



THE FLAG ART FOUNDATION

2008–2018

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With contributions by

Ashley Bickerton, Delia Brown, Chuck Close,
Patricia Cronin, Cynthia Daignault, Lisa Dennison, Sarah Douglas,
Elmgreen & Dragset, Awol Erizku, Eric Fischl, James Frey, Ewan Gibbs, Louis Grachos,
Stamatina Gregory, Prabal Gurung, Jane Hammond, Hilary Harkness,
Jim Hodges, Philae Knight, Cary Kwok, Josephine Meckseper, Shaquille O'Neal,
Richard Patterson, Jack Shear, Carolyn Twersky, Lesley Vance, Rebecca Ward,
Linda Yablonsky, and Heidi Zuckerman

THE FLAG ART FOUNDATION and GREGORY R. MILLER & CO.

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PREFACE

Stephanie Roach

When I reflect on the first decade of The FLAG Art Foundation, a colorful amalgamation of experiences with artists and curators comes to mind: reviewing images of artworks with basketball superstar Shaquille O'Neal in Cleveland for *SIZE DOES MATTER*—I will never forget his expression upon seeing Ron Mueck's oversized hyperrealistic sculpture *Big Man* (2000), and when he exclaimed, "I want that in the show!"; sampling a variety of hard candies with Jim Hodges for Felix Gonzalez-Torres's "*Untitled*" (*Rossmore II*) (1991) before ultimately deciding on a custom green apple flavor; meeting Dorothy Lichtenstein at Roy's hallowed former studio with artists Hilary Harkness and Ewan Gibbs, who selected drawings to feature in the exhibition they curated, *Roy Lichtenstein: Nudes and Interiors*; seeking refuge from a rainstorm in Venice in the sixteenth-century church of San Gallo and being overcome with emotion by Patricia Cronin's poignant *Shrine for Girls*, which a year later would travel to FLAG; and discussing with Awol Erizku a new series of photographs completed during a trip to his home country, Ethiopia, which would eventually become his solo exhibition *New Flower / Images of the Reclining Venus*.

Before these memories were woven into FLAG's history, I fortuitously intersected with Glenn Fuhrman at the Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania, when I was an undergraduate. This meaningful connection led to a substantive conversation about his plans to start FLAG, and in 2006, Glenn enlisted me in this exciting endeavor. At that time, the space was literally under construction and FLAG was still an idea. I had the honor of working alongside him to shape what it has become today. Developing a new contemporary art organization required the ability to navigate uncharted territory with a combination of curiosity, adaptability, and open-mindedness. Glenn's prescient words—"What we both lack in experience we will make up for with

enthusiasm and passion!”—were a constant and guiding force that has proven true time and again over the past decade.

When FLAG opened to the public in January 2008, Glenn and I were just beginning to define its role within New York’s cultural landscape and the art world. The first five years were primarily dedicated to exhibitions by rotating curators, whose distinct voices and appreciation of contemporary art informed their diverse approaches: Lisa Dennison selected more than seventy artists who explored Ed Ruscha’s inimitable influence; Shaquille O’Neal brought a larger-than-life presence and a sense of humor to his exploration of the miniature, the gigantic, and everything in between; Prabal Gurung utilized his sensibility as a fashion designer to interpret Cary Kwok’s elaborate drawings; Linda Yablonsky’s meditation on trees was a beautiful and unexpected take on this subject matter; Eric Fischl mined his family history, American suburbia, and artists’ fascination with dolls, toys, and mannequins to shape a psychologically charged panoply of works. Each exhibition was a collaboration—a process of adapting to varied personalities and working styles—and an opportunity for interesting individuals to realize unique visions and address relevant issues.

In 2011, FLAG broadened its program to focus on in-depth solo exhibitions of artists at pivotal junctures in their careers: Josephine Meckseper’s exhibition marked the first time we supported the fabrication of new work; Jane Hammond’s *Fallen* (2004) was a profound and timely tribute to U.S. soldiers killed in Iraq, for which she inscribed each fallen soldier’s name onto a colorful handmade leaf (4,455 in total); Hilary Harkness presented the first comprehensive exhibition of her intricate “cross-section” paintings—the only occasion that many works from this series had been seen together; after receiving his MFA from Yale, Awol Erizku had his first solo exhibition at FLAG; and Cynthia Daignault’s exhibition introduced new paintings that included collaborations with thirty-six emerging and established artists. We were honored to give Wayne Lawrence, Richard Patterson, and Rebecca Ward their New York solo exhibition debuts.

FLAG turns to artists for their perspectives during watershed moments in society, and two key thematic group exhibitions bookend

the past decade: *Re-Accession: For Sale by Owner*, a direct response to the 2008 economic downturn in which many artists lost the support of gallery representation; and *The Times* (2017), which featured over eighty artists who used the “paper of record” to address social issues in the wake of the 2016 election. We hosted open calls for both exhibitions, providing a platform for the broadest range of artists to respond to the cultural climate.

In addition to FLAG’s vibrant exhibition program, accessibility and engaging with our audience are vital parts of our spirit and ethos. Among the numerous museum and school groups we have welcomed over the past decade, the Harlem Children’s Zone has been one of our most fulfilling and sustained relationships; their students have offered brilliant insights on topics ranging from Maurizio Cattelan’s controversial sculpture of upside-down police officers (*Frank and Jamie*, 2002) to the 2016 presidential election. Artist conversations with Lawrence Weiner (complete with a Scotch tasting), Jeff Koons, Sean Scully, and Cynthia Daignault, among others, revealed personal anecdotes as well as insights about their oeuvres. FLAG has hosted various memorable events from concerts to benefits to Will Cotton’s figure drawing party, which filled our space with artists and friends hard at work at easels as nude models struck poses. Each of these experiences has contributed to our evolution.

The core of FLAG’s mission is to support emerging and established international artists, and the relationships we have cultivated are integral to our success. Ultimately, our history is a shared one. I am immensely grateful to all the individuals who have made the past decade truly remarkable and are a special part of FLAG’s family. I would like to thank them for their indelible contributions:

To the artists, for their infinite creativity and inspiration.

To the curators, with whom it was an honor to work together to make their dream a reality.

To the community of galleries, museums, collectors, and artists, for their generosity in lending works to our exhibitions.

To our loyal viewers, whose curiosity and loyalty are the lifeblood of what we do.

To the art handlers, for their time and expertise; the photographers, designers, and interns, for their work behind the scenes and their attention to detail; and to Maureen Sullivan, for creative strategy and public relations.

To the awesome team we collaborated with to realize this catalogue—Miko McGinty and her designers, Rita Jules and Claire Bidwell; our editor, Kate Norment; and our co-publisher, Greg Miller—each of whom helped shape this book into a fantastic marker of our tenth anniversary.

I owe a debt of gratitude to the other members of the FLAG team: Associate Director Jonathan Rider; the former Exhibitions and Programs Manager, Risa Daniels; and the current Exhibitions and Programs Manager, Caroline Cassidy, who recently joined us. Their diligence, heart, and enthusiasm have been integral to the pursuit of FLAG's mission, and it has been a great pleasure to work with them.

I would like to acknowledge Glenn as a true visionary and extraordinary mentor; his dedication to and support of art and artists are unparalleled. In working with him, I have learned as much about life as I have about art.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents, Jill and Dennis, for providing me with invaluable exposure to art throughout my life, and my husband, John, for sharing my love of art.

Being at the helm of this organization has been exciting, challenging, and rewarding. I am continually invited to open my eyes and mind to the universal and transformative power of art. As I look toward the future, I am proud to say that FLAG's unwavering commitment to contemporary art and its community is stronger than ever.

PATRICIA CRONIN: SHRINE FOR GIRLS, NEW YORK

June 9–July 29, 2016





Shrine for Girls, Venice was a solo collateral show of the 56th Venice Biennale in the sixteenth-century church of San Gallo, reflecting on the global plight of exploited young women and girls that focused on three recent tragic events in India, Nigeria, Ireland, and beyond. The FLAG Art Foundation and the Fuhrman Family Foundation were my lead sponsors, and this project would not exist without their generous support. After the incredible critical response at the Biennale, an international tour beginning in New York made sense. I was talking to a few venues when Glenn and Amanda suggested showing the installation at FLAG.

But how to preserve the emotional resonance while restaging the work in a very different architectural space? A private contemporary art space designed by Richard Gluckman in the heart of Chelsea was going to be very different from a Baroque church in Venice. There, the installation consisted of piles of the girls' relics, their clothes placed on the marble altars accompanied by a small framed photograph of the different events. Moving the show to different cities, without the altars, required new pedestals. Originally, because the deadline for the Biennale exhibition catalogue was before I had access to the marble altars in the church, I placed the clothes on crates in my Brooklyn studio. When conceptualizing the FLAG presentation, I revisited the crate concept. The words "tour," "travel," and "traffic" got braided together in my head. Since many of these girls and women were trafficked, the shipping crates now had metaphoric potential. I designed new crates in which each sculpture would travel as the show toured. International shipping crates are made from specially treated wood stamped with a universal symbol meaning the crate is safe for international travel, along with the words "fragile" and "this way up," and symbols of arrows and umbrellas. The crates became a stark, minimalist reminder that in the \$45 billion-a-year global art market that mostly prizes male achievement, we take great care of objects but not of human beings, especially women, who are the most vulnerable. This is social sculpture in the Beuysian tradition—the works are actually just piles of girls' clothing on the shipping crates they travel in, contemporary art for sale and simultaneously true shrines of remembrance.

In the *Shrine for Girls, New York* exhibition at FLAG, the specificity of the location was as visible as the one in Venice, with floor-to-ceiling



windows flanking what was positioned as the high altar revealing expensive skyscrapers, condo developments, construction cranes, and water towers. It was a reminder of who in this world profits from the global circulation of finances, art, clothing, and people, and who doesn't.

Whether *Shrine for Girls* is shown in sacred or secular architecture, these venues are all structures of the powerful, while my subjects are the powerless. I'm trying to honor these women, give them some of the dignity they were denied when they were alive.

As the great American author Toni Morrison said, "The best art is political and you ought to be able to make it unquestionably political and irrevocably beautiful at the same time." Or as I like to say, the best art is when a love song and a protest song are rolled into the same song.

—Patricia Cronin



