

# MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS ST. PETE

THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, ST. PETERSBURG (MFA) ANNOUNCES NEW EXHIBITION,  
*BORROW AND STEAL: APPROPRIATION FROM THE COLLECTION*

*The MFA's New Exhibition Will Be On View September 24, 2022 - February 5, 2023*



**ST. PETERSBURG, FL (September 19, 2022)** – [The Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg](#) (MFA) is pleased to announce its upcoming exhibition, *Borrow and Steal: Appropriation from the Collection*. The exhibition traces the lineage of appropriation art—the unsanctioned use of imagery—that has been strategically employed in the hopes of destabilizing or rearranging power structures. The art of appropriating, literally “taking,” allows an artist to harness the power of established imagery, drawing attention to important issues. The act of appropriation “steals” and redistributes the power of the icon while also interrogating the idea of originality and authorship. *Borrow and Steal* explores various modes of appropriation and pays particular attention to those artists and ideas that have been marginalized throughout art history. Like Chaucer’s original phrase referenced in the title, if one is not afforded something, one must empower oneself.

The exhibition puts artworks exemplifying mass media appropriation in dialogue with art historical references, providing rich context and insight into this body of work.

The exhibition includes works by Ellen Gallagher (b. 1965), Guerrilla Girls (active since 1985), Deborah Kass (b. 1952), Barbara Kruger (b. 1945), Christian Marclay (b. 1955), Roger Shimomura (b. 1939), and Kara Walker (b. 1969). It will be on view from September 24, 2022 through February 5, 2023.

“Not only does this exhibition allow us to highlight a selection of some of the most important works from our Contemporary collection, it speaks to crucial issues of our time,” said Katherine Pill, Curator of Contemporary Art at the MFA. “*Borrow and Steal* reminds us of the ways that artists have forged new modes of artmaking, finding innovative ways to address, conceptually, historical inequities.”

Anchoring the exhibition is Sherrie Levine’s *After Degas* (1987). Levine was one of the five artists in *Pictures*, the 1977 exhibition curated by Douglas Crimp at Artists Space in New York City. This groundbreaking exhibition ushered in the so-called “Pictures Generation” of artists who pioneered the appropriation of mass media imagery with varying degrees of humor and sly cynicism. Levine is best known for her re-photography of photographs by male icons of modernism like Edward Weston (1886-1958) and Walker Evans (1903-1975). *After Degas* is a reproduction of Edgar Degas’s (1834-1917) monotype with applied pastel *Café-Concert at Les Ambassadeurs* (1877). Levine’s work removes the vivid red, blues, and yellows of the original, thus creating an interval for discussion between the original and the copy. This work also references previous questions of originality, as Degas was creating new works by drawing upon his own reproductions. Here, Levine uses the appropriation strategy to question the sacredness of the male creator, critique the male gaze, and question notions of originality and authenticity further.

In his work, Roger Shimomura uses art historical references to address cultural stereotypes, specifically those of Japanese-Americans. When the artist was two years old, he was sent to the Minidoka internment camp in Idaho with his family. He and his family’s wartime experience—subject to a shameful moment in U.S. history— influenced Shimomura’s work throughout his career. Shimomura often uses his grandmother’s diary entries as source material and inspiration for his images, further compounding the “borrowing” aspect of appropriation. In *American Neighbors* (1996), Shimomura juxtaposes a representation of an American cultural icon—Andy Warhol’s (1928-1987) portrait of Elizabeth Taylor—with a Japanese geisha figure, playing with icons representing icons and examining cross-cultural modes of performance and representation.

Kara Walker, Ellen Gallagher, and Mildred Howard rework historical images to create new narratives that address racist legacies and exclusionary histories. Walker’s critically acclaimed *Banks’s Army Leaving Simmsport* from *Harper’s Pictorial History of The Civil War (Annotated)* (2005) shows the artist’s insertion of cut-paper silhouetted figures onto enlarged reproductions of an 1866 *Harper’s Magazine* issue on the Civil War. This creative act revises the official narrative to reference the visceral brutality of slavery, allowing the viewer to confront historical stereotypes critically.

Also on view will be *Telephones* (1995) by Christian Marclay, a pioneer of video appropriation, and a work by Generic Art Solutions, a performance-based duo that uses the medium of video to engage with

ancient history. Taken together, the works in *Borrow and Steal* open a rich vein of discourse examining the impact of popular culture on our collective imagination. This is happening at a moment when the sheer multiplicity and complexity of appropriations—combined with technological advancements, have radically challenged our ability to distinguish originals from copies and truth from fiction.

**IMAGE CAPTION**

Roger Shimomura, *American Neighbors*, 1996

Woodcut on Rives BFK; Ed. Of 25, Published by UNO Print Workshop

Gift of Dr. Karen White

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**ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA**

The MFA at 255 Beach Drive NE is the largest encyclopedic art museum in Florida. The collection includes works of art from ancient times to the present day and from around the world, including ancient Greek and Roman, Egyptian, Asian, African, pre-Columbian, Native American, European, American, and contemporary art. The photography collection is one of the largest and finest in the Southeast. For more information, please visit [mfastpete.org](http://mfastpete.org) and follow @mfastpete on social media.

**MEDIA CONTACT**

DEPARTMENT PR

Sarah Brown McLeod

[sarah@department-pr.com](mailto:sarah@department-pr.com)

Roberta Zertuche

[roberta@department-pr.com](mailto:roberta@department-pr.com)