

List of Exhibitions (through Fall 2014)

1993

Sanctuaries: Recovering the Holy in Contemporary Art
Body and Soul: The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

1994

Georges Rouault: Miserere et Guerre, the complete series
of etchings

Post-Minimalism and the Spiritual: Four Chicago Artists
Consecrations: The Spiritual in Art in the Time of AIDS

1995

Keith Haring: The Life of Christ Altarpiece

Ian Friend: The Edge of Belief

Eleanor Dickinson: A Retrospective

1996

Frederick J. Brown: The Life of Christ Altarpiece

Edward Boccia: Eye of the Painter

1997

Steven Heilmer: Pietre Sante

Utopia Body Paint

Manfred Stumpf: Enter Jerusalem

1998

Tobi Kahn: Metamorphoses

MOCRA: The First Five Years

1999

Bernard Maisner: Entrance to the Scriptorium

2000

Georges Rouault: Miserere et Guerre, the complete series
of etchings

Lewis DeSoto: Paranirvana

Robert Farber: A Retrospective, 1985–1995

2001

Andy Warhol: Silver Clouds

2002

The Greater Good: An Artist's Contemporary View of the
Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment

Andy Warhol's "Silver Clouds": An Encore Presentation

2003

Georges Rouault: Miserere et Guerre, the complete series
of etchings

Avoda: Objects of the Spirit

2004

Rito, Espejo y Ojo / Ritual, Mirror and Eye

Radiant Forms in Contemporary Sacred Architecture:

Richard Meier & the Jubilee Church, Rome – Steven Holl &
the Chapel of St. Ignatius, Seattle

Daniel Ramirez – Twenty Contemplations on the Infant Jesus:
An Homage to Olivier Messiaen

2005

Junko Chodos: The Breath of Consciousness

DoDo Jin Ming: Land and Sea

2006

Gorky: The Early Years – Drawings and Paintings, 1927–1937

Andy Warhol: Silver Clouds

2007

Oskar Fischinger: Movement and Spirit

The Celluloid Bible: Marketing Films Inspired by Scripture

2008

Miao Xiaochun: The Last Judgment in Cyberspace

MOCRA at Fifteen: Pursuit of the Spirit

2009

MOCRA at Fifteen: Good Friday

Michael Byron: Cosmic Tears

2010

Good Friday: The Suffering Christ in Contemporary Art

James Rosen: The Artist and the Capable Observer

2011

Georges Rouault: Miserere et Guerre, the complete series
of etchings

Adrian Kellard: The Learned Art of Compassion

2012

Archie Granot: The Papercut Haggadah

Patrick Graham: 30 Years – The Silence Becomes the Painting

2013

Jordan Eagles: BLOOD / SPIRIT

Thresholds: MOCRA at 20 Years - Part One: The First Decade

2014

Thresholds: MOCRA at 20 Years - Part Two: The Second Decade

Rebecca Niederlander: Axis Mundi

MOCRA

Museum of Contemporary Religious Art ♦ Saint Louis University

Mission and Exhibition History

Mission

Saint Louis University's Museum of Contemporary Religious Art (MOCRA) is the world's first museum of interfaith contemporary art. Officially opened in 1993, MOCRA is dedicated to the ongoing dialogue between contemporary artists and the world's faith traditions, and to serving as a forum for interfaith understanding. Located in a spacious chapel that was used for over 35 years by Jesuits studying philosophy at Saint Louis University, MOCRA offers a unique, meditative setting for the display of its permanent collection and changing exhibitions. MOCRA's exhibitions demonstrate the range of contemporary religious and spiritual artistic expression, presenting the work of artists of regional, national and international stature. Exhibitions are complemented by lectures, symposia, performances, and other public presentations, as well as *MOCRA Voices*, the museum's podcast and lecture series. MOCRA has received critical acclaim in the local and national media, including *Art News*, *Art in America*, *Art Journal*, *Art Papers*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *The New York Times*, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, and the *San Jose Mercury News*. In December 2002, MOCRA was named by USA Today as one of America's top 10 religious museums.

Exhibition history: 1993–2002

Since its inaugural group exhibition in 1993, *Sanctuaries: Recovering the Holy in Contemporary Art*, MOCRA has been exploring the wide range of contemporary expressions of the intersection between art and religion and spirituality. Other early group exhibitions included *Post-Minimalism and the Spiritual*, with work by four Chicago artists; *Utopia Body Paint*, featuring the work of the Aborigines of Australia's Central Desert; and the groundbreaking *Consecrations: The Spiritual in Art in the Time of AIDS*, which explored the impact of AIDS through the lens of spirituality and religion.

MOCRA's early years saw diverse solo exhibitions, including the last major work by Keith Haring; abstract paintings by Australian artist Ian Friend; the black velvet paintings of Eleanor Dickinson; a major multipanel commission by renowned painter Frederick J. Brown; a retrospective of work by St. Louis painter Edward Boccia; marble sculpture by Steven Heilmer; computer art by German artist Manfred Stumpf; the remarkable 25-foot long inflatable sculpture by Lewis deSoto titled *Paranirvana*; and a retrospective of work by painter Robert Farber. Another solo exhibition, *Tobi Kahn: Metamorphoses*, was hailed as St. Louis' best traveling exhibition of 1998 by the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. The MOCRA-organized exhibition *Bernard Maisner: Entrance to the Scriptorium*, a 25-year retrospective of that artist's paintings and illuminated manuscripts, received enthusiastic reviews in *The Los Angeles Times* and *The Austin Chronicle* during its three-year, five-city tour.

Early on MOCRA signaled an expansive approach to its exhibitions with the archival exhibition *Body and Soul: The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater*, which included costumes, set designs, and video performances, as well as programming that included an evening with legendary dancer and choreographer Katherine Dunham. This expansive approach continued in 2001 and 2002, when MOCRA twice hosted the largest ever U.S. installation and first ever St. Louis showing of Andy Warhol's *Silver Clouds*, buoyant helium- and air-filled silver mylar pillows that ride the air currents and respond to the touch of the viewer. The *Silver Clouds* drew record audiences of all ages to MOCRA and generated extensive media coverage. MOCRA continued its commitment to presenting challenging and significant exhibitions in 2002 with *The Greater Good: An Artist's Contemporary View of the*

Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment, an installation by artist Tony Hooker. This artistic reflection on a painful chapter in America's racial history opened MOCRA's doors to a broader cross-section of the Saint Louis community and inspired a talk by noted civil rights leader Fred D. Gray as well as an interdisciplinary panel discussion by University faculty and community members. It was named one of the best exhibitions of 2002 by the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*.

Exhibition history: 2003–2007

In 2003, MOCRA presented Georges Rouault's *Miserere et Guerre: The Complete Series of Etchings*. MOCRA is privileged to have in its collection one of the few complete sets of this landmark body of prints, and was pleased to display them newly rematted and reframed. The latter part of 2003 saw *Avoda: Objects of the Spirit*, an exhibition of contemporary reworkings of traditional Jewish ceremonial objects by artist Tobi Kahn. Visitors were encouraged to consider the sacred objects of their own faith traditions and the role they play in our lives. MOCRA turned its focus in Spring 2004 to the photographic work of three important Latin American artists—Luis González Palma, María Magdalena Campos-Pons, and Pablo Soria—with *Rito, Espejo y Ojo/Ritual, Mirror and Eye*.

MOCRA's first show devoted to contemporary architecture took place during Fall and Winter 2004–05. *Radiant Forms in Contemporary Sacred Architecture* examined recent church commissions by leading architects Richard Meier and Steven Holl. Simultaneously, *Twenty Contemplations on the Infant Jesus: An Homage to Olivier Messiaen* featured a series of twenty etchings by artist Daniel P. Ramirez, work inspired by the music of the great French composer Messiaen. MOCRA's 2005 programming continued with *The Breath of Consciousness*, a thirty-year retrospective of work by Japanese-American artist Junko Chodos, who in her drawings, collages, and scroll paintings embraces the sacred and the profane, uncovers beauty in ugliness, and maintains an openness to hope amidst hardship. Fall 2005 saw a presentation of photographs by Chinese artist DoDo Jin Ming. *Land and Sea* explored the representation of sublime as discovered in nature with riveting seascapes and haunting vistas of sunflower fields.

2006 began with *Gorky: The Early Years, 1927–1937*, a special presentation of early drawings and paintings by pivotal modern artist Arshile Gorky (1904–48). This exhibition inaugurated *MOCRA: Sources*, an occasional series of exhibitions presenting those seminal artists who have influenced the development of modern and contemporary art, and whose impact is seen in the artists of our time who engage the religious and spiritual dimensions in their work. Andy Warhol's *Silver Clouds* returned to MOCRA in Fall 2006, again drawing record crowds. This final engagement of the *Clouds* at MOCRA received significant media attention, including a segment on *Living St. Louis*, a local-interest series on St. Louis Public Television affiliate KETC (Channel 9). MOCRA also participated in Day With(out) Art on December 1, 2006, juxtaposing images from Carolyn Jones' moving *Living Proof* photographic suite with the *Clouds* as a meditation on all those whose lives have been affected by HIV/AIDS.

MOCRA presented another installment of *MOCRA: Sources* in Spring 2007 with *Oskar Fischinger: Movement and Spirit*, a presentation of paintings and drawings by pioneering German abstract painter and filmmaker Oskar Fischinger (1900–67). He worked in the realm of "visual music," seeking to expand dimensions in both visual and auditory experience. In Fall 2007, MOCRA debuted *The Celluloid Bible: Marketing Films Inspired by Scripture*. This presentation of vintage motion picture posters and other promotional materials (dating from 1898 to the present and hailing from across the globe) explored the ways in which the Bible has been adapted to film, as well as how those movies have been advertised. In conjunction with the exhibition, MOCRA presented the classic Bible epics *The Ten Commandments* (1956) and *Ben-Hur* (1959) in St. Louis's handsomely restored Tivoli Theatre. *The Celluloid Bible* was featured in a segment on *Living St. Louis*.

Exhibition history: 2008–2012

MOCRA began 2008 with *Miao Xiaochun: The Last Judgment in Cyberspace*, in which a Chinese artist used three-dimensional modeling software to create a digital avatar of his own body that he mapped onto all 400-plus figures in Michelangelo's famous Sistine Chapel painting. The exhibition included large-scale digital prints from five vantage points in the virtual environment, as well as a video that enabled the viewer to "fly through" the painting. In Fall 2008 and Spring 2009, MOCRA marked its fifteenth anniversary with two special group exhibitions. In Fall 2008, *Pursuit of the Spirit* presented the work of 46 artists drawn from MOCRA's first 35 exhibitions. The works were arranged in categories such as "Sacred Spaces," "The Sublime," "Mother and Child," and "Suffering and Healing," thus establishing new relationships between works not previously shown together. In Spring 2009, MOCRA presented *Good Friday*, comprised of work by 31 modern and contemporary artists that focused on the experiences of Jesus on Good Friday. For this exhibition, presented during the Lenten season, special attention was given to present the works in ways that allowed visitors to use the art as thresholds to prayer and contemplation.

Michael Byron: Cosmic Tears, presented in Fall 2009, featured paintings by internationally recognized artist Michael Byron based on a text by the artist that meditates on the inevitable mix of emotions that accompanies the act of creation. In response to a high volume of visitor requests, MOCRA gave an encore presentation of its Good Friday exhibition in Spring 2010, retitled *Good Friday: The Suffering Christ in Contemporary Art*. The show received significant media coverage, including a cover article in *America* magazine and a review in the English weekly *The Tablet*. MOCRA's Fall 2010 exhibition, *James Rosen: The Artist and the Capable Observer*, presented a selection of work from the 1950s to the present, offering viewers the opportunity to observe a master artist's visual journey through paintings, watercolors, drawings, and prints. It was also with this exhibition that the *MOCRA Voices* podcast was launched, a series of conversations with thinkers and practitioners at the intersection of contemporary art, religion, and spirituality.

2011 began with another presentation of *Georges Rouault: Miserere et Guerre*, the complete series of etchings. This was followed by *Adrian Kellard: The Learned Art of Compassion*. Coinciding with the twentieth anniversary of the artist's death, the exhibition featured Kellard's distinctive, boldly colored carved wood panels that reflect the artist's deep faith and complicated set of identities: Irish-Italian ancestry, Catholic, gay. The show was heralded by visitors as one of MOCRA's finest, and received a complimentary review in the national magazine *Art Papers*. In 2012 MOCRA offered three exhibitions. *Archie Granot: The Papercut Haggadah* presented the stories and rituals of the Jewish festival of Passover in the traditional medium of papercutting made contemporary by Israeli artist Archie Granot. The summer months saw *A Tribute to Frederick J. Brown*, who passed away in May 2012. *Patrick Graham: Thirty Years – The Silence Becomes the Painting* was a thirty-year retrospective of one of Ireland's most important contemporary artists, curated by noted art historian Peter Selz.

Exhibition history: 2003–present

Spring 2013 saw *Jordan Eagles: BLOOD / SPIRIT*, the St. Louis premiere of work by a New York artist whose signature use of animal blood combined with Plexiglas, UV resin, copper, gauze, and other media, produces arresting works that both fascinate and challenge audiences. MOCRA also presented a special mini-exhibition of large-format Polaroid prints by Cuban-American artist Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons in conjunction with a major lecture by the artist.

By this point MOCRA had mounted nearly fifty creative, challenging exhibitions and presented the work of more than two hundred established and emerging artists who hail from across the globe. And so in Fall 2013 and Spring 2014 we marked MOCRA's twentieth anniversary with a two-part exhibition titled *Thresholds: MOCRA at 20*. In Part One, we reviewed MOCRA's first decade, while Part Two brought together works from our second decade. The exhibitions conveyed some idea of the richness and diversity of expressions that we

have been privileged to show in our explorations of this rich sector of contemporary art. We were also honored when *The Riverfront Times* named MOCRA “Best Museum in St. Louis 2013.” The editors noted that MOCRA “consistently has organized some of the most nuanced and revelatory exhibitions in St. Louis. . . . As the country’s only museum to engage this otherwise untouchable subject by the adamantly atheistic contemporary-art world, MOCRA has maintained an expansive and progressive perspective on its mission, presenting a widely ecumenical sense of religiosity as well as an incisive aesthetic currency.”

Moving into our third decade

We began our third decade of exhibitions with *Rebecca Niederlander: Axis Mundi* In Fall 2014. For MOCRA’s first site-specific installation, Los Angeles-based artist Niederlander utilized multiple elements to create an abstracted environment of color, form, and contemplative space, including a large sculptural piece suspended from MOCRA’s soaring nave ceiling that captivated visitors with its scale and grace. In Spring 2015 we presented *Vast Bhutan: Images from the Phenomenal World*, featuring photographs taken by artist Regina DeLuise during a seven-week sabbatical in Bhutan in which she worked with Voluntary Artists’ Studio, Thimphu (VAST). Her photos, taken with a large-format camera, investigate the mundane and sublime aspects of her surroundings, with light as her central theme.

Our exhibitions will continue in Fall 2015 with *Painting Prayers: The Calligraphic Art of Salma Arastu*.