

# ADDISON

Addison Gallery of American Art

## Contemporary Artists at Addison Gallery of American Art Interpret Historical Map Collection through Six New Art Installations

*Wayfinding: Contemporary Artists, Critical Dialogues, and the Sidney R. Knafel Map Collection*

**New Work by Sonny Assu, Andrea Chung, Liz Collins,  
Spencer Finch, Josh T. Franco, and Heidi Whitman**

**Andover, Massachusetts (UPDATED August 31, 2020)**— *Wayfinding: Contemporary Artists, Critical Dialogues, and the Sidney R. Knafel Map Collection* presents new work by six emerging and established artists—Sonny Assu, Andrea Chung, Liz Collins, Spencer Finch, Josh T. Franco, and Heidi Whitman—made in response to a two-year engagement with Phillips Academy’s historical Sidney R. Knafel Map Collection. *Wayfinding* will be on view at the Addison from October 17, 2020 to February 28, 2021.

A unique holding of atlases, maps, and globes dating from 1434 through the 19th century, the Knafel Map Collection documents Europeans’ developing understanding of the world over four centuries. Captivating for their aesthetics as well as their political and social implications, these maps offer illuminating windows into the European Age of Discovery and its aftermath.

Whereas geographers adhere to particular mapping conventions and a largely standardized visual language, artists are not constrained by these rules. The artists in the exhibition bring diverse cultural perspectives, intellectual interests, and aesthetic approaches to their work. Their installations explore how American spaces are, and have been, imagined, drawn, measured, constructed, claimed, reclaimed, and contested, advancing the Addison’s mission of catalyzing fresh dialogue through provocative works.

“*Wayfinding* brings awareness to a unique and important historical collection at Phillips Academy, highlighting how the work of contemporary artists can encourage new ways of thinking,” said Allison Kemmerer, interim director of the Addison Gallery of American Art and Mead Curator of Photography and Senior Curator of Contemporary Art. “Using the Knafel maps as a springboard for artistic exploration, *Wayfinding* offers a glimpse into the creative engagement of six diverse artists with this historically significant, aesthetically resonant, and at times, politically charged, material.”

The artists and their works in the exhibition include:

- **Sonny Assu** (based in Vancouver, Canada), a multidisciplinary artist, has constructed a set of “Broken Treaties” arcade cabinets that critically combine elements from comic books and gaming cultures with histories of settler colonialism, land theft, and displacement.
- **Andrea Chung** (based in San Diego, CA), whose works trace fraught histories of commerce, mass enslavement, and exploited labor in the Caribbean, has created an immersive planetarium inspired

by early astrological charts as a means to explore new possible meanings of nautical map depictions.

- **Liz Collins** (based in New York City), an artist and designer whose works range from fabrics, wallpapers, carpets, stitched pieces, paintings, and all-immersive installations, has developed a textile-based environment that references and transforms the visual vocabulary of the Knafel maps into the abstract language of art.
- **Spencer Finch** (based in New York City), known for applying scientific and poetic approaches to data collection, analysis, and display, has created a series of new drawings that explore the tension between careful observation and subjective perception in cartography.
- **Josh T. Franco** (based in Hyattsville, MD), an artist from West Texas with a PhD in art history, explores the relationship between indigenous pictographs and conventional Euro-American mapping of the Chihuahua desert region, through bookmaking, painting, drawing, sculpture, and sound.
- **Heidi Whitman** (based in Boston, MA), whose work often deals with mapping interior states of mind, has created a three-part installation that explores the hidden motives of cartography, metaphorically mapping the fear, violence, and greed associated with the exploration and conquest of the New World.

*Wayfinding* is curated by Allison Kemmerer, interim director of the Addison Gallery of American Art and Mead Curator of Photography and senior curator of contemporary art, and Stephanie Sparling Williams, former assistant curator at the Addison and current associate curator at the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum. The exhibition is generously supported by the Sidney R. Knafel Fund, the Edward E. Elson Artist-in-Residence Fund, and a grant from the Artists' Resource Trust.

#### **About the Edward E. Elson Artist-in-Residence program**

Since welcoming Charles Sheeler to Andover as the museum's first artist-in-residence in 1946, the Addison has provided generations of students with insight into the creative process and a rare opportunity to discuss ideas with major artists living and working on the Phillips Academy campus. Visiting artists have the use of an apartment and studio designed and fabricated in 1996 by artist David Ireland. In addition to creating new work on the Phillips Academy campus, artists-in-residence variously exhibit at the Addison, give public talks, critique student work, and lead discussions and workshops with students in Andover and the surrounding area. Alumni of the artist-in-residence program include acclaimed artists of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries Dawoud Bey, Kerry James Marshall, Lee Mingwei, Laurie Simmons, Frank Stella, Jessica Stockholder, and William Wegman among many others.

#### **About the Addison Gallery of American Art**

Devoted exclusively to American art, the Addison, which opened in 1931, holds one of the most important collections of American art in the country. Its holdings include more than 23,000 works by prominent artists such as John Singleton Copley, Thomas Eakins, Winslow Homer, George Bellows, Georgia O'Keeffe, Jackson Pollock, Lorna Simpson, Kara Walker, and Mark Bradford, as well as photographers Eadweard Muybridge, Walker Evans, Robert Frank, Cindy Sherman, Dawoud Bey, and many more. The Addison Gallery, located in

a stand-alone building on the campus of Phillips Academy—a residential school of grades nine through 12 in Andover, Massachusetts—offers a continually rotating series of exhibitions and programs.

For more information, call 978-749-4015, or visit the website at [www.addisongallery.org](http://www.addisongallery.org).

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