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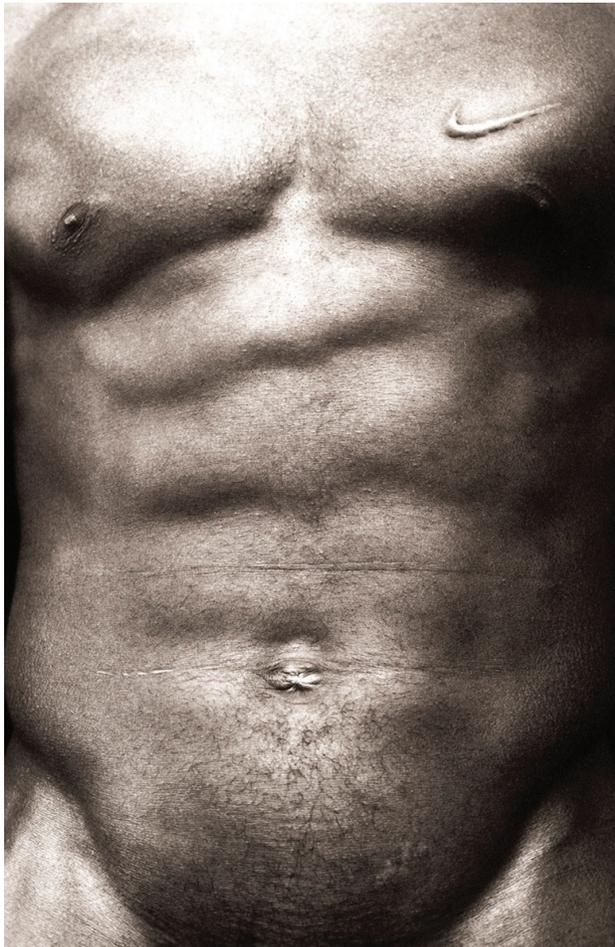
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Provocative new exhibitions at the Fleming explore identity and activism in art



Hank Willis Thomas, *Branded Chest*, from the *B^{anded} Series*, 2003. Platinum Print. Courtesy of Light Work.

BURLINGTON, VT - The Fleming Museum of Art is pleased to announce two exhibitions opening this fall that explore topical themes pulled from today's headlines: identity and activism.

In the East Gallery, we feature *Be Strong and Do Not Betray Your Soul: Selections from the Light Work Collection*, originally organized by Light Work, a nonprofit organization in Syracuse, New York, that provides direct support to artists working in the media of photography and digital imaging.

The show was guest-curated by For Freedoms, a platform for civic engagement, discourse, and direct action for artists in the United States, co-founded in 2016 by former Light Work artists-in-residence Eric Gottesman and Hank Willis Thomas. Since then, For Freedoms has produced exhibitions, town hall meetings, and public art to spur greater participation in civic life. On their motivation for starting For Freedoms, Gottesman states: "Our hope was to spark dialogue about our collective civic responsibility to push for freedom and justice today, as those before us pushed for freedom and justice in their time through peaceful protest and political participation."

Borrowing its title from the Charles Biasiny-Rivera piece of the same name, *Be Strong and Do Not Betray Your Soul* features photographs from the Light Work collection that explore topics of politics, social justice, identity, and visibility. These subjects have remained significant for Light Work and many of the artists they have supported over their forty-five year history.

The list of artists includes: Laura Aguilar, George Awde, Karl Baden, Lois Barden and Harry Littell, Claire Beckett, Charles Biasiny-Rivera, Samantha Box, Chan Chao, Albert Chong, Renee Cox, Rose Marie Cromwell, Jen Davis, Jess Dugan, John Edmonds, Amy Elkins, Nereyda Garcia Ferraz, Jennifer

Garza-Cuen, Antony Gleaton, Jim Goldberg, Eric Gottesman, David Graham, Mahtab Hussain, Tommy Kha, Deana Lawson, Mary Mattingly, Osamu James Nakagawa, Pipo Nguyen-Duy, Jackie Nickerson, Shelley Niro, Suzanne Opton, Kristine Potter, Ernesto Pujol, Irina Rozovsky, Alessandra Sanguinetti, Kanako Sasaki, Pacifico Silano, Clarissa Sligh, Beuford Smith, Amy Stein, Mila Teshaieva, Brian Ulrich, Ted Wathen, Carrie Mae Weems, Carla Williams, Hank Willis Thomas, and Pixy Yijun Liao.

These forty-seven artists use the medium of photography to express their own humanity and that of their subjects; to subtly comment on the social, economic, and historical forces that oppress us all, but especially women, queer people, and people of color; and above all to create images that are by turns startling, meditative, and thought-provoking.

“The photographs in the exhibition are beautiful, intriguing, and provocative,” says Fleming curator Andrea Rosen. “No matter how seemingly abstract, each one has a human story to tell, about sense of place, sense of belonging, and sometimes sense of alienation. While some of the images speak of struggle, many more are about forging human connection through empathy.”

Across the Marble Court from *Be Strong and Do Not Betray Your Soul* will be *RESIST! INSIST! PERSIST!*, an exhibition that explores the intersection of art and activism. Drawn primarily from the Fleming Museum’s collection, the exhibition features the work of historical and contemporary artists who have countered adversity and hardship with empowerment and expression. This show was curated by UVM students in the Fall 2018 class Art History 282: Museum Studies, taught by Kelley Helmstutler Di Dio, Professor of Art History and Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

Art has always had the power to evoke a strong emotional response from viewers, but as it became easier and cheaper to produce and circulate art in prints and photographs, artists seized the opportunity to spread imagery that gives voice to marginalized groups and brings injustices to light.

Artists in the exhibition include Francisco de Goya, William Hogarth, Pablo Picasso, Lewis Hine, Diego Rivera, the Guerrilla Girls, Kara Walker, Alison Saar, Glenn Ligon, Sabra Field, and Mildred Beltré, among others. Their subjects range from racial violence, to state oppression, to the underrepresentation of women in the art world, and more.

The show’s student curators write: “In investigating these issues, we will encounter some controversial and distressing images and ideas, but we must not shrink from them. As citizens of this messy world, we have a duty to address our past, ugly as it might be, and use what we learn to shape a better future for ourselves and those who succeed us.”

An exciting schedule of [programs and events](#) accompanies the exhibitions on view at the Museum this winter and spring, including a festive opening reception on Friday, September 27. Tours of the exhibitions will be offered starting at 4:30pm; followed by the reception with hors d’oeuvres and cash bar from 5:30 to 7:00 pm.

A multi-day symposium exploring activism in comics will start on Wednesday, October 2 with a talk by celebrated Vermont graphic novelist Alison Bechdel at the UVM Davis Center. A comics workshop follows on Friday, October 4 at Billings Library and a series of talks at the Fleming Museum occur throughout the day on Saturday, October 5. Congressman John Lewis closes the symposium with a talk on his transformative and award-winning graphic novels, *The March Trilogy*, at the Flynn Center on Monday, October 7.

The University of Vermont’s Fleming Museum of Art serves as a gateway for active cultural exchange and critical thinking and has presented diverse artistic traditions for over 85 years. The Museum is Vermont’s premier public showplace for exhibitions, education, and scholarship about local and world cultures, both historical and contemporary. For more information regarding the Fleming Museum’s [exhibitions](#), [programs](#), and [location](#) call (802) 656-0750 or go to the Fleming Museum website at www.flemingmuseum.org.



Mildred Beltré (American, born 1969), *I Would Not Help My Keepers*, 2016. Cotton and human hair. Courtesy of the Artist.