

# **TORRANCE ART MUSEUM**

## **VOLUNTEER EDUCATION SERIES** **Art 21 // Art in the Twenty-First Century**

Screening #4:

Season 1 // Identity

Thursday, July 7, 2016 @ 3 – 5pm

Refreshments will be served



How does contemporary art address the idea of identity?

How do artists working today reveal and question commonly held assumptions about stereotypes, self-awareness, portraiture, and what it means to be an artist?

The "Art in the Twenty-First Century" documentary "Identity" explores these questions through the work of the artists **WILLIAM WEGMAN, BRUCE NAUMAN, KERRY JAMES MARSHALL, MAYA LIN, and LOUISE BOURGEOIS.**

**Please R.S.V.P. with:**

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## **MORE ON THE ARTISTS:**

### **WILLIAM WEGMAN**

William Wegman was born in Holyoke, Massachusetts, in 1943. He graduated from the Massachusetts College of Art in 1965 with a BFA in painting, then enrolled in the graduate painting and printmaking program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, receiving an MFA in 1967. After teaching at various universities, Wegman's interests in areas beyond painting led him to photography and the then-infant medium of video. While living in Long Beach, California, Wegman acquired Man Ray, the dog with whom he began a fruitful twelve-year collaboration. A central figure in Wegman's photography and videos, Man Ray became known in the art world and beyond for his endearing, deadpan presence. In 1972, Wegman and Man Ray moved to New York. In 1986, a new dog, Fay Ray, came into Wegman's life; and soon thereafter another famous collaboration began, marked by Wegman's use of the Polaroid 20-by-24-inch camera. With the birth of Fay's litter in 1989 and her daughter's litter in 1995, Wegman's cast of characters grew.

### **BRUCE NAUMAN**

Born in 1941 in Fort Wayne, Indiana, Bruce Nauman has been recognized since the early 1970s as one of the most innovative and provocative of America's contemporary artists. Nauman finds inspiration in the activities, speech, and materials of everyday life. He graduated with a BFA from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, in 1964, and with an MFA from the University of California, Davis, in 1966. Confronted with the question "What to do?" in his studio soon after leaving school, Nauman had the simple but profound realization that "If I was an artist and I was in the studio, then whatever I was doing in the studio must be art. At this point art became more of an activity and less of a product." Working in the diverse mediums of sculpture, video, film, printmaking, performance, and installation, Nauman concentrates less on the development of a characteristic style and more on the way in which a process or activity can transform or become a work of art. A survey of his diverse output demonstrates the alternately political, prosaic, spiritual, and crass methods by which Nauman examines life in all its gory details, mapping the human arc between life and death. The text from an early neon work proclaims: "The true artist helps the world by revealing mystic truths." Whether or not we—or even Nauman—agree with this statement, the underlying subtext of the piece emphasizes the way in which the audience, artist, and culture at large are involved in the resonance a work of art will ultimately have.

### **KERRY JAMES MARSHALL**

The subject matter of his paintings, installations, and public projects is often drawn from African-American popular culture, and is rooted in the geography of his upbringing: "You can't be born in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1955 and grow up in South Central [Los Angeles] near the Black Panthers headquarters, and not feel like you've got some kind of social responsibility. You can't move to Watts in 1963 and not speak about it. That determined a lot of where my work was going to go," says Marshall. In his "Souvenir" series of paintings and sculptures, he pays tribute to the civil rights movement with mammoth printing stamps featuring bold slogans of the era ("Black Power!") and paintings of middle-class living rooms, where ordinary African-American citizens have become angels tending to a domestic order populated by the ghosts of Martin Luther King, Jr., John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, and other heroes of the 1960s. In "RYTHM MASTR," Marshall creates a comic book for the twenty-first century, pitting ancient African sculptures come to life against a cyberspace elite that risks losing touch with traditional culture. Marshall's work is based on a broad range of art-historical references, from Renaissance painting to black folk art, from El Greco to Charles White. A striking aspect of Marshall's paintings is the emphatically black skin tone of his figures—a development the artist says emerged from an investigation into the invisibility of blacks in America and the unnecessarily negative connotations associated with darkness. Marshall believes, "You still have to earn your audience's attention every time you make something." The sheer beauty of his work speaks to an art that is simultaneously formally rigorous and socially engaged.

### **MAYA LIN**

Born in 1959 in Athens, Ohio, Maya Lin catapulted into the public eye when, as a senior at Yale University, she submitted the winning design in a national competition for a Vietnam Veterans Memorial to be built in Washington, DC. She was trained as an artist and architect, and her sculptures, parks, monuments, and architectural projects are linked by her ideal of making a place for individuals within the landscape. Lin, a Chinese-American, came from a cultivated and artistic home: her father was the Dean of Fine Arts at Ohio University, and her mother is a Professor

of Literature at Ohio University. Lin remarks: “As the child of immigrants, you have that sense of ‘Where are you? Where’s home?’ And trying to make a home.” She draws inspiration for her sculpture and architecture from culturally diverse sources, including Japanese gardens, Hopewell Indian earthen mounds, and works by American earthworks artists of the 1960s and 1970s.

### ***LOUISE BOURGEOIS***

Louise Bourgeois was born in Paris in 1911. She studied art at various schools there, including the Ecole du Louvre, Académie des Beaux-Arts, Académie Julian, and Atelier Fernand Léger. In 1938, she immigrated to the United States and continued her studies at the Art Students League in New York. Though her beginnings were as an engraver and painter, by the 1940s she had turned her attention to sculptural work, for which she is now recognized as a twentieth-century leader. Greatly influenced by the influx of European Surrealist artists who immigrated to the United States after World War II, Bourgeois’s early sculpture was composed of groupings of abstract and organic shapes, often carved from wood. By the 1960s, she began to execute her work in rubber, bronze, and stone, and the pieces themselves became larger and more referential to what has become the dominant theme of her work: her childhood. She has famously stated, “My childhood has never lost its magic, it has never lost its mystery, and it has never lost its drama.” Deeply symbolic, her work uses her relationship with her parents and the role sexuality played in her early family life as a vocabulary in which to understand and remake that history. The anthropomorphic shapes her pieces take—the female and male bodies are continually referenced and remade—are charged with sexuality and innocence and the interplay between the two.