



Vik Muniz *The Reader, after Fragonard (from Pictures of Chocolate)*, 2002, Cibachrome, Collection of Meredith and Brother Rutter | Art © Vik Muniz
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SPRING 2014

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Vik Muniz: Poetics of Perception

New Waves 2014

Havets Sanger / The Songs of the Sea

Waste Land

ARTlab



VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

IDEAS FOR ENJOYING THE GALLERIES

Try this looking guide for the young, and young-at-heart, museum visitor.

START WITH LOOKING

Most works of art do not reveal themselves in just a glance. Try “reading” the work. Find a point that captures your eye and then move your gaze across and around the work. Try looking from different places (near or far, standing vs. sitting). You’ll be surprised by what you can learn just by looking.

Parents: You can help model looking by verbalizing where your eyes are moving to and why.

ENCOURAGE QUESTIONS

Whether visiting with a youngster, friend, or by yourself, it’s important to recognize the questions that surface. What are some types of questions you might consider? Try these as you look:

- Is there a story? What is it?
- What feeling does this work project?
- Is there a message or symbolism?
- Do you get a sense of time or place?

Parents: You can incorporate counting, word choice and the 5 senses into your discussion. Try asking:

- How many ___ do you see?
- What 3 words describe what’s happening?
- How would this color taste?
- What might this feel like if you could touch it?

TRY ACTIVE LOOKING

Imagine you are inside the work of art. Where would you explore? Try standing like something or someone in the piece. You can also make a tiny telescope with your hand (make a circle with your thumb and fingers and look through it). This will help you find details and focus your looking.

Parents: This is a great way to make looking fun. Play “I Spy.” Choose an artwork with lots of details and describe a section to your child. Have them guess where it is. Reverse roles and enjoy!

WHEN YOU’VE TRIED IT ALL, THEN READ

Resist the urge to start with the wall label, and trust your looking. After you’ve shared your questions and interpretations, compare your ideas to the wall label. Often, there is additional information you may not have gained just by looking - but you’ll be surprised how much you learned on your own.

Parents: This is a great opportunity to impart lifelong skills, such as reading and writing. Look for new words and read together!





Vik Muniz Pictures of Garbage Portfolio, *The Gypsy (Magna)*, 2008-11, Chromogenic print, Private Collection, New York Art © Vik Muniz | Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY

VIK MUNIZ: Poetics of Perception

Vik Muniz is a master of metamorphoses. He presents familiar yet startling reconstructions combining drawing, sculpture, and photography. Over twenty years, this Brazilian-born artist has gained international renown for masterfully creating reproductions from the canons of art history and the archives of popular culture. His reconstructions are created from nontraditional materials such as soil, chocolate syrup, magazine clippings, industrial refuse, garbage, and diamonds. Muniz successfully juggles both the function and meaning of the materials, so that there is an interplay between the two. Viewers may delight in the ingenuity of the constructed image, and delve into deciphering the layers of meaning.

Muniz also has an abiding interest in perception – how we see and process visual information, and how this awareness is linked to the poetics of language. This fascination developed, in part, because of how he learned to read. As a preschooler he received hours of instruction from his grandmother, who loved books, but was self-taught, having little formal education. Rather than reading phonetically, she taught him to memorize words as complete visual symbols. He recounts how she would place his finger on words spelling the exotic names of snakes native to Brazil, reciting them like an incantation, so that his bright and pliable mind would record the complex squiggles comprising the word. Muniz entered school as a precocious reader, but one with self-imposed dyslexia, as he had no understanding of the phonetic coding of words, or how to write what he could so easily perceive. As he struggled to learn in a more conventional manner, out of necessity, Muniz started to draw as a means to communicate through pictures. By age 14, he won a competition and a scholarship to study drawing at an academy in the evenings. For three years he honed his powerful draftsmanship skills, memorized the world's famous paintings through their reproduction in books, and digested scientific research regarding vision and perception.

His first profession was in advertising, but after moving to the US in the 1980s, he began to make sculptures. Eventually, he found the medium of photography to be most satisfying because he could capture the ideal image of the sculptural objects and drawings he created.

When photography was first developed, it was valued for portraying the visual truth. In the early 20th century, Alfred Steiglitz explored photography's potential for conveying emotion by creating a series of pensive photographs of clouds, which were meant to

free the subject matter from literal interpretation. This series, *Equivalents*, is considered one of the first abstract works of art. Inspired by the *Equivalents* on view at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in 1995, Muniz created a simulacrum of it by photographing the marble floors of MoMA, using simple props—painted coins and paper—thereby transforming solid marble to resemble the sky and fleeting clouds.

By contrast, the *Pictures of Chocolate* series is created with speed and precision using viscous chocolate syrup. Muniz recreates the famous Hans Namuth photograph of Jackson Pollack making a drip painting. Notably there are parallels between the



Vik Muniz, *Haystacks*, (after Claude Monet), from *Pictures of Color*, 2001. Dye destruction (vibachrome) print. Edition 1/10, Podesta Collection. Art © Vik Muniz | Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY

performance of Jackson's painting process and Muniz's reinterpretation. Jean-Honoré Fragonard's *The Reader*, an 18th century portrait of a young woman reading a portable novel, is also recreated in chocolate. The bravura of Fragonard's brushstrokes is mimicked by Muniz's deft markings on white Plexiglas.

In 2001, Muniz was invited to represent Brazil in the Venice Biennale where he exhibited the *Pictures of Color* series. Utilizing thousands of Pantone color swatches, Muniz creates the appearance of digitized images of known works of art. Among the series is an interpretation of Claude Monet's famous 19th century *Haystack*, which is a study of the effects of light and atmosphere on forms. Muniz likens the pixels in digital photography to Monet's impressionist brushstrokes.

Given access to thousands of diamonds, Muniz created dazzling portraits of Hollywood's silver screen divas: Marilyn Monroe, Elizabeth Taylor, Grace Kelly, Bette Davis, and Marlene Dietrich. He tested the "degree of interference between the overkill glamour of the stars themselves and that of shiny rocks."¹ These mesmerizing portraits of some of the 20th century's most celebrated actresses seem to cast a glittering, eternal afterimage.

The images of the divas, as well as his photographs constructed from a confetti-like collage of magazine clippings, hint at Muniz's interests in the media. His recreation of Paul Gauguin's *Still Life with Puppies* recreates the strange perspective of the original, as the tabletop is turned on a vertical axis to reveal puppies dining amidst goblets and fruit. Another photograph



Vik Muniz, *Elizabeth Taylor* (from *Pictures of Diamonds*), 2004, Chromogenic print, Courtesy of Fern and Lowell Kwiat | Art © Vik Muniz | Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY

from this series is an interpretation of George Stubbs's portrait of the exotic zebra Queen Charlotte received as a gift. Muniz emphasizes the celebrity and displacement of the zebra, having survived the long boat journey from the mountains of the Cape of Good Hope to reside in the gardens of Buckingham Palace.

Working in a variety of scales—from the minute to the monumental—is also an essential component of Muniz's repertoire. Three of his series, *Pictures of Earthwork*, *Pictures of Junk*, and *Pictures of Garbage*, are much larger than life in their original iteration. Inspired by Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty*, Muniz creates his own humorous land sculptures of a pointing finger, an eye, a target, and a keyhole. By working with engineers and heavy equipment, he excavates and shapes tons of earth to create these massive images, which are photographed from a helicopter. For *Pictures of Junk*, Muniz orchestrates a tangle of objects on the floor of his massive warehouse so that chaos morphs into recognizable images of gods and goddesses from Greek mythology. To create *Pictures of Garbage*, Muniz collaborated with a number of workers who earn



Vik Muniz, *Medusa, after Caravaggio (Pictures of Junk)*, 2009
Digital chromogenic print, Courtesy of Rafael Fogel
Art © Vik Muniz | Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY

a meager wage by hand-picking recyclable materials from the dangerous, mountain of garbage in South America's largest landfill. They assisted by gathering the materials, helping select images that would be created, and arranging the objects in the studio comprising their portraits. Muniz was profoundly affected by the collaboration—"the experience with art transformed their lives and mine in the process."² A master of metamorphosis, Muniz wholly engages with the materials he arranges and transforms. The forgotten and discarded, the mundane and the marginalized, are transformed into poetic objects of beauty and contemplation.

Carla M. Hanzal
Independent Curator, Charlotte, NC

Vik Muniz: Poetics of Perception is organized by Virginia MOCA and guest curated by Carla M. Hanzal. Sincere thanks to the following for their assistance in realizing this exhibition:

VIK MUNIZ
VIK MUNIZ STUDIO: ERIKA BENINCASA & DILLON DEWATERS
SIKKEMA JENKINS & CO.: MEG MALLOY
FERN & LOWELL KWIAT
TONY PODESTA
MEREDITH & BROTHER RUTTER
AUSTIN H. RUTTER

ENDNOTES

¹Vik Muniz, "The Art of Selling What Is Not for Sale" in *Reflex: A Vik Muniz Primer* (New York: Aperture, 2005) p. 97.

²Vik Muniz, October 31, 2011. Conversation between Vik Muniz, Rio de Janeiro and Eric Mézil, Avignon" in *Le Musée Imaginaire* (Arles: Actes Sud), p. 87.

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WEATHERSPOON ART MUSEUM: NANCY DOLL, ELAINE GUSTAFSON, XANDRA EDEN & HEATHER MOORE
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KAIA BLACK

NEW WAVES 2014

The Virginia Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) is pleased to present its annual juried exhibition, *New Waves 2014*. 239 artists from across Virginia submitted work and proved, yet again, that the Commonwealth contains a rich and vast array of artistic talent. This exciting exhibition demonstrates the diversity of materials and approaches that are used in contemporary art today.

About the juror: Charles L. Moffett joined Sotheby's in 2013 after spending two years working for an art advisory group with offices in Los Angeles and New York. He graduated from Occidental College with a degree in Art History in 2007 and received his Master's Degree in Curatorial Practice from California College of the Arts in 2011. He is presently the Head of Afternoon Sale in the Contemporary Art department at Sotheby's maintaining key client relationships throughout North America and Europe, securing consignments for auction, as well as private sales.



Ying-Fang Shen, *Humanexus*, 2013



Pat Jarrett, *Legacy*, 2013



John Tobin Jr., *Blue Rabbit Ride*, 2012



Kate Negri, *Think. No Evil.*, 2013

ACCEPTED ARTISTS:

MARK EDWARD ATKINSON (VIRGINIA BEACH)

JONATHAN AUMEN (NORFOLK)

NATHAN BOOR (VIRGINIA BEACH)

JESSICA BRAUN (ARLINGTON)

SUSAN WILLIS BRODIE (CHARLOTTESVILLE)

CHRISTIANA CARO (NORFOLK)

TRAVIS CHILDERS (FAIRFAX)

CAREY COLEMAN (WAVERLY)

NAOMI J. FALK (WILLIAMSBURG)

MARISA FINOS (RICHMOND)

DAVID GARRATT (AMHERST)

JEANNE GOODMAN (NORFOLK)

MARK ISAAC (ALEXANDRIA)

PAT JARRETT (STAUNTON)

EMMA KNIGHT (RICHMOND)

KATE NEGRI (NORFOLK)

SETSUÉ PUTNEY (NORFOLK)

HANS SAUNDERS (WILLIAMSBURG)

YING-FANG SHEN (RICHMOND)

ALAN SKEES (HAMPTON)

JESSICA SHEEHAN SMITH (KESWICK)

ERIC STANDLEY (BLACKSBURG)

JEFFREY STOCKBERGER (PORT REPUBLIC)

JOHN TOBIN, JR. (CHESAPEAKE)

SUE VON OHLSEN (CHESAPEAKE)

JENNY WINDSOR (VIRGINIA BEACH)

JIHYUNG YOON (RICHMOND)

MOCA would like to thank Charles L. Moffett and all of the artists who submitted entries to New Waves 2014. Continued support from regional artists and art professionals allows MOCA to uphold its commitment to support contemporary artists who work in all media. MOCA is proud of the lasting New Waves tradition and we hope you will be pleased with this year's selection.

- Organized by Heather Hakimzadeh, Curator



Lana Stephens, Vid Havet, *By the Sea*, 2013

COMMUNITY GALLERY **HAVETS SÅNGER / Songs of the Sea**

Artist Lana Stephens and opera singer, musician and composer Simon Petersson first met on their way to an opera festival in Verona, Italy. A collaborative art and music project was the result of their chance meeting. Created during a residency in Sweden during the summer of 2013, the exhibition is strongly influenced by the landscape there. Visitors can experience 10 songs by Petersson with corresponding charcoal drawings by Stephens. Metaphorically expressed through references to nature, Petersson's music is emotive and hauntingly beautiful. Stephens' charcoal drawings are

expressive and dream-like, oscillating between reality and fantasy. The tonal overlap and stylistic similarities are evident. This unique project connected art forms, cultures, and languages as these two artists came together in the creative process.

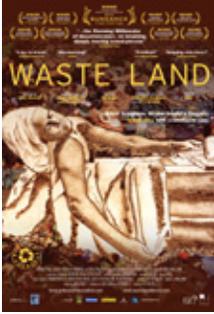
[Credits: Simon Petersson, Composition, Voice, Poems. Lee-Jordan Anders, Piano. Mixed and recorded by Washburn Mastering LLC. Translation, Lana Stephens.](#)

ARTlab

Explore our interactive gallery, complete with hands-on activities, reading materials, and videos for connecting with art. Learn about current exhibiting artist Vik Muniz, his artistic process and works in the exhibition, or become an artist yourself!



PRICE AUDITORIUM **WASTE LAND** (99 minutes)



Filmed over nearly three years, **WASTE LAND** follows renowned artist Vik Muniz as he journeys from his home base in Brooklyn to his native Brazil and the world's largest garbage dump, Jardim Gramacho, located on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro. There he photographs an eclectic band of “catadores”—self-designated pickers of recyclable materials. His collaboration with these inspiring characters as they recreate photographic images of themselves out of garbage reveals both the dignity and despair of the catadores as they begin to re-imagine their lives. **Waste Land** will be screened daily in Price Auditorium and is free with admission to the museum.

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