the perceptual states of distraction and contemplation, respectively; Weist's project suggests that we might now distinguish between circulation and exhibition as modes of dispersion and concentration.

Weist holds degrees in both art and library science. Unsurprisingly, then, her approach to exhibiting recalls Sol LeWitt's old adage that the serial artist "functions merely as a clerk cataloguing the results of his [*sic*] premise." The original vinyl billboard lay on a plinth, folded to an eighth of its full size. On a nearby wall, an LED spotlight flashed on whenever anyone accessed Weist's web page. Along with this real-time registration of online activity, Weist displayed an archive of images culled from websites where *parbunkells* appeared, as well as samples of (still available!) *parbunkells*-themed merchandise. The most surprising of these various ready-made "results" was a plaque from the Outdoor Advertising Association of America, which honored *Reach* alongside campaigns for American Airlines and the movie *Minions*. On wireless headphones that served, however parodically, as the exhibition's audio guide, you could hear a judge praise Weist's use of "the medium"—an overlap of advertising jargon and modernist dicta. Someone like Thomas Crow would lament Weist's award as evidence of the avant-garde providing R&D to the culture industry. (Indeed, *Adweek* expressed keen interest in obtaining Weist's analytics.) Someone like Price might mourn Weist's decision to reel *Reach* back into art. Both would have a point, but neither is the full story. It's knotty.

—Colby Chamberlain

"Looking Back: The 10th White Columns Annual"

WHITE COLUMNS

Yesterday's Newspaper, 2007, by Dave McKenzie, is just what its title announces: a folded issue of a day-old local paper resting on a low wooden platform. The piece provides a pause, a reminder of the headlines that earned our brief attention, one step out of sync with the nonstop twenty-four-hour news cycle. But it also repeats the pitiable fate of those above-the-fold stories: discarded one day past relevance, the paper on the pedestal must continually give way to time: another day, another yesterday. McKenzie's piece, which appeared at the forefront of the White Columns Annual, also served as compelling shorthand for the exhibition as a whole. Each year, the venerable nonprofit asks an artist, writer, curator, or collective to create a show from artworks of the previous season. The slim constraints—the works are meant to have been shown in New York in the year prior but can be from galleries, art fairs, studios—give the Annual a sense of critical urgency, a last-chance-before-it's-gone excitement, but it also means that the show can be burdened with the slightly exclusionary feel of an insider's club.

For the tenth anniversary of the exhibition, artist and White Columns director and chief curator Matthew Higgs chose works by twenty-five artists. True to his other prolific curatorial concerns, Higgs grouped the work of hot up-and-comers (Justin Adian's Flavin-like corner piece of painted foam, Bill Jenkins's thirty-nine-minute video of the street taken from a shopping cart) with that of more established outsider artists (Christopher Knowles's stunning typings *Lamp* and *Eight Ladders*, both 1985–86, with their grids of red and black typed *c*'s and, in a pairing that was a high point of the exhibition, Birdie Lusch's rough-hewn "fork, spoon, and knife holders") and that of artists with mental and developmental disabilities who work with nonprofits such as Healing Arts Initiative and Creative Growth (Alyson Vega's bleak fabric pieces; William Scott's wholesome reimagining of the globe as an *Inner Skyline*

Dave McKenzie, *Yesterday's Newspaper*, 2007, day-old newspaper, wood, 2¼ × 20½ × 17¼".

Opportunity Space for Peace Celebrating, 2014). The hang was refreshingly straightforward: McKenzie's paper, Jenkins's video, and Susan Cianciolo's accessories kit were on the floor, and almost everything else was placed at a comfortable eye level. Works on paper and small-scale sizes prevailed.

Higgs's preferences for the intimate, the bricolaged, and the unpolished opened up a welcome space for humor. Three of the most conceptually grounded works doubled as the funniest: Rainer Ganahl's series of photos from the Whitney Museum symposium "The Koons Effect Part 1" (part of his ongoing "S/L" series, 1995–) juxtaposes a wan group of panelists with the exuberance of projected images of Koons's shiny toys (along with the giddiness of a smiling Jeffrey Deitch in the audience); Mieko Meguro's sparse oil-and-pencil paintings of "world traveler Dan Graham having a rest" at various hotels have a Warholian paint-by-numbers flare perverted by a low vantage point that makes Graham's feet assume epic proportions; and Vaginal Davis's *Flirtation Walk (The Ho Stroll)*, 2015, is a suite of eighteen publicity photos and production stills and nine text-based sheets that "out" several famous stars (Frankie Avalon, Tommy Kirk) as Hollywood hustlers.

The White Columns Annual gives us a glimpse into someone else's navigation of the art world, and tells us more about a particular curator's taste than it does about current art trends. But the *New York Times* isn't objective either, and the show, like yesterday's paper, gives us a chance to catch our breath and reflect, even if the effect is fleeting.

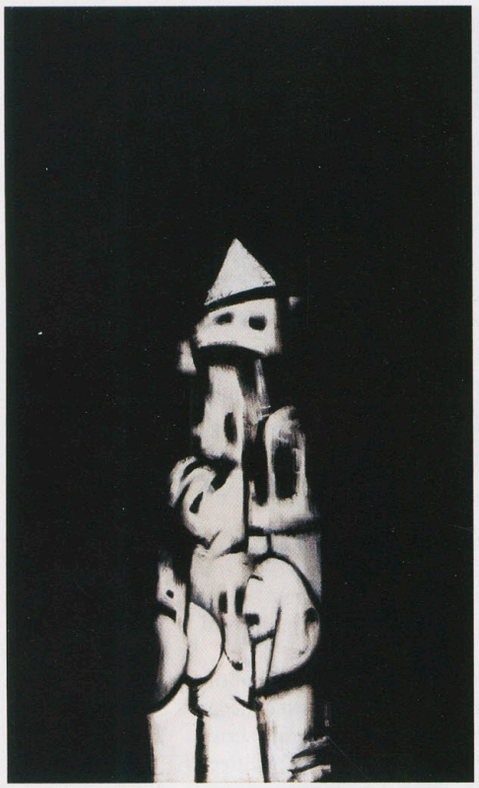
—Rachel Churner

PHILADELPHIA

Norman Lewis

PENNSYLVANIA ACADEMY OF THE FINE ARTS

"Procession: The Art of Norman Lewis" is the first comprehensive museum retrospective of the work of the noted African American modernist. Curated by Ruth Fine, the exhibition, organized according to six chronological themes, brings together ninety-five paintings and works on paper spanning five decades. Lewis's earliest works demonstrate an observational social realism that focused on the denizens and street life of Harlem, where the artist lived and worked for most of his life. Experiments with Cubist fragmentation and Surrealist automatism led him to gradually decouple line from color, using both in a less disciplined and descriptive and more lyrical and expressive manner. By the mid-1940s, Lewis's subjects had begun to disintegrate into flat



Norman Lewis, *American Totem*, 1960, oil on canvas, 74 × 45".

compositions of restless lines, incidental shapes, and unruly colors, driven by the impulsive improvisations of jazz. In *Roller Coaster*, 1946—a small watercolor, ink, and crayon work on board—a dense snarl of frenzied abstract black lines interwoven with shades of red, yellow, and gray push up against the edges of the frame, conveying the sensations of a rollicking fairground ride.

Lewis was heavily influenced by nature, and much of his work from the 1950s and '60s supplants movement with mood and atmosphere. Washes of almost monochromatic oil blur the edges of the linear subjects of these studies, enveloping them in sublime, foggy grounds. Yet Lewis was simultaneously fascinated with the ways in which collectivities gathered and moved through urban space, and he translated the energy of such celebrations and processions into compositions populated with what he called "little people," cipher-like marks, sometimes definitively figurative, other times more abstract, almost calligraphic. These marks congregate in snaking lines, loose circles, and amorphous groupings, all floating in fields of nebulous color. Lewis was the son of West Indian immigrants, and the annual Caribbean Labor Day festival and other similar rituals of community were important inspirations for his work during this period.

As the call for racial equality became more urgent in the 1960s, Lewis adapted this visual language to represent political gatherings on both sides of the battle—from civil rights marches to Ku Klux Klan rallies. Although he insisted that his work was first and foremost informed by aesthetic concerns, paintings like *American Totem* and *Alabama*, both 1960, featuring pointedly reduced palettes of black and white, suggest an overt political engagement. In 1967, Lewis moved to a loft in downtown Manhattan, which allowed him to work on a larger scale, and the final group of paintings in this show, expansive in size and color, are triumphant. Familiar techniques and motifs reappear but seem to transcend representational concerns—both aesthetic and political—of the real world. In *Seachange*, 1975, an incandescent band of interlocking curves and discs charges out of an inky blue void, suggesting a churning that is both oceanic and cosmic.

Pitched between the Harlem Renaissance's imperative toward positive representations of "the Negro" and the mainstream postwar avant-garde's embrace of total abstraction, Lewis was alone among his black peers in committing, at least ideologically, to the latter and by 1950 was firmly part of the wider circle of Abstract Expressionists. Committing aesthetically seems to have been somewhat trickier. Spanning his long career, this exhibition reveals Lewis's many shifting styles; the weight of representation, always a heavier burden for a marginal/minority subject, seems to have continued to haunt his abstractions as he experimented with different strategies to syncretize his opposing interests. This formal eclecticism, an apparent lack of a signature, has been used by mainstream critics to casually dismiss the artist's considerable talent and achievement, relegating him to Abstract Expressionism's "second tier" and suggesting that his art-historical relevance is merely a consequence of his race. However, as art historian Ann Eden Gibson has argued, such eclecticism might indicate a structural lack of access, due to race, to the critical support needed to turn an aesthetic experiment into a canonical style (which Greenberg provided for Pollock). By presenting an expansive overview of Lewis's prodigious output, "Procession" forces us to look beyond Abstract Expressionism as the sole criterion for his canonization. That avant-garde moment turns out to have been just one of the many associations and allegiances the artist negotiated as a black man in the shifting political, cultural, and aesthetic terrain of twentieth-century America. This exhibition asks us, instead, to consider his rightful place in the broader canon of American art.

—*Murtaza Vali*

WASHINGTON, DC

Irving Penn

SMITHSONIAN AMERICAN ART MUSEUM

Over the course of seven decades, Irving Penn did much to dismantle what was once thought to be a rigid barricade between fine-art and commercial photography, setting a precedent of mobility among diverse photographic contexts. Along with his colleague Richard Avedon, Penn elevated fashion photography to the highest levels of aesthetic ambition and refinement (though his work has seemed, at times and to a newer generation, as the embodiment of the historical canon). His eye was promiscuous and restless. Although his sensibility was rooted in the still life, his work straddled many photographic genres—portraiture, street photography, fashion, and advertising—and by rejecting the protocols of photographic typologies, he created original hybrids and fusions within a still-segregated medium. That this body of work, patronized by the brilliant art director Alexander Liberman, would take shape within the pages of *Vogue*, a mass-market fashion publication, made it all the more remarkable.

"Beyond Beauty," organized by guest curator Merry Foresta, provided a graceful overview of Penn's protean career. The exhibition's offerings were culled from the museum's permanent collection, recently bolstered by a donation of one hundred works from the Irving Penn Foundation. Consisting of 146 prints that spanned the range of Penn's durable career, "Beyond Beauty" proposed some canny relationships between diversely motivated images, and effectively chronicled an aesthetic inquiry that permitted itself a broad range of manifestations characterized by a mood of contemplative elegance and formal invention.

Irving Penn, *Sitting Enga Woman*, 1970, platinum-palladium print, 19⅝ × 19⅜".

One of the exhibition's revelations was an ample selection of Penn's lesser-known early street photography realized between 1937 and 1946. Made on excursions through the American South and war-ravaged Europe, these images disclosed the unexpected origins of Penn's vision. His interest in the vernacular of silhouetted objects (rooted in a preliterate culture) and shadow was likewise evident in the photographer's later use of shape and form as descriptive tools. These early pictures also evidence influences as diverse as Surrealist photography and the work of fin-de-siècle photographer Eugène Atget, as well as Penn's early affection for the random