

FEATURE - 29 SEP 2016

# Pioneers and Rebels

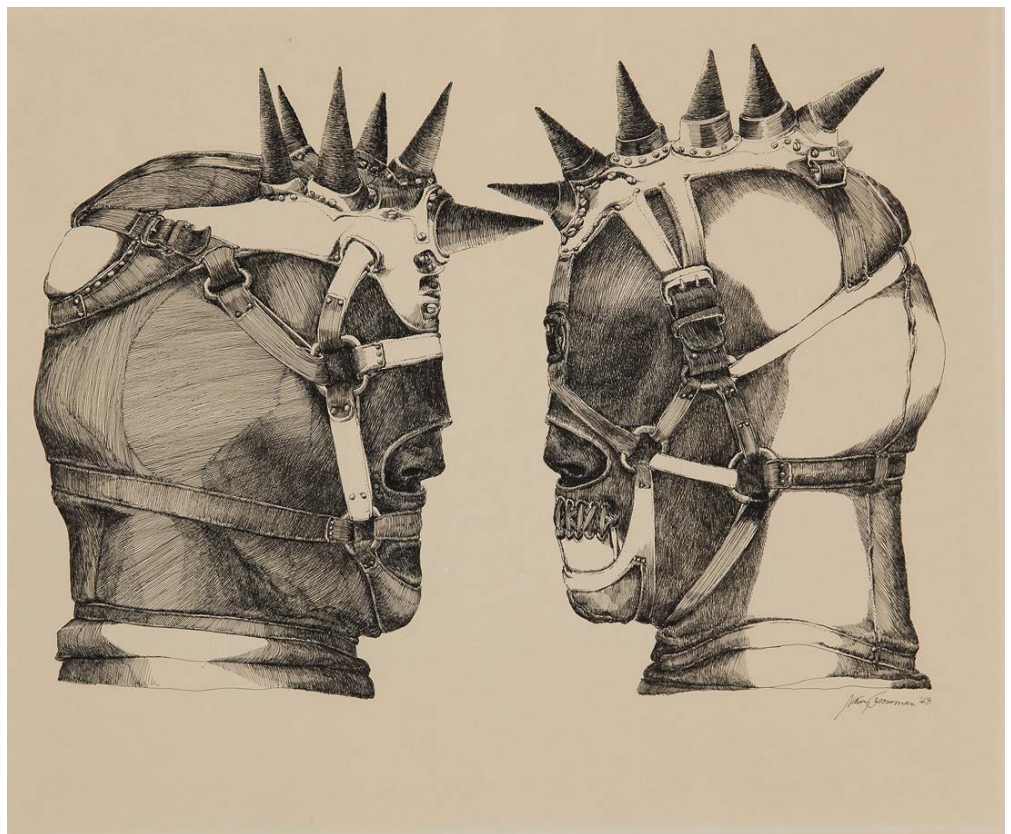
From feminism to cosmic order, Menil Collection curator Toby Kamps discusses the prevalent themes of *Spotlight*

I hope the experience of strolling through *Spotlight* is like an ideal art day in some faraway city, where visits to museums and galleries are filled with new discoveries.

With 21 galleries, each presenting a focused body of work by a 20th-century artist, the section aims to introduce the work of artists who, for reasons of

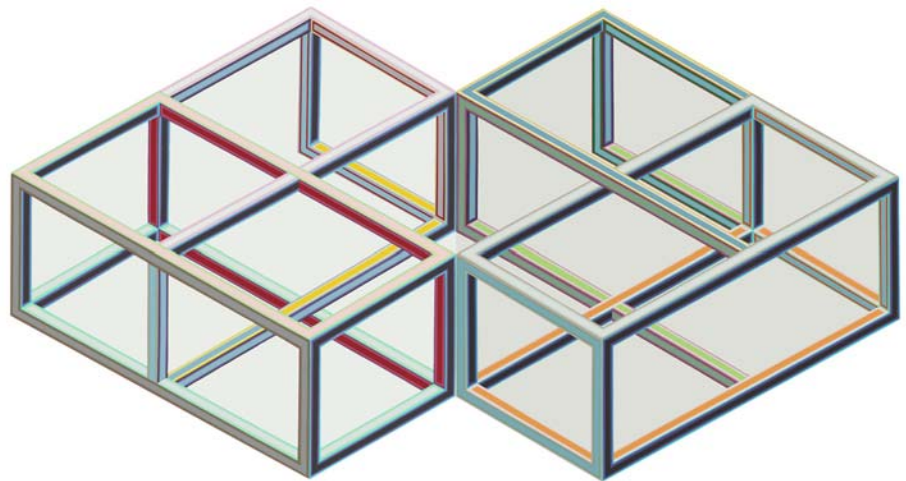
geography, gender, or cultural bias, have not received proper attention, or to reveal a little-known side of an prominent figure's career. There's an open call for applications, and a recruitment process: but ultimately projects are chosen because the works resonate with contemporary concerns, or ask us to reconsider the familiar narratives of recent art.

This year in London, several general themes have emerged. Fresh perspectives on feminist art from all over the world fill the section. The late Indian textile and ceramic artist Mrinalini Mukerjee (**Jhaveri Contemporary, H16** <<https://frieze.com/gallery/jhaveri-contemporary>> ) created voluptuous woven sculptures that vibrate with outrageous bodily energies. French painter, photographer, performance artist Françoise Janicot (**espaivisor, G9** <<https://frieze.com/gallery/espaivisor>> ) pushes for equal rights for women by harnessing many of the tactics of the May 1968 student uprising. The paintings of Joan Semmel (**Alexander Gray Associates, H9** <<https://frieze.com/gallery/alexander-gray-associates>> ), the assemblages of artist Nancy Grossman (**Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, G23** <<https://frieze.com/gallery/michael-rosenfeld-gallery>> ), and the earthworks of Michelle Stuart (**Parafin, H12** <<https://frieze.com/gallery/parafin>> ) - all Americans - push boldly into stereotypically male domains of libido and power and scale. Meanwhile, the paintings and drawings of the Austrian Martha Jungwirth (**Galerie Krinzinger, H6** <<https://frieze.com/gallery/galerie-krinzinger>> ) and the Italian pioneer Carol Rama (**Galerie Isabella Bortolozzi, H15** <<https://frieze.com/gallery/galerie-isabella-bortolozzi>> ) tap into wild forces existing only within themselves.



Nancy Grossman, *Two Heads* (1968). Courtesy the artist and Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, New York.

Minimalism and postminimalism in their global dimension are also explored. Al Loving, who in 1969 was the first African-American artist to have a solo exhibition at the Whitney Museum, made geometric images on shaped canvases, testing concepts of flatness and depth (**Garth Greenan Gallery, G16** <<https://frieze.com/gallery/garth-greenan-gallery>> ); the Swiss sculptor Heidi Bucher employed latex, cast from domestic architecture, to make eccentric, oftentimes biomorphic three-dimensional works unusually redolent with lived experience (**Freymond-Guth Fine Arts, G18** <<https://frieze.com/gallery/freymond-guth-fine-arts>> ). Masaaki Yamada, a Japanese painter, eschewed received ideas of stylistic evolution, creating a unique, heartfelt form of reductive abstraction (**Vigo, G20** <<https://frieze.com/gallery/vigo>> ).



Al Loving, *Untitled* (1969). Courtesy: the Estate of Al Loving and Garth Greenan, New York.

A quest for deeper orders runs further through the section, with artists exploring profound structures in human and natural life. Dora Maurer's simple yet profound use of photography rigorously explores being in space (**Vintage, G15** <<https://frieze.com/gallery/vintage-galeria>> ), while Terry Fox's (**Anglim Gilbert Gallery, H14** <<https://frieze.com/gallery/anglim-gilbert-gallery>> ) investigations of everyday phenomena and energies included an eight year cycle of works inspired by the form of the labyrinth in Chartres Cathedral. Li Yuan Chia – born in China in 1929, but who eventually opened an art gallery on Hadrian's Wall – searches in his delicate works for a cosmic point (**Richard Saltoun, G16** <<https://frieze.com/gallery/richard-saltoun>> ); Wolfgang Paalen undertook a similarly global journey, from Vienna to Mexico, and is represented by his nuclear-age abstract cosmologies (**Gallery Wendi Norris, G12** <<https://frieze.com/gallery/gallery-wendi-norris>> ). There is a social dimension to this search for structure too: Italian conceptual photographer Franco Vaccari's collected countless images of everyday people at photo booths in train and bus stations (**P420, G21** <<https://frieze.com/gallery/p420>> ).





Franco Vaccari, *Photomatic d'Italia* (1973-74). Courtesy: the artist and P420.

Of course, while it can be tempting to create sweeping classifications, revisiting art history shows that pigeonholing individual artists is never a good idea. This year, I'm especially excited to see the quiet, mysterious work of Philadelphia sculptor Bill Walton (**Fleisher Ollman, G14**  [<https://frieze.com/gallery/fleisher-ollman>](https://frieze.com/gallery/fleisher-ollman) ), whose handmade objects are at once eerily familiar and strange, as well as the groundbreaking, brilliantly rebellious time-based works of Zhang Peili, widely regarded as the founding father of video art in China (**Boers-Li Gallery, H10**  [<https://frieze.com/gallery/boers-li-gallery>](https://frieze.com/gallery/boers-li-gallery) ).

These artists worked outside neat, existing categories — I hope that *Spotlight* will show how it's the pioneers, rebels, and brilliant outliers that move us to see and think in new ways.

The *Spotlight* section is at Frieze Masters, 6th - 10th October: tickets available now  [<https://frieze.com/article/tickets-sale-now>](https://frieze.com/article/tickets-sale-now)

