



## **Body Language: New Figurative Work from RAM's Collection**

January 18 – May 3, 2015

The figure is used to tell stories, to symbolize existence, and to represent the human condition. Featuring works new to RAM's collection, **Body Language** reflects our desire to study, analyze, and respond to the human body as form and content. Whether clay, fiber, or paint on canvas, the works included in this exhibition underscore the enduring artistic interest in the body as subject.

The figure has been represented in two and three dimensions as far back as records can be found. Classes based on the study of the human form and anatomy have long served as a basis for academic art training. While a body can be used to denote the human presence, emotions, mood, and actions—as well as function as a compositional element—modern artists have also sought to use it as a "site" for investigating social, cultural, and personal issues. As just one example, in the 1970s and 1980s, many artists were looking at how attitudes about women and their place in society could be understood by looking at how a female body was depicted. What differences were there between nude and clothed representations? How did the look of the body itself reflect social or cultural attitudes?

Reflecting a range of approaches to depicting the human form, **Body Language** includes both two- and three-dimensional full-body figures—nude and clothed—and fragments, such as a head or feet. The difference in methods and materials reflects the pervasive nature of the subject and the diversity of work in RAM's collection. The pieces included represent gifts from the last three years—works new to RAM, many of which have not been on display before.

RAM is pleased to present multiple works by two internationally-known artists, **Mimmo Paladino** and **Manuel Neri**. Both artists are associated with artistic movements that emphasize expressive gesture, line, surface, and color. Both investigate the figure as form and content. Their work is featured prominently to reflect their significant roles in contemporary art and as important artists new to RAM.

### **Manuel Neri (1930 – )**

Manuel Neri is known primarily for his life-size figurative sculptures in plaster, bronze, and marble, as well as for his association with the Bay Area Figurative movement during the 1950s and 1960s. Since 1972, Neri has worked with the same model, **Mary Julia**, creating drawings and plaster figures that merge contemporary sculptural concerns with classical forms. The anatomical skill of these works recalls the sculptures and drawings of **Auguste Rodin**, **Alberto Giacometti**, and **Edgar Degas**.

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Of his own work, Neri states:

*I would say that I did a U-turn in my art in 1955 when I saw my first child being born...It was a fantastic moment. I realized then that the female body has the magic. The male may have the power, but the female has the magic.*

Source: [www.artistsforum.com](http://www.artistsforum.com)

## Mimmo Paladino (1948 – )

Mimmo Paladino is an Italian sculptor, painter, printmaker, and draughtsman famous for his role in the revival of painting in the late 1970s. In the early 1970s, Paladino concentrated on drawing, developing much of the imagery that later appeared in his paintings. Having moved to Milan in 1977, Paladino executed monochrome paintings with found objects in blue, red, and yellow. By 1980, when Paladino was associated with the Transavantgarde artists **Francesco Clemente**, **Sandro Chia**, and **Enzo Cucchi**, he had developed his mature figurative style. Drawing on Etruscan, Roman, Egyptian, Christian, tribal, and modern art, Paladino created profoundly allegorical work.

Source: [www.waddingtoncustot.com](http://www.waddingtoncustot.com)

Four of the Paladino prints recently gifted to RAM, and on display in **Body Language**, are inspired by **James Joyce's Ulysses**. This connects Paladino to RAM's archive of works related to the writings of the famed twentieth-century author, several of which were featured in an exhibition here in 2012. Of his response to the Joyce work, Paladino has stated: "Ulysses has informed my work through a reading of fragments, looking back, from memory, unreachable, perhaps as Joyce himself imagined." His works do not directly represent specific moments or identities from Joyce's narrative.

Source:

[www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/paladino-wet-dream-p77084/text-catalogue-entry](http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/paladino-wet-dream-p77084/text-catalogue-entry)

Brief statements collected from various sources reflect the broad-ranging interests of other artists featured in both this exhibition and RAM's collection.

**Nancy Carman's** haunting ceramic pieces frequently contain white surrealistic figures in eerie settings...Carman calls herself "slightly superstitious" and believes that each of her pieces is the result of some event in her life, whether it is an experience or "simultaneous or even precognitive phenomena."

Source: <http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artwork/?id=76701>

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**Franz Gertsch** is considered one of the most important contemporary Swiss artists. With his hyper-realistic painting and his woodcuts—which are unique both in technique and size—he also acquired an outstanding reputation outside Switzerland. Between his international breakthrough at the **documenta 5** in Kassel in 1972, and the presentation of his works at the **Biennale** in Venice in 1999, a rich pictorial and graphic work emerged, which shows a very particular approach to reality.

Source: [http://rogallery.com/Gertsch\\_Franz/gertsch-biography.html](http://rogallery.com/Gertsch_Franz/gertsch-biography.html)

Of her work, **Cindy Hickok** states:

*I paint with thread. I "paint" each day, with thread as my medium, the needle as my paintbrush, the sewing machine an extension of arm...Many of my works are twists on much-loved paintings. We like to think that dolls in the toy store come out to dance at night when no one is present to watch; likewise, I like to think that figures from paintings step out of their backgrounds as well, when the museum is closed. I imagine what they might do—meet others in the cafeteria to enjoy a meal, unwind, or engage in conversation with their peers.*

Source: [www.cindyhickok.com](http://www.cindyhickok.com)

**Geo Lastomirsky** uses the human figure as a reference point for humanity relative to the greater natural landscape. Of this, he states:

*I am constantly struck by the sheer majesty of the natural world and the power it has over me. The monumentality I seek to build into my work is a reflection of the places of excruciating beauty I have visited. I have stood where nature is supreme and felt subordinate to it.*

Source: [www.orientaldiscovery.com/html/2012/01/201201161110007807.html](http://www.orientaldiscovery.com/html/2012/01/201201161110007807.html)

**Odd Nerdrum** is a Norwegian figurative painter. Themes and style in Nerdrum's work reference anecdote and narrative. Primary influences by the painters **Rembrandt Van Rijn** and **Caravaggio** help place his work in direct conflict with the abstraction and conceptual art considered acceptable in much of his native Norway. Nerdrum creates six to eight paintings a year that include still life paintings of small, everyday objects like bricks, portraits and self-portraits, and large paintings allegorical and apocalyptic in nature. Subjects of Nerdrum's paintings are often dressed as if from another time and place.

Source: [www.oddnerdrum.com](http://www.oddnerdrum.com)