

# Arts & Entertainment



Above: Jeroen Diepenmaat, *Pour des dents d'un blanc éclatant et saines*, 2005. Record players, vinyl records, taxidermied birds and sound. Dimensions variable. © Jeroen Diepenmaat. Image courtesy of the artist. Below: Christian Marclay, "Recycled Records" series (one of eight), 1983. Collaged vinyl records, 10 inches diameter. Image courtesy of the artist and Paula Cooper Gallery, New York.

## A new exhibit at ICA highlights the creative art of vinyl records

Susan Saccoccia

The primal forms of the circle and square in a vinyl record and an album cover draw artists like catnip, along with the music on the record and its world of memories and emotions, associations that artists can harness like so many ready-mades.

Unlike CDs and MP players, records have heft and presence. Even the covers of many albums are works of art, suggesting the transformative power of the music that ignites when needle strikes groove.

My own collection of albums is small but choice — and each is a landmark of a time in my life. Among my strongest childhood memories are my first records, turquoise 45-r.p.m. recordings of "The Teddy Bear's Picnic" and "I Wonder As I Wander" that I ceaselessly played on my small turntable — a wonder box.

The absorbing exhibition, "The Record: Contemporary Art and Vinyl," on view through Sept. 5 at the Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston, is a chamber of wonders. Like the 16th century European precursor of the art museum known as a wonder room, it is a mix of oddities and some first-rate art, an immersion into the vinyl record world that blends artistic complexity with the amateur's obsessive love of objects.

How else do you describe an exhibition in which a stuffed bird stands in for a turntable tone arm and a display shows circular buttons made from melted Billie Holiday records?

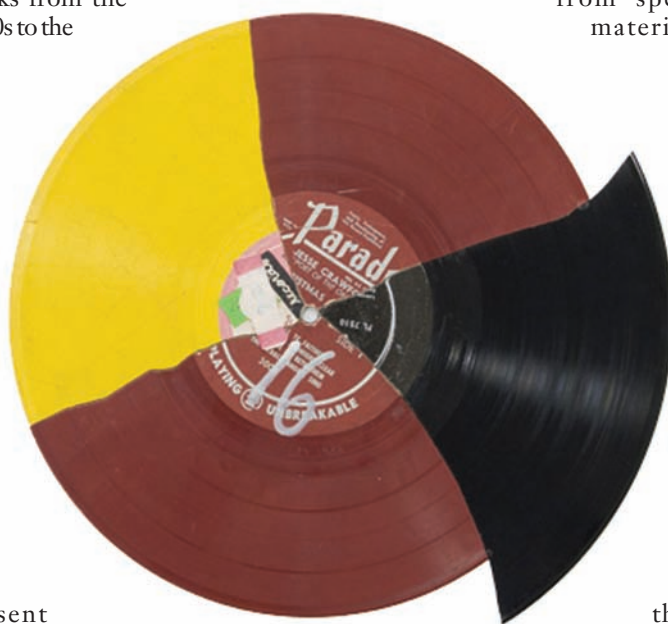
Organized by Trevor Schoonmaker, curator of Contemporary Art at the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, where the exhibi-

tion originated, and coordinated for the ICA by Senior Curator Jenelle Porter, "The Record" is the first museum exhibition to bring together contemporary works with records as their subject or medium.

Presenting 99 works from the 1960s to the

ists who first experienced records after their eclipse into artifacts. The strongest works explore the incantatory power of records to reincarnate the past into the present and future.

Few artists are as ardent at reclaiming life from spent materials



present — including sculpture, installation, drawing, photography and video — by 33 artists from around the world, the exhibition is accompanied by a terrific catalog that includes the artists' own commentaries as well as an audio guide and website ([www.nasher.duke.edu/thercord/index.php](http://www.nasher.duke.edu/thercord/index.php)).

Loosely arranged around themes in four galleries, the exhibition mingles small images by big-name artists who came of age in the 1960s such as Jasper Johns and Ed Ruscha with installations by much younger art-

ists than Dario Robleto of San Antonio, whose luminous tributes to record albums and Civil War widows were the high points of the group show "The Old Weird America," at the deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum in 2009.

Here, a vitrine displays the buttons Robleto crafted from hand-ground records of Billie Holiday, sewed onto thrift-store shirts that he repaired and returned to their place of origin; matches he coated with the powder from records of Patsy Cline, Hank Williams and others and left

on bars to enflame the cigarettes of courting couples; and a spool of thread from a record of Patsy Cline's "I Fall to Pieces."

Nearby in cool contrast is another small work that exudes power, Christian Marclay's glistening metallic sculpture, "Secret" (1988). A brass lock instead of a tone arm crosses the grooves of a silver-plated 45-r.p.m. record, as if to silence sound.

Commanding the gallery like a stage set is Satch Hoyt's "Celestial Vessel" (2009). Suspended from the

to three overlooked heroes: Bastidas, an 18th century martyr for Peruvian independence; Wilson, an African American music producer and Harvard graduate who during the 1960s helped launch the careers of Bob Dylan, the Velvet Underground and others; and Aquash, an American Indian Movement activist slain in 1975.

In the second gallery, album covers conjure social, cultural and personal stories. Brimming with verve, Malick Sidibé's spectacu-

*Even the covers of many albums are works of art, suggesting the transformative power of the music that ignites when needle strikes groove.*

ceiling, the life-size canoe is composed of red 45-r.p.m. records. Hoyt accompanies with a sound track of 17 musical passages that vary from a Franz Listz symphony and recordings of tribes in the Belgian Congo to excerpts from LPs by the Count Basie Orchestra and the Art Ensemble of Chicago. The installation evokes the barge that bears the Egyptian sun god, Ra, in his daily circumnavigation of the cosmos and the passage of slaves from Africa to America.

Its equally imposing neighbor is Peruvian William Cordova's 19' tall totem, entitled, "Greatest Hits (para Micaela Bastidas, Tom Wilson y Anna Mae Aquash)" (2008). The tower of 3,000 LPs is a monument

lar quartet of gelatin silver prints, photographed from 1967 through 1973, show young people in Mali in exuberant poses with their records and turntables.

A grid of photographs by Felipe Barbosa of Rio de Janeiro, "Autographs" (2008-09), evokes the stars of Tropicália, Brazil's liberating, African American inflected pop music that rose up the 1960s. His images show the covers of record albums signed by their owners.

Framed by paper flowers, Dario Robleto's meticulously constructed collage of fictional album covers satirizes religious fundamentalism and other American excesses.

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## Vinyl

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Equally well crafted is Peruvian Alice Wagner's "Serie Percusión" (2009). Recreating in fabric and thread five Modernist album covers designed by artists, her hand-made collages celebrate the joy of graphics as well as jazz.

Another spare, geometric riff on album covers is the pair of handsome, large-scale prints by Dave Muller. The spines of the albums create an image of long, primary color lines but the titles are also visible, conveying the musical tastes of his family.

Album covers become autobiography in the hands of outsider artist "Mingering Mike" of Washington, D.C. As a teenager in 1968, he began a decade-long fantasy career as soul superstar and producer by creating more than 50 cartoon-like album covers. Occupying two large vitrines, they humorously celebrate Motown and R&B and work in real life too, starting in 1970, when he became a draftee.

Carrie Mae Weems, renowned for stirring works that explore the complexities of race in America, pairs a gold record for civil rights with an imaginary album in "Ode to Affirmative Action" (1989). Photographed on the album cover, Weems casts herself as Dee Dee, a 1960s R&B singer. The album title, "Live

at The Copa" refers to the famed New York club that once banned black patrons and performers; and her invented record label, Clarksdale Records, is a nod to the Mississippi hometown of many legendary blues singers.

The apparatus of recording and playing LPs is explored in the third gallery, which showcases musician Laurie Anderson's iconic "Viophonograph" (1977), her hybrid of a violin and record player.

David McConnell's diverting "Phonosymphonic Sun" (2008-09) arranges six vintage record players in a semi-circle like members of a



Above: Fatimah Tuggar, "Turntable" (work on which "Fai-fain Gramophone," 2010, is based) (detail), 1996. Record player, raffia discs with labels, music by Barmani Choge, entertainment center; dimensions variable. Image courtesy of the artist. Left: Christian Marclay, "Secret," 1988. Metal disc, padlock, 7 inches (18 cm) diameter. Collection of the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, Fund for Acquisitions. Image courtesy of the artist and Paula Cooper Gallery, New York. Photo by Peter Paul Geoffrion.

West African raffia swirl in place of records on the turntables of Fatimah Tuggar's "Fai-fain Gramophone" (2010). Born in Nigeria, Tuggar pairs her entertainment center with the recordings of Barmani Choge, an all-female band that sings of female roles in the Hausa language and uses kitchen utensils as percussive instruments.

If I could take home one work in this show, it would be the witty three-by-three grid of black and

white photographs by Cape Town-born Robin Rhode. Starting with a chalk drawing of a square and a spoon-like tone arm, the ensemble progresses like an animation storyboard to show the steps of setting a record in motion on a turntable — and in the process, creates a visual image of syncopation.

Mark Soo displays wall-sized 3-D images of the installation he built to replicate the storied Sun Studio in Memphis as it may have looked in 1954, when Elvis Presley recorded his first single, bluesman Arthur

Crudup's song, "That's All Right, Mama." Viewing the scene through the 3-D specs, I had the tantalizing illusion of almost stepping inside the past, a longing that Seattle-based art critic Jen Graves notes in her essay about the work, writing, "The image makes you ache."

In the show's fourth gallery, some works contemplate the mysteries, curiosities and rituals associated with experiencing music through record albums.

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# Drumming to a different beat

Jacquinn Williams

Cornell Coley and his Afro-Latin ensemble Sugarfoot are performing tonight at Café Tatant in Roxbury. The drummer, singer and arts educator has always felt the pull of the drums and has dedicated his life's work to them.

He was born in Kingston, Jamaica to Cuban and Jamaican parents. His family immigrated to Boston when he was 4 years old and by the age of 9, Coley was mastering the drums. His love affair with dance however, didn't happen until he traveled to Ghana as an undergraduate student at Tufts University.

"I was drawn to it," he explained. "I loved the music. It was my first time visiting and I picked it up right away."

After finishing his bachelor's degree in English at Tufts, Coley headed to California to study cultural anthropology. He later earned a master's in education from Cambridge College and has conducted rhythm workshops in different libraries throughout the state for the last 30 years.

In addition to teaching, he wrote the first draft of the arts curriculum framework for the Massachusetts Department of Education in 1994

and uses his talents for art therapy. Coley works as a music art therapist on a contractual basis with The Healing Arts Alternative: Pathways to Health organization. He's also conducted successful residencies in the Vermont Veteran's Home and Tewksbury and Butler Hospitals. He works with patients suffering from a number of ailments from Alzheimer's to depression to cancer.

"I've always known what I wanted to do," he said. "I wanted to be involved in arts administration and the arts. I just loved being in the community and being with all kinds of people. Sick people, kids and professionals. Some people can't handle all of those personalities."

Coley — whose motto is "Have Drums, Will Travel" — plays the drum kit, timbales, congas, bongos, talking drum, berimbau, Brazilian carnival drums and other percussion. He has performed at festivals all over the world, including tours with the "Ulcantino" band in Mexico and with the "Boytiak" group in Indonesia.

He specializes in Afro-Cuban, Afro-Brazilian, Congolese, Ghanaian and rhythm tap and salsa dances.

He has studied with master drum circle facilitator Arthur Hull and with many masters in African Diaspora drum and dance, including CK Ladzekpo (Ghana), Malonga Casque Lourdes (Congo), Conjunto Folclorico (Cuba), Diane Walker (tap), Jose Lorenzo (Afro-Brazilian) and Deraldo Ferreira (Capoeira), traveling several times to their places of origin according to his biography.

"There are all levels of talent in a drum circle," he said. "The music performed is somewhere between practiced and improvisation. The music isn't culturally specific. There's a small group or sometimes one person who brings the music out or starts it."

He said he was excited about his upcoming performance at Café Tatant where he and six other musicians — one of them a female percussionist — will do a set of Latin jazz and some jazz standards.

"There will be some work by Tito Puentes, Charlie Parker and more," said Coley.

*Tickets are available at the door. Dinner starts at 6 p.m. The show starts at 8 p.m. Single ticket: \$12; meal and show combo: \$28; combo for two: \$54.*



Cornell Coley performs tonight at Café Tatant in Roxbury. (Photo courtesy of David M. Tunick)

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Su-Mei Tse's pristine installation "White Noise" (2009) tops a veneer cube of a turntable with a record pocked with tiny white bubbles — a tribute to dust specks.

An evocative trio of photographs by Moyra Davey includes a portrait of fast-obsessing treasures — books and record albums,

and an impressionistic close-up of a cartridge touching an LP. The record's blurry specks of dust suggest the orbs of lantern light in a Toulouse-Lautrec painting of a Parisian dance hall.

Taiyo Kimura of Japan displays a swarm of small, ink-drawn cartoons that, alongside his five-minute video of Dadaist pranks with LP paraphernalia offers an irresistible sampling of his surreal humor. In his drawings, he plays with the black circle of a record as so much

visual silly putty (in one drawing, a centipede is a tone arm).

Reveries too are on display in the arresting landscape photographs by Xaviera Simmons. In its own room, her installation "Thundersnow Road, North Car-

olina" (2010) features six scenes from her travels across North Carolina, each accompanied by an original soundtrack.

In the ICA's media center is the installation "Cover to Cover," where you can browse albums and sample

music. Each of its seven turntables is equipped with a crate of 20 albums curated by a guest artist.

*Admission to the ICA is always free to youth up to age 17 and free to all on Thursdays from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m.*

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**\*Artists Subject to change**