John Currin American, b. 1962
Park City Grill 2000
oil on canvas
38 1/16 x 30 x 1 7/16 in.
Collection Walker Art Center Justin Smith PurchaseFund, 2000

Jacques Lipchitz French, 1891–1973
Prometheus Strangling the Vulture II 1944/1953
bronze
91 3/4 x 90 x 57 in.
Collection Walker Art Center
Gift of the T. B. Walker Foundation, 1956

Adrian Piper American, b. 1948
The Mythic Being; I/You (Her) 1974 (detail)
black-and-white photograph, ink
10 images; 8 x 5 in. each
Collection Walker Art Center
T. B. Walker Acquisition Fund, 1999

Sigmar Polke German, b. 1941
Frau Herbst und ihre zwei Töchter
(Mrs. Autumn and Her Two Daughters) 1991
artificial resin, acrylic on synthetic fabric
118 x 196 3/4 x 1 5/8 in.
Collection Walker Art Center
Gift of Ann and Barrie Birks, Joan and Gary Capen, Judy and Kenneth Dayton, Joanne and Philip Von Blon, Penny and Mike Winton, with additional funds from the T. B. Walker Acquisition Fund, 1991

George Segal American, 1924–2000
The Diner 1964–1966
plaster, wood, chrome, laminated plastic, Masonite, fluorescent lamp, glass, paper
93 3/4 x 144 1/4 x 96 in.
Collection Walker Art Center
Gift of the T. B. Walker Foundation, 1966

John Sloan American, 1871–1951
South Beach Bathers 1907–1908
oil on canvas
31 13/16 x 36 x 1 1/4 in.
Collection Walker Art Center
Gift of the T. B. Walker Foundation, Gilbert M. Walker Fund, 1948

Kara Walker American, b. 1969
Endless Conundrum, An African Anonymous Adventuress 2001
paint on wall; exhibition copy of paper original
180 x 420 in.
Collection Walker Art Center
T. B. Walker Acquisition Fund, 2002

Andy Warhol American, 1928–1987
16 Jackies 1964
acrylic, enamel on canvas
80 3/8 x 64 3/8 in.
Collection Walker Art Center
Art Center Acquisition Fund, 1968

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Park City Grill 2000
oil on canvas
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John Currin's strangely disquieting paintings are depictions of contemporary people, rendered in a style characterized by distortion and elongation that is evocative of the painters of northern Renaissance, early Mannerism, and 20th-century modernism, including Grünewald, Parmigianino, and Picasso. However, the artist turns occasionally to advertising, fashion magazine spreads, kitsch portraiture found in thrift stores, and soft-porn magazines for inspiration. He has also used his own facial features and those of his wife, sculptor Rachel Feinstein, in his portraits. *Park City Grill* is provocative yet ambiguous, ironic yet dangerously inviting. The artist argues that the best art is ultimately beyond psychology and interpretation. Currin has spoken of visual clichés as a form of recurring truth, and considers that aspect of his work to be an end in itself.

Jacques Lipchitz French, 1891–1973
Prometheus Strangling the Vulture II 1944/1953
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“I wished to say to men, ‘If you desire to continue freely in your creative work, it will be necessary for you to enter the struggle and conquer the forces of darkness that are about to invade the world.’” —Jacques Lipchitz

The alcove at the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden’s east edge is dominated by Jacques Lipchitz’s bronze sculpture *Prometheus Strangling the Vulture II*. It was inspired by the classical Greek myth Prometheus and the Vulture in which Prometheus stole fire from the gods as a gift for mankind. The god Zeus was so angry he punished Prometheus by binding him to a cliff for eternity, where every day a vulture devoured his liver. However, in this sculpture, Lipchitz portrays Prometheus triumphing over the vulture, strangling the bird with one hand and holding his claws in the other. For the artist, this was a symbol of human progress and determination and of democracy triumphing over fascism. The original version of *Prometheus Strangling the Vulture* was a 30-foot work cast in plaster for the Paris International Exposition in 1937. In 1943, the Brazilian government asked Lipchitz to sculpt another version of the work for the Ministry of Education and Health building in Rio de Janeiro. The Walker sculpture is based on the second version.

Adrian Piper American, b. 1948
The Mythic Being; I/You (Her) 1974 (detail)
black-and-white photograph, ink
10 images; 8 x 5 in. each
Collection Walker Art Center
T. B. Walker Acquisition Fund, 1999

“We started out with beliefs about the world and our place in it that we didn’t ask for and didn’t question. Only later, when those beliefs were attacked by new experiences that didn’t conform to them, did we begin to doubt: e.g., do we and our friends really understand each other? Do we really have nothing in common with blacks/whites/gays/workers/the middle class/other women/other men/etc.?” —Adrian Piper, 1981

Adrian Piper is an important figure in the early development of Conceptual Art in the 1960s and is one of the few African Americans involved in that movement. Her multidisciplinary work—which has included photography, performance, drawing, video, and sound installation—often combines text with image or ephemeral performance with physical documentation.

Beginning in the 1970s, Piper began to incorporate issues of identity while maintaining a strong conceptual basis in her work. As a black woman often mistaken for white, she sought to engage her audience with racism and sexism by drawing on an autobiographical catalogue of experiences. *The Mythic Being series* (1972–1975), which includes 10 images, was developed by Piper while she was a doctoral student in the Department of Philosophy at Harvard University. She created a male alter ego, and by performing in this guise found a release from the intense pressures and tensions of being the only black woman in her department. Piper challenges us to be actively aware of, and perhaps struggle with, ways that race and gender can misdirect our understanding of individuals.

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“I pile everything up, all the accumulated material . . . all the things from my travels . . . and when the room is filled, I lock it up and move on to an empty one . . . I have done this all my life. When I was seven the war broke out and the village I lived in was right on the Russian front. We had to leave immediately and left everything behind. I still remember the drawer of my table with all my things in it: pieces of wood I carved, stones, seeds, a stuffed owl . . . all left.” —Sigmar Polke, 1992

Sigmar Polke has emerged as one of the most important artists of postwar Germany. In 1963, he and other German artists founded a movement called Capitalist Realism—a parody of American Pop Art. In the mid-1980s, he began exploring the medium of photography, which led to his grand-scale pictures made with intentionally unstable chemicals and his use of transparent painting surfaces.

In *Frau Herbst und ihre zwei Töchter (Mrs. Autumn and Her Two Daughters),* Polke combines a mysterious image from a book of 19th-century engravings with an abstract surface. The image is fanciful, almost surreal, perhaps depicting a mother explaining to her children where snow comes from, or the fairylike beings that produce snow. In contrast, the gorgeous abstraction, painted on transparent fabric, suggests clouds, sky, and an almost spiritual emanation of light.

George Segal American, 1924–2000
The Diner 1964–1966
plaster, wood, chrome, laminated plastic, Masonite, fluorescent lamp, glass, paper
93 3/4 x 144 1/4 x 96 in.
Collection Walker Art Center
Gift of the T. B. Walker Foundation, 1966

George Segal is known for his sculptures of people placed in different scenes. His works include figures in a gas station, an elevator, standing in front of a mirror, and in this case, sitting at a diner counter. The artist called these types of artworks “situation sculptures.” To make the figures, Segal wrapped bandages soaked in plaster around the bodies of his friends or models. When the bandages had dried and hardened, he carefully cut them off and reassembled the cast of the body. Then he combined these human figures with found objects to create different scenes.

The Diner is a life-size sculpture that shows two people at a counter—a customer and a server. The found objects Segal included came from a diner in New Jersey that had closed. The artist was also inspired by his memories of stopping at this type of restaurant during his late-night drives home to New Jersey after visiting art galleries in New York City.

John Sloan American, 1871–1951
South Beach Bathers 1907–1908
oil on canvas
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Collection Walker Art Center
Gift of the T. B. Walker Foundation, Gilbert M. Walker Fund, 1948

“This Staten Island resort had few visitors compared to Coney Island, and gave better opportunity for observation of individual behavior.” —John Sloan

Along with fellow members of the early 20th-century group of American painters known as the Ashcan School, John Sloan was interested in the life of New York’s streets and gathering spots. These artists sought to present themes that depicted their surroundings, such as the creation of an urban ethnic culture in New York’s immigrant neighborhoods, the glaring contrasts between wealth and poverty, the glitter of show business, the bustle of city streets, and the ferment over the proper roles of men and women.

Sloan first visited South Beach, an amusement park on Staten Island that attracted primarily working-class clientele, on June 23, 1907. Like many of his New York–themed works, his depiction of South Beach suggests a story that begins when one person looks at another. In *South Beach Bathers* a woman adjusting her hat is eyed appreciatively from the side and behind by men lounging on the sand. Women play several roles at once in Sloan’s art: beyond being objects of desire, they record the new independence of modern New Yorkers, while also presenting a variation on old ideals of beauty in art.

Kara Walker American, b. 1969
Endless Conundrum, An African Anonymous Adventuress 2001
paint on wall; exhibition copy of paper original
180 x 420 in.
Collection Walker Art Center
T. B. Walker Acquisition Fund, 2002

“My works are erotically explicit, shameless. I would be happy if visitors would stand in front of my work and even feel a little ashamed because they have . . . simply believed in the project of modernism.” —Kara Walker, 2001

Kara Walker’s work, done in the style of silhouette portraits widely popular in the 17th and 18th centuries, has focused on an exploration of the history of slavery and of black-white race relations in the United States. *Endless Conundrum, An African Anonymous Adventuress* represents an expansion of this subject matter, adding an examination of the role of African tribal motifs in the genesis of modern art. These motifs played a crucial but undercredited role in Western art’s move from realism to conceptual and expressive representation and in the work of such artists as Pablo Picasso, Constantin Brancusi, and Alberto Giacometti. (Brancusi’s sculpture Endless Column is referenced in the title.) While the influence of African sculpture has been disputed in the case of this work, Walker clearly indicated that the debate is absurd.

Commissioned by the Fondation Beyeler, a Swiss museum that exhibits African tribal sculptures alongside modernist works of art, Walker’s piece asks us to examine the issue in the context of other problematic appropriations of blackness in Western culture. She portrays key works from the Beyeler’s collection, including a nail fetish and Rodin’s Iris, alongside African-American performer Josephine Baker, who is dancing her way out of the “exotic” banana skirt that made her famous. A resounding homage to the creativity of African and African-American cultures, Walker’s work highlights the power dynamics behind the cultural exchanges, appropriations, and combinations that are part of our society today.

Andy Warhol American, 1928–1987
16 Jackies 1964
acrylic, enamel on canvas
80 3/8 x 64 3/8 in.
Collection Walker Art Center
Art Center Acquisition Fund, 1968

“The more you look at the same exact thing, the more the meaning goes away and the better and emptier you feel.”
—Andy Warhol, 1975

For Warhol and fellow Pop artists, reproducing images from popular culture was the visual means for expressing detachment from emotions, an attitude they regarded as characteristic of the 1960s. Like droning newscasts, repetition dissipates meaning and with it the capacity of images to move or disturb. Warhol created *16 Jackies* in response to the November 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy, an event whose mass-media coverage reached an unparalleled number of people.

The four images of Jacqueline Kennedy, each repeated four times, were enlargements of news photographs that appeared widely and continually in the media after the assassination. Taken from issues of Life magazine, the images depict, from top to bottom: Jackie stepping off the plane upon arrival at Love Field in Dallas; grieving at the Capitol; stunned at the swearing-in ceremony for Lyndon B. Johnson aboard Air Force One after the president’s death; and smiling in the limousine before the assassination. *16 Jackies* combines a number of themes important in Warhol’s work, such as his fascination with American icons and celebrities, his interest in the mass media and the dissemination of imagery, and his preoccupation with death.