

EXHIBIT

LET US  
CELEBRATE  
WHILE YOUTH  
LINGERS  
AND IDEAS FLOW

ARCHIVES  
1915 – 2015

NOVEMBER

14

TO

DECEMBER

20

2015

THE RENAISSANCE SOCIETY

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF

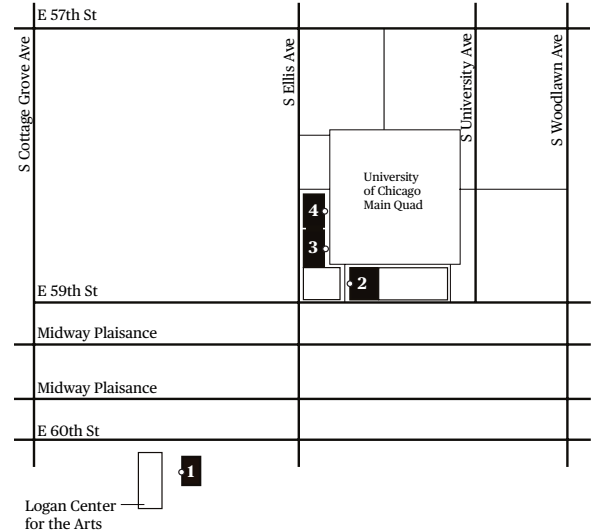
CHICAGO

- 1 Gray Center Lab, Midway Studios  
929 East 60th Street
  - Archival materials, 1915–2015.
  - Auder, Michel. *Endless Column*, 2011.
  - Fish, Julia. *Key*, 1981.
  - Gerber, Gaylen. *Backdrop/Let Us Celebrate While Youth Lingers and Ideas Flow: Archives 1915–2015*, 2015.
  - Graham, Rodney. *School of Velocity* and *Parsifal* notebook sketches, 1995.
  - Ito, Miyoko. *Island in the Sun*, 1978.
  - Pope, L., William. *Well*, 2015.
  - Sone, Yutaka. *Untitled (Snowballs)*, 2006.
  - Grid section, 1967–2014.

- 2 Wieboldt Hall, Room 205  
1050 East 59th Street
  - Archival materials, 1930–1938.
  - Gonzalez-Torres, Felix. “Untitled” (Revenge), 1991.
  - Mirra, Helen. *Schlafbau*, 1995.

- 3 Goodspeed Hall, Room 106  
1010 East 59th Street
  - Archival materials, 1938–1979.
  - Gonzalez-Torres, Felix. “Untitled” (Revenge), 1991.

- 4 The Renaissance Society  
Cobb Hall, Fourth Floor  
5811 South Ellis Avenue
  - Detail of Raymond Pettibon wall mural, 1998.
  - Gonzalez-Torres, Felix. “Untitled” (Revenge), 1991.



Open hours  
 Tuesday–Friday, 10am–5pm  
 Saturday–Sunday, 12–5pm  
 Closed November 26–27, 2015

## Introduction

In June of 1915, eleven University of Chicago faculty members invited their colleagues to join them for a meeting to explore the possibility of forming “a society to stimulate the love of the beautiful, and to enrich the life of the community through the cultivation of the arts.” And here we are, 100 years later—an institution with an expanded mission, perhaps, but one that shares the same belief in the power of art and artists to address the present moment. A nimble, non-collecting museum, we do this now as we always have done, through a focused program of exhibitions, lectures, concerts, readings, and publications.

As we approached this milestone, we wanted to refresh our institutional memory. This archive presentation was therefore conceived as crucial component of the Centennial program, not just as a celebration (which it certainly is!) but also as a way for us to understand who we are and how we arrived at this point. Surveying a century of activity has been a revealing process, enriching our understanding of well-known histories and illuminating moments and movements that are less familiar. It has also been truly inspiring to remind ourselves of what a unique and special place the Renaissance Society has been and continues to be.

I want to extend a warm thanks to curator Jordan Stein who organized this project with thoughtfulness and care. We are greatly appreciative to the participating artists and lenders for their generosity; to the Richard and Mary L. Gray Center for Arts and Inquiry, the Department of Romance Language and Literature, and the Department of Music for their hospitality; and to the University of Chicago, whose community of inquiry we are honored to be part of.

—Solveig Øvstebø, Executive Director and Chief Curator

*Let Us Celebrate While Youth Lingers and Ideas Flow: Archives 1915–2015* is an exhibition presented by the Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago to mark the occasion of its Centennial. Staged throughout multiple locations, it is comprised of historical materials and a selection of artworks.

An archive is a collection of artifacts unique to an institution, group of people, place, or idea—sometimes all at once—nominated for safekeeping under an overarching organizational system or structure. Archives look inward and outward, reflecting both implicated histories and the self-reflexive circumstances of their own creation. In other words, archives speak not only to what’s kept, but the desire to keep. The Renaissance Society’s status as a “non-collecting” art museum serves to confirm the archive as its only permanent collection.

This presentation features primary source materials from the last century, including invitations, announcements, news clippings, founding documents, sketches, snapshots, title cards, postcards, letters, telegrams, faxes, loan forms, posters, theses, schematics, work orders, inventory lists, book prototypes, and various other particular miscellany. While an archive suggests totality, an exhibition allows for a more exacting approach. A workable number of items have been chosen from the tens of thousands available on account of their art historical import, bureaucratic fidelity, riotous idealism, and well-balanced chronology.

This constellation is complemented by a number of artworks from the recent past, either shown in the museum or made by previously exhibiting artists, selected for their connection to archival themes, such as the passage of time, the organization of information, and the construction

of context. The artworks on display do not constitute a “group exhibition,” but rather serve as punctuation for the historical objects presented. *Let us Celebrate...* features works by Michel Auder, Julia Fish, Gaylen Gerber, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Rodney Graham, Miyoko Ito, Helen Mirra, William Pope.L, and Yutaka Sone.

Exhibition sites include Midway Studios, the earliest home for the visual arts on campus; two former locations of the Renaissance Society, Wieboldt Hall (1930–38) and Goodspeed Hall (1938–79); and the hallway and office of the museum’s current site. (The institution, in fact, has itinerant roots, holding exhibitions and events in a half dozen campus locations for its first 15 years.)

*Let us Celebrate...* proposes that history unevenly distributes the weight of the past across infinite documents and geographies, leaving no true primary source. As it lingers, it changes, always changing. History's evidence nonetheless carries a significant charge that may be activated as these traces encounter congruous conditions of time and space. With this in mind, the exhibition considers just how long the present lasts and how an institution best reckons with the legacy of its actions and ideas.

Above all, *Let Us Celebrate...* intends to convey the relative autonomy under which the Renaissance Society has operated for the last one hundred years. Independence,

made tangible in countless ways through a sustained commitment to artists and their ideas, is perhaps the most critical ingredient in the tangle of this particular history.

*Let Us Celebrate While Youth Lingers and Ideas Flow* is named for a 1975 sculpture by artist Ree Morton that was presented at the Renaissance Society in 1981. The large, wall-mounted assemblage pictured on the back of this booklet, however, is not featured in this exhibition. Former Executive Director Susanne Ghez had hoped to present a solo exhibition of new work by Morton in the late 1970s, but the artist died tragically and the show never happened. Several years later, the New Museum mounted a Morton retrospective and Ghez brought the show to Chicago. The title reference stands not just for the personal, exultant, and unpretentious nature of Morton’s work, but also for the urgency of the present as a conduit for all that has come and is yet to come.

In addition to the artists and lenders, I’d like to thank Renaissance Society Executive Director and Chief Curator Solveig Øvstebø for encouraging the extended research that made this exhibition possible and for supporting its multi-channel installation.

—Jordan Stein, exhibition curator

VENUE  
G R A Y  
C E N T E R  
L A B  
MIDWAY STUDIOS

929  
EAST 60<sup>TH</sup> STREET

The central location of the exhibition is the Gray Center Lab in historic Midway Studios, the former working space of celebrated sculptor Lorado Taft. Taft hosted early Renaissance Society members for a 1917 visit, and today his large wooden tables are used to present archival materials. The additional display tables were built for the recent Wadada Leo Smith exhibition at the Renaissance Society (October 11–29, 2015).

While artworks are detailed on the following pages, archival materials are labeled in their cases. A library and bookstore are also available.

Michel Auder

*Endless Column*, 2011

Phone video to digital video HD, color and sound, 18:21

Courtesy of the artist

*Retrospective 1969–2001*

March 10–April 21, 2002

The Renaissance Society's retrospective exhibition of Auder's work included a number of important video works that prolifically document the artist's life. Auder distills countless hours of raw material—from far-flung travel to highly intimate domestic footage—into diaristic reflections on love, loss, madness, counterculture, and the ever-changing face of New York City. In place of bringing a specific work back to the Renaissance Society, *Let Us Celebrate...* presents *Endless Column*, a more recent, encyclopedic, and mysteriously moving video showing Auder's computer screen as he clicks through the images on his hard drive one by one. The soundtrack for the video doubles as the soundtrack for this exhibition: repeated keyboard clicks glossing back and forth through time.

Julia Fish

*Key*, 1981

Cyanotype

13 ¾ × 12 ½ inches

Courtesy of the artist

*View: Selected Drawings and Paintings 1985–1995*

January 14–February 25, 1996

Although technically falling outside the chronology of Fish's Renaissance Society survey show, *Key* was nonetheless included in the exhibition as a pivotal piece in the life and work of the artist, a painter. The modest and elegant cyanotype distills Fish's interest in time and light to its core visible incarnation, opening the door to a career spent slowly studying how things change.

Gaylen Gerber

*Backdrop/Let Us Celebrate While Youth Lingers  
and Ideas Flow: Archives 1915–2015*, 2015

Background paper

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist

*Gaylen Gerber*

January 26–March 8, 1992

Gerber's 1992 Renaissance Society exhibition—25 gray monochromatic genre paintings installed in a contiguous row on a temporary wall that spanned the width of the gallery—denied access to the majority of the space. This foreshadowed much of his work positioning larger monochromatic surfaces as contextual support for the art and activities surrounding it. For this exhibition, Gerber covers the west wall of the Gray Center Lab with a pleated gray paper *Backdrop*, folded to the proportions of a full figure, that grounds the entirety of the exhibition. Gerber's work reveals the complexities of authorship and makes apparent the fundamental network of exchanges between artists, artworks, and their reception.



Rodney Graham

*School of Velocity* notebook sketch, 1995

*Parsifal* notebook sketch, 1995

Pen on paper

18 × 24 inches

Courtesy of the artist

*School of Velocity, Parsifal*

October 01–November 12, 1995

Graham exhibited two time-based musical installations in 1995, *School of Velocity* and *Parsifal*. The former combined the piano exercise of the same name with Galileo's equation of the acceleration of falling objects to create a piano piece that grows progressively slower. Based on a few bars of music from Wagner's composition of the same name, the latter work is an opera that doesn't end until the year 38,969,364,735. Graham made these sketches during a Chicago lecture to represent the mathematical processes that determined the two works.

Miyoko Ito

*Island in the Sun*, 1978

Oil on canvas

38 × 33 inches

Courtesy of John Pittman

*A Review*

October 05–November 09, 1980

*Island in the Sun* is displayed on its own at the top of the gallery stairwell. A Chicago artist with Japanese roots, Ito's idiosyncratic style—someplace between geometric abstraction and Imagistic landscape painting—is not easily classifiable, and although treasured in Chicago, was somewhat overlooked more broadly in her lifetime. This painting, now looking over the show, was featured alongside 37 others in her 1980 Renaissance Society exhibition, her first and only retrospective. She died in 1983 at 65.

William Pope.L

*Well*, 2015

Three glasses of water on three shelves

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist

*Forlesen*

April 28–June 23, 2013

This version of *Well* is adapted from a piece shown in Pope.L's 2013 Renaissance Society exhibition, *Forlesen*. While the building blocks of the work remain the same—shelves and glasses—the quantity and placement varies with each installation. In 2013, the glasses were upright and filled with water. Today, they are precariously positioned on their sides, ready to roll. Can history be paused? From which well does it draw? And is it clear?

Yutaka Sone

*Untitled (Snowballs)*, 2006

Paper, stickers, and acrylic on cardboard

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist

*Forecast: Snow*

January 29–April 9, 2006

Sone's solo exhibition was a mixed-media extravaganza of painting, drawing, photography, sculpture, and a forest of nearly 100 pine trees. Alongside a series of astonishing marble snowflake sculptures ranging from several inches to a few feet in diameter sat the fragile and homebrewed *Untitled (Snowballs)*. Crumpled wads of paper sit in a custom cardboard box—a pathetically transcendent reflection of the archive.

Grid section, 1967–2014

*Mathias Poledna*

December 7, 2014–February 8, 2015

A heavy white metal truss floated horizontally 10 feet above the floor of the Renaissance Society's home in Cobb Hall from 1967 (12 years before the museum moved in) until late last year. Used for the stabilization and support of temporary walls and lighting, the grid was conspicuous in much of the museum's photographic documentation, coming to define the peculiar architectural character of the gallery. Its demolition and removal by artist Mathias Poledna, realized in collaboration with the Renaissance Society, follows in a tradition of institutional critique explored here by artists such as Michael Asher and Joëlle Tuerlinckx and others whose work has engaged the structure directly, such as Katharina Grosse and Nora Schultz. Its removal reveals not only cathedral-like ceiling heights, but also shifting relationships between artist, artwork, curator, and institution. A single, salvaged piece now hangs above the door of the Gray Center Lab.

VENUE  
W I E B O L D T  
H A L L  
RM. 205  
DEPARTMENT OF ROMANCE  
LANGUAGES AND  
L I T E R A T U R E S

1050  
EAST 59<sup>TH</sup> STREET

THE RENAISSANCE SOCIETY  
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF  
CHICAGO  
1930–1938

Room 205 of Wieboldt Hall was the Renaissance Society's first dedicated exhibition space from 1930 to 1938.

It saw one of the first solo exhibitions of Alexander Calder's mobiles, works by Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Isamu Noguchi, Georges Seurat, *Balian Woodcarvings*, *Musical Instruments and Various Objects in Use in Ceremonies and Daily Life of Native Africans*, and more.

This site now hosts a video by Helen Mirra, one of three presentations of Felix Gonzales-Torres's "Untitled" (Revenge), and a selection of historical materials related to the Renaissance Society.

The Department of Romance Languages and Literatures offers programs in French, Italian, and Hispanic/Luso-Brazilian literatures, as well as Renaissance and Early Modern Studies.

With special thanks to Larry Norman, Deborah Blumenthal, and Jennifer Hurtarte.

Felix Gonzalez-Torres

“Untitled” (Revenge), 1991

Light blue candies individually wrapped in cellophane,  
endless supply

Ideal weight: 325 lbs.

Overall dimensions vary with installation

Courtesy Barbara and Howard Morse, New York

With special thanks to the Felix Gonzalez-Torres Foundation

*Traveling*

October 2–November 6, 1994

“Untitled” (Revenge) is made from light blue candies in endless supply that are available for the public to take. For *Let Us Celebrate...* the piece appears across three sites, each in a different physical format, linking the Renaissance Society's “permanent” homes under an extended common roof.

The uniqueness of the work lies with ownership, not presentation. This means that the exhibition does not present a trifurcation, but instead three unique instances of the same work: a generosity the piece *allows* for under its specific, yet open-ended parameters.

As with much of Gonzalez-Torres's work, “Untitled” (Revenge) sensitively provokes questions about the malleable nature of history, memory, meaning, security, originality, value, possession, presence, and exchange.

Installed as a large rectangle of candy, the work was the centerpiece of Gonzalez-Torres's 1994 Renaissance Society exhibition, his first large-scale, touring institutional exhibition. The original candy distributor, Peerless, was founded one year before the Renaissance Society in 1914. It closed in 2007.

Helen Mirra

*Schlafbau*, 1995, 14:30

Video

Courtesy of the artist and Video Data Bank

*Persona* (group exhibition)

March 10–April 21, 1996

*Sky-wreck* (solo exhibition)

May 6–June 24, 2001

Taking its title from a poem by Paul Celan (translated as “sleeping den”), *Schlafbau* is the result of a script that reconfigures over two hundred lines of English subtitles borrowed from French, German, Russian, Italian, and Swedish films. Its disconcerting soliloquy on love and distance is quixotically attempted in a medley of original languages by an off-screen narrator. *Schlafbau* was presented in *Persona*, a group exhibition exploring identity as a set of distinguishing, not delimiting, characteristics in which one might lose rather than find one’s self.



Video Data Bank

VENUE

GOODSPEED

HALL

RM. 106

DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

1010

EAST 59<sup>TH</sup> STREET

THE RENAISSANCE SOCIETY

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF

CHICAGO

1938–1979

The Renaissance Society occupied Room 108 of Goodspeed Hall from 1938 to 1979. Works by Marc Chagall, Eva Hesse, Diego Rivera, Robert Smithson, and Lawrence Weiner were exhibited there, along with dozens of artist members exhibitions, *Contemporary Indian Painting*, *Islamic Prayer Rugs*, and a 47th Anniversary Exhibition that took place in the incorrect year due to faulty record keeping. Two large galleries separated by a narrow hallway have since been divided into a series of small piano practice rooms. While Room 108 is no longer physically or numerically extant, Room 106 has graciously been made available for this exhibition.

The space is home to one of three presentations of Felix Gonzales-Torres's "Untitled" (Revenge) along with a selection of historical materials related to the Renaissance Society.

The Department of Music offers graduate degrees in Composition, Ethnomusicology, and Music History and Theory and an undergraduate Bachelor of Arts degree in Music.

With special thanks to Peter Gillette, Barbara Schubert, Anne Robertson, and Laura Swierzbina.

Felix Gonzalez-Torres

“Untitled” (Revenge), 1991

Light blue candies individually wrapped in cellophane,  
endless supply

Ideal weight: 325 lbs.

Overall dimensions vary with installation

Courtesy Barbara and Howard Morse, New York

With special thanks to the Felix Gonzalez-Torres Foundation

“Untitled” (Revenge) covers the entire floor of the  
practice space. For more information, please see the  
Wieboldt Hall section.

VENUE

C O B B  
H A L L  
FOURTH FLOOR

5811

SOUTH ELLIS AVENUE

THE RENAISSANCE SOCIETY

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF

CHICAGO

1979–PRESENT



The Renaissance Society has occupied the north side of Cobb Hall's fourth floor since 1979. During this time it has become widely known as a platform for critical experimentation in the still-developing field of "Contemporary" art. That space, still active, is not the home for this exhibition.

Yet, steps beyond the museum's front doors, the partial removal of a wall at the far end of the hallway reveals a glimpse of Raymond Pettibon's extraordinary 1998 site-specific mural, which has been hidden under drywall for 17 years. The museum offices are activated as one of three sites for the presentation of Felix Gonzales-Torres's 1991 work, "Untitled" (Revenge).

Detail of Raymond Pettibon wall mural, 1998

*Raymond Pettibon*

September 13–November 08, 1998

Pettibon's monumental 1998 Renaissance Society exhibition featured over 600 drawings in the gallery and one impulsively and exquisitely rendered mural in the hallway. Although the exhibition traveled to the Drawing Center in New York, the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, and the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the site-specific mural was covered with studs and drywall to preserve it. The removal of a small section of wall at the far end of the hallway reveals the eyes of a fielder 17 years in waiting.

Felix Gonzalez-Torres

"Untitled" (Revenge), 1991

Light blue candies individually wrapped in cellophane,  
endless supply

Ideal weight: 325 lbs.

Overall dimensions vary with installation

Courtesy Barbara and Howard Morse, New York

With special thanks to the Felix Gonzalez-Torres Foundation

"Untitled" (Revenge) is installed within the offices of the Renaissance Society. For more information, please see the Wieboldt Hall section.

PROGRAMS

LET US  
CELEBRATE  
WHILE YOUTH  
LINGERS  
AND IDEAS FLOW

ARCHIVES  
1915 – 2015

NOVEMBER

20

DECEMBER

3 6 11

2015

THE RENAISSANCE SOCIETY

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF

CHICAGO

*Let Us Celebrate...*

Friday, November 20, 6–10pm

Midway Studios, Gray Center Lab and Great Hall

Join us to mark the exhibition opening with a reception and performance by Chicago post-punk quartet Negative Scanner. Aside from a band name that suggests a relatively recent archival tool, the group is equipped to look forward while making good and loud on a rich countercultural tradition. They perform at 9pm.

Ordnance Operations: War Art at the Renaissance Society

Thursday, December 3, 6pm

Midway Studios, Great Hall

Art historian Maggie Taft lectures on the 1942 Renaissance Society exhibition *War Art*, curated by László Moholy-Nagy, discussing how World War II transformed Chicago's art scene and how artists and curators imagined and articulated the relationship between art and war.

Exhibition walk-through

Sunday, December 6, 1pm

Midway Studios, Gray Center Lab

Curator Jordan Stein leads a tour of the exhibition across all four sites, beginning at the Gray Center Lab.

Toggle Variable Speed, featuring Blondes

Friday, December 11, 7pm

Logan Center for the Arts, Screening Room

915 East 60th Street

The first film screened by the Renaissance Society in 1931, Fernand Léger's *Ballet Mécanique* (1924) hypnotically explores the Modern, mechanical age with equal parts grace and terror. This program of moving image work includes the performance of a newly commissioned score for Léger's masterpiece by Brooklyn-based duo Blondes, and a selection of titles previously screened at the Renaissance Society that embody the paranoia of the digital revolution of the 1980s, when the rise of video cameras and editing software commingled with the emergence of the pop-cultural machine, gender studies, and mediated reality.

WHPK 88.5 FM Chicago Community Radio

November 14–December 20

A series of historical Renaissance Society radio spots announcing exhibitions and events will be read live on the airwaves at spontaneous intervals during the run of the exhibition. WHPK 88.5FM is a non-profit community radio station of the University of Chicago, broadcasting to Hyde Park and the south side of Chicago for over 50 years.

## A Note on Sources

The bulk of archival materials from the first fifty years come from the Smithsonian Institution Archives of American Art, Washington, DC, the nation's preeminent research center dedicated to collecting, preserving, and providing access to primary sources that document the history of the visual arts in America. Founding documents come from the Special Collections Research Center at the University of Chicago. Materials after 1965 are borrowed from the present home of the Renaissance Society, where the archive is available for viewing by appointment.

Back cover:

Ree Morton

*Let Us Celebrate While Youth Lingers and Ideas Flow*, 1975

Paint on canvas, celastic, wood

96 × 72 × 6 inches

(c) Estate of Ree Morton

# R



## THE RENAISSANCE SOCIETY

at the University of Chicago  
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Chicago, Illinois 60637

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