

## THE SHORTLIST

### SOCIAL WORKS

- **Mark Bradford** and the **Getty Museum** have launched "Open Studio: A Collection of Artmaking Ideas by Artists." Conceived by the artist for K-12 teachers, the online project provides free information on arts activities that don't require a lot of preparation or supplies. Contributors include Kara Walker, Carrie Mae Weems, Kerry James Marshall and Catherine Opie. This is the inaugural project of the Getty Artists Program, which will annually commission an artist to create educational tools. (A survey of Bradford's work remains on view at the Wexner Center, Columbus, Ohio, through Oct. 10.)
- The collecting (and selling) activities of **Charles Saatchi** are often considered a barometer of an artist's career. In July, the 67-year-old advertising magnate announced his intention to give 200 pieces from his collection to the British nation. If all goes as planned, the works, with an estimated value of \$37.5 million, will be turned over to a government-run foundation to create the **Museum of Contemporary Art, London**. Saatchi's gallery is currently housed in a 70,000-square-foot rented space; whether it will remain there has yet to be determined.
- **Modern Views**, a project of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, which launched in June to raise funds for Philip Johnson's **Glass House** and Mies van der Rohe's **Farnsworth House**, is holding live auctions on Sept. 16 at the Arts Club of Chicago and on Oct. 6 at Sotheby's in New York. A hundred architects and artists have donated works inspired by the iconic structures, among them David Adjaye, Vija Celmins, Zaha Hadid, Robert Morris, Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle, Ken Price, Ed Ruscha, James Rosenquist, David Salle, Richard Woods and Sarah Morris, whose new film *Points on a Line* will premiere. Online bidding begins Sept. 7 at [sothebys.com/modernviews](http://sothebys.com/modernviews). A book on the project is being published by Assouline in late September.
- **Art and Activism: Projects of John and Dominique de Menil**, a new book examining the Houston-based French couple's philan-

## LOUISE BOURGEOIS 1911-2010

*In this remembrance of Louise Bourgeois, the artist and writer Maki Xenakis shares memories of her first encounter and subsequent friendship with the late artist. Their exchanges eventually led to a collaboration on the 1998 book Louise Bourgeois: The Blind Leading the Blind.*

In 1988, I was living in New York, painting and destroying everything I made, feeling completely lost and depressed. Then I discovered Louise Bourgeois's work. It was an enormous shock, as if each of her pieces were helping me recover my center of gravity. At that time, Louise was not quite as famous as she would become a little later on, after the time of her now-legendary "salons du dimanche." She was still relatively accessible. To my surprise, I easily found her name in the phone book, and when I called, she herself picked up the phone. Probably because of my accent, she spoke to me in French and began a series of questions about my age and my life. Then she asked, "But what do you expect from me?" Frightened by the bluntness of the question, I felt that I should simply tell the truth. I heard myself reply that she was the only person who could save my life. "But nobody has ever asked me for such a thing. Do you understand how terrifying it is, what you're asking of me?!" I was trembling with fear. After a long silence, she said in a low voice, "Come to me on Sunday at 3:00, with your work."

I brought a tiny sketchbook, filled with little creatures lost in the white pages. Louise was waiting for me at the top of the staircase of her house. She was tense, and yet I felt somehow deeply soothed by her eyes, so blue and clear. She led me to her desk and said, "We're not going to stay here on our feet staring at each other all day long!" She had me sit down in front of her, and she began looking through my drawings. Her face softened; she asked the most astounding questions, as if she already knew me. For the first time, I felt that I was with someone who understood my work and who accepted me. When it was time to leave, she told me I could come and see her whenever I wanted. With that, I came to her house regularly. She never told me what I had to do.

All those moments of intimacy, generosity and authenticity allowed me to see a Louise who was often worried or fragile but who, at the same time, always manifested strength, intelligence and intransigence completely devoted to feeding her work. As she often declared to visitors, "We're not here to waste time!" Our conversations were focused on our work, but we also talked about our mothers and fathers, about childhood, exile, maternity and chaos. The question of fear arose again and again in our conversations. One day she said to me, "When you're overwhelmed with anxiety, you need to walk with little steps, hold on to the wall, and you'll see, it will slowly get better. I'm anxious when other people fill up all the space, only talking about themselves. Then I explode, and afterwards I feel better."

Often, I confessed to her that I thought I would sink into madness if I went any further with my art. Louise never succeeded in reassuring me. So one day she picked up a little piece of paper and wrote a few words. She handed it to me and told me to keep it with me. A few months later, on the phone, I mentioned the little paper again; she



Louise Bourgeois in her studio, ca. 1946.

Bourgeois: *Cell (Choisy)*, 1990-93, marble, metal and glass. Collection Ydessa Hendeles Art Foundation, Toronto.



▽ thropic activities, is scheduled for publication in October. The 350-page compilation of texts and correspondence by such figures as Renzo Piano, Niki de Saint Phalle, Walter Hopps, Marcel Duchamp, Jasper Johns, Barnett Newman and Mark Rothko provides an overview of the couple's diverse passions, which, in addition to collecting, included establishing university art departments and individual scholarships, commissioning ambitious art and architectural projects and funding civil-rights campaigns, not to mention Dominique's founding—in 1987, 14 years after John's death—of their namesake Houston museum.

## HAMMER TIME

● More than 400 works from the **Neuberger Berman** and **Lehman Brothers** corporate art collections will go on the auction block at **Sotheby's**, New York, on Sept. 25. A pre-auction exhibition of the offerings is on view Sept. 19-24. The works, by such artists as Damien Hirst, John Baldessari, Richard Prince, Takashi Murakami, Julie Mehretu, John Currin and Félix González-Torres, are expected to bring more than \$10 million.

Meanwhile, **Freeman's** auction house in Philadelphia will hold its fourth auction of artworks from the Lehman collection. More than 250 works from the London, Philadelphia, Chicago, Los Angeles and San Francisco offices will be included in the modern and contemporary art sale on Nov. 7. Going on the block are pieces by Robert Mangold, Alex Katz, Sol LeWitt, Judy Pfaff, Elliott Puckette, Vernon Fisher and Joyce Pensato, among others.

● **Christie's** is selling works from the private collection of **Dennis Hopper** in its postwar and contemporary auctions and in a single-owner sale in New York on Nov. 10 and 11. With offerings by Andy Warhol, Wallace Berman, Bruce Conner, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Donald Baechler, John Baldessari, Keith Haring, Kenny Scharf and Robert Rauschenberg, Hopper's collection is expected to bring over \$10 million. The auction house will host a sale of smaller works and memorabilia from the actor's collection in January 2011.

In other Christie's news, the house is launching a fair of contemporary art editions, called **Multiplied**, to be held in London during the Frieze Art Fair, Oct. 15-18. Over 30 galleries and publishers will showcase prints, editions and photographs by artists ranging from Damien Hirst and Tracey Emin to emerging talents. ▽

▷ asked me to read it to her. Soon after, she made *Precious Liquids* (1992), on the front of which she had engraved the words from the paper: "Art is a guarantee of sanity."

By 1989, when I returned to France, Louise had already decided to never go back there. During our long telephone conversations, she often spoke of the places of her youth; she wanted to know what became of them. I offered to go and take photographs. And this is how I came to visit her childhood homes in Clamart, Antony and Choisy-le-Roi. After my return from Choisy-le-Roi, Louise was especially anxious to hear from me, and she sounded worried when I called. As I told her that the house was gone, I felt as though I had announced the disappearance of someone very close to her. Not long after, she made *Cell (Choisy)*, 1990-93. The guillotine in that work symbolizes the action of the present that kills the past.

One day in 1992, Louise asked me to go to her former high school, the Lycée Fénelon in Paris. The idea didn't really appeal to me, but from her insistence I understood that it was very important. As soon as I entered, it was as if I were inside Louise's universe: infinite stairs, endless corridors, huge glass cabinets filled with all sorts of bell jars containing wax hearts or ears, snakes, spiders and mirrors. The monumental stairwell with the sculpture of Oedipus and Antigone, which little Louise went up and down so often, was now gone. But I discovered a postcard that reproduced the banister, with its very suggestive design.

"This will be our book, Mâkhi," she said. Thus began our collaboration on *Louise Bourgeois: The Blind Leading the Blind*, which was first published in French in 1998, followed by English version in 2008. As Louise sent me off to explore the tracks of her past, she was busy on the other side of the ocean creating her "Cells," a transfiguration of all these buried memories. "Ah, but that's your interpretation, not mine!" she would say. Louise's response was similar when people spoke to her about the sexuality they saw in her work. She once told me that she was very interested in Jean-Martin Charcot's theory of "split personality," because during the creative process she was quite unaware of the sexual connotations that the artworks convey in the end.

Even though Louise has now left us, I can still hear her speaking about her husband's disappearance. "I thought the world was dead, too. But when I looked through the window, I was astounded to see that the cars kept moving and people still walked." That idea of life's continuity is true of Louise. Today and forever her art will be alive. She often said, "Art is truth because it is eternal."

—Mâkhi Xenakis

**MÂKHI XENAKIS** is a French-born artist and author.

## DENNIS HOPPER 1936-2010

*Revisiting an unpublished interview he conducted last year with the late Dennis Hopper, curator Douglas Dreishpoon reflects upon the unconventional career of the artist and actor.*

NO ONE LOOKED more surprised than Dennis Hopper on the morning of May 6, 2009, when he was appointed honorary mayor of Taos, N.M., and presented with a key to the city. Such a tribute would have been unthinkable 42 years earlier, something akin to handing over Gotham City to the Joker. Hopper's portentous appearance in 1967, riding choppers with Peter Fonda through a deserted Taos pueblo during the filming of *Easy Rider*, seemed like an alien invasion to local Taoseños, a perception perpetuated by his countercultural encampment a few years later at the Mabel Dodge Luhan House during postproduction on *The Last Movie* (1970-71). But on that calm spring day last year, a jubilant assembly of artists, reporters and politicians packed the Harwood Museum of Art to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the release of *Easy Rider* and to preview an exhibition of Hopper's paintings and photos, and a show he had organized of the work of his longtime friends and fellow Taos residents Larry Bell, Ron Cooper, Ronald Davis, Ken Price and Dean Stockwell (also an actor). Surrounded by well-wishers, Hopper relished the moment as though it were an auspicious gift.

### CURRENTLY ON VIEW

"Dennis Hopper: Double Standard" at the Geffen Contemporary at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, through Sept. 26.

"I've never had a lot of direction in my life," the 73-year-old admitted with a laugh during our interview at the Harwood three days before the celebration. "I sort of follow the bee, you know, to the honey. It's not like ▷



Dennis Hopper (second from right) at the Harwood Museum with (left to right) Ronald Davis, Ron Cooper, Dean Stockwell and Larry Bell.



- **Heritage Auction Galleries** arrives on the New York scene with the Sept. 1 opening of a 2,500-square-foot street-level space at Park Avenue and 57th Street. Primarily a purveyor of coins, comics, collectibles and celebrity memorabilia, the Dallas-based auctioneer also offers modern and contemporary art and photography. A June 9 auction in Dallas included the record-setting sale of a Bruce Nauman work on paper, *Human Nature* (1983), which went for \$776,750.

## HAVE YOU HEARD?

- On Sept. 22, **Sperone Westwater** opens in its new Norman Foster-designed, eight-story building at 257 Bowery, a block from the New Museum in Manhattan. The inaugural exhibition features recent paintings by **Guillermo Kuitca** and an installation of his 1992 work *Le Sacre*, comprising 54 mattresses, in the gallery's 12-by-20-foot elevatorlike "moving room" [through Nov. 6].
- **Anish Kapoor** has been commissioned to create a sculptural observation tower for the 2012 Summer Olympics in London. To be situated outside the Olympic stadium, the coiling red steel form, incorporating the five Olympic rings, was designed



Anish Kapoor and Cecil Balmond's design for an observation tower at the 2012 London Olympics.

with engineer and architect **Cecil Balmond** of the firm Arup, who collaborated with the artist on his 2002 *Marsyas* at Tate Modern. Titled *ArcelorMittal Orbit*, the 377-foot-tall structure, which like the 443-foot London Eye will provide panoramic views of the city, has an estimated price tag of about \$30 million, \$25 million of which is funded by steel tycoon Lakshmi Mittal. ○

▷ my life is some miraculous thing. I just leave myself open. The trail may not be going that way."<sup>1</sup> The many trails that Hopper blazed during the course of his remarkable life did not always lead to honey. Leaving himself open became a survivalist's credo: a way to rebound and to reinvent himself, time and time again, by simply re-writing the rules of his own game.

If life's dice had landed differently, the restless youth from Dodge City might have become an artist instead

of an actor. But he realized early on that acting, besides being a golden egg, could be the vehicle through which everything else was possible. "Being an actor," he told me, "was a free ride to being able to paint, photograph, write poetry, and to being what a middle-class farm boy from Kansas thinks is an artist." Acting, then, enabled Hopper to realize his broadest artistic inclinations, as did his decision to live in Los Angeles, a center for multiple identities and cross-fertilizations—to establish associations with kindred artists, poets, writers, and experimental filmmakers, like Bruce Conner and Stan Brakhage (both from Kansas), that fueled his creative persona.

If Hopper ever admitted to having a formative influence, it was James Dean, whose method-driven performances in *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955) and *Giant* (1956) deeply impressed the 19-year-old Hollywood hopeful who cut his teeth on the same sets. Hopper idolized Dean, who taught him how "to trick the imaginary line" between one's actions on and off camera, encouraged him to pursue photography and advised him to get to know artists in his spare time, which he did through another close friend, Stockwell, who introduced him to the Stone Brothers print shop in West Los Angeles. Everyone he met there—the print shop's founders, Walter Hopps (who, soon after, launched Ferus Gallery), Wallace Berman and Robert Alexander as well as George Herms and Edward Kienholz—over the years became a photographic subject.

More than tools of painting and sculpture, a portable Nikon, loaded with black-and-white Tri-X film, suited Hopper's quicksilver sensibility, allowing him to capture critical cultural moments with an uncanny sense of timing. "Where did Dennis Hopper come from?" mused Herms. "How many times was he on the scene . . . on the spot . . . in the world of art, Hollywood, the civil rights movement? This gift of being almost prescient is rare."<sup>2</sup> With his return from New York to Los Angeles in 1961, and for the next six years, leading up to the production of *Easy Rider*, Hopper clicked off an astonishing stream of images that document an era of transition. "In a curious way," Hopps recalled in 1986, "what seems special about Hopper's photographs now is that they . . . resemble still shots from movies. Not so much frames from films but still photographs made on the sets and locations of imagined films in progress . . . wonderful ones."<sup>3</sup>

The sets of these imagined films are populated in the main by an expanding circle of musicians and art-world friends, sometimes photographed in public settings, but more often in familiar surroundings: homes and studios. They are candid portraits of a burgeoning West Coast art scene, rough around the edges and manic with energy. Other action scenes—the civil rights march from Selma to Montgomery, for example—depict a tumultuous arena far from Tinseltown. The still shots from this would-be film signify more pressing issues—the quest for freedom and equality against a tide of bigotry and hatred—which would bleed into the script for *Easy Rider*, the film that jump-started Hopper's directorial career but effectively (and regrettably, according to him) ended his initial involvement with photography.

Hopper's Saturnian temperament probably explains why he always trusted artists. The art of others sustained him through ups and downs, divorces and rehabilitations. He plainly liked having art around him, acquiring it with a vengeance from 1961 (when he was living with his first wife, Brooke Hayward, and collecting unemployment checks) until his death. If art offered solace, so did fellow artists, in whose company he relaxed and listened deferentially. That is what I observed on the afternoon of May 4, when he joined Bell, Cooper and Stockwell back at the Harwood to talk about their exhibition and to reminisce.<sup>4</sup> Their brief reunion, full of light-hearted banter, now seems like a reprieve from the unsettling events that followed, as Hopper neared the end of his life's trail. —Douglas Dreishpoon

<sup>1</sup> All Dennis Hopper quotes from an interview conducted by the author at the Harwood Museum of Art, Taos, N.M., May 3, 2009, videotaped and transcribed by the Taos-based Mandelman-Ribak Foundation.

<sup>2</sup> George Herms, "Twine," *Dennis Hopper: A System of Moments*, Ostfildern-Ruit, Germany, Hatje Cantz, 2001, p. 131. <sup>3</sup> Walter Hopps, "Out of the Sixties," *Dennis Hopper: Out of the Sixties*, Pasadena, Twelveteetrees Press, 1988, n.p. <sup>4</sup> A 59-minute video produced by the Mandelman-Ribak Foundation documents the panel.

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Dennis Hopper: *Selma, Alabama* (U.S. historians), 1965.