EXHIBITION FACT SHEET

Title: **Anxious Objects: Willie Cole's Favorite Brands**

When: January 21–March 11, 2007

Description: Fun, funky and provocative, Willie Cole’s art explores identity, race relations, consumerism, the environment and other contemporary concerns. Bicycles, irons, hair dryers and high-heeled shoes are among the urban artifacts he transforms into powerful, iconic, “Africanized” works.

Contents: 31 works created between 1988 and 2006

Exhibition party: Saturday, January 20, 8–11 pm

Lectures: Artist Willie Cole (Sunday, January 21, 2 pm); choreographer Garth Fagan (Thursday, February 1, 7 pm). *For details see attached release.*

Family day: Sunday, February 4 from noon to 4, all ages will enjoy art activities, music and dance, storytelling, exhibition tours. *For details see attached release.*

Hours: Wednesday–Sunday 11 am–5 pm and Thursday until 9 pm. Closed Mondays and Tuesdays.

Admission: $7; college students with ID and senior citizens, $5; children 6–18, $3. Reduced admission Thursdays 5–9 pm, $2. Always free to MAG members, UR students and children 5 and under. Reduced general admission, $2, Thursdays from 5–9.

Credits: This exhibition was organized by the Montclair Art Museum with support from the State of New Jersey, Department of Treasury; Agnes Gund and Daniel Shapiro; the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts; Altria Group, Inc.; Ruth and William True; Merrill Lynch; the Cowles Charitable Trust; the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State, a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts; and by funds from the Judith Targan Endowment Fund for Museum Publications of the Montclair Art Museum. In Rochester, it is made possible in part by the members of the Memorial Art Gallery.

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MAG EXHIBITION FEATURES POWERFUL, ICONIC WORKS BY CONTEMPORARY ARTIST WILLIE COLE


Fun, funky and provocative, Cole’s art transforms such urban artifacts as bicycles, irons, hair dryers and high-heeled shoes into powerful, iconic works as it explores and reinterprets African tribal art, global culture and personal identity.

At MAG, the exhibition includes a work that’s not part of the original tour—a monumental chessboard from a private collection, with lawn jockey playing pieces.

It’s not the first time Cole’s work has been shown at MAG. Extreme Materials, which opened in January 2006, featured one of his steam iron sculptures. And it won’t be the last. The Gallery recently acquired a work from Anxious Objects for the permanent collection. Fashioned from bicycle parts, Sears Ross tji wara (mother and child) (2002) reimagines a ritual headdress from the west African nation of Mali.

Anxious Objects remains on view through March 11.

About the exhibition title
The term “anxious objects” was coined by American art critic Harold Rosenberg (1906–1978). A champion of Abstract Expressionism, Rosenberg used the term to refer to objects that have a strong cultural identity and energy—objects that Cole calls the “battery.”

“I lived in Newark in the 70s and 80s when assemblage was king,” says Cole of such objects in the exhibition catalog, “and discovered that the sudden addition or omission of a single ‘thing’ could render an assemblage dead or alive.”

About the artist
Born in 1955, Willie Cole is a lifelong resident of New Jersey. His artistic ability was apparent from the age of three, when his mother enrolled him in Saturday children’s art classes at the Newark Museum. He was accepted at Newark’s respected Arts High School, where he majored in fashion design. In Manhattan, where he commuted after graduation, he received his BFA at the School of Visual Arts and studied at the Art Students League.


December 26, 2006
The earliest work in *Anxious Objects* dates from 1988, when Cole was an artist-in-residence at the Studio Museum in Harlem. It was at this time that his artistic vision matured and he began assembling artifacts from a throwaway culture into iconic artworks. It was also at this time that he began using one of his signature motifs—the steam iron.

For Cole, the iron has personal meaning. His parents separated when he was 11, leaving him and an older sister in a woman-centered family. As man of the house, he frequently repaired broken irons for his mother and grandmother, both housekeepers. But it wasn’t until much later that he realized their artistic potential.

Not only does Cole use steam irons, cords and plates as components of his sculptures, he also uses irons to create scorch marks on paper, ironing boards, even—in works such as *Man Spirit Mask* (1999)—his own photograph. The patterns recall African masks and shields and bring to mind ritual scarification.


He lives and works in Mine Hill, New Jersey.

**Special events**

These include an exhibition party (January 20); a lecture by the artist (January 21); an educators’ inservice (January 24); a lecture by choreographer Garth Fagan (February 1); and a family day (February 4).

**Hours and admission**

The Gallery is open Wednesday-Sunday from 11 am to 5 pm and Thursday until 9 pm.

General admission is $7; college students with ID and senior citizens, $5; children 6–18, $3; always free to MAG members, UR students and children 5 and under. Reduced general admission from 5 to 9 pm Thursdays is $2.

**Sponsors**

*Anxious Objects* was organized by the Montclair Art Museum with support from the State of New Jersey, Department of Treasury; Agnes Gund and Daniel Shapiro; the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts; Altria Group, Inc.; Ruth and William True; Merrill Lynch; the Cowles Charitable Trust; the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State, a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts; and by funds from the Judith Targan Endowment Fund for Museum Publications of the Montclair Art Museum. In Rochester, it is made possible in part by the members of the Memorial Art Gallery.
National tour
Anxious Objects opened in March 2006 at the Monclair (NJ) Art Museum, and went next to the Sheldon Memorial Art Museum in Lincoln, NE. After it closes in Rochester, it travels to the Birmingham (AL) Museum of Art; the Frye Art Museum in Seattle; and the Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts at Stanford University in Palo Alto, CA.

Catalog
A fully illustrated, soft-cover catalog ($29.95) is available in the Gallery Store.

MAG website
http://mag.rochester.edu

Press contacts:
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EXHIBITION PARTY:
Anxious Objects: Willie Cole’s Favorite Brands

Saturday, January 20, 8–11 pm (Patrons 6–8 pm)
MAG supporter members and above free; associate members $8; non-members and guests $15; advance tickets required*

* For recorded information call 473-7720, ext. 3510. Tickets for nonmembers only are also available at Wegmans Customer Service Counters (surcharge applies).
Programs and Events:
Anxious Objects: Willie Cole’s Favorite Brands

Lectures (free with gallery admission)
Sunday, January 21, 2 pm
Artist Willie Cole (pictured)

Thursday, February 1, 7 pm
Tony Award-winning choreographer Garth Fagan on the making of The Lion King

Family Day (free admission)
Sunday, February 4, noon–4 pm
Enjoy a demonstration by members of Garth Fagan Dance, a tribute to Ella Fitzgerald with vocalist Whitney Marchelle and trombonist Wycliffe Gordon, storytelling, art activities, and tours of Anxious Objects. Offered in conjunction with Black History Month.

Sponsored by Ortho-Clinical Diagnostics, a Johnson & Johnson Company, and the Marie C. and Joseph C. Wilson Foundation, with additional support from the Rochester City School District.

Guided Exhibition Tours (free with gallery admission)
Sunday, January 21: 1, 2 and 3 pm
Fridays and Sundays, January 26–March 11: 2 pm

Especially for Educators
Wednesday, January 24, 4–6:30 pm / $30
This inservice explores the art of the self-portrait through tours of Anxious Objects, presentations, refreshments and classroom materials.

For reservations, contact Kerry Donovan, 473-7720, ext. 3072 (kdonovan@mag.rochester.edu).

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CHECKLIST:
Anxious Objects: Willie Cole’s Favorite Brands
January 21–March 11, 2007

WORKS BY WILLIE COLE
(AMERICAN, B. 1955)

Dog Eat Dog, 1988
Pencil, wood, nails, and objects mounted on wood
Collection of the artist

High Security Jacket for Executives Only, 1988
Woven steel and found metal object
Collection of Clement Alexander Price

Neo-Senufo, 1988
Assemblage of found objects and concrete
Collection of Dennis A. Derryck

Collage I, 1990
Photocopy paper mounted on paper
Collection of the artist

Air in Remission, 1990
Mixed media with hairdryers, metal, and wire
Courtesy of Alexander and Bonin, New York

Wind Mask East, 1990
Hair dryers
Shelton Memorial Art Gallery and Sculpture Garden, University of Nebraska–Lincoln, UNL; Robert E. Schweser and Fern Beardsley Schweser Acquisition Fund

Domestic Shield I, 1992
Scorched canvas on wood with ironing board legs
Collection of Carolyn Alexander

Domestic Shield IV, 1992
Scorched canvas on wood with ironing board legs
Collection of Ruth and Bil Ehrlich

Domestic Shield XI, 1992
Scorched canvas on wood with ironing board legs
Private Collection

How Do You Spell America? #2, 1993
Oilstick and latex on Masonite and wood
Collection of The Bronx Museum of the Arts, New York
Gift of Jennifer McSweeney

America I, 1993
China marker on cloth on board
Hort Family Collection

Made in the Philippines, 1993
High-heeled shoes and mixed media
Courtesy of Alexander and Bonin, New York

Rosa Parks, 1994
Shoes, wood, wire, and screws
Collection of Frederieke S. Taylor

Sunflower, 1994
Scorched canvas and lacquer on padded wood
Tampa Museum of Art
Museum purchase

600%, 1996
Shellac, enamel and rubber on plywood with found bannisters
Private Collection, courtesy of Alexander and Bonin, New York

Gas Snake with Blue Nozzle, 1996
Mixed media, aluminum tubing with gas nozzle
Collection of Jereann and Robert Chaney

Stowage, 1997
Woodblock on kozo-shi paper, edition of 16
Private Collection

House and Field, 1997
Mixed media
Private Collection

Domestic Degrees, 1998
Scorches on paper in wood window frame with glass
Collection of Ann Hatch

G.E. Mask and Scarification, 1998
Two panels, sandblasted glass with wood
Collection of Catherine Woodard and Nelson Blitz, Jr.

Water Window Female Iron Figure, 1998
Metal iron parts, cord and concrete
Private Collection

Man Spirit Mask, 1999
Collaborating printers: Randy Hemminghaus and Gail Deery

Man: Photo-etching, embossing, and hand-coloring on Somerset antique white paper

Spirit: screenprint with lemon juice and scorching, and hand-applied heat gun on Rutgers handmade paper

Mask: Photo-etching with woodcut on Somerset Antique White paper

Courtesy of Alexander and Bonin, New York
Produced at Rutgers Center for Innovative Print and Paper
Pleasure, 2000
Vitreous china and altered plumbingware fixtures
Courtesy of Alexander and Bonin, New York

Malcolm’s Chickens I, 2002
Matches, brooms, wax, Styrofoam, and marbles
Collection of James Sokol and Lydia Cheney

Mother and Child, 2002
Sheet metal and plastic
Collection of the Montclair Art Museum
Purchase and gift of the Collectors Forum

Quick as a Wink, 2002
Iris print on paper, edition of 12
Collection of the Montclair Art Museum
Gift of Patricia and Charles Selden
Produced at Rutgers Center for Innovative Print and Paper

Sears Ross tji wara (mother and child), 2002
Bicycle parts
Memorial Art Gallery, Maurice R. and Maxine B. Forman Fund
(recent acquisition)

Home Hero, 2003
G.E., Black & Decker, Sunbeam, and Hoover irons and cords
Ann and Mel Schaffer Family Collection, New Jersey

Silex Male, Ritual, 2004
Collaborating Printer: Josh Azzarella
Ultra Chrome archival inks on paper, edition of 12
Collection of the Montclair Art Museum
Gift of Patricia A. Bell
Produced at the Rutgers Center for Innovative Print and Paper

Sole Protector, 2005
Shoes, PVC pipe, painted wood table, metal, and screws
Courtesy of Alexander and Bonin, New York

Pretty in Pink, 2005–06
Shoes, wood, metal pipe, screws, and staples
Courtesy of Alexander and Bonin, New York

MEMORIAL ART GALLERY ONLY

To get to the other side, 2001
32 cast concrete lawn jockeys, mixed media, galvanized steel, and wood
Collection of Peter Norton, Santa Monica