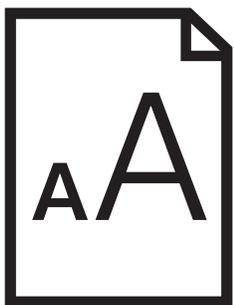


# TO MY BEST FRIEND

On View  
Jan 23 –  
Dec 31, 2026



Large Format  
Text

**ICA**

# To My Best Friend

In the twenty years since the ICA formed a collection in 2006, the collection has grown to encompass almost 500 works of art, spanning painting, sculpture, photography, installation, and beyond. At the heart of the ICA Collection are artists who expand the canon of contemporary art, sharing the same spirit of innovation that defines the museum's exhibitions. Longtime friends and supporters of the ICA, Fotene Demoulas and Tom Coté have played a vital role in shaping this growing collection. Their deep engagement with the ICA reflects a shared belief in the power of contemporary art to build community and expand visibility for diverse voices. The exhibition, *To My Best Friend*, highlights works Demoulas and Coté have supported, promised, or gifted to the museum, uplifting our mutual commitment to championing historically underrepresented — particularly women — artists at every stage of their careers.

The show borrows its title from the opening artwork by Lorna Simpson, *To My Best Friend*, which evokes the warmth and reciprocity at the heart of the ICA's story — one built on enduring relationships among artists, audiences, and collectors. Tracing the evolution of contemporary art across generations, styles, and themes, the exhibition celebrates the bonds that have defined the ICA for the past ninety years and continue to inspire its future.

*To My Best Friend* is organized by Erika Umali, Curator of Collections

This exhibition is funded, in part, with support from Leadership in Arts Museums, an initiative to create more racial equity in art museum leadership, supported by the Ford Foundation, Mellon Foundation, Pilot House Philanthropy, and Alice L. Walton Foundation.

# Labels

Lorna Simpson

Born 1960 in New York

*To My Best Friend*, 2013

Found photographs, gold embossed drawings, and bronze  
Promised gift of Fotene Demoulas and Tom Coté

The ICA has presented the work of pioneering contemporary artists since its inception, including the work of Lorna Simpson, which was first exhibited at the museum in the 1988 exhibition, *Utopia Post Utopia: Configurations of Nature and Culture in Recent Sculpture and Photography*. The ICA later recognized her as the second recipient of the museum's Meraki Artist Award. At the core of Simpson's practice is an interrogation of perspective and authorship—questioning whose stories get told, and how race, gender, and language shape those narratives. For *To My Best Friend*, she assembled over one hundred found elements, largely photo booth portraits of unidentified Black individuals. Introduced in 1925, photo booths offered a democratic means of self-representation, which Simpson transforms into a meditation on memory, absence, and identity, reinforced by the dispersed blank pieces.

Deborah Roberts  
Born 1962 in Austin, TX  
*Becoming*, 2021

Mixed media and collage on canvas

Promised gift of Fotene Demoulas and Tom Coté

Deborah Roberts — first included in the ICA exhibition program in the 2022 show *To Begin Again: Artists and Childhood* — creates semi-autobiographical mixed media collages with larger-than-life figures that meet the viewer's gaze, emphasizing eye contact as a means of human connection and resistance to dehumanization. Centering Black children, her work examines the stereotypes and social constructs imposed upon them, shaped by a dominant white gaze. Roberts has described this work as a self-portrait, depicting a young girl with one arm across her body, the other resting on an unseen ledge, and her knees drawn together — gestures that suggest youthful bashfulness. At the same time, her direct gaze and frontal stance assert a growing sense of confidence. Through layered digital and found images of Black youth combined with drawing, paint, and patterned materials, Roberts constructs composite portraits that affirm agency, self-representation, and the multiplicity of Black identity.

R. H. Quaytman  
Born 1961 in Boston  
*+ x, Chapter 34, 2018*

Indigo distemper, acrylic, silkscreen ink, silver glitter,  
gouache, watercolor, and gesso on wood

Promised gift of Fotene Demoulas and Tom Coté

R. H. Quaytman had her first museum exhibition at the ICA in 2009 as part of the museum's Momentum series, which highlighted emerging artists. For the presentation, the Boston-born artist created works inspired by the ICA's programming, reflecting her practice of referencing both art and museum history. This piece responds to the series of works, *Paintings for the Temple (1906–15)*, by Hilma af Klint, considered to be the first Western artist to work in abstraction — a recognition previously attributed to a male artist. It revisits themes Quaytman first explored while curating an exhibition of af Klint in 1989 in New York. The work continues her ongoing exploration of self-organized bodies of work she refers to as “chapters.”

Olga de Amaral  
Born 1932 in Bogotá, Colombia  
*Bruma W*, 2018

From the series *Bruma*, 2013–2018

Linen, cotton, gesso, acrylic, Japanese paper, and wood

Promised gift of Fotene Demoulas and Tom Coté

Olga de Amaral first gained international acclaim in the 1960s and '70s for reconciling traditional weaving with contemporary art. The ICA included her work in the 2014 exhibition *Fiber: Sculpture 1960–Present*, the first major U.S. survey in forty years of fiber-based art. *Bruma W*, part of the Colombian-born and -based artist's *Bruma* series, continues her exploration of materiality, scale, and space. Delicate, painted threads form geometric shapes that shift with the viewer's perspective, evoking its title, *bruma* — Spanish for mist. Amaral's pioneering practice confronts historical biases that marginalized fiber arts, bringing greater visibility to women artists long overlooked.



Installation view, *Fiber Sculpture: 1960–present*, Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston, 2014–15. Photo by Charles Mayer Photography.

Njideka Akunyili Crosby  
Born 1983 in Enugu, Nigeria  
*Facets: Screen Wall, 2016*

Acrylic, colored pencil, and collage on paper

Promised gift of Fotene Demoulas and Tom Coté

The ICA has followed the celebrated Nigerian-born, Los Angeles-based Njideka Akunyili Crosby's thoughtful and deliberate engagement with portraiture since first exhibiting her work in 2020. *Facets: Screen Wall* reflects the artist's exploration of African diasporic identity through layered collage and painting. Here, Akunyili Crosby reimagines the decorative breeze blocks — bricks with cut outs that filter air and light while offering partial privacy — common in Nigerian architecture. Within their geometric gaps, vignettes drawn from her life and personal photographs appear, blurring distinctions between public and private while revealing the intimate, multifaceted nature of individual and cultural visibility.

Jaune Quick-to-See Smith  
Born 1940 in St. Ignatius Mission Parish,  
Saint Ignatius, MT; died 2025 in Corrales, NM  
*I See Red: Indian Heart, 1993*

From the series *I See Red*, 1992–96

Mixed media on canvas

Collection of Fotene Demoulas and Tom Coté

The artist Jaune Quick-to-See Smith has been widely recognized as a matriarch of contemporary Indigenous American art through her activism, support of other Native artists, and curatorial practice since the 1970s. Her work was included in the exhibition *An Indigenous Present* (2025–26) by guest curator and artist, Jeffrey Gibson, and independent curator, Jenelle Porter. *I See Red: Indian Heart* was created in response to the quincentennial of Christopher Columbus’s arrival in the Americas. The series title evokes both blinding anger and a critical engagement with the racial slur “redskin.” Through layered mixed media, Quick-to-See Smith asserts visibility and political critique in contemporary art.

Njideka Akunyili Crosby  
Born 1983 in Enugu, Nigeria  
*“The Beautiful Ones” Series #7, 2018*

From the series *The Beautiful Ones*, 2014–ongoing  
Acrylic, colored pencil, and transfers on paper

Acquired through the generosity of Fotene Demoulas and  
Tom Coté, in honor of Eva Respini

This was the first work of Nigerian-born, Los Angeles-based artist Njideka Akunyili Crosby to enter the ICA Collection and it was later shown in the museum’s 2020 exhibition *i’m yours: Encounters with Art in Our Times*. Akunyili Crosby combines photographs from family albums and personal travels with imagined scenes of intergenerational memory and possibility in this ongoing series, *The Beautiful Ones*. Here, a young girl with folded arms regards the viewer, standing between several vehicles whose surfaces reflect and contain images from the artist’s archive. Through this layered approach, Akunyili Crosby illuminates the complexities of contemporary life, African diasporic identity, and intergenerational hope.

Lynette Yiadom-Boakye  
Born 1977 in London  
*The Much-Vaunted Air*, 2017

Oil on canvas

Promised gift of Fotene Demoulas and Tom Coté

Lynette Yiadom-Boakye first exhibited at the ICA in the 2018 show *ICA Collection: Entangled in the Everyday*.

A leading portrait painter of her generation, she invents fictional subjects from found images and her imagination, untethering them from time and place. In *The Much-Vaunted Air*, Yiadom-Boakye depicts a dancer offstage. Dancers are a common subject of traditional Western art, but one that rarely centers Black subjects. Her poetic depictions invite broad interpretation, probing the politics of representation and the historical absence of Black subjects in Western painting.

Rose B. Simpson  
Born 1983 in Santa Clara Pueblo, NM  
*Legacy*, 2022

Clay, glaze, and grout

Collection of Fotene Demoulas and Tom Coté

This work premiered in 2022 in *Legacies*, a solo exhibition of multidisciplinary artist Rose B. Simpson at the ICA. The artist was raised in a multigenerational, matrilineal family of clay artists, who combined contemporary techniques with those dating back to the sixth century. Simpson's work explores the impact of family, gender, and marginalization. In *Legacy*, she depicts a mother-daughter pair; their shared features and subtle differences, intimate embrace and spatial distance suggest the complexities of motherhood and youthful independence. The piece bridges tradition and innovation, highlighting the vitality of contemporary art and underscoring how ancestral knowledge continues to shape artists working today.



Installation view, *Rose B. Simpson: Legacies*, Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston, 2022–23. Photo by Mel Taing.

Deana Lawson  
Born 1979 in Rochester, NY  
*Daenare*, 2019

Pigment print

Fotene Demoulas and Tom Coté Art Acquisition Fund

The ICA has long amplified innovative contemporary photographers, including Deana Lawson, whose first museum survey was organized by the ICA in 2021 and included this photograph. Lawson's staged yet intimate images expand portraiture and challenge conventional representations of Black life, establishing her as a leading voice in photography today. In *Daenare*, she depicts a young Black woman in Brazil whose languid pose, emphasizing her pregnancy, recalls Western art's canonical femme nude. The subject's only adornment, an ankle monitor, points to the surveillance, visibility, and vulnerability of Black bodies, reflecting Lawson's engagement with social and cultural realities.



Installation view, Deana Lawson, Institute of Contemporary Art/  
Boston, 2021–22. Photo by Mel Taing.

Becky Suss

Born 1980 in Philadelphia

*8 Greenwood Place (1985–88), 2021*

From the series *Greenwood Place*, 2020–22

Oil on canvas

Promised gift of Fotene Demoulas and Tom Coté

Philadelphia-born and -based painter Becky Suss was first included in the ICA's exhibition program in 2022 in *To Begin Again: Artists and Childhood*. This painting, part of her *Greenwood Place* series (2020–22), depicts the artist's remembered childhood bedroom. While specific objects and patterns reflect certain childhood memories, exaggerated perspective and proportion underscore how recollections of early life can shift with age. In the dollhouse windows, Suss details scenes from beloved children's books. Her attention to the home reflects her commitment to honor the overlooked and undervalued spaces and labor associated with women.

Vivian Suter  
Born 1949 in Buenos Aires

*Untitled*, n.d.

*Untitled*, n.d.

*Untitled*, n.d.

Mixed media on canvas

Promised gift of Fotene Demoulas and Tom Coté

The ICA first presented the work of Vivian Suter in a self-titled solo exhibition in 2019. Known for her abstract paintings on unstretched, untreated canvases, the artist creates and then leaves her works outdoors, allowing flora, fauna, and the natural elements to leave impressions that blend with her paint. Suter's process emphasizes the role of natural forces in her art, resulting in work that resists representing a fixed or defined landscape. The *en plein air* painter prefers her work layered and suspended in space, without a predefined order or arrangement, echoing her studio space.

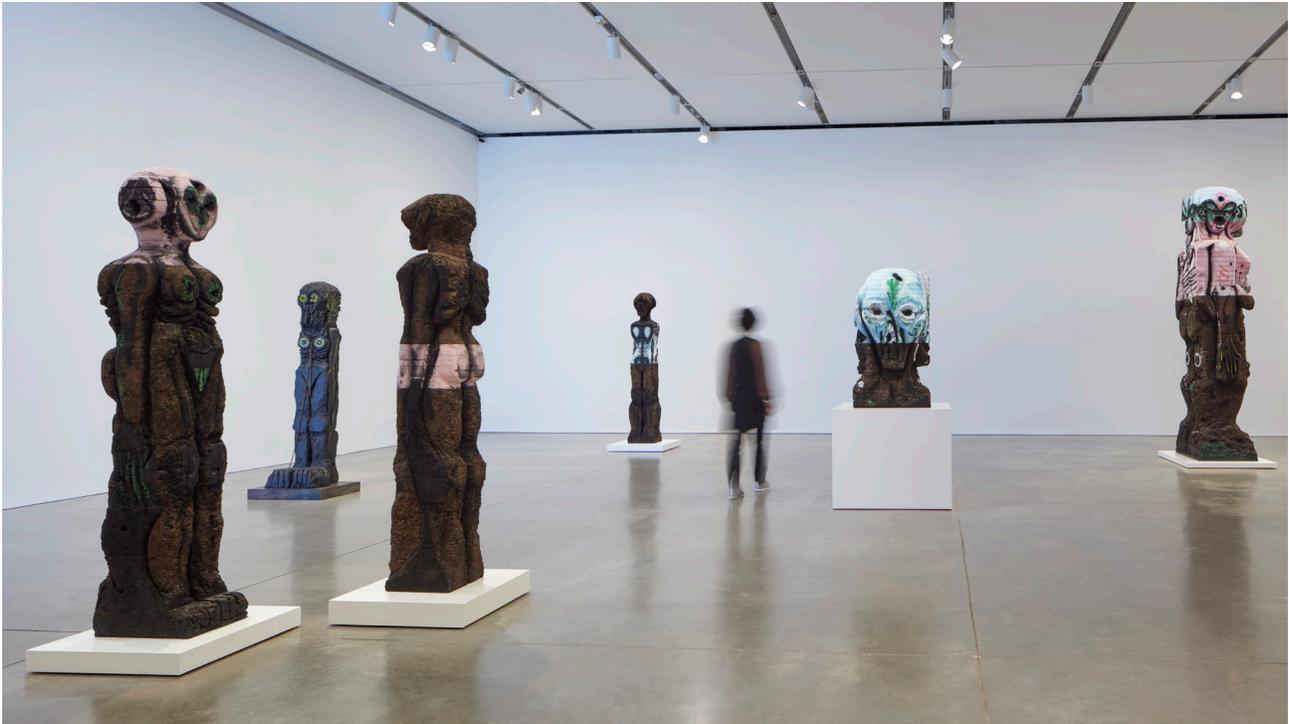


Installation view, *Vivian Suter*, Institute of Contemporary Art/ Boston, 2019. Photo by Charles Mayer Photography.

Huma Bhabha  
Born 1962 in Karachi, Pakistan  
*With Blows*, 2015

Cork, Styrofoam, acrylic paint, oil stick, nail polish, and wood  
Collection of Fotene Demoulas and Tom Coté

This sculpture was presented at the ICA in 2019, as part of one of the largest surveys to date of Pakistani-American artist Huma Bhabha. Born in Karachi, Pakistan, Bhabha moved to the U.S. in 1981 to attend the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence, RI. The artist is known for creating sculptures that combine a vast array of materials like cork, clay, Styrofoam, nail polish, and bronze. Bhabha investigates the vulnerability and strangeness of figures in her innovative practice. This totemic sculpture challenges our sense of the uncanny, prompting reflection on the shift from curiosity to discomfort or fear.



Installation view, *Huma Bhabha: They Live*, Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston, 2019. Photo by Charles Mayer Photography.

Charline von Heyl  
Born 1960 in Mainz, Germany  
*Guitar Gangster*, 2013

Acrylic on canvas

Gift of Fotene Demoulas and Tom Coté

Charline von Heyl was a central figure in Cologne's 1980s art scene before moving to New York in the mid-1990s, where her work developed the intense color and form for which she is best known. *Guitar Gangster* was painted the year after her first U.S. museum survey, hosted by the ICA in 2012. Von Heyl creates images from imagination rather than from observation. Here, she reenacts methods of Cubism and investigates the deconstructed guitar — an important subject for modernists like Pablo Picasso. Juxtaposing color, gesture, and shapes within a loose grid, von Heyl exemplifies her inventive approach to painting.



Installation view, *Charline von Heyl*, Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston, 2012. Photo by Charles Mayer Photography.

Laura Owens  
Born 1970 in Euclid, OH  
*Untitled, 2016*

Flashe and screen printing ink on dyed linen  
Gift of Fotene Demoulas and Tom Coté

The ICA first showed this painting by Laura Owens in the 2018 exhibition *Art in the Age of the Internet, 1989 to Today*. The artist creates complex visual narratives through compositions of figuration, abstraction, pop culture, and technology. In this painting, the dyed pink and blue squares taken from a Garfield cartoon background are layered with patterned lemons, an illustration of a ship in a bottle, and a cartoon thought bubble with a pixelated milk container. The images, drawn from a range of sources, are nested together, creating tension between depth and flatness and demonstrating her humorous and skillful approach to painting.

Sarah Sze

Born 1969 in Boston

*Surround Sound (After Studio)*, 2019

Oil, acrylic, acrylic polymers, ink, aluminum, archival paper,  
Dibond, and wood

Gift of Fotene Demoulas and Tom Coté

Sarah Sze was first featured at the ICA in 2011 in the exhibition *Dance/Draw* as part of a performance collaboration with dancer and choreographer Trajal Harrell where she stripped her palette down to a single blue string. Two years later, the Boston-born and New York-based artist represented the U.S. at the 55th Venice Biennale, and in 2025, the ICA recognized Sze as the first recipient of the museum's Meraki Artist Award. Her work explores the space where art, everyday materials, and architecture meet. In *Surround Sound (After Studio)*, Sze includes printed images, Post-its, mirrored surfaces, and other materials to create a studio-like environment. "After" is often used in titles of artworks that reference another artist's work, but, here, Sze "copies" her own studio through this multi-media painting, continuing this investigation of the intersection of art and environment.



Trajal Harrell and Christina Vasileiou in *The Untitled Still Life Collection*, by Trajal Harrell and Sarah Sze, 2011, as part of *Dance/Draw*, Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston, 2011–12. Photo by Jaye Phillips.

Mickalene Thomas  
Born 1971 in Camden, NJ  
*Monet's Salon, 2012*

Rhinestones, acrylic, oil, and enamel on wood panel  
Promised gift of Fotene Demoulas and Tom Coté

Multidisciplinary artist Mickalene Thomas had one of her earliest solo museum shows at the ICA in 2012. Thomas is known for her large-scale, bejeweled female portraits and domestic interiors, blending Western painting traditions with contemporary popular culture. Thomas draws from art histories ranging from nineteenth-century French painting to the collage work of the Harlem Renaissance artist Romare Bearden. Created following her 2011 artist residency at the home and gardens of Claude Monet in Giverny, France, *Monet's Salon* reinterprets these influences to challenge conventional definitions of Black femininity, exploring beauty, sexuality, race, and gender.



**Pierre Choumoff, Claude Monet, French painter, in his house. Giverny, France, ca. 1915–1920. Silver gelatin print.**



**View of Claude Monet's Studio/Lounge, Ground Floor,  
House and Gardens of Claude Monet, 84 Claude Monet Street,  
Giverny, France.**

Roni Horn

Born 1955 in New York

*Untitled (Weather)*, 2010–11

Chromogenic color prints

Promised gift of Fotene Demoulas and Tom Cot  

Roni Horn's 2010 survey exhibition at the ICA, *Roni Horn aka Roni Horn*, highlighted the artist's role as a pioneering contemporary artist. Through her multi-media practice, Horn encourages viewers to consider human experience in relation to the environment. The exhibition included *You are the weather* (1994–95), an installation comprising ninety-four photographs of Icelandic artist Margr  t Haraldsd  ttir Bl  ndal in Iceland's geothermal pools, capturing expressions shaped by the country's unpredictable climate. *Untitled (Weather)*, part of a later extension of this work, continues Horn's exploration of perception, environment, and identity, picturing Bl  ndal through a screen of mist and water droplets.



Installation view, *You are the weather*, 1994-95. 36 silver gelatin prints and 64 chromogenic prints. Installation dimensions variable; each 10 1/2 × 8 1/2 inches (27 × 22 cm). *Roni Horn aka Roni Horn*, Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston, 2010. Photo by Charles Mayer Photography.