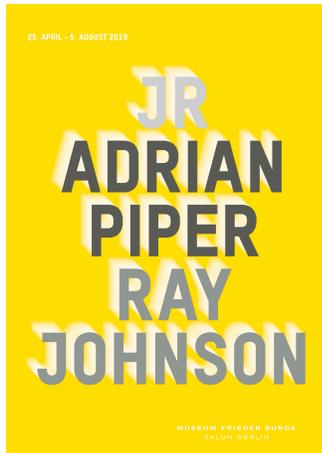


MUSEUM FRIEDER BURDA  
SALON BERLIN



**JR – ADRIAN PIPER – RAY JOHNSON**

**Opening:** April 24, 2019, 7–9 pm

**Press preview:** April 24, 2019, 12 noon – 2 pm, registration required

**Duration:** April 25 through August 5, 2019

**“Mail-Art has no history, only a present.” This statement made by Ray Johnson in 1977 has probably never been more true than in the context of today’s correspondence and communication behavior, specifically concerning social networks. Online, everything exists in the present moment. The information we create and circulate is transported by media without hierarchy or centrality, developing the artificial intelligence of tomorrow. Social networking as facilitated by the internet has restructured global society.**

**In this exhibition, Salon Berlin of Museum Frieder Burda brings together three artists from different generations, with different roots and strategies, who share a common focus: an appeal to the viewer to become actively involved in the artwork, allowing it to fulfil its true purpose: only this “pact” between artist and audience brings the often ephemeral artwork to its intended completion.**

**An artwork always anticipates its relation to the viewer,** which is intrinsic and immanent to its being. A painting suggests an ideal viewer position, offering the canvas as a window looking out on a different world. A sculpture in space demands that the viewer walk around it, adopting different positions; only such changes of perspective allow the work to be perceived in three-dimensions. The theatrical and media arts demand an investment of time for viewing. Since Marcel Duchamp, and since the advent of Conceptual Art, artists have often tried to render the “dictates” of the artwork productive, taking an ironic approach. What power does an artwork have? How instructive can it be? What can be achieved by providing instructions for its use thus turning the viewer into an accomplice?

**Ray Johnson, Adrian Piper, and JR:** in the work of all three artists, interacting in an art context becomes a model for social interaction and participatory commitment. The result is art that seeks to establish a sense of inter-engagement and belonging to a global community, transcending differences in language, religion, and ideology: emancipating the viewer to collaborate with the artist stimulates political articulation, drives a self-conscious approach to lived democratic responsibility, and raises awareness of the importance of the individual voice. While the “father of mail-art” **Ray Johnson** (b. 1927, Detroit, d. 1995, New York) used the gesture of communication and interaction is central to his mail art practice and as a stylistic device in his collages, the diversity of the work of conceptual artist **Adrian Piper** (b. 1948, New York) reflects an open understanding of art that links the personal with the political. For multimedia artist **JR** (b. 1983, Paris), meanwhile, the cityscape becomes a canvas for large-scale black-and-white collages that aim to activate the participative forces of local residents. All three are concerned with abolishing the classical boundaries of the artwork, linking art and life, and upending elitist definitions of art.

PRESS RELEASE

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**Artistic director and curator Patricia Kamp on the exhibition:** “While preparing this show, we were often surprised by the intensity of the dialog between the works of Ray Johnson, Adrian Piper, and JR. This reminded us once again that we do not live as individuals surrounded by meaningless, isolated facts, but that we are part of a multitude of references, correspondences, and encounters that connect us with other people and the world. We very much hope that our visitors will share this experience. The way the art on show touches people by rendering visible their faces and voices for more humanity and an open society is both enriching and a key aspect of this exhibition.”

**Please find further information about the exhibited works of the three artists hereinafter.**

**Information**

The exhibition was realized in close cooperation with the Ray Johnson Estate and the artists.

**Special opening hours during Gallery Weekend**

Thu, 25. April, 10am –8pm

Fr, 26. April, 10am – 9pm

Sat, 27. April, 11am– 6pm

Sun, 28. April, 11am – 6pm

**Opening hours**

Thursday to Saturday, 12 noon – 6pm

**Concurrently at the Museum Frieder Burda in Baden-Baden**

ENSEMBLE. CENTRE POMPIDOU – MUSEUM FRIEDER BURDA (April 6 – September 29, 2019)

**Preview**

KARIN KNEFFEL (October 12, 2019 – March 8, 2020)

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**RAY JOHNSON**

**In close collaboration with the Ray Johnson Estate (1927–1995)**, Salon Berlin presents thirty collages made between 1971 and 1994 by the American artist. Johnson’s fascinating works, forerunners to pop-art, as well as his status as the “father of mail art”, have given him a legendary reputation among experts and practitioners. After completion of his studies at the famous avant-garde Black Mountain College in North Carolina, Johnson moved to New York in 1948. Basing his work on examples of Dadaist collages, he developed small scale collages called “moticos” that played with formal processes of abstraction with tender drawings, newspaper and magazine cuttings, brands and trademarks and other random elements, compressing them into subversive material treasures. His collages thrive on the interrelations between their components and unexpected correspondences in which time and space are compressed.

**From the outset, he had little time for the established institutions of the art world**, often defying their conditions in the presentation of his work. In the late 1950s, seeking a directly accessible form of free art distribution, he developed the practice of sending collages to friends and acquaintances. This in turn led to the emergence of the Mail Art movement as continuing network of people. In 1962, as an early form of Net Art, Johnson later began sending letters marked “Please Add To And Return To Ray Johnson” that eventually led to the New York Correspondance School (NYCS). By appropriating American mass media and drawing inspiration from pop culture in his work from the early 1950s, Johnson’s clever and hyper perceptive art put him one step ahead of pop art heroes such as Andy Warhol, Jasper Johns or Robert Rauschenberg.

**In 1968, after Valerie Solanas shot Andy Warhol** and Johnson was threatened at knifepoint in the streets of New York, Johnson left Manhattan and withdrew to a small town outside of the city where he continued to work in a self imposed reclusiveness. On Friday January 13, 1995, Johnson was last seen backstroking out to the sea. The circumstances surrounding his death remain unresolved and a mysterious, possibly “curated” suicide is often referred to as his “final performance.”

**In 1999, the Whitney Museum in New York gave him a posthumous retrospective.** From 2020, various shows at major American museums will refocus attention on his oeuvre. The works on show are drawn from the Frieder Burda Collection and the Ray Johnson Estate in New York.

**At the same time, Salon Berlin invites visitors to take part in the collaboration *Museum Frieder Burda | Salon Berlin x Ray Johnson Project featuring the New York Correspondence School*.** The aim of this project is to continue the legacy of the NYCS. Some of Johnson’s original *Please Add To And Return* sheets will be available for visitors to creatively modify and then return to sender. The Frieze NY fair in early May brings together many surprising and amusing contributions that can be viewed here: [www.friezeny.com](http://www.friezeny.com).

**For further information about Ray Johnson, please visit:**  
[www.rayjohnsonestate.com](http://www.rayjohnsonestate.com)

**MUSEUM FRIEDER BURDA**  
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**ADRIAN PIPER**

In recent years, **Adrian Piper (b. 1948, New York)** has been rediscovered as one of America's leading conceptual artists. She had recently been awarded the Golden Lion at the Venice Biennale and the Käthe-Kollwitz-Prize from Berlin's Akademie der Künste; her retrospective at MoMA in New York was the largest one-person show ever organized by the museum. The artist, who is also a professional philosopher, links the personal and the political in her work. As a woman of African heritage who deliberately "left" the United States to live in exile in Berlin, she introduced issues such as xenophobia, gender, and race into the vocabulary of Conceptual Art early in her career. Her media are as traditional as they are unconventional; they include performance, painting, drawing, installation, and film. Her artistic works bring together Immanuel Kant, funk music, and yoga. Her autobiographical book *Escape to Berlin: A Travel Memoir* was recently published in English and German. Rigorous self-analysis is the starting point of her practice, which often ends with the viewer becoming involved.

The artist has authorized Salon Berlin to stage her works *The Humming Room (2012)*, most recently realized for her MoMA retrospective, and *My Calling (Card) #3: Guerrilla Performance for Disputed Territorial Skirmishes (2012)*. Before entering *The Humming Room* visitors are told: "IN ORDER TO ENTER THE ROOM, YOU MUST HUM A TUNE. ANY TUNE WILL DO." Here, the museum guards, who usually make sure artworks are not touched, make sure visitors comply with the artist's wishes. Following her instructions, each visitor becomes a performer for a brief moment, allowed to test his or her own creativity, regardless of age or background. The spontaneous personal interactions taking place in the space contrast with our everyday dependencies. For a moment, visitors can feel themselves free and humorous with a reinforced sense of self-esteem, like Piper when the idea for *The Humming Room* came to her.<sup>1</sup> "It was a perfect expression of my state of mind at that moment, a joyous celebration of my final release from a whole set of needs, desires, anxieties, and ambitions connected with institutional validation."<sup>2</sup>

The second work, *My Calling (Card) #3: Guerrilla Performance for Disputed Territorial Skirmishes (2012)*, can be seen as part of a series of performances in which Piper asks people to decide who they are. In these works, she explores the potential for individual and political transformation.<sup>3</sup> Piper, who exerted an early shaping influence on discussions of identity, race, and xenophobia, creates works that reflect her own experiences of blackness, whiteness, and gender. *My Calling (Card) #3* takes the form of a professional business card like those used in pre-digital social networks, but it bears a text that addresses the receiver directly, an intimate confrontation intended to trigger a change in the recipient via either withdrawal or engagement.<sup>4</sup>

**For further information about Adrian Piper, please visit:**  
[www.adrianpiper.com](http://www.adrianpiper.com)

**Referenzen**

<sup>1</sup> Cherix, Christophe (2018): "Who calls the tune?", in: *Adrian Piper. A Synthesis of Institutions. 1965-2016*, (catalogue in conjunction with the exhibition at MoMA, New York, March 31–July 22, 2018), 15.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., „It was a perfect expression of my state of mind at that moment, a joyous celebration of my final release from a whole set of needs, desires, anxieties, and ambitions connected with institutional validation.“

<sup>3</sup> Vgl. Buttler, Cornelia (2018): „Wake up and get down“, in: *Adrian Piper. A Synthesis of Institutions. 1965-2016*, (catalogue in conjunction with the exhibition at MoMA, New York, March 31–July 22, 2018), 55.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 61.

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**JR**

**The French artist JR (b. 1983, Paris) is one of today's most influential** and innovative multimedia artists, working in the fields of performance, installation, photography, film and fine art. JR is known for the huge black-and-white portrait photographs that he installs as monumental collages on houses, stairways, and walls in different cultural and historical contexts, achieving surprising effects via the interplay of close-up and more distanced viewing. As a result, his works always also address the architecture and culture of the host city; its specific living conditions and its atmosphere are captured in the faces of the people who live there, giving the anonymous a voice.

**With his work, JR builds bridges, crosses borders, and links people** with different backgrounds in a physical, cultural, and spiritual way. His activist approach to art talks about commitment, freedom, identity and limits. As a result, his work always involves a critical approach, relating to those portrayed in terms of both form and content. Once completed, his projects are disseminated via various media, often pushing technical possibilities to the limit.

**After JR's major exhibition curated by Patricia Kamp at Museum Frieder Burda in Baden-Baden in 2014**, this show at Salon Berlin presents *Eyes on Boat. 1455 Containers* (2018), a wooden model of a container ship consisting of 1455 containers in HO scale (1:87). These containers, bearing an image of a pair of eyes, are loaded and unloaded by two mechanical arms, restacked on the outer rows of the ship to recreate the pair of eyes. The work stands on a stainless steel table that contains the computer system that enables the cranes to activate and identify each container via an integrated camera system. This installation refers to a project carried out by JR in 2014 in the port of Le Havre. He stuck 2600 strips of paper onto shipping containers on a cargo ship: 2600 images of the eyes of Elizabeth Kamanga, a Kenyan woman photographed during his "Women Are Heroes" project. With this journey by ship, the stories of the women from "Women are Heroes," that tell of the violence to which women are exposed in times of war, were sent on a final journey, symbolically releasing them into the world like a message in a bottle. Sometimes art and life come together in miraculous ways: on its way back from Asia to France, the ship saved 213 refugees who were in distress at sea off the coast of Africa.

**Another highlight will be the presentation of *INSIDE OUT***, a participatory art project launched by JR in 2011, which actively appeals to people to get their voices heard and campaign for change. The *INSIDE OUT* truck, with a built-in photo booth and printer, will travel to Berlin during Gallery Weekend and will be present in the city on April 25, 26 and 27, at secret locations to be announced each day via Salon Berlin's social media channels. In 2017, JR travelled in this truck with the filmmaker Agnès Varda to a range of very different places in France to take photographs of people. "Faces Places," the documentary film based on this journey, was nominated for an Oscar in 2018.

**JR has recently realized a large-scale anamorphosis for the Louvre in Paris** and is currently participating in the Havana Biennial. In May, JR will present a new work, the digital mural *The Chronicles of San Francisco* at SFMOMA.

**For further information about JR, please visit:**

[www.jr-art.net](http://www.jr-art.net)