



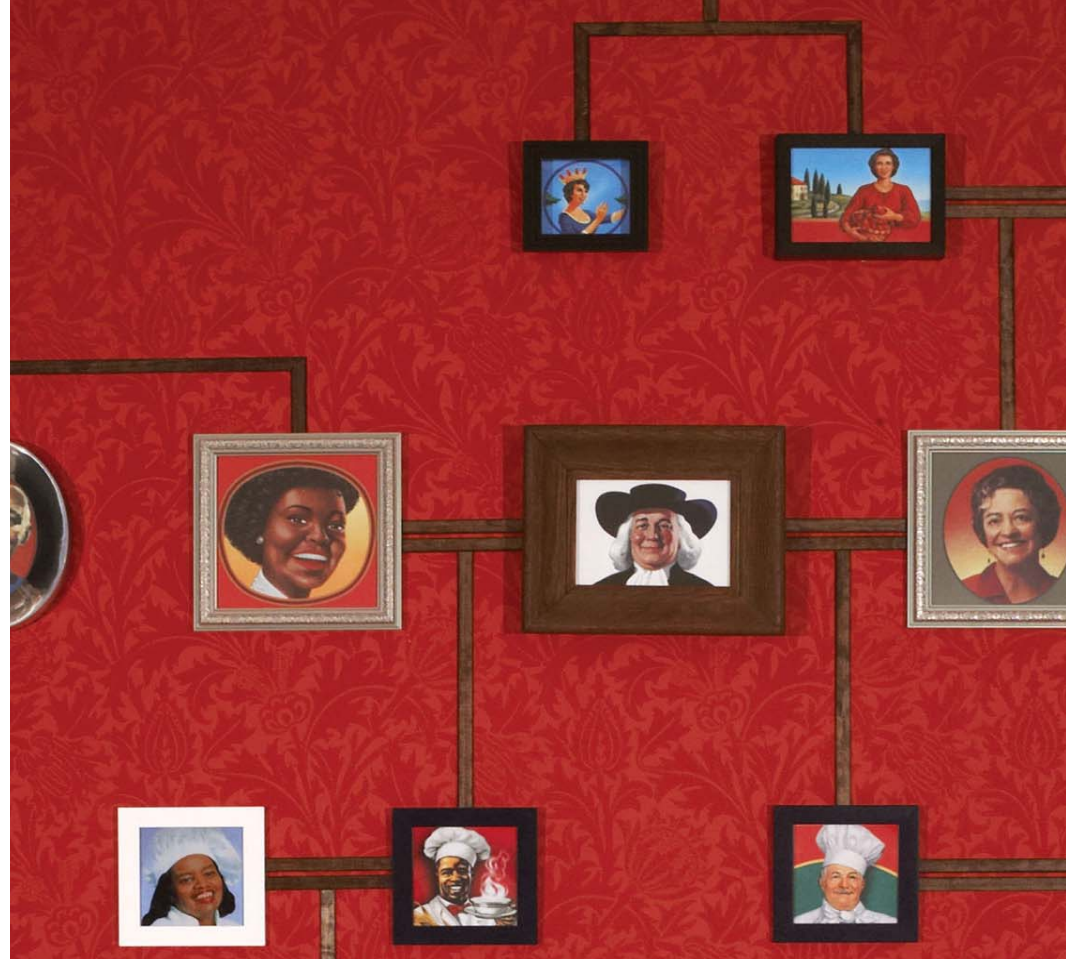
This program is made possible in part by the Mercer County Cultural and Heritage Commission through funding from the Mercer County Board of Chosen Freeholders, and the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State, A Partner Agency of the National Endowment of the Arts.



 The College of New Jersey

The College Art Gallery
 The College of New Jersey
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 www.tcnj.edu/~tcag
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Gallery Hours: Tu, We, Th 12p.m.-7p.m.; Su 1p.m.-3p.m.
 Opening Reception: Wednesday, January 27, 5p.m.-7p.m. with Gallery Talk at 6p.m.



INHERITED TRAITS:

NINA KATCHADOURIAN
 & HEIDI KUMAO
 JANUARY 27-MARCH 3, 2010



CREDITS

The College of New Jersey

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Chair, The Art Department

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Inherited Traits is sponsored by The College Art Gallery and The School of the Arts and Communication at The College of New Jersey with additional support from the Committee for Cultural and Intellectual Community, the Mentored Undergraduate Summer Experience (MUSE) Program and the Office of Academic Affairs.

The exhibit is also made possible in part by the Mercer County Cultural and Heritage Commission through funding from the Mercer County Board of Chosen Freeholders and the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State, a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts.

Image credit: Detail of *Genealogy of the Supermarket* by Nina Katchadourian

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INTRODUCTION

Inspired by the campus wide theme of “family” sponsored by the Committee for Intellectual and Cultural Community (CCIC) here at The College of New Jersey, the *Inherited Traits* exhibit explores heredity through the work of two important contemporary artists, Nina Katchadourian and Heidi Kumao. In their work, both artists investigate the cause and effect of relationships, the manner in which family ties are created and maintained, and how personal identity is shaped in the context of history. This exhibit looks beyond a strictly biological interpretation of inheritance to consider not only genetic determination, but also historical, sociological and cultural influences.

In three very different pieces, Katchadourian uses a combination of pointed humor and everyday forms of familial representation to both “[play] on the fantasies of lineage and heritage” and probe her personal connections with her mother and father. Kumao, whose work is not explicitly based in personal experience, explores kinship, creative birthrights, intrinsic strengths and history’s impact on the individual in her intricate video installations.

This exhibit is the product of a truly collaborative effort. My first thanks must go to my extraordinary curatorial assistant, Karin Christiaens '10. Through TCNJ's Mentored Undergraduate Summer Experience, Karin spent the summer researching the exhibit themes and potential artists. In the fall, she helped with logistical planning, exhibit design and wrote a portion of the catalog text (credited as KC).

This exhibit is also special because it marks the debut of our new gallery in the new Art & IMM Building. Special thanks to everyone in Campus Construction, Arts Facilities, the Art Department and the Dean's Office in the School of the Arts and Communication for readying our new space.

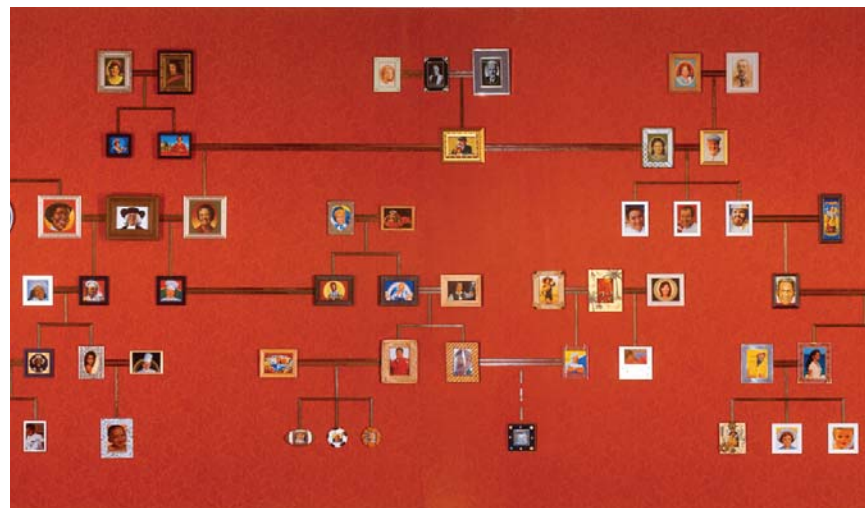
Many others have helped make this exhibition possible. We are especially grateful for the assistance offered by the Carpentry/Paint crew to install the exhibition. Thanks also to the gallery assistant team for their hard work and personal dedication. We are indebted to Catherine Clark Gallery and Sara Meltzer Gallery for loaning and facilitating the exhibition of the work by Nina Katchadourian. Special thanks to Ian Berry, Amy Hufnagel and Rosemary Williams for their feedback and artist suggestions. And, of course, we are extremely grateful to President Gitenstein, Provost Bresnahan and Dean Laughton for their enthusiastic support of this exhibition and the arts on campus.

Most of all, thanks to the artists for fully embracing our exhibition concept, contributing their insightful work on inheritance and offering their time and expertise to TCNJ's community by giving a gallery talk during the opening reception.

Sarah Cunningham (SC)
Director, The College Art Gallery
January 2010

NINA KATCHADOURIAN

Genealogy of the Supermarket
Wall installation, 90 framed photographs on wallpapered wall
2005/2006/2009



Katchadourian's family tree of supermarket icons, *Genealogy of the Supermarket*, interrogates the commercialization of inherited food traditions. One of a series of artworks using the trope of the family tree, this piece adopts the familiar methodology of charting relationships while questioning its validity. In *Genealogy of the Supermarket*, the artist satirizes the marketing strategies of many consumer brands by asking the viewer to reflect on only the surface: food labels depicting now iconic figures. These icons have been used for years to create a personal connection between the consumer and the brand-name product; shoppers are encouraged to purchase maple syrup by manufactured personas like 'their own' Aunt Jemima. Consumers are comforted by the idea that their store-bought goods are not too far from the 'homemade' foods they desire. Katchadourian juxtaposes these well-known figures with one another in a purely imagined 'family tree,' revealing familial ties between the icons: siblings, married couples, parent-child relationships or adoptions. In focusing on the artist's created connections, the viewer sees patterns of ethnicity, attire and attractiveness that the artist seems to suggest is the purpose of brand icons. Each specific persona is intended to create a sense of authenticity that allows consumers to connect with the items for sale. The figures are meant to appeal to our emotions, rather than our intellect. Consumer brands aim to gain (family) loyalty through this type of personal advertising strategy. Katchadourian, however, questions the intended interpretation of each icon; in this respect, the artist asks what the viewer, as a consumer, inherits on a subconscious level from a trip to the supermarket.

NINA KATCHADOURIAN

Accent Elimination

Six televisions, three pedestals, six-channel video (three synchronized programs and three loops), headphones and benches
2005



Katchadourian's six-channel video installation, *Accent Elimination*, scrutinizes the effort to acculturate through speech pattern neutralization. After viewing several posters advertising 'accent elimination' courses, promoting assimilation into American culture, Katchadourian contacted a professional speech improvement coach. A joint effort of the artist and her foreign born parents, *Accent Elimination* displays the progress that the family made in both erasing and taking on foreign accents. On one side of the installation a row of three monitors features headshots of the the artist and her parents as she attempts to learn the accents that they are subsequently taught to unlearn. On the other side, an additional three monitors display outtakes revealing both the process of "accent elimination" and the creation of the artwork itself. The piece tracks the struggle to imitate a culturally alien heritage; the artist's parents are asked to fully abandon an intrinsic aspect of their culture while their daughter attempts to claim their native accents "like an heirloom." The recording consists of Katchadourian and her parents' repetitive, and often humorous, dialogue in which they continually strive to adopt new intonations. Despite their sincere endeavors, their new pronunciations betray a trace of their native accents (and true selves) highlighting her parents' foreign accents as an integral component of the artist's personal heredity. Language, with its specific cadences and inflections, embodies culture. Although accents may be suppressed, the rhythm of their native tongues allows individuals to retain their self-image when speaking a new language. Katchadourian's video installation provides commentary on the importance and depth of cultural inheritance.

KC

NINA KATCHADOURIAN

The Nightgown Pictures

14 piezo prints and 2 archival color inkjet prints, edition of three
1996-2004

A series of paired black and white photographs, Katchadourian's *The Nightgown Pictures* features portraits of her mother made by her grandmother alongside landscape photographs taken by the artist more than five decades later. In the original photographs, Katchadourian's grandmother documented her daughter's growth from infancy to puberty by photographing her annually in the same nightgown in the countryside near their summer home. When her daughter eventually outgrew the nightgown, Katchadourian's grandmother bound the photographs into an accordion book titled, *The Story of Why Stina's First Nightgown Became Too Small*. Building on her grandmother's artistic legacy and with her mother's assistance, Katchadourian sought out the specific locations of photographer and subject for each of the childhood images of her mother. Taken over a period of eight years and distinctly void of the human subject of her grandmother's work, Katchadourian's photographs document place, process and the passage of time. In the artist's words the project was, among other things, "a landscape study, an attempt to take part in a family ritual that I missed, [and] a study of someone else's methods." The final result is a multigenerational collaboration in which the artist physically positions herself not so much as the next child in the matrilineal progression, but rather as the next artist in the family line by replicating her grandmother's point of view and adopting her themes of growth and change while creating artwork uniquely her own. Although *The Nightgown Pictures* is rooted in the tradition of the family photo album, Katchadourian transcends the pitfalls of saccharine sentimentality with her stark complements to her grandmother's images.

SC

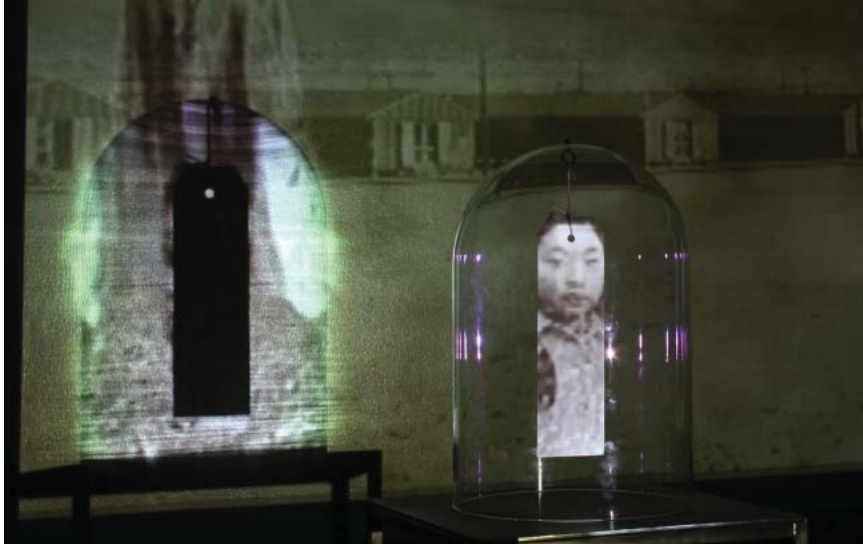


1939

1997

Transplant

Mixed media: bell jar, paper, steel tables,
DVD w/audio, DVD player, video projector
2009



Kumao's haunting video installation, *Transplant*, depicts Japanese Americans who, in the midst of their forced internment during World War II, created exquisite gardens in the desert camps. Through skillful editing and careful placement of objects, Kumao creates a layered video dialog between the two planes of the image – an ID tag suspended in a bell jar and the wall. The bell jar serves as a poignant metaphor for both entrapment and cultivation. Using a combination of original and found footage, Kumao's nuanced narrative explores this contradiction of confinement and growth. The small image visible on the ID tag interacts with the video projected on the wall and the shadows cast by both the bell jar and the tag itself. On the tag, a child prisoner, the American flag, and finally a sprouting seed are highlighted in opposition to a stark barren landscape, military guards, and carefully tended plots. The actual shadows interplay with silhouettes in the video in which a hand broom and dustpan, as well as the artist in the role of gardener and street sweeper, are recurring motifs. In these silhouetted sequences, the artist uses dirt to represent the perceived uncleanness and rejection of the prisoners from society, while also recognizing it as the source of life and nutrition. *Transplant* explores inheritance sociologically in its examination of the impact of the internment on a generation of Americans as well as their descendants. At the same time, genetic legacy is depicted through horticulture as a means of both emotional and physical sustainment.

SC

Translator

Aluminum legs, plastic bowl, half-scale chairs with video projector
heads, wooden table, parts from garage door opener and bicycles
2008

The third installment of a three-part project entitled *Misbehaving: Media Machines Act Out*, *Translator* incorporates what Kumao calls "kinetic sculpture," a combination of robotics, video projection, and viewer-controlled media. A 'girl,' composed of robotic aluminum legs fitted with roller skates and a bowl-shaped screen, oscillates between a set of facing armchairs equipped with projectors. Each projector displays differing images on the girl's body and emits encouraging yet fragmented sounds. Kumao places the viewer directly at the point of conflict with the girl who moves from one projector to the other when prompted by a hand-crank. Therefore, the viewer is forced to enact a process that places the child in the middle of a domestic dispute (or, alternatively, the scenario may be seen as indecision within one's own mind or a political mediation). The act of translation occurs only in pieces, projected onto the girl's body. Consequently, inheritance takes place within the young girl as a result of her opposing parents' projected thoughts, words and actions. The parents' projections can be clearly seen and interpreted only through the young girl; however, the projections remain fragmented, reflecting the girl's confusion. The body and mind are offered as the site of a physical and psychological metamorphosis. The viewer, the instigator of the girl's shift between each projection, controls the mode of inheritance and the girl's compromised position. The artist presents a psychological interpretation of inheritance from the child's point of view encouraging the viewer to take part in both the process and outcome.

KC



HEIDI KUMAO

Trace

Mixed media: book, stand, wooden table,
DVD w/ audio, DVD player, projector
2010



Throughout her *Time Release* series, Kumao is inspired by “individuals that have developed a creative refuge in order to endure extreme physical containment.” Her newest piece, *Trace*, which debuts here at TCNJ, chronicles the life and struggles of Frederick Douglass who was able to free himself from slavery and advocate for abolition largely because he learned to read and write. In the video installation, an open book concurrently functions a second screen and casts a house shaped shadow over the video projected on the wall. The house represents both shelter and the womb; the book that casts the shadow is the site of learning and the freedom it brings. The book acts literally as a ‘blank slate’ showcasing Douglass’ increasing literacy and creative force. Kumao highlights the battle between escape and captivity with juxtaposed images on the blank pages and the wall. In this piece, a recurring visual element is the line itself manifested as the Mason-Dixon line, the lines of a notebook, and bloodlines. The lines are both directive and restrictive simultaneously showing the way and delineating divisions. The lines also make connections and demonstrate transformation as they morph from overseer’s whip to umbilical cord. In this way *Trace* illustrates Douglass casting off the legacy of bondage thanks to his innate intellect, the inheritance of creativity trumping captivity determined by birth.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

Nina Katchadourian

Nina Katchadourian was born in Stanford, California and grew up spending every summer on a small island in the Finnish archipelago, where she still spends part of each year. Her work exists in a wide variety of media including photography, sculpture, video and sound. Her work has been exhibited domestically and internationally at places such as PS1/MoMA, the Serpentine Gallery, New Langton Arts, Artists Space, SculptureCenter, and the Palais de Tokyo. In January 2006 the Turku Art Museum in Turku, Finland featured a solo show of works made in Finland, and in June 2006 the Tang Museum in Saratoga Springs exhibited a 10-year survey of her work and published an accompanying monograph entitled “All Forms of Attraction.” The Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego presented a solo show of recent video installation works in July 2008. She is also the recipient of many awards including the Svenska Kulturfonden Grant (2007), Anonymous was a Woman Foundation Award (2004), the New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship in Video (2003), and the American Scandinavian Foundation Grant (2001). Katchadourian is represented by Sara Meltzer Gallery in New York and Catharine Clark Gallery in San Francisco.

Heidi Kumao

Heidi Kumao is an interdisciplinary artist who creates kinetic and electronic sculpture, interactive installations and digital animations. She has exhibited her work nationally and internationally in group and solo exhibitions including one-person exhibitions at the Museo de Arte Moderno, Buenos Aires, Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona, and Center for the Arts, Yerba Buena Gardens, San Francisco and the Arizona State University Art Museum. She has been awarded numerous national fellowships, grants, residencies and awards including the Guggenheim Fellowship (2009), the Michigan Governor’s Award for Arts and Culture for Innovative Artist (2008), an American Association of University Women Postdoctoral Research Fellowship (2007-08), the Malvina Hoffman Award for Sculpture at the 181st Annual exhibition at the National Academy (2006), a Creative Capital Grant in Emerging Fields/Robotics (2002), a Sculpture Space funded residency (2002), and the New York Foundation for the Arts Artist’s Fellowship in Sculpture (2001, 1997). She is currently an Associate Professor at the University of Michigan School of Art and Design where she teaches digital video and animation, experimental tv production, electronic and conceptual art.