

ARCHETYPES POWER AND PUPPETS

JONATHAN BALDOCK
ANNE CHU
MY BARBARIAN

TOM THAYER
KARA WALKER
WAYNE WHITE

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HANDSPRING PUPPET COMPANY
MARISKA P. MARKER PUPPET COLLECTION

THE COLLEGE OF WOOSTER ART MUSEUM
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Punch and Judy, Pinocchio, and Kermit. Whether a hand puppet or marionette, everyone knows the story of these memorable alter egos who raged in comical violence, wanted to become a “real boy,” or plaintively sang “. . . it’s not easy being green.” Generally considered children’s entertainment, puppets derive much of their efficacy through the unique juxtaposition of play, manipulation, and archetypal characters.

Found in mythology, art, and literature, an archetype is a uniquely effective form of communication that often expresses common values. Examples range from characters like the hero, the trickster, the mother, and the innocent youth, to archetypal themes such as good versus evil. Such recurring tropes have tremendous power for modeling behavior, storing collective morals and memories, and defining universal typologies. And while admittedly reductive, archetypes are particularly compelling when they define, elucidate, and acknowledge what are often uncomfortable social truths.

Archetypes, Power, and Puppets features artists based in New York, Los Angeles, London, and Cape Town. Each utilizes some aspect of the puppet genre to unpack shared histories. For example, in the Sussel Gallery, Kara Walker and Wayne White explore stereotypes associated with the antebellum South, while Tom Thayer and Anne Chu carefully neutralize themes and characters in their painting and sculpture. In the same gallery, My Barbarian's video critiques high culture, and Jonathan Baldock's installation at the far end of the gallery comments on how history repeats itself in a humorous riff on Alfred Jarry's infamous play, *Ubu Roi* (1896).

The Burton D. Morgan Gallery features a selection of traditional puppets from the CWAM's William C. Mithoefer Collection of African Art, and The Mariska P. Marker Puppet Collection, sponsored by the Departments of Sociology/Anthropology and Theater and Dance. Also in that gallery is a 2011 TED Talk featuring the Handspring Puppet Company's co-founders—Adrian Kohler, Artistic Director, and Basil Jones, Executive Producer—who show us just how difficult it is to make a puppet live.

Together, the work in both galleries demonstrate—in different ways—what curator Ingrid Shaffner so aptly said in *The Puppet Show* catalogue (2008), “. . . puppets come to us readymade to abstract the dramas, mysteries, anxieties, and personas we might all project onto a shared stage.”

Kitty McManus Zurko

CWAM Director/Curator

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Any contemporary art exhibition dealing with puppets owes a debt of gratitude to Ingrid Shaffner and Carin Kuoni's landmark 2008 exhibition, *The Puppet Show*, first shown at The Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

We also thank the artists, galleries, and collections who so graciously made the loans that comprise this exhibition possible. They are: Wayne White and Joshua Liner Gallery, New York; Anne Chu and Tracy Williams Ltd., New York; Kara Walker and Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York; Jonathan Baldock and VITRINE London; My Barbarian and Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects; Tom Thayer, New Jersey; and H. Scott Westover and The Progressive Corporation, Cleveland.

As is typical in museums, many participate in the realization of projects, and we thank the Departments of Anthropology/Sociology and Theater and Dance, for graciously allowing us to show their Mariska P. Marker Puppet Collection. We also thank Doug McGlumphy, CWAM Preparator/Collections Manager, who designed the beautiful installation with the assistance of the CWAM Gallery Attendants—Tilly Alexander '16, Dani Gagnon '16, Sue Kim '16, Robin Klaus '16, Katie Stephens '15, and Petr Wiese '16. Once again, we thank Robin Klaus for her superb editorial assistance, and also Sue Kim for her research on Korean puppets. And, from Smithville, Ohio, we thank Eric L. Mast for so generously crafting a longer hanger for Anne Chu's *Eques*.

Last but not least, we owe the greatest debt to the artists and performers who push boundaries and provoke curiosity in order to open the metaphorical window that lets in the much needed oxygen of new thoughts and ideas.