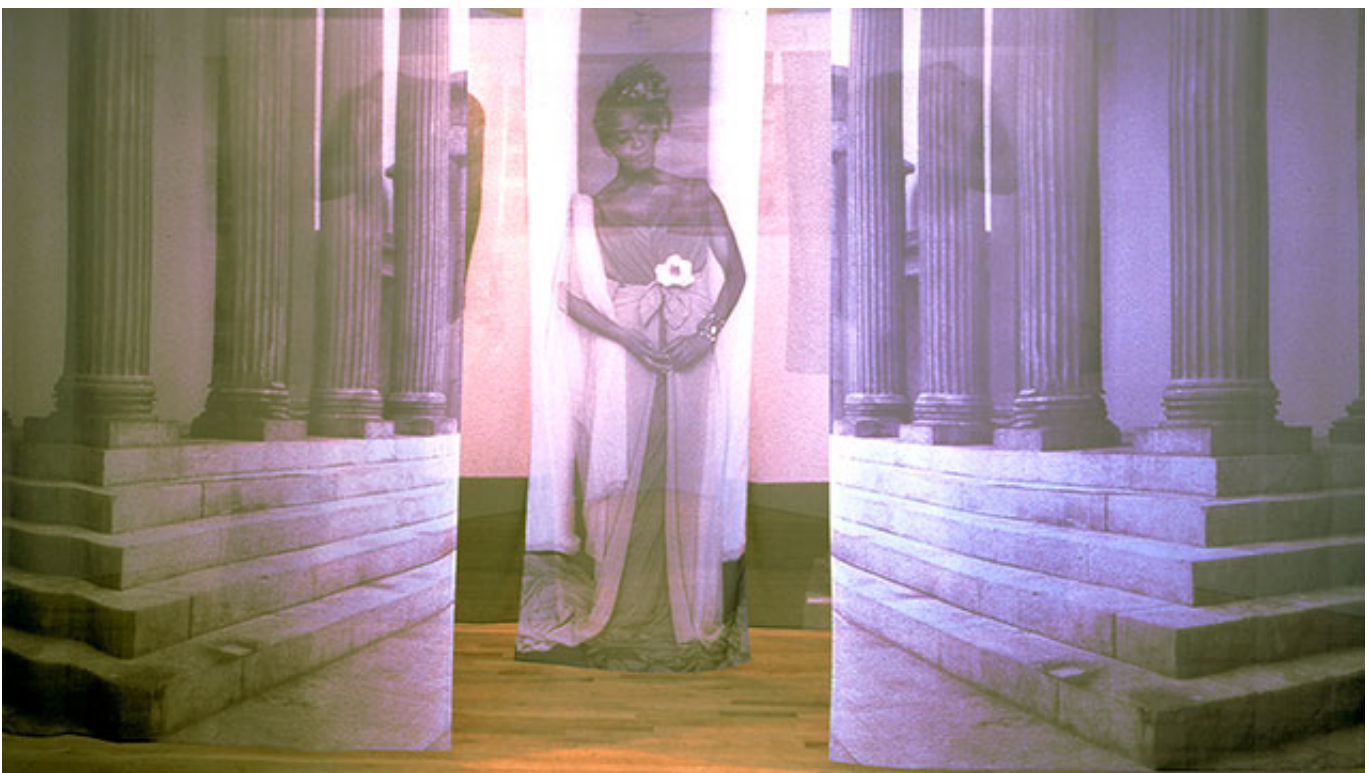


## Block Museum Receives Major Gift of Contemporary Art

Collector Peter Norton donates 68 art works to Northwestern University museum

May 4, 2016 | [by Judy Moore](#)



Carrie Mae Weems, "Ritual and Revolution" (1998), installation of cloth banners and audio component, dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery.

EVANSTON, Ill. --- Pioneering software innovator Peter Norton has donated 68 contemporary artworks from his personal collection to Northwestern University's [Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art](#), a transformative gift that includes a wide variety of media from more than four dozen internationally known artists.

The gift was announced by [Lisa Graziose Corrin](#), the museum's Ellen Philips Katz Director.

Norton, also an author and philanthropist, gave a wide variety of media, including videos, sculpture, drawings, photographs and installations by 53 internationally known artists. The works were particularly selected for their ability to support teaching and learning, including use within the Block Museum's [Eloise W. Martin Study Center](#).

Among the artists represented in the gift are Matthew Benedict, Doug Black, Nayland Blake, Paul Chan, Ken Fandell, Miran Fukada, Anna Gaskell, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Mona Hatoum, Jenny Holzer, Doug Ischar, Emiko Kasahara, Mike Kelley and Tony Oursler, Louise Lawler, Glenn Ligon, Christian Marclay, Matthew McCaslin, Gabriel Orozco, Cornelia Parker, Paul Ramirez-Jones, Erika Rothenberg, Joe Scanlan, Jim Shaw, Gary Simmons, Lorna Simpson, Masooma Syed, Tony Tasset, Maki Tamura, Kara Walker, Gillian Wearing, Carrie Mae Weems and Fred Wilson.

With the addition of the Peter Norton gift, the Block Museum's collection increases the diversity of media it houses and the international array of artists it represents.

"The gift will distinguish the Block as a university museum devoted to the unique strengths of Northwestern, especially in its commitment to global perspectives and -- through the example of its collection and program -- foster respect for diversity and difference," Corrin said.

"On behalf of the Block Museum, I would like to express my profound gratitude to Peter Norton who has been visionary in his support of art and education -- making what artists do accessible to all," Corrin added. "This gift reinforces Northwestern's commitment to excellence in the arts as a significant part of the Northwestern experience for students and as part of its identity in the cultural community of the Chicago region."

## **Norton Gift**

A pioneering software innovator whose former company created Norton Utilities and other cybersecurity products, Norton has an extensive collection of global contemporary art that is renowned internationally. Norton is frequently listed among the top 200 art collectors in the world. As an advocate for challenging contemporary art, Norton has served on the boards of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York and is currently a trustee of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA).

The Block gift is one of a series of gifts Norton has made to university art museums throughout the country. The gifts are being made in recognition and support of those institutions advancing innovative work to integrate art into teaching and learning across disciplines, foster creative museum practices and engage audiences with diverse forms of contemporary art.

Norton has committed more than 900 works from his 2,700-piece collection to eight distinguished college and university museums nationwide. In addition to the Block Museum, the museums that have received a major gift of art from the Norton Collection include: UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley, California; California Museum of Photography and Sweeney Art Gallery, University of California, Riverside; Hammer Museum, UCLA, Los Angeles; Kemper Art Museum, Washington University, St. Louis; Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts; The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, New York; and Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown, Massachusetts.

"The Block Museum is proud to be among this extremely distinguished company of recipients," Corrin said. "These museums are known for their commitment to artistic excellence, their important collections and their innovative approaches to teaching and learning."

The Norton gift is included within [We Will. The Campaign for Northwestern](#), a \$3.75 billion fundraising effort to support strategic initiatives throughout the University.

## Teaching Global Contemporary Art

In selecting the Block Museum as a recipient of this major gift, Norton noted the museum's commitment to global contemporary art and to delivering diverse and dynamic programming to cross-campus partners. Norton would like to see the works from the gift integrated into wide-ranging curricula and used to support faculty across disciplines.

"The artworks in the Norton gift to the Block have been thoughtfully selected to build on and expand the museum's collection strengths and its position as an innovative space for teaching with art," said Kathleen Bickford Berzock, associate director of curatorial affairs.

"This gift adds to the museum's strengths in modern and contemporary works on paper and photography and expands those collections with work by artists working from multiple global perspectives.

"Significantly, the gift also gives the Block its first major installation and time-based media works, areas of collecting upon which we intend to build. The gift enables the museum to more fully support curriculum in areas where significant faculty research and teaching is focused," Berzock said.

The Norton gift aligns with the Block Museum's expanded global vision for its program, with an emphasis on diversity consistent with Northwestern's strategic priorities. The Block's exhibitions, engagement programs and Block Cinema are all giving greater emphasis to the art of Africa and the African diaspora, the Middle East and North Africa, and Asia. This new focus builds on Northwestern's unique strengths such as the University's [Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies](#), [Institute for the Study of Islamic Thought in Africa](#), the [Buffett Institute for Global Studies](#) and the [Keyman Modern Turkish Studies](#) program.

Considering modern and contemporary art and visual culture across physical and conceptual boundaries is a strength of the Northwestern departments of art history, art theory and practice (ATP), performance studies, and radio, television and film (RTVF). This approach also is widely incorporated into courses offered in poetry and poetics, in African American studies, at the [McCormick School of Engineering](#), and through the work of the [Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences' Alice Kaplan Institute for the Humanities](#).

Significant graduate work in the arts and humanities is now focused on contemporary visual culture and visual studies encompassing modes of representation and global exchange. "It is critical for students to experience creative expression that is of their generation and for them to understand how the past and the present relate to one another," Corrin noted.

## Highlights of the Norton Gift to the Block

"I tend to be drawn to artworks that have ideas embedded in them," Norton has said of his collection.

"One of my ideals for an artwork is that there are thoughts and ideas behind it, but that the work nevertheless has so much visual content that it appeals to viewers," he said. "I also like to buy the work of artists in their early careers, not only as it supports, encourages and gives heart to them, but it also does the same for their contemporaries."

Spanning the years 1989 to 2007, the 68 works in the Block Museum gift reflect the broad range of artistic production in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. The collection is particularly strong in

photography, media art and works by women artists and artists of color.

- **Paul Chan, “Happiness (Finally) After 35,000 Years of Civilization” (2000-2003)** -- Hugo Boss Prize winner Paul Chan received almost instant recognition when he exhibited this first major video piece in 2002. The 18-minute animated loop is projected on a floating screen shaped and textured like a torn scroll. The work makes direct reference to the surrealistic work of Chicago-based and self-trained artist Henry Darger as well as Charles Fourier’s “Table of the Social Progress of Movement” in order to critique Americana’s political interventions overseas.
- **Erika Rothenberg, “Test” (1991)** -- Exhibited at Documenta IX in Kassel, Germany, this installation is representative of much of the artists’ conceptual signage, which draws attention to contradictions at the core of American life. Designed as a “self-scoring Rorschach test,” a series of mounted wall cutouts invites audiences to match themselves against a parade of perplexing self-identifications (“I stand up for my rights.” “I sometimes taste sound.”).
- **Carrie Mae Weems, “Ritual and Revolution” (1998)** -- This evocative environment of 18 printed cloth banners and an audio recording of the artist’s own voice addresses the historic and ongoing human struggle for equality and justice. Including references to Mayan civilization, World War II, Ancient Greece and the French Revolution, the hanging layers of delicate muslin create a solemn sanctuary in which the viewer can ponder the passage of time and its waves of revolution. “By moving into and through the work, I wanted to give the viewer permission to invade the work of art, to invade history, and, thereby claim it as one’s own; to feel that one is a part of history and, therefore, one makes history,” Weems said.
- **Wilfredo Prieto, “Speech” (1999)** -- Cuban conceptual artist Wilfredo Prieto’s “Speech” series consists of rolls of toilet paper cut from the pages of Granma, the official newspaper of the Cuban communist party. The regime’s cultural commissioners agreed the work could be displayed only if it used pages that did not feature an image of Fidel Castro -- a feat the artist described as “near impossible.”
- **Mona Hatoum, “Rubber Mat” (1996)** -- Lebanese-born Palestinian installation artist Mona Hatoum uses carpets and mats to refer to Minimalist floor sculptures, Muslim prayer rugs and commonplace domestic furnishings. “Rubber Mat” combines these associations with another of the artist's foremost preoccupations: the human body. With its pattern of intestines, this work turns the body inside out, bringing its deepest recesses to the surface.

Individuals and educators are invited to [search](#) the Block Museum collection containing nearly 6,000 works and schedule viewing appointments in the [Eloise W. Martin Study Center](#) to further explore the museum’s holdings. The Norton gift will be available for view in the study center in Summer 2016.

More information on the Block Museum is available [online](#).

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