

HAPPY!

Buddhism teaches that the pursuit of happiness is life's goal. The path to it begins with the understanding that happiness cannot exist without sorrow. This exhibition focuses on contemporary artists who follow this pursuit by addressing all emotional states in their work to reveal universal truths of the human condition. These artists' works let us know we are not unique, which in turn heightens our empathy for others. The artists included in this exhibition have developed a personal philosophy about happiness in which making art is akin to meditation and a means of achieving equilibrium.

Happy! includes works dating from the mid-twentieth century to day. Among the earliest in the exhibition is a 1956 abstraction by Mark Rothko. Rothko's thoughts about how art can evoke emotions provide the underlying theme of the exhibition. In a lecture delivered in 1958, Rothko declared that his paintings encompassed all emotions, and that he introduced "wit...play" and "hope" into his work to make the "tragic concept" of the human condition "more endurable."

WHY MAKE ART? Mark Rothko pondered this question in notes he wrote in the 1940s in response to World War II. He justified the artist's role in society by arguing that it was a sociably redeemable act. When artists produce works that they find satisfying and revealing, they have contributed to themselves as individuals. When individuals improve themselves, they automatically improve society, because society's welfare depends on the overall good of its constituents.

This exhibition looks at the use of archetypal images of happiness such as the smile, clouds, gifts, babies, and celebrations. Several artists in the exhibition convey the power of music, dance, prayer, and positive psychology in their work, while others address the implications of gift-giving, healing and play. The exhibition also explores the bliss associated with Paradise before the Fall, infancy, and spiritual or meditative states. Although the artists included here have not necessarily discovered the meaning of happiness, their works convey and thus generously share their pursuit of this elusive state with the world. Exhibition curated by Director and Chief Curator Bonnie Clearwater.

#HAPPY EXHIBITION



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