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Images and Interviews Available on Request

School of the Art Institute of Chicago Remembers and Redefines Roger Brown

Chicago, IL—Several private collections, rare archival ephemera, and an expert curatorial team inform a new look at a legendary Chicago artist this fall at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC). Roger Brown: This Boy’s Own Story will be on view in the SAIC Sullivan Galleries, 33 South State Street, August 25–November 10. A unique exploration that considers a significant yet under-explored current in the artist’s work, the exhibition leads a trio of prominent exhibitions and programs this fall exploring personal and public perceptions of identity, including the concurrent show The Great Refusal: Taking on New Queer Aesthetics and the 2012 William and Stephanie Sick Distinguished Professor Lecture by documentary photographer Catherine Opie on September 10. Visitor hours and more information are available at saic.edu/exhibitions.

The exhibition reception is Friday, September 14, 4:30–7:00 p.m.

This Boy’s Own Story
The paintings, writings, and archival materials brought together in this exhibition evoke a range of social, political, and religious considerations, calling attention to Brown’s engagement with the subject of sexuality—one of many themes he addressed throughout his twenty-seven year career. Ranging from the early 1970s to mid-90s, these works also reflect the trajectory of Brown’s artistic practice in relation to the broader histories of Chicago’s gay nightlife, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and the Culture Wars of the 1980s and 90s.

Also on view are letters and sketchbooks from SAIC’s Roger Brown Study Collection. This selection is only a small example of the artist’s extensive writings and archival materials through which he often reveals his working process and articulates deeply personal beliefs about life, love, longing, and death.

Brown often blended his personal life with his artistic practice, creating works that related and responded to the cultural and political environment in which he lived. For Brown, an autobiographical painting could also deliver a strong social message. In The Devil’s Surprise, for example, Brown evokes his childhood experience of being raised in the fundamentalist Church of Christ while also challenging conceptions of heaven and hell by inverting what some Christians might believe as holy or sinful actions. In City Nights, Brown’s time spent in the gay scene of Chicago’s Gold Coast is referenced while also marking the urban landscape as a site and frame for sexual encounter and visibility. Often, Brown used the titles of his works to signify the many contexts that his paintings traverse. For example, in the painting Me’s Building High Rise, the modern architecture of the building coupled with the grammatical play in the title Me’s alludes to architect Mies van der Rohe, but also to Brown’s long-term partner modern architect George Veronda (1941-1984).

This Boy’s Own Story is curated by SAIC graduate student Kate Pollasch (Dual Degree MA 2013) with the support of the SAIC Roger Brown Study Collection and curator Lisa Stone.
About Roger Brown
Born in Alabama, Roger Brown (1941–1997) moved to Chicago in 1962. In 1968 he received his BFA and in 1970 he was awarded his MFA, both from SAIC. In 1970 art dealer Phyllis Kind first exhibited Brown's work, beginning their strong relationship; Kind was representative and ardent supporter of his work for his entire career. Inspired by instructors Ray Yoshida and Whitney Halstead, works by Roger Brown and a number of fellow students were initially recognized and promoted by curator Don Baum, who organized a series of exhibitions at the Hyde Park Art Center (all with individual titles, but later referred to under the rubric "Hairy Who") and the Museum of Contemporary Art. These and other artists later became known as “Chicago Imagist” artists. His work is in the collections of the Art Institute of Chicago, Metropolitan Museum, Whitney Museum, Museum of Modern Art, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Museum of Contemporary Art/Chicago, Museum Moderner Kunst, Vienna, Museum Boymans, Rotterdam, and many others.

This year marks the 15th anniversary of Brown’s death due to complications of HIV/AIDS, as well as his gifts and bequests to SAIC both during this time and posthumously. Roger Brown’s generosity to SAIC began in 1995 with the gift of his home, studio, and art collection in New Buffalo, Michigan, and grew to include his home and collections in Chicago at 1926 North Halsted St. (1996) and in La Conchita, California (1997), designed by Chicago architect Stanley Tigerman and completed in 1993.

Also on View
A complete schedule of more than a dozen fall/winter presentations at the Sullivan Galleries is available in the SAIC online press room and at saic.edu/exhibitions.

The Great Refusal: Taking on a New Queer Aesthetics
August 25–November 10
Reception: Friday, September 14, 4:30–7:00 p.m.
This exhibition interrogates and explores the concept of queerness in this cultural and political moment. Through themes of Restraint and Indulgence, Progressive Rituals, Bad Values, and Misuse and Dislocation, The Great Refusal considers the term queer as it intersects with issues of race, class, sexuality, and gender, and suggests conceptualizations of what Queer Aesthetics could be. Organized by SAIC faculty member Oliverio Rodriguez along with current SAIC undergraduates and alumni, The Great Refusal showcases recognized artists as well as newly emerging practitioners. A series of performances, film screenings, and panel discussions will be held in conjunction with the show at the Sullivan Galleries and various cultural organizations throughout the city. For more information, visit saic.edu/exhibitions.

Detroit, USA: Material, Site, Narrative
August 25–January 5
Reception: Friday, September 14, 4:30–7:00 p.m.
Detroit, USA explores the dynamic and ever-shifting creative, cultural, and physical topography of Detroit. Engaging the city as material, site, and narrative, the artists’ work comes in dialogue with the city’s social, cultural, built, and natural environment. Curated by SAIC faculty members Kirsten Leenaars and Kevin Kaempf with guest curator Kerstin Niemann, the exhibition includes work by Detroit-based artists
and designers; ephemera from historical collections; the Living Archive from the research residence FILTER DETROIT; and works by SAIC students developed during their study trips to Detroit. The Gene Siskel Film Center also screens the documentary "Detropia" (2012, Heidi Ewing and Rachel Gray, USA, 91 min.) September 21-27.

**Afterimage**: SAIC Roger Brown Study Collection  
1926 N. Halsted St.  
September 14–November 18  
Saturday, 12:00–4:00 p.m., and by appointment

In the only artist-curated exhibition included in the DePaul Art Museum’s Afterimage, Carl Baratta (MFA 2005), Onsmith, and Edra Soto's (MFA 2000) micro-exhibits feature their artwork, art collections, and source material in concert with Roger Brown’s collection preserved on premises. Like the Imagists before them, they experiment with modes of display; expose viewers to the work of their peers and colleagues; and are inspired by and manipulate pop culture and deskilled handi-craft, folk, and self-taught art. Afterimage is curated by SAIC staff members Thea Liberty Nichols and Dahlia Tulett-Gross for the DePaul Art Museum.

**About the Sullivan Galleries**
The Sullivan Galleries of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago is located in the historic site of Louis Sullivan's masterpiece, the Carson Pirie Scott & Co. building. It features the work of acclaimed artists and those new on the scene who, through exhibitions and other public forums, work collaboratively within the School community to explore how art functions within society today. As the public arm of the SAIC’s Department of Exhibitions and Exhibition Studies, Sullivan Galleries seeks to generate new research around issues, ideas, and professional practices in art and design, while stimulating dialogue among the wider Chicago arts community.

**About the School of the Art Institute of Chicago**
A leader in educating artists, designers, and scholars since 1866, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) offers nationally accredited undergraduate and graduate degrees and post-baccalaureate programs to nearly 3,200 students from around the globe. Located in the heart of Chicago, SAIC has an educational philosophy built upon an interdisciplinary approach to art and design, giving students unparalleled opportunities to develop their creative and critical abilities, while working with renowned faculty who include many of the leading practitioners in their fields. SAIC’s resources include the Art Institute of Chicago and its new Modern Wing; numerous special collections and programming venues provide students with exceptional exhibitions, screenings, lectures, and performances. For more information, please visit saic.edu.