

Exhibition: *Past Things and Present: Jasper Johns since 1983*
October 7th 2004 to January 2nd 2005

Curator: Joan Rothfuss

Organised by: Walker Art Center Minneapolis
Institut Valencià d'Art Modern IVAM

The logo for Bancaja, featuring the word "BANCAJA" in a gold, serif font centered within a dark teal rectangular background.

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From 7 October 2004 to 2 January 2005 the Institut Valencià d'Art Modern (IVAM) in collaboration with the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis is presenting nearly 90 paintings, prints, and drawings exploring Jasper Johns' art since 1983 – a period in which he has applied his virtuoso technique and incisive intelligence to a wide range of arresting new imagery, much of it intensely personal, melancholic and even surreal.

Past Things and Present: Jasper Johns since 1983 is an opportunity to study this recent material on its own. It focuses on motifs introduced into the artist's work since 1983, and has at its core nearly all the prints made during the period, – there are images in intaglio, lithography, linocut, mezzotint and other techniques. The balance of the exhibition is comprised of paintings and drawings that expand the conversation around these motifs and weave in imagery familiar from his earlier work.

American painter Jasper Johns' now-iconic images of flags and targets of the late 1950s brought him critical acclaim and instant celebrity in the vigorous art scene of postwar America. Those images, depicted in an intentionally uninflected way, were radically different from the emotionally charged works of the Abstract Expressionists, and they offered a new way to think about the function and practice of art.

Jasper Johns, born in 1930 in Augusta, Georgia, moved to New York in the early 1950s and became friendly with a number of artists – notably Robert Rauschenberg, John Cage and Merce Cunningham – who were inventing ways to introduce the experiences of daily life into their art, music and dance works.

Early on, in the 50 years, Johns' images included what he called “things the mind already knows”: commonly seen symbols such as the U.S. flag, alphabet letters, targets and numerals; household or studio objects such as paintbrushes, brooms, tableware and clothes hangers; and “found” images that he encountered by chance and then incorporated into his work. Personal content, while present, was often hidden within these impersonal images or buried beneath their highly tactile surfaces.

During the early 1980s his approach shifted, and viewers began to see a much more personal iconography in his work. There were depictions of things present in his studio or home, allusions to his childhood and souvenirs of his family, evocations of the spaces in which he lives and works, and quotations from artworks – his own and others'.

The recent work, which of course shares many concerns with the flags, numerals and targets of the 1950s is yet markedly different from those iconic works. The catalogue published accompanying this show reproduces the works exhibited and includes contributions by the art historians Richard Shiff and Victor Stoichita; and Joan Rothfuss, the curator of the exhibition.