



A MEASURE OF VALUE

A MEASURE OF VALUE

“Dear Selma, Every Time I See a Dime I Think of You,” writes artist Faith Ringgold in the margins of her print (fig. 1). Ringgold’s work calls attention to the achievements of Black sculptor Selma Burke, who did not receive credit for her relief portrait of Franklin Delano Roosevelt that appears on the U.S. dime. Alongside other works in the exhibition *A Measure of Value*, this print addresses how art intersects with different notions of artistic, political, and financial worth. While some artists in this exhibition, like Ringgold, use a depiction of currency to rebalance the art-historical record and critique systems of wealth and power, other objects on display demonstrate how art is used to convey status or influence the public’s perspective on economic systems. From ancient Roman coins to contemporary drawings, prints, and sculpture in The Trout Gallery’s permanent collection, the works in *A Measure of Value* represent a variety of time periods, geographies, and approaches to credit, currency, and power. Rather than simply making an equivalency between art and money as a transactional exchange of payment and object, this exhibition considers the dynamic relationship between artistic and economic measures of value.



(fig. 1) Faith Ringgold, *Dear Selma, Every Time I see a Dime I Think of You*, 2010

EXCHANGE OF VALUES

Several of the works in the exhibition illustrate the ways in which art functions as a medium of exchange or as a representation of wealth. For example, prints made for mid-nineteenth-century United States bank notes feature images of livestock, such as cows and horses, to convey the significance of agricultural wealth and how land is used for commerce and productivity. In 1853, Baldwin, Bald, & Cousland Co., an engraving and printing company based in New York and Philadelphia, provided engraved vignettes and illustrations sold to private banks for printing paper currency, a practice that continued until 1861. The stock images were a commodity to be purchased, but they were imbued with messages about power, natural resources, labor, and American identity.

Before the establishment of a national currency in 1861, paper bills were produced by private banks, who were required to print the name of the bank, its location, the note’s denomination, the date it was issued, a serial number, and a signature of the bank president on each note.¹ In order to prevent counterfeit production, engravers created intricate scenes of American life and labor. For example, as seen in one engraving by Cousland, Bald, and Baldwin Co. (fig. 2), a Black teamster whips a team of six donkeys carrying a wagon with large bales of hay into a town, followed by an oxcart with more hay, as a white man stands in the doorway of a house. In



(fig. 2) Baldwin, Bald, & Cousland Co., *Bank note illustration*, c. 1856

addition to conveying a particular message about American abundance, the scene cannot be uncoupled from the contemporary antebellum racial division of work and leisure, as well as larger ideologies of power.

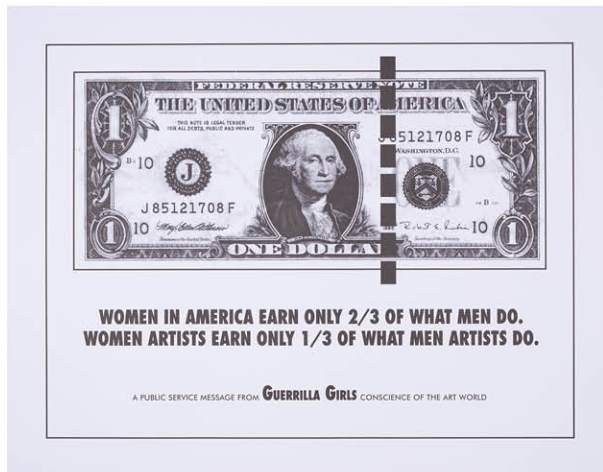
Although the materials and social context is markedly different from that of these early US bank notes, the iron Afo hoe currency object (fig. 3) on display also utilizes agricultural symbolism in this case to facilitate bride wealth payments. This object resembles a farming tool, such as a hoe or blade, used in Afo and Nigerian communities. Its value, however, was not utilitarian, as it served primarily as a matrimonial payment. This hoe or blade would be recognizable to Afo peoples as a symbol of fertility in agriculture, but also in female spouses and specifically represents a bride's ability to produce heirs. In the arrangement of a marriage in Afo and Nigerian societies, the groom's family provided funds to commission the forging of this object and then gave it to the bride and her family to recognize her reproductive power.² Here, values of fertility and motherhood are visually and materially connected to agricultural work and the fecundity of land.



(fig. 3) Afo, Hoe currency, Nigeria

OVERLOOKED AND UNDERVALUED

Some of the artists in this exhibition question notions of value related to recognition, compensation, and the marginalization of women and people of color in the American economy and the art world. As mentioned above, Ringgold's print *Dear Selma, Every Time I See a Dime I Think of You* specifically examines how the art-historical canon, and historical representation more broadly, exclude the contributions of Black and women artists. Selma Burke (American, 1900–1995), was an accomplished Black artist, who won a national contest to sculpt a bronze portrait of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1944. The relief portrait she created was used for Roosevelt's profile on the dime, but John R. Sinnock, the US Mint Chief Engraver—not Burke—took credit for the design.³ Ringgold's work does not simply celebrate Burke's contributions; rather, she draws attention to the achievements of artists who are undervalued and overlooked because of their race and gender.



(fig. 4) Guerrilla Girls, *Women in America Earn only 2/3 of What Men Do*, 1985

Complementing the dime in Ringgold's work is the depiction of a one-dollar bill seen in another work in the exhibition, a poster by the Guerrilla Girls, a feminist art activist group founded in 1985 with the mission to raise awareness about sexist and racist practices in the art world and museums (fig. 4).⁴ The dotted line that bifurcates the dollar bill is explained by the text in the print: "WOMEN IN AMERICA EARN ONLY 2/3 OF WHAT MEN DO. WOMEN ARTISTS EARN ONLY 1/3 OF WHAT MEN ARTISTS DO." The Guerrilla Girls call out the disparities



(fig. 5) Jennifer Ling Datchuk, *Money Honey*, 2017

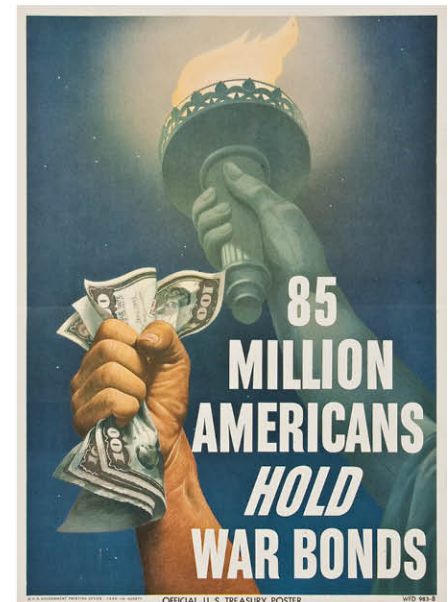
between men and women, both within the art world and in the larger job market. While the value the Guerrilla Girls is addressing is monetary in terms of wages and compensation, they also are highlighting the ways marginalized, ostracized and forgotten groups of people have contributed to the art world.

The “bling” that is the focal point of Jennifer Ling Datchuk’s photograph *Money Honey* (fig. 5) can be seen as an opulent corrective to the deficits and neglect called out by the Guerrilla Girls and Ringgold. In this work, Datchuk, a ceramicist who explores her Chinese and American identities through her work, includes an American Hip-hop symbol of “bling,” specifically an oversized ring decorated with four dollar signs. The long intricately designed nails on the woman’s fingers can be understood as representing positive expressions of identity in Asian-American and Black American beauty culture. Additionally, the background of the ring is drawn from a traditional Chinese blue-and-white porcelain pattern.⁵ By fusing this traditional Chinese porcelain aesthetic with a specific symbol of financial success celebrated through ornate accessories and nail art, Datchuk’s work questions and redefines notions of wealth. In other

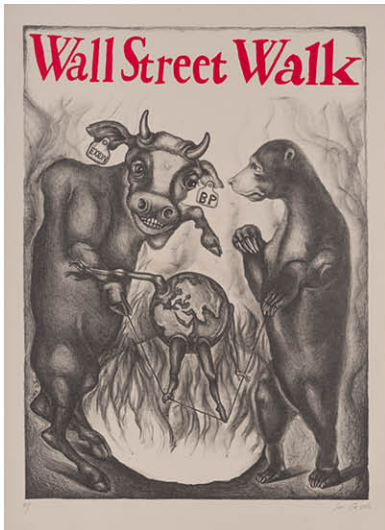
THE POWER OF POLITICAL VALUES

In a poster created by the US Department of Treasury to urge Americans to purchase war bonds, money is both the subject and the nationalist intention of the print (fig. 6). Used to finance military operations and to control inflation by taking money out of circulation, war bonds also promoted patriotism during war time. The depiction of a muscular white, male hand clutching a fistful of one hundred-dollar bills mirrors the iconic Statue of Liberty’s hand holding her torch. The print clearly equates money and the purchase of war bonds with values of American freedom and military power.

In contrast to this overt declaration of nationalism and equation of freedom with money, artists Sue Coe and Robert Rauschenberg critique economic systems and the injustices they perpetuate. Each artist examines the ways that capitalism intersects with political and corporate corruption. Sue Coe’s lithograph *Wall Street Walk* (fig. 7), depicts the earth walking on a tightrope held up by a bull and a bear over a pit of fire, illustrating the effects of capitalism on the environmental world. She takes the imagery of stock market fluctuations, with the bull representing a rise in stocks and investor confidence



(fig. 6) United States Department of the Treasury, *85 Million Americans Hold War Bonds*, 1945



(fig. 7) Sue Coe, *Wall Street Walk*, 2012



(fig. 8) Robert Rauschenberg, *Surface Series (No. 52)*, 1970

and the bear standing in for a decline in stocks. The bull wears the tags Exxon and BP on its ears, which represent the two largest oil-based corporations. Coe suggests that the world's fate is dictated by the power of corporations and the stock market. She clearly links capitalism and the fossil fuel industry to the climate crisis and the unscrupulous values of global corporations.

Similarly, Rauschenberg's *Surface Series* print (fig. 8) focuses on the political events and social issues of the first two months of 1970. In this series, Rauschenberg collected

newspaper headlines, photographs, and articles from various kinds of print publications to create collages, then photographed these compositions, and layered the negatives of two different photographed collages to create his final print.⁶ In addition to references in the prints to race, the environment, crime, violence, and politics, several works include headlines related more specifically to economic policy, marketing strategies, and the effects of capitalism. Because Rauschenberg places “\$25,000,000” in large, bold type at the center of the composition, all the other headlines and photographs are read in relation to this large financial sum. With headlines including “Governor Seeks to Avert Bankruptcy in the Arts” and “President Seeks ABM Expansion,” Rauschenberg juxtaposes an arts-related financial crisis with Nixon’s antiballistic missile system, to assert that money is equated with power.

IMMEASURABLE VALUE

The equation of an artwork with the word “commodity” is complicated. Works of art, in the broadest terms, are valued both in dollars and also measured in a more elusive manner associated with meaning-making. The artist’s goal of generating profit or income is often understood as secondary to their drive for expression, reflection, or illusionistic reproduction. In 1790 German philosopher Immanuel Kant argued in 1790 that art is not “a mercenary occupation and hence a kind of labor, whose magnitude can be judged exacted or paid for according to a determinate standard.”⁷ Kant’s ideas became foundational for understanding how art is distinctive from other outcomes of production. In his analysis, the artist is removed from the profit-generating process of conventional labor. Kant states, “The mind is occupying itself yet it feels satisfied and aroused (independently of any pay) without looking to some other purpose.”⁸ This myth is subverted when we consider that artists—alongside collectors, curators, and critics—may approach notions of worth and compensation differently. The value of art is defined not only by quantitative amounts, but also qualitative factors such as its cultural, intellectual, historical, and aesthetic significance.

In a kind of direct response to Kant's assertion that art's value is defined by its non-utilitarian status, Andy Warhol emphasized a more direct alignment between art and the commercial world. For example, his print *\$1* (fig. 9), takes the symbol of the dollar as the subject itself. With a knowing wit, Warhol expresses how this work is worth much more than a dollar. Warhol's professed interests in money and commodity shaped his aesthetic directions and challenged the perceived separation of art and commerce. He claimed, "I went into business art ... making money is art and working is art and good business is the best art."⁹ Across his various series, Warhol's work exemplifies the complicated intersections of art and money, calling attention to the contexts—both financial and aesthetic—for why art is made. In subverting and challenging Kant's foundational thoughts, many of the artists included in this exhibition investigate the role of money in the art world, offer critiques of capitalism, and examine its influence on art as a commodity.

Allie Gonzalez '26



Figure 9

ENDNOTES

- 1 William L. Pressly, "America's Paper Money: A Canvas for an Emerging Nation" (Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press, 2023), 21, https://smithsonian.figshare.com/articles/book/America_s_Paper_Money_A_Canvas_for_an_Emerging_Nation/24871410?file=43762131.
- 2 Adebowale Biodun Aro, "Money in Nigeria Market Driven Economy: Iron, the Antecedent to Paper Money," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 4, no. 7 (2014): 238-239. See also "Blades of Value," National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, <https://africa.si.edu/exhibitions/current-exhibitions/striking-iron-the-art-of-african-blacksmiths/blades-of-value>.
- 3 Gay Sweely, and Gwendolyn N. Graham, "Including Seminal African-American Artists in the Humanities," *The International Journal of Critical Cultural Studies* 15, no. 1 (2017): 24.
- 4 Josephine Withers, "The Guerrilla Girls," *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 2 (1988): 285.
- 5 On nail art, see Howard Kaplan, "Talking with Our Hands: Nail Art Inspiration at the Smithsonian," (Smithsonian American Art Museum, March 14, 2025), <https://americanart.si.edu/blog/smithsonian-nail-art>. See also P. Labossiere, "Nail Art: Expressions of African American Culture, Pride, and Style" (National Museum of African American History and Culture), <https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories/nail-art#:~:text=with%20the%20Smithsonian-,Expressions%20of%20Self%2DCare,God%20created%20us%20to%20be>.
- 6 *Robert Rauschenberg: Surface Series* (The Trout Gallery, 2022).
- 7 Immanuel Kant, cited in Titia Hulst, ed., "Art in a Commercial World," in *A History of the Western Art Market: A Sourcebook of Writings on Artists, Dealers, and Markets*, 1st ed. (University of California Press, 2017), 16.
- 8 Kant, 16.
- 9 Andy Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol (From A to B and Back Again)* (Harcourt Trade Publishers, 1975), 92. See also Anthony E. Grudin, "'A Sign of Good Taste': Andy Warhol and the Rise of Brand Image Advertising," *Oxford Art Journal* 33, no. 2 (2010): 211-32. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40856515>.

EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

Afo, Hoe currency, Nigeria, n.d. Iron, 28.5 x 23 in. (72.39 x 58.42 cm), 26 lbs. The Trout Gallery, Gift of Dr. David and Karina Rilling, 2008.20.38.

Ashanti, Gold Weights (turtle, bird, and bird perch with six birds), Ghana, n.d. Brass, 1x1.5in (2.54 x 3.81cm); 1 x 2.5 in. (2.54 x 6.35 cm); 4 x 1.5in. (10.16x3.81cm). The Trout Gallery, Gift of Charles E. and Kathleen Myers, 1975.1.99; 1975.1.96; 1975.1.110.

Baldwin, Bald, and Cousland, New York and Philadelphia, Bank note illustrations, c. 1856. Steel engravings on paper, each approx. 3 x 5.625 in. (7.62 x14.29 cm); 2009.14.2; 2009.14.4; 2009.14.5; 2009.14.6; 2009.14.7; 2009.14.8

Sonya Clark (American, b. 1967), *Afro Abe*, 2010. Mixed media (five-dollar bill with peacock feathers), 4 ¼ x 7 in. (10.8 x 17.8 cm). Petrucci Family Foundation, PFF169.

Sue Coe (British and American, b. 1951), *Wall Street Walk*, 2012. Two-colored lithograph on paper, 36x25 in. (91.44 x 66.04 cm). The Trout Gallery, 2014.4.

Jennifer Ling Datchuk (American, b. 1980), *Money Honey*, 2017. Archival digital print, ed. 8, 48 x 36 in. (121.9 x 91.4 cm). The Trout Gallery, purchase made possible by the Friends of The Trout Gallery and the Burgess Institute for the Global Economy, Dickinson College, 2025.40.

Guerrilla Girls (founded 1985), *Women in America Earn Only 2/3 of What Men Do*, 1985. Offset print on paper, 17 x 22 in. (43.18 x 55.88 cm). Purchase of the Friends of The Trout Gallery, 2025.18.1.

Lega, Bwami ceremonial hat, Democratic Republic of the Congo, c. early 20th c. Fiber, shells, buttons, and animal hair, 7 x 7 in. (17.78 x 17.78 cm). The Trout Gallery, Gift of Dr. David and Karina Rilling, 2008.20.44.

Edward Orme (British, 1774–1838), *Grief-Pleasure*, c. 1810. Etching with hand-coloring on paper, 6.5 x 9 in. (16.51 x

22.86 cm). The Trout Gallery, Gift of The Brookes V Limited Partnership Collection, 2011.7.46.

Robert Rauschenberg (American, 1925–2008), *Surface Series* (No. 52), 1970. Silkscreen on paper, 40 x 40 in. (101.6 x 101.6 cm). The Trout Gallery, Gift of Lawrence and Carol Zicklin, 1982.13.1.17.

Faith Ringgold (American, 1930–2024), *Dear Selma, Every Time I see a Dime I Think of You*, 2010. Silkscreen on Paper, 30.33 x 22 in. (77.5 x 55.9 cm). Purchase of the Friends of the Trout Gallery, 2025.22.

Silver Drachma (Alexander the Great), Greece, 127–128 CE. Silver, 1.34x1.34in (3.4x34cm), 127–128 AD (2nd C.), The Trout Gallery, Gift of Dr. Donald K. McIntyre '35 and Mrs. Donald K. McIntyre 1998.5.696.

Silver Denarius (Septimus Severus), Rome, 193–211CE. Silver, 0.75 x 0.75in. (1.9x1.9cm). The Trout Gallery, Gift of Dr. Donald K. McIntyre '35 and Mrs. Donald K. McIntyre, 1998.5.586.

Silver Antoninianus (Gordian III), Rome, 238–244 CE. Silver, 0.91 x 0.91 in. (2.3 x 2.3 cm). The Trout Gallery, Gift of Dr. Donald K. McIntyre '35 and Mrs. Donald K. McIntyre, 1998.5.693.

Artist Unknown (Russia), *Having Destroyed Capitalism, the Proletariat Will Destroy Prostitution*, 1921, printed 1966. Offset print, 27.5 x 19.25 in. (70 x 49 cm). The Trout Gallery, Gift of Kim E. Banister, 2025.23.1.22.

United States Department of the Treasury, *85 Million Americans Hold War Bonds*, 1945. Offset photomechanical poster on paper, 14 x 10 in. (35.56 x 25.4 cm). The Trout Gallery, Gift of Robert and Francisca Kan, 2006.6.2.

Andy Warhol (American, 1928–1987), *\$1*, 1982. Screen Print on Lenox Museum Board, 19.75 x 15.625 in. (50.165 x39.688 cm). The Trout Gallery, Gift of The Andy Warhol Foundation, 2014.1.4.

A MEASURE OF VALUE

JANUARY 16–APRIL 4, 2026

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Graphic design by Krista Hanley, Dickinson College Print Center

Exhibitions are supported in part by Dickinson College, the Ruth Trout Endowment, the Helen E. Trout Memorial Fund, and the Friends of The Trout Gallery. Educational programming presented through the Mumper-Stuart Education Center at The Trout Gallery.

Cover Image:

Jennifer Ling Datchuk, *Money Honey*, 2017. Archival digital print, 48 x 36 in (121.9 x 91.4 cm), Purchase made possible by the Friends of The Trout Gallery and the Burgess Institute for the Global Economy, Dickinson College. 2025.40

© The Trout Gallery, 2026

THE TROUT GALLERY

The ART MUSEUM of Dickinson College

📍 240 West High Street, ☒ P.O. Box 1773, Carlisle, Pennsylvania 17013
717-245-1344 | www.troutgallery.org

THE TROUT GALLERY

THE ART MUSEUM OF DICKINSON COLLEGE

www.troutgallery.org