On Kawara, *Moon Landing*, 1969



On Kawara, *Moon Landing,* 1969.

1 Close Looking and Principles of Design

- What do you see as you approach and walk around the artwork?
- What do you think is happening? What details make you say that?
- What questions do you have about the artist's choices, materials, scale, or the meaning of the work? What are you curious to learn more about?

*Consider using terms like **line, form, scale, balance,** and **negative space.***

2 Learn More About the Artist:

- On Kawara (1932–2014) was a Japanese conceptual artist. He lived for exactly 29,771 days.
- His work explored ideas about time, memory, and what it means to be human. Kawara was initially involved in Tokyo's postwar art scene and the Reportage movement, where artists responded to the social and political changes happening in Japan after World War II.
- Before moving to New York, he traveled through Mexico and Europe. He enjoyed traveling and often made artwork that recorded events from his daily life.
- Although the paintings look simple, he had a careful and organized process. Kawara kept much of his personal life private, but he closely documented the passing of each day through his art.
- In 1965, Kawara stopped giving interviews and rarely appeared at public art events.

About the Artwork:

- Glenstone's triptych *Moon Landing* (1969) marks three important moments from the Apollo 11 mission:
  - July 16: Launch of Apollo 11
  - July 20: The Moon landing
  - July 21: Neil Armstrong's first steps on the Moon
- In his *Today* series (1966-2013), Kawara carefully painted the date on the day each artwork was made. These daily paintings reflected his interes in time and the passing of life. If he did not finish a painting before midnight, he destroyed it.
- Space exploration fascinated Kawara. Friends have said that he collected newspaper clippings and articles about space travel.
- Kawara used a typeface called FUTURA. Designed by Paul Renner in Germany during the 1920s, Futura is easy to read from a distance. NASA also used this font during the Apollo space program.

Glenstone Connection:

- Before his death in 2014, Glenstone worked with On Kawara to design Room 3. Afterward, Glenstone continued working with his estate to turn Room 3 into a permanent home for *Moon Landing.*
- Kawara requested that binchotan, a traditional Japanese white charcoal, be placed beneath the floor. In Japan, this charcoal is often used to help absorb moisture and impurities from the air.
- The room's tall design draws the visitor's eyes up toward the sky, and it's narrow build strengthens the connection to a rocket launch, the earth, and the sky.



Binchotan charcoal installation in Room 3.



MAR. 22, 1978 from "Today" series (1966 - 2013), 1978.
Photo: Ron Amstutz


The New York Times

MAN WALKS ON MOON

ASTRONAUTS LAND ON A PLAIN
AFTER STEERING PAST CRATER

Newspaper clipping from *The New York Times* detailing the astronauts' preparation for the moon landing.

3 Reflect

Worldview and Social Impact

- Why do you think On Kawara chose to record specific dates instead of showing pictures of the Moon landing?
- How did the Apollo 11 mission change the way people thought about science, exploration, and the future?
- How might the artist's background or culture change the context of the work?

This invites discussion of empathy, interpretation, and perception.

Details and Material

Examine the art closely.

- What details do you notice about the color, scale, or arrangement of the three panels?
- How does the tall, narrow room change the way you experience the work?
- How has time affected the surface?

*Introduce words like **social commentary, humanity, and font.***

Personal Reflection

After moving through the sculpture, reflect:

- I feel... (emotion or reaction)
- I think... (insight or idea sparked)
- I am... (state of being or identity)

Connect art to personal meaning, mindfulness, and self.

On Kawara, Moon Landing, 1969
© One Million Years Foundation
Photo: Ron Amstutz

Accessibility Note: Natural light in Room 3 can be brighter than in the Passsageway