Fall 2019 Faculty Resource Guide

This document is provided to KSU faculty as an overview of exhibitions at the Zuckerman Museum of Art.

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Museum Educational Goals:
In alignment with the museum’s educational mission, the exhibitions present an opportunity for broad interdisciplinary conversation and learning. The educational goals of the ZMA are:
- Teach viewers to explore, discuss, and comprehend contemporary art objects.
- Consider how to decode and understand the messages or signs legible in art.
- Learn how artists use their practice to explore current global issues.
- Enhance visual literacy.

Academic Class Programming:
The Zuckerman staff is available to customize class visits and tours in accordance with course objectives and upon faculty request. We strive to help students connect more deeply with course content through engagement with art.

Pre-Tour Preparation Notes: Prior to visiting an exhibition, we encourage instructors to hold an in-class dialogue to frame the exhibition for students.

Exhibition Tours: A class tour provides the faculty member with a constructive method by which students can experience the exhibition. The themes suggested herein can help to appropriately focus the class dialogue to match the course’s subject.

Writing prompts for an after-visit exercise: Instructors may elect to provide a writing assignment after a visit to the museum. Open-ended questions associated with each theme can offer basic ideas to use as a springboard.
Fruitful Labors

Mortin Gallery

Exhibition Runs: August 24 – November 10, 2019

Artists include: Lenka Clayton, Harry Dodge and Stanya Kahn, Shanequa Gay, Stanya Kahn, Michelle Laxalt, Shana Moulton, and Kaitlynn Redell

Synopsis:

The primary focus of the exhibit is strategies for coping. Ranging from the absurd to the essential, these tactics include conversation, repetitive labor, intergenerational storytelling, and healing practices.

Stanya Kahn, who is represented in this project with two videos, is an observer of life who offers wry, seemingly rambling commentary on failure and responsibility. Lenka Clayton’s sculptural work also ponders responsibility through the investment of unnecessary, yet poetic labor. Through disassembly, alteration, and reassembly her objects of clothing consider use and misuse of human and machine. Kaitlynn Redell’s photographic series, Not Her(e), falls within the sphere of the domestic labor where she directly addresses the invisibility in her constancy and support through a contemporary rendition of Victorian photography techniques.

Shana Moulton takes the idea of invisibility in the direction of the imaginary. Her assumed character, Cynthia, receives messages from household objects that lead her to the Galactic Pot Healer for restoration. Equally mysterious, Michelle Laxalt refers to the power that can be invested in small objects and repeated behaviors. In her sculptural installations, the artist references her grandmother’s superstitions—long held beliefs that remain intact despite more orthodox forms of religious training. Shanequa Gay explores the contemporary relevance of an ancient world of rites, practices, and sisterhood that she visualizes in multiple media. The photographs in this show depict women who unapologetically confront and adopt tropes as they embody deities of the artist’s creation.

Fruitful Labors values the power of belief in the face of struggle. The specificity of the belief alters from one artist to another.

Exhibition Specific Educational Goals:
The educational goals for this exhibition are:

- Consider how to decode and understand the messages or signs legible in sculpture, installation, performance, and photography.
- Explore interpretations of artistic expressions of coping.
- Consider how these works can support examination of personal and societal management of stress and perceived hardship.

Themes of Fruitful Labors:

Theme 1. Caregiving is often invisible work

Both Lenka Clayton and Kaitlynn Redell explore how mothering has altered and informed their practice of art making. Clayton's works in this show are white, button-down, dress shirts she deconstructed, used a typewriter to type a pattern, and reassembled by hand.
The finished products show only vestiges of her laborious efforts. Without knowledge of her process and close inspection, the viewer would not fully realize the extent of labor involved. Redell references Victorian era photographs of hidden mothers (mothers draped fully in cloth to disguise them while holding their children for the long duration of a 19th c. photographic exposure.) Her photographs of sculptural objects morph her body with furniture and other elements of her domestic environment. She becomes almost hidden, save a few limbs poking out here and there.

1. What does it mean to do work that goes unnoticed or unappreciated? Is there value in unseen work?
2. What do her photographs suggest to you about the disguised mother?
3. Creating textiles has traditionally been viewed as “woman’s work” and yet in our contemporary world it is highly mechanized. What does Clayton’s use of manual labor say about the value of time as a resource?
4. How is her spending time on an art project that will never expand beyond the face value of the work similar to or different from parenting? How is it similar or different from being in any relationship in which you care for another person?

**Theme 2. The power and value of belief in the face of struggle**
In Shana Moulton’s video *The Galactic Pot Healer* we see the main character, Cynthia, follow guidance received from an unknown source. Via a very strange creation process, she ends up with a new pot after her original vessel is broken. In another part of the gallery Shanequa Gay depicts one of her Devouts ascending towards the ceiling. Devouts are human and female from the neck down but have a bull’s head. These deities symbolize both femininity and strength.

1. What beliefs do you rely upon when facing a difficult time in your life?
2. How do you benefit from your beliefs?
3. Is there value in different people having and using different systems of belief? Why or why not?
4. How are mixed symbols adding to an overall message? Which dominate? Why?

**Theme 3. The power and value of conversation in the face of struggle**
In Michelle Laxalt’s installation, *The Quivs*, the artist explores aspects of her grandmother’s superstitions and beliefs. Struggling with leg spasms, the older woman relied on a folk remedy for relief and placed a bar of soap under the bed covers near her feet. Laxalt recalls and reinterprets this custom.

In the video, *I See You Man* and *Kathy*, Harry Dodge and Stanya Kahn present a monologue about hardship and struggle. *I See You Man* shows the artist on a beach offering impromptu commentary on life and her surroundings. In Kahn’s video, *Kathy*, we see the artist’s friend communicating her life experiences over the course of several years. Ranging from funny to heart-breaking, Kathy’s perspectives on situations within her family and situations she encounters in her work as a social worker, provide a montage over which to compare one’s own understanding of family and society.

1. How do you connect with other people?
2. In what ways might talking about troubles help someone deal with their own challenges? How might talking about troubles make a situation better or worse?
3. What objects hold memory for you?
4. Do you preserve past conversations with loved ones? If so, how? Why?
5. What, if any, superstitions were passed down in your family?
6. What, if any, small rituals do you practice for good luck or protection?
7. How might conversation provide healing and understanding?

**Painting Who?**

**East Galleries**

Exhibition Runs: August 24 - December 15, 2019

Artists Include: Jeff Conefry, Gracie DeVito, Moira Dryer, Chris Hood and Wihro Kim

**Synopsis:**

This is a small exhibition that focuses on the multiple roles that paintings can fill. These objects occupy real space and also demonstrate the illusion of space. They consciously and unapologetically reference the history of painting, the act of making a painting, and our contemporary world. And in this layered and loaded territory, they reflect both the past and the present.

Asking the question “Who is this painting?” rather than “What is this painting about?” opens up the possibility of considering the object as a complex character in a larger narrative. It allows the gallery to be interpreted as a theatrical space in which stories are played out and plots are thickened. On this big white stage, relationships between the paintings can be explored and personalities can be assigned. This approach applies action to a group of otherwise static objects and it emphasizes the role of the gallery environment. But most importantly, it gives us a different way to think about painting, an alternative lens through which to read and interpret what we see.

**Exhibition Specific Educational Goals:**

The educational goals for this exhibition are to:

- Consider how painting acts as a tool for expression and exploration beyond the traditional scopes of representation and abstract expressionism.
- Explore interpretations of the act of painting.
- Explore innovative process and materials usage.

**Themes of Painting Who?**

**Theme 1. Space within space**

Concepts of linear time are condensed in these artist’s acts. They perform a remixing of time and place in the context of the space on their canvases. This approach is very different from an abstract expressionist capturing a mood or a romantic realist depicting an ideal pastoral scene, but maybe not so different from a cubist revealing multiple perspectives in a single plane. Wihro Kim has said that he aims to create immersive space and “a surface you
could exist within.” Others have referred to his works as traversing multiple planes and as interwoven realities. Kim achieves this sense of space within space in part by combining multiple planes on one unified surface with multiples views layered within. Layering different views in multiple planes melded into one creates a play of scale and space that evokes questions of perception.

Gracie Devito plays with concepts of space when she embeds material from the real world into her work. For instance, she literally saves what would be refuse for many artists – painting rags – and recycles them as the painting surfaces for new work. Mixing real and painted ideas of landscape and place allows the viewer to traverse time and space and may trigger memories of our own journeys or transport the viewer to an entirely new dimension.

1. How do you delve into complex topics?
2. How can such strategies help you understand the worlds presented in the work?
3. What can you extrapolate from multiple perspectives in a single work?
4. How does juxtaposition play a part in the work of Devito and Kim?
5. How do you understand time and space in Kim’s work?

**Theme 2. The Gallery as a Stage**

Moira Dryer was quoted saying, “So the pieces are performers themselves…I see them as alive. I see them as walking away from the wall. It’s a feeling I have that the work is active, active in our own world, not separate.” To reframe paintings as objects with agency to act or the ability to dialogue with other paintings puts a new spin on one’s experience of and with art in a gallery space. To utilize one’s imagination to create such a dialogue puts onus, not only on the work but also on the viewer to more deeply consider the art with a new lens and observe connection or relationship between the pieces. What kind of dialogue would we hear between Dryer’s colorful paintings and Jeff Conefry’s hybrid painting sculptures?

Conefry creates his work with many layers of cast acrylic paint and wooden structures. They turn unexpectedly and animate form. This kind of activation of objects and imaginative play has been depicted on screen in movies like the Disney classics *Fantasia* and *Beauty and the Beast* and on stage in perhaps the most loved ballet of all time, *The Nutcracker*. Now the gallery visitor is asked to take a step forward in their participation and envision the art alive on stage, hear the conversations these pieces speak and experience gallery viewing in a new way.

1. How does your understanding of the individual works of art alter when considering them in connection with each other?
2. What human characteristics might one apply to an individual work? Why? What suggests that to you? What do you imagine them saying?
3. How can imagination play a role in understanding what you see?
Theme 3. Metacognitive Painting as an Evolutionary Form
The artists in this show created paintings intentionally cognizant of the history of painting. Each, in their own ways, has an interest in forging a new path in the act of painting and employed innovative techniques for making their art. Jeff Conefry states, “To cut or break a form in a way that seems disrespectful or fetishized, helps me to push against the historical sanctity of painting.” He uses layers of cast paint and structural manipulations of stretchers and supports to expose the tactile qualities of paint and the sculptural forms of the painted object, which one would not normally consider.

Chris Hood’s work involves a process of layering paint in a specific way. Hood sought out a style of working which allows him “to have friction built into the material look of [the painting] as well as the imagery.” He was “looking for a way to ‘break’ the painting.” He wants his work to show a personal voice that stands in contrast to other painters’ work.

1. What does it mean to challenge notions of history?
2. How does Hood “break” the painting? What does he mean in using this term?
3. Why do you think these artists have an interest in trying to reinvent painting on their own terms?
4. If you think about a landscape painting you’ve seen in the past, how is Wihro Kim’s work different? Or Chris Hood’s?
5. How do you deal with ambiguity in your life? Can you use those strategies to help interpret what you see in this work?

2nd National Arts Program Exhibition
Mortin Gallery
Exhibition Runs: December 2 - 15, 2019

Synopsis:
The ZMA invites participation by all KSU faculty, staff, and their family members in the 2nd National Arts Program (NAP) Exhibition during the month of December. NAP exhibitions are free, non-curated, and judged according to different levels of skill not medium. By accepting all entries (abiding guidelines), artists of all skill levels—-from youth to professionals—are able to display their art. This provides a diverse and inclusive array of creative expression at every venue. If art-making is part of your life, please share it with our campus community!

Exhibition Specific Educational Goals:
The educational goals for this exhibition are:
• Celebrate the diversity of creative expression across the faculty, staff, and families of Kennesaw State University (students who are also staff may enter.)
• Embrace a culture of making.
• Demonstrate appreciation for artistic effort and a growth mindset by recognizing the cumulative building of artistic skill through continued practice.