

For Immediate Release

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Contact:

Erika Monroe-Kane

Director of Strategic Communications and Engagement

608.257.0158 x 237

erika@mmoca.org

2019 WISCONSIN TRIENNIAL ARTISTS ANNOUNCED

October 19, 2019—February 16, 2020

MMoCA Opening Friday, October 18 • 6–9 PM

MADISON, WI—The Madison Museum of Contemporary Art's *Wisconsin Triennial*, a highly anticipated exhibition that charts the latest art being made across the state, will feature works by 32 individual artists and two groups of artists working in collaboration. Paintings, drawings, prints, photographs, sculpture, and video are among the media represented, reflecting the diversity of approaches artists undertake in their explorations of process and content. MMoCA's curatorial staff selected new works of art by established and emerging artists through a rigorous review process, organizing an exhibition that will provide audiences with a visually engaging and thought-provoking experience.

This year's *Wisconsin Triennial* will open with a reception beginning at 6 pm on Friday, October 18. The exhibition will be on view in the museum's lobby, State Street Gallery, Imprint Gallery, main galleries, and rooftop sculpture garden through February 16, 2020. A cornerstone of MMoCA's exhibition programming, the *Triennial* captures the

richness and variety of artistic expressions across the state, and showcases emerging ideas being addressed within the contemporary art world while also honoring artists who engage with timeless themes, techniques, and materials.

Artists participating in the 2019 *Wisconsin Triennial* include:

Saif Alsaegh (Milwaukee)
Emily Arthur (Madison)
Tom Berenz (Milwaukee)
Timothy Brenner (Madison)
Jennifer Bucheit (Middleton)
Ed Erdmann (Menomonie)
Marianne Fairbanks (Madison)
Ben Grant (Milwaukee)
Rachael Griffin (Madison)
Helen Hawley (Madison)
John Himmelfarb (Spring Green)
John Hitchcock (Madison)
Jon Horvath (Waukesha)
Chele Isaac (Madison)
Tomiko Jones (Madison)
Tom Jones (Madison)
Diane Levesque (Kenosha)
Gina Litherland (Cedarburg)
Dakota Mace (Madison)
Francisco Mora (Fox Point)
Stephen Perkins (Madison)
Jeffrey Repko (Madison)
Suzanne Rose (Forestville)
Andy Rubin (Madison)
Dane Schumacher (Green Bay)
Peter Schwei (Dodgeville)
Anders Shafer (Eau Claire)
Pranav Sood (Madison)
Spatula&Barcode (Madison)
SPOOKY BOOBS (Madison)
Ariana Vaeth (Shorewood)
Leslie Vansen (Milwaukee)
Shane Walsh (Milwaukee)
Della Wells (Milwaukee)

MMoCA's *Triennial* jury is comprised of Mel Becker Solomon, curator of the collection; Leah Kolb, curator of exhibitions; Sheri Castelnovo, curator of education; and Stephen

Fleischman, the Gabriele Haberland director. The jury process involved a careful review of material submitted by hundreds of artists, followed by visits to over 70 artist studios across the state.

The 2019 *Wisconsin Triennial* serves as a platform to engender and celebrate artistic invention, and stands as a testament to the dedication and sophistication of the artists working throughout the state. Approximately two-thirds are participating in the *Triennial* for the first time, with the final roster including a diverse mix of artists at all points in their careers, from professional artists with national reputations to current BFA students.

EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS

Among the distinctive works that will be on view in this year's *Wisconsin Triennial*:

Diane Levesque's ongoing series of paintings and drawings, *The Penny Dreadful Project*, reinterprets themes depicted in Staffordshire figurines produced between 1810 and 1835. Some of these popular collectibles portrayed idealized pastimes, as well as disturbing and often violent contemporaneous events, such as infamous murders, public hangings, and animal baiting. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, the figurines were acquired as decorative household items. These themes corresponded to what could be read in "penny dreadfuls," popular serial literature from the same era with sensational storylines. With bold color choices and energetic paint application, Levesque heightens the implied violence and sexuality of the subject matter. The consumer tastes and decorative motifs associated with the material culture of the Victorian and pre-Victorian eras are here transformed into social commentary that is unusual yet beautiful.

Pranav Sood's intricate, pattern-heavy paintings are filled with narrative that draws on the artist's personal relationships. Influenced by from Indian, Persian, and Egyptian art, Sood emphasizes the flatness of the canvas while also playing with bold lines, strong profiles, and symbolic motifs. The artist also references Op Art in his work and each of the figures in his fantastical compositions inhabit a veritable wonderland of vibrant color, whimsy, and a surreal graphic sense of space. These works tell the story of a quest for love between a young couple, as they embark on the journey towards adulthood and leave their homes behind. Sood complicates the cultural norms experienced in his native India, challenging expectations on how love should be formed and with whom. The vibrating patterns and repetitive geometric vocabulary of these works investigate visual language across cultures while drawing from a universal theme.

Gina Litherland's immaculately rendered paintings reference the artistic traditions of Magic Realism and Midwest Surrealism, as well as narrative threads found in folktales, fairytales, and literature. Litherland creates her own mythologies in her wood panel paintings, twisting familiar iconographies and storylines into new realms of the uncanny where young girls befriend wolves and tigers and join packs of dogs howling at the moon. In her painting *Yggdrasil*, Litherland illustrates the Tree of Life from Norse Mythology, the three "Norns" (female beings who control the fate of both gods and humans) appear as girls eerily floating beneath the tree, lit from below, toying with their environment as if with fates of all those below. Litherland imbues her mystical worlds with tales of female empowerment, making them places where young girls and women have immense power and magic over their incongruous surroundings.

Della Wells employs the medium of collage to construct fractured, narrative compositions. Together, her works reveal an imaginary world she refers to as "Mambo Land," a dynamic environment which serves as an arena for women and girls to take control of their own fears. In Haitian Vodou religion, a Mambo is a female priestess, one who often performs healing works and guides others throughout complex rituals. Similarly, in Wells' collages, women are the predominant figures, presiding over each scene. In the artist's Mambo Land, there is no fixed point of reference; scales shift, people and animals fly, children rule, monsters thrive, and daily routines are given a sense of staggering importance. These collages create a subverted world, utilizing symbolism such as American flags, highway signs, state buildings, and chickens, a symbol Wells' own childhood awareness of death in her personal lexicon of visual iconography, to offer complex commentary on what it means to be a Black woman in this political moment.

Francisco Mora's drawings reveal the imaginary world of his dreams. Playing freehandedly with scale, he transmogrifies humans into animals and back again, setting his fantastical characters on journeys through a mysterious jungle. Born and raised in Mexico City, Mora draws on the visual traditions of Mexican Surrealism, which emerged during the 1940s and 1950s as an international community of artists fled World War II in Europe and settled in Mexico. Mexican artists merged their own history and folklore with the ideas that had defined the Surrealism abroad, transforming and expanding the movement through new stylistic innovations and cultural references. Mora here creates a body of work cataloguing his imagination, where a giant child, a wizard, a woman traveling inside of a donkey's stomach, a fish-man, and a bird-man all intersect in a visionary and hand-penciled world.

EXHIBITION EVENTS

A dynamic schedule of events is planned to provide experiences and insights into 2019 *Wisconsin Triennial* artists and artwork. All events, except the MMoCA Opening, are free to the public.

FRIDAY, OCT 18 • 6-9 PM
MMoCA Opening

Join us at MMoCA on Friday, October 18 for a special evening dedicated to the opening of the 2019 *Wisconsin Triennial*. Widely regarded as the state's most prestigious showcase of contemporary Wisconsin visual art, the *Triennial* reflects a broad range of art representing current directions in contemporary visual art. Join the artists and other art supporters at this celebration of Wisconsin contemporary art. Enjoy live DJ mixes, a cash bar, and hors d'oeuvres in the MMoCA Lobby.

This event is free for MMoCA Members/ \$10 for non-members. MMoCA Openings are sponsored by Newcomb Construction Company and The Alexander Company with additional support from Fresco and media support from Isthmus.

FRIDAY, NOV 1 • 6:30-7:30 PM
IN CONVERSATION: CHELE ISAAC AND HELEN HAWLEY

Phenomena and rhythms of nature are among the ideas that Chele Isaac and Helen Hawley make visible through their video installations on view in the *Wisconsin Triennial*. Together, they will examine their individual approach to making their work and describe its conceptual underpinnings.

Chele Isaac's films and multimedia installations have been exhibited nationally and internationally. She has been an adjunct faculty member in the Art Department at UW-Madison, where she also serves on the Board of Visitors. In 2017, her seven-channel film, *the understory*, was installed in MMoCA's State Street Gallery. Helen Hawley is accomplished in various art media, including sculpture, printmaking, painting, and video. She has been an artist in residence at the Vermont Studio Center and her work has been exhibited at the Flux Factory, Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts, and in the 2016 *Wisconsin Triennial*.

THURSDAY, NOV 7 • 1-1:45 PM
STEPHEN PERKINS ON LATIN AMERICAN ART AND THE DECOLONIAL TURN

Stephen Perkins will discuss his installation, *Latin American Art and the Decolonial Turn (1963-2018): "Memories of Underdevelopment" Revisited*, which is a response to the exhibition *Memories of Underdevelopment: Art and the Decolonial Turn in Latin America, 1960-1985*, which the artist visited at the Museo Jumex in Mexico City in 2018.

Perkins's installation includes materials from his archive coupled with works by Latin American artists that are a rejoinder to "the forces that created modernism or development in Latin America" and how they "produced radically different effects from those in the colonialist and imperialist centers." (Luis Camnitzer et al.,1999)

Stephen Perkins is an artist and independent art historian specializing in alternative artists' periodicals and printed matter. He curates his home-based gallery, Subspace, from his extensive archive and maintains a blog dedicated to artists' accordion publications. He was director of the Lawton Gallery at UW-Green Bay, where he taught courses on gallery and museum practices and policy.

SATURDAY, NOV 9 • 1 pm
DROP-IN TOUR

Drop by MMoCA for a lively and informal discussion of the 2019 *Wisconsin Triennial*. Expertly led by MMoCA's docents, these free, 30-minute guided tours consider artists' creative decisions and provide insight into their methods, ideas, and influences. Meet in the museum lobby.

FRIDAY, DEC 6 • 6:30-7:30 PM
IN CONVERSATION: TOMIKO JONES AND TOM JONES

Tomiko Jones and Tom Jones each extend the boundaries of photography to explore identity, tradition, and intergenerational understanding. In this joint gallery talk, Tomiko Jones will discuss her photographic installation memorializing her father through the Japanese Buddhist ritual of *Hatsubon*. Immediately following, Tom Jones will describe his incorporation of traditional Ho-Chunk beading designs in his photographic series *Strong Unrelenting Spirits*.

Tomiko Jones's interdisciplinary work has been exhibited internationally and she has held residencies at Musée Niépce in Chalon-Sur-Saône and at The Camargo Foundation in Cassis, France. Tom Jones's photographs have been widely exhibited and are included in the permanent collection of the National Museum of the American Indian, among others. He is co-author of the book, *People of the Big Voice, Photographs of Ho-Chunk Families by Charles Van Schaick, 1879-1943*. Both are faculty members in the UW-Madison Art Department.

SATURDAY, DEC 14 • 1 pm
DROP-IN TOUR

Drop by MMoCA for a lively and informal discussion of the 2019 *Wisconsin Triennial*. Expertly led by MMoCA's docents, these free, 30-minute guided tours consider artists' creative decisions and provide insight into their methods, ideas, and influences. Meet in the museum lobby.

EXHIBITION SPONSORS

Generous support, to date, for the 2019 *Wisconsin Triennial* has been provided by Ellen Rosner and Paul J. Reckwerdt, Nancy Mohs, the Steinhauer Charitable Trust, University Research Park, Katie Howarth Ryan, JoAnne Robbins and David Falk, Nancy Doll and Michael Bernhard, Darcy Kind and Marc Vitale, Dynee and Barney Sheafor, BDO USA, LLP, an anonymous donor, and Dane County Arts with additional funds from the Endres Mfg. Company Foundation, the Evjue Foundation, Inc., charitable arm of the Capital Times, the W. Jerome Frautschi Foundation, and the Pleasant T. Rowland Foundation. Design support is provided by Hiebing.

Housed in a soaring, Cesar Pelli-designed building, the Madison Museum of Contemporary Art provides free exhibitions and education programs that engage people in modern and contemporary art. The museum's four galleries offer changing exhibitions that feature established and emerging artists. The Rooftop Sculpture Garden provides an urban oasis with an incredible view. The museum is open: Tuesday through Thursday, noon–5 pm; Friday, noon–8 pm; Saturday, 10 am–8 pm; Sunday, noon–5 pm; and is closed on Mondays.

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