

Irreconcilable
DIFFERENCES

**MFA 2014
Graduation
Exhibition**

USF Contemporary Art Museum

March 28 – May 3, 2014

John Allen
Emily Elliott
Corbett Fogue
Jennifer Greenwell
Johanna Keefe
Briana Phelps
Mikaela Raquel Williams
Janelle Wisehart

School Director's Statement

Congratulations to our Master of Fine Arts students in this graduation exhibition. Their artworks embrace and reflect many of the key directions of contemporary art practice.

For three years, these exceptionally imaginative students have engaged our distinguished faculty and endured challenging critique sessions as well as sleepless nights preparing for semester reviews. They have stretched well beyond their initial perceptions of what art can be and its impact on an audience.

The MFA at USF is acknowledged as a premiere program among its peers nationally. Its uniqueness resides in a demanding curriculum of studio practice and inquiry coupled with critical studies seminars in the history of art and elective courses throughout the disciplines of a major research university.

Faculty welcome the prospect to connect with our students, responding to new concepts and working as collaborators as well as conductors to uncover fresh dimensions in the forms, objects, performances and images that are created. Our valued staff provides resolve and ingenuity in solving formidable problems, from bureaucratic labyrinths to one-of-a-kind projects.

The MFA program offers every graduate student the opportunity to work in any medium of materials and to select from among our eminent faculty for directed study contracts. Virtually unheard of at other institutions, this open invitation to explore, experiment and discover, leads to startling and innovative outcomes. The fruit of this philosophy toward graduate art studio studies, along with a varied student body from throughout the nation and beyond, endows this exhibition with delightful and provocative stagings of new art.

The unorthodox nature of many of the works has generated significant consultation and cooperation between the Museum staff and our students. We offer our gratitude for assisting these artists in realizing their envisioned realities and developing this exhibition.

And, again, congratulations to our graduating MFA students! The graduate studio experience affords the time and community to expand ideas about art and oneself, and the relationship of the two to the larger world. USF has benefited from your presence and we extend our sincere best wishes.

Wallace Wilson | Director
USF School of Art and Art History

Acknowledgements

USF Contemporary Art Museum is proud to showcase *Irreconcilable Differences*, the ninth MFA graduation exhibition to be presented at the museum. Each spring this tradition animates the end of the museum's season with expectation and enthusiasm—and this year's exhibition, featuring ambitious projects by John Allen, Emily Elliott, Corbett Fogue, Jennifer Greenwell, Johanna Keefe, Briana Phelps, Mikaela Raquel Williams and Janelle Wisehart, marks another exciting chapter.

USFCAM prides itself on serving as a destination where all visitors can encounter the work of emerging and established artists throughout the year. However, we regard our relationship with the MFA students of the School of Art and Art History as a special one. CAM provides a critical component to their graduate educational experience, both as a museum that showcases global contemporary art within a stone's throw of their studios and classrooms, and as the site of their capstone experience, the MFA exhibition.

In addition to exhibitions, USFCAM offers opportunities for students to interact with artists, curators and scholars representing diverse perspectives through lectures, colloquia, informal discussions and studio visits. It provides directed study, graduate assistantships and internships that help students gain experience critical to the success of emerging artists. Through their participation in the annual MFA exhibition, students come to understand the dynamic interplay of theory and practice that characterizes professional artistic practice and collaboration with institutions.

I thank the CAM staff for their collaborative spirit in presenting this challenging exhibition, notably Tony Palms, Exhibitions Designer and Coordinator, who was responsible for its design in consultation with the students as well as John Byrd, Graduate Student Advisor and Associate Professor in the School of Art and Art History, and Wallace Wilson, Director of the School of Art and Art History. Don Fuller, New Media Curator, is recognized for his creative expertise while guiding students through the publication process and for the exhibition's promotional materials, graphics and web content; Peter Foe, Curator of the Collection, and Shannon Annis, Registrar, for introducing the students to professional standards and policies to which museums are held accountable; Vincent Kral, Chief Preparator, for his management and installation strategies for the individual projects along with assistance from staff and students Mariela Estrada, Ian Foe, Eric Jonas, Ville Mehtonen, Jeremiah Mosely, Jeremy Rivera and Andrea Tamborello; and David Waterman, for his patience and good humor throughout the installation. Members of the Institute for Research in Art are recognized for their extended efforts to realize this exhibition: Margaret Miller, Director; Amy Allison, Jennifer Andrews, Noel Smith, Kristin Soderqvist, Megan Voeller and Randall West. I also thank Stanton Storer, collector extraordinaire and contemporary art champion, for his generous support of the graduate student experience and the programs of the Institute.

My thanks to all the graduates for making our final exhibition of the season so special by sharing the culmination of their research and the presentation of their artworks, which add so much to the life of the university and to the community.

Alexa Favata | Deputy Director
USF Contemporary Art Museum | Institute for Research in Art



John Allen
Greenville, South Carolina
BFA Drawing (2010) Clemson University

*Before it can ever be the repose for the senses, landscape is the work of the mind.
Its scenery is built up as much from strata of memory as from layers of rock.*

– Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory*

My work uses the external landscape to explore the fathomlessly dense cartographies of the mind. My drawings not only respond to my own inability to understand my personal psychology, but to the complex and overstimulating world in which I find myself. At the same time, my drawings are both a form of meditation and a type of escapism, creating an ethereal world into which I hope to also transport the viewer.

Recently I have expanded my practice to also incorporate the use of photography, specifically pinhole. Inspired by the Allegory of Plato's Cave, I have been photographing the caves of Peninsular Florida. Finding myself in a figurative and literal rabbit hole, I want to use these photographs to explore perception using the natural landscape.



Emily Elliott
Columbus, Georgia
BFA Sculpture (2011) Columbus State University

My work is an exploration of emotional and psychological responses to human interaction and the desire for intimacy. I use the body as a metaphorical battleground where the struggles of the mind take on a physical form. The figures are infected and transformed in reaction to their trauma. Each bump, scar, or mutation represents the fractured sense of self, torn between the desire to connect and need to protect oneself. I am interested in complicating those instincts, creating a dynamic energy between the push and pull of the psyche. This piece captures the moment before separation, where there is no clear victim or perpetrator. Instead they are both at once for and against each other.



Corbett Fogue

Des Moines, Iowa

BA Art Education + BFA Photography (2011) University of Northern Iowa

...getting the wind knocked out of you is the only way to remind your lungs how much they like the taste of air.
– Sarah Kay (Poet)

My work draws from personal experiences relating to the untimely death of my father in my mid-20s. I often exhibit works that, not unlike us, are intended to only exist for small moments in time. I strive to combine poetic gestures that reference the complexity of the human condition. The gestures are where a stronger memory can live. The final piece is the vessel that holds the gestures' trace.

I seduce the audience by coupling common materials with performance in a manner that embeds the objects with a simple concept that is much bigger than any one person. By simultaneously aggrandizing the power and fragility of the breath; I draw the viewer's attention to their own relationship with space and time.



Jennifer Greenwell

Mexico City, Mexico

BFA Photography (2002) Florida International University

Author Kent C. Ryden wrote that, "A sense of place results gradually and unconsciously from inhabiting a landscape over time, becoming familiar with its physical properties, accruing history within its confines." I use photography as an investigative tool, as a means to force myself out of my confinement and actively observe and discover the intricacies that transform ordinary spaces into meaningful places. I explore and create visual archives that speak of a personal memory in which aestheticized images of the mundane become testimonies of the act of slowing down, being in place, and recognizing that even within the most chaotic settings beauty can be found within the remnants of life that often go unnoticed.

Yearning for the sense of place that I identify with my native Mexico, I walk streets and examine spaces as a means to appease my own feelings of displacement. With each investigation I discover that in the act of engaging spaces the world begins to reveal itself in a single moment, the moment when a single space becomes my own through the simple act of being there.



Johanna Keefe

Wilmette, Illinois

BFA Ceramics (2005) Kansas City Art Institute

Post Baccalaureate (2009) Oregon College of Art and Craft

As a sculptor and photographer I use the material and history of ceramics as a springboard for creating a contemporary conversation about desire. My photographic work exploits the visual language of Flemish still life painting while my sculptures play with cultural appropriation. Together they show my struggle to balance my own desires and cast light on my experiences traveling abroad as well as living in Florida.



Briana Phelps
Atlanta, Georgia
BFA Drawing and Painting (2007) Georgia State University

If the camera shows us the world is already *image*, painting allows us to internalize it. Completing approximately 200 watercolor paintings since January 1st, my work is a recording of time in the suburban landscape. Painted in plein-air on hiking trips and from direct observation, these paintings are a race against time to capture a fleeting moment—the sun is setting, the moon is moving, and the flowers are dying. While presently, cats, moons, trees, and flowers are my image of choice, my realization that they are part of a reality that is wholly image allows the possibilities to be endless.



Mikaela Raquel Williams
Titusville, Florida
BFA (2010) Ringling College of Art & Design

Rainbow consists of invented characters that I have summarized in my own way, taken from the internet and television: 'the host', 'the seller' and 'the star' for different shorts comprised together that is an experiential parody. In the process of making this digital video I investigated talk shows, comedy, music videos, and commercials to address themes about domestic habitat and relationships through absurdity and play. Constructed naive objects deliberately inform the different video components that represent channel surfing or internet browsing. *Rainbow* and the performances in it aim to subvert the expectations of the audience through these types of characters that I have created.



Janelle Wisheart

Valdosta, Georgia

BFA Painting and Drawing (2007) Valdosta State University

I make instances in time that are but a brief glimpse into another world, created for the purpose of indulging myself in a moment that has past. My work portrays a connection between adult and adolescent behaviors and feelings. I am interested in how misbehavior, repressed desires, rebellion and failure are similarly portrayed in both children and adults. I investigate these connections through various alter egos, set in an awkward two-dimensional world that brings reality and fantasy together. I use drawings and photographs to establish these egos and the world they live in. Translating my thoughts to a two-dimensional surface, causes them to fall somewhere between reality and fantasy.

USF School of Art and Art History

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The Master of Fine Arts degree at the University of South Florida is an idea-centered program encouraging broad media exploration, interdisciplinary projects, and engagement with current theoretical and cultural issues. This nationally-ranked program provides a dynamic atmosphere with ongoing opportunities for dialogue with the faculty, other graduate students and frequent visiting artists, critics and scholars.

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