

University Art Museum

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

January 9, 2015

The Ties That Bind: Artists and Archives

February 17 – April 4, 2015

Artists' Reception: Tuesday, March 10, 2015, 5-7 pm

Public Program: Wednesday, February 25, 7 pm

Lecture by exhibiting artist Anna Craycroft

UAM

Museum Hours: Tuesday: 10 AM – 8 PM; Wednesday – Friday: 10 AM – 5 PM; Saturday: 12 – 4 PM

All events are free and open to the public.



Brian Zanisnik
Off Season, 2010
Triptych C-print
40 x 78 inches
Courtesy the artist and Aspect/Ratio, Chicago

ALBANY, NY--- The University Art Museum is pleased to announce that the exhibition ***The Ties That Bind: Artists and Archives*** will be on exhibit February 17 – April 4, 2015.

The Ties That That Bind: Artists and Archives presents seven artists who use the archive in its myriad forms to explore our collective histories and shared humanity. Working in various mediums including video, photography, drawing, and installation, these artists comb a host of sources--the news, the internet, their own basements and attics--in search of images,

objects, and memories that build upon the social and cultural ties that continue to bind us together, for better or worse. Artists include: Anna Craycroft, Aurélien Froment, Elise McMahon, Michael Oatman, Kateřina Šedá, Shane Aslan Selzer, and Bryan Zanisnik.

Anna Craycroft's *The Agency of the Orphan*, 2006-present, is an intimate collection of archives and observations that calls into question why the archetypal orphan portrayed in books and movies has such a hold on the public imagination.

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Anna Craycroft
The Agency of the Orphan, 2006-present
Inkjet prints and plastic frames
10 x 8 inches each
Courtesy of the artist and Tracy Williams, Ltd., New York

Playing off the dual meanings of the word "agency," Craycroft creates a franchise for her protagonists that can also be read as a source of power and action. An exhaustive display of over 300 orphan "head shots" from *Oliver Twist* to *Harry Potter*, large-scale drawings of orphans with signature attributes, and a ceramic fountain with running water are all part of the mix. An air of melancholy permeates Craycroft's project, pointing to larger cultural yearnings for emotional connectedness.



Aurélien Froment
Théâtre de poche (Pocket Theatre), 2007
HD video, 12:27 minutes; color; sound
Courtesy of the artist and Marcelle Alix, Paris

In **Aurélien Froment's** video *Théâtre de poche (Pocket Theatre)*, 2007, a magician pulls a seemingly endless stream of random images from his pocket, including family photographs, playing cards, and film stills, arranging and rearranging them in mid-air. Inspirations include *The Human Card Index* Arthur Lloyd, (1891 - ?), the magician who dazzled his audiences by pulling out images on demand from coat pockets filled with over 15,000 pieces of paper, and art historian Aby Warburg (1866-1929), who created the *Mnesmosyne-Atlas*, an encyclopedic archive of black-and-white photographs ranging from ancient Babylon to Weimar Germany. Representing yet another attempt to contain the uncontainable, Froment's mesmerizing video is a paean to the excess of images that continue to feed our cultural memory.

Elise McMahon's installation *Everybody's Coffin*, 2015 features a hand-milled walnut coffin made by the artist in collaboration with dairy farmer Ken Crane, 81, and his granddaughter Shawna Luke. Beginning with wood pulled from Crane's farmland, the coffin took two years to complete allowing time for a firm bond of friendship to develop between Crane and the artist. McMahon videotaped their conversations and, with Crane, collected

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significant objects and archival material from his life and work. While Crane initiated the idea of making a coffin for his funeral, McMahon furthers the collaboration by offering an alternate environment for the presentation and containment of a life filled with “problem solving, hard work, and family.”

Michael Oatman presents an unfolding archive based on several past projects, all of which are sourced from an Albany Hall of Records archive of 18,000 glass-plate negatives of early-20th century criminal portraits. Oatman obtained the plates after promising to digitally scan the entire archive. Once in his care, he used the actual glass plates to create *Conservatory*, 2005, an 18-foot greenhouse replete with vegetation grown in the original wooden crates used to store the negatives. Other works based on individual criminal portraits followed, including several videos and a projection. Portions of each project have been reconfigured for this exhibition demonstrating how the archive as an idea can mutate into myriad forms under the artist’s imagination to reveal the individual humanity buried within a floodgate of arcane data. Michael Oatman received his MFA from UAlbany in 1992.

It Doesn't Matter, 2005-2007 is an expansive drawing archive resulting from a collaboration between artist **Kateřina Šedá** and her grandmother Jana Šedá (1930-2007). In an effort to break through her grandmother's severe depression, Šedá devised a drawing “regime” that required her grandmother to record details from a more active period in her life. Pen and paper in hand, her grandmother began making drawings of as many items as she could remember from her thirty-three-year tenure as inventory manager at a home supplies store in Brno, Czech Republic. Amazingly, Šedá's grandmother produced more than five hundred renderings over the course of two years, a large selection of which are presented in this exhibition.



Elise McMahon
Everybody's Coffin, 2015
Video, 3 minutes; color; sound
Courtesy of the artist, Miles Beeson, and Ken Crane



Michael Oatman
Conservatory, 2005
Mixed media
Courtesy of the artist



Kateřina Šedá
It Doesn't Matter, 2006
Video, 5:05 minutes; color; sound
Courtesy of the artist and Franco Soffiantino
Contemporary Art Productions, Milan

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Shane Aslan Selzer
Social Action Archive: University Libraries, University at Albany, SUNY, 2015
Video still
Courtesy of the artist in collaboration with
Social Action Archive Committee

Shane Aslan Selzer's video project *Social Action Archive: University Libraries, University at Albany, SUNY, 2015*, presents a stream of subtly altered black and white images of the University at Albany campus from 1910 to the present. Selzer worked with a group of researchers culling material from the M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, University at Albany. United in their effort to understand the pictorial shape of social action at a public university over time, they formed the Social Action Archive Committee (SAAC) and are working on several additional projects. The events depicted in their inaugural video reflect a range of educational, cultural, and social experiences. From classroom lectures to student protests we see the university community come together in shared social spaces to celebrate milestones, challenge the status quo, and promote change. In an accompanying broadsheet that includes a newly-created archive of signage from recent campus protests across the United States, SAAC

posits a link between past events at the University at Albany and current advocacy efforts of the #BlackLivesMatter movement.

Bryan Zanisnik's videos, photographs, and performances all stem from the neatly organized cardboard boxes stored in his parents' New Jersey basement. He refers to the toys, trophies, tchotchkes, home movies, and snapshots contained in this underground realm as "an archive of family memories." Filtered through the artist's unbridled imagination, this tucked away and for the most part forgotten material, is transformed into elaborate constructions that speak to what lies beneath the seemingly generic nature of suburban experience. Zanisnik says he does not want the work to be read as the study of one particular family, but rather to speak more broadly about familial relationships and the psychic weight embedded in once desired, and now discarded objects.

This exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated 16-page brochure.

Funding for the exhibition and publication is provided by UAlbany's Office of the President and Office of the Provost, The University at Albany Foundation, University Auxiliary Services, and the Ellsworth Kelly Foundation.

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