

ACKLANDARTMUSEUM

For immediate release

3 April 2011

Ackland Art Museum presents 2011 Master of Fine Arts Exhibition

CHAPEL HILL, NC – Cutting-edge art by seven graduating MFA students at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill will debut in the Ackland Art Museum's exhibition *New Currents in Contemporary Art: MFA 2011* opening April 15.

On view at the Ackland through May 8, the innovative works of photography, video, sculpture, and mixed media on view represent the culmination of two years of graduate study by featured artists Travis Donovan, Carolyn Janssen, Lydia Anne McCarthy, Jessye McDowell, John Hollin Kelse Norwood, Raymond Padrón, and Tracy Spencer-Stonestreet.

"This is one of the strongest MFA classes that we've graduated," said Jeff Whetstone, associate professor of art and director of graduate studies in UNC's Department of Art. "The spectrum of work runs from small-scale photographs to a sculpture that's 19 feet high, so it's a really diverse group of voices and media. All of these works seem to deal with issues of the day, whether it be war, religion or personal issues dealing with the changing American family."

Blurring the boundaries between tame and wild, sensual and grotesque, attraction and repulsion, the works of **Travis Donovan** take materials typically associated with clothing and present them outside of normal expectations. He aims to encourage an intimate conversation between the viewer and their environment by heightening the viewer's awareness and problematizing notions of comfort. Donovan's art provides his audience with an opportunity to consciously confront the unexpected and bring greater sensitivity to their own existence.

Interested in the cultural meanings and traditions surrounding textiles, **John Hollin Kelse Norwood** uses cloth and thread to craft images that are a mix between fashion and fine art. While Norwood considers his work to be a part of the history of embroidery and stitching that has so influenced him, he has incorporated his own style and contemporary influences, such as graffiti, race, and sports, into the mix to form unique artworks.

Carolyn Janssen uses photographs of daily life to build large-scale "über-worlds" that reference video games, science fiction tableaux, and "damaged universes." Her fantastic, cataclysmic landscapes are populated by roaming packs of women who engage in narratives and mini-dramas. At times calmly observing, at times appearing apprehensive,

Janssen's figures reflect on the broken, uncertain, and strange environment that Janssen has created for them.

Lydia Anne McCarthy's work revolves around an intense longing to experience a reality that is not her own. Her photographs are visions, flashes, and hallucinations of past moments, rooted in a once-nagging fear that she would endure the mental illness that runs through her family tree. Using her camera lens to simultaneously mutate and beautify images, McCarthy asks both the viewer and herself: what do you at once desire and fear? How does this desire alter your perception of the world?

The works of **Jessye McDowell** investigate cultural codes through which people locate and define themselves and their relationships. Using video, sculpture, and interactive works, she interrogates the relationships between cultures and individuals and the objects and images that surround them and help form their identities. McDowell aims to take the viewer out of the passive role usually associated with filmic mediums and instead forces images to directly respond to viewers' actions, with the aim of questioning the mythologies by which cultures and individuals live.

Ray Padrón examines themes of domination, obsession, mortality, sexuality, and spirituality found in supposedly "idyllic" sculptures throughout history. The tensions he sees in idealized visions of religious, political, and societal constructions forces Padron to consider his own internal conflicts, which he engages in his artworks. The result is pieces that refuse any clear message and allow the viewer to consider their complexity.

Through the manipulation of everyday household objects, **Tracy Spencer-Stonestreet** creates sculptures and installations which complicate entrenched conventions of family relations, sexuality, and social conditioning. She is interested in the home as a site of both learned control and relational stress, and the subconscious desire to misbehave or to act out. Focused on the repressive habits of middle-class America, Spencer-Stonestreet's simple alterations of furniture reveal subconscious psychological associations of complex emotions and taboos.

Opening reception: Thursday, 14 April 2011, 6:00–8:00 PM

Light refreshments and music by mgl.

Reception sponsors: Student Friends of the Ackland and The Class of 2011.

New Currents in Contemporary Art: MFA 2011 will be on view through 8 May 2011.

Exhibition media sponsor: WUNC North Carolina Public Radio.

###

The Ackland Art Museum

The Ackland Art Museum is located on the historic campus of The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The Ackland's holdings consist of more than 16,000 works of art, featuring significant collections of European masterworks, twentieth-century and contemporary art, African art, North Carolina pottery, and folk art. In addition, the Ackland has North Carolina's premier collections of Asian art and works on paper (drawings, prints, and photographs). As an academic unit of the University, the Ackland serves broad local, state, and national constituencies.

Hours and Admission

The Ackland is open Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday 10 AM – 5 PM; Thursday 10 AM – 8 PM; and Sunday 1 PM – 5 PM. Admission to the Museum is always free, with donations accepted.

Location and Parking

The Ackland Art Museum is located on South Columbia Street, near the corner of East Franklin Street, in downtown Chapel Hill. Parking is available at several nearby municipal and private parking decks, and at meters on Franklin Street. Most Chapel Hill Transit buses (free) provide service to downtown Chapel Hill. More information is available at 919.966.5736 or www.ackland.org.

For more information or images, please contact:

Emily Bowles

Director of Communications

esbowles@email.unc.edu www.ackland.org

PH 919.843.3675 FAX 919.966.1400