

PAUSE AND AFFECT:
Gregory Scott and Joan Truckenbrod
Jan 21–Apr 23, 2011



RAM

Exhibition Teacher Guide

PAUSE AND AFFECT

CURATOR STATEMENT

Pause and Affect examines the multimedia art of fellow Chicago video artists Gregory Scott and Joan Truckenbrod. These artists create interactive stories that force the viewer to question visual reality. What is actually present, and what is implied? Technologically savvy, stimulating and powerful, this art transports the viewer to another place. The element of curiosity is playfully explored and celebrated by both artists.

Gregory Scott masterfully combines painting, photography and video. At first glance, the viewers are unclear what they are seeing. Scott's storylines are revealed through the use of cleverly introduced animations that include a cameo of the artist himself. Technically seamless, these thoughtful narratives draw the viewer into the picture plane. Universal emotions—joy, loneliness, futility, insecurity, desire, disappointment—are woven into the storylines. Witty titles are a charming and integral part of the communication. Indeed, humor is a cohesive element that binds Scott's work.

From Magritte to Cassatt, the work of other artists is often a starting point for Scott's impish creations. In *Attemptuous* (2008), Manet's renowned figure Olympia reclines in glorious splendor, unimpressed by the artist's romantic antics behind her. She responds to his offer of gifts with a slight wiggle of her toes. The work is friendly, lighthearted and just plain fun.

An early pioneer of digital media, **Joan Truckenbrod** creates dynamic installations that are an amalgam of sound, sculpture and video. Her interactive presentations explore natural forces that unite living things. An underlying pulsating energy dominates her compositions; themes of flow, struggle, submersion and transformation abound. The hypnotic rhythm of water and the journey of the Pacific salmon are magically captured in the 2002 work *Quantum Realities*. The viewer's experience is heightened by acoustically amplified sounds of moving, splashing and trickling water. Truckenbrod's extensive study of coastal estuarine habitats (where freshwater joins ocean water) gives her work authenticity. Water, earth's essential resource, is a poignant metaphor for life's transience and vulnerabilities.

A personal thank you to Catherine Edelman Gallery, Chicago, for their help with this project. Heartfelt appreciation to Gregory Scott and Joan Truckenbrod, whose contributions to *Pause and Affect* are immeasurable. The exhibition remains on view at Rockford Art Museum in Funderburg and Kuller galleries through Saturday, April 23.

Patty Rhea
Exhibition Curator
Curator, Rockford Art Museum

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

GREGORY SCOTT (American, b. 1957)

ARTIST STATEMENT

"What if" is a good question. What if I was taller? Or fatter? Would that make me different inside? What if I was five years old? What if my body was female, or a horse, or a bird? What if the room I'm in is an illusion and the picture hanging on the wall is real? As delightful as curious exploration may be, there is something else that drives me. I want to capture the emotional states that we all have as humans; emotions such as laughter, loneliness, futility, desire, insecurity, confusion, and play. And especially moments of being that elude verbal description. How does humor make sadness more poignant? Or sadness give humor more depth? How can loneliness be so starkly personal and yet utterly universal? And why does "serious" art have to be so, well, serious?

I attempt to accomplish three goals with my artwork: for it to be engaging, meaningful, and accessible. To make it engaging I explore elements of trompe l'oeil, illusions, and altered realities to entice the viewer into paying attention. At the same time these techniques explore our perceptions of what is "real." Is a photograph more real than a painting? Is video more real even though its resolution is lower? Rather than enter the well-worn discourse on photographic truthfulness, I'm more interested in people's tendency to be convinced by an obviously manufactured fantasy.

The imagery I employ references common artistic subjects or genres, such as the nude figure, or abstract expressionism. The video portion of each piece appears within a photograph of a frame in a gallery setting. This creates a context for consideration of the conventions of art and their relevance and value in today's world. The juxtaposition of photo, painting and video reinforces the self-reference to art. The inherent strengths and weaknesses of each of the different media are exposed by this juxtaposition.

In each piece, the human figure acts out moments of emotional existence that are sometimes humorous, and other times poignant. Whatever the mood, the human element provides a personal connection for the viewer. For me this is what makes the work meaningful, and where the real value lies.

Finally, it is important to me that the work be accessible. Contemporary art too often obscures its intent or simply fails to communicate. I want anybody, regardless of their art knowledge or appreciation, to get something out of their experience of the work.

"Gregory's recent mixed media work combines traditional oil painting on panel with flat screen HD video and archival digital printing, creating layer upon layer of illusion with genuine wit and humour."—*London art gallery Waterhouse and Dodd*

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"Postmodern photo-artist ... Gregory Scott piles medium upon medium by taking photographs of interiors and hanging framed videos of himself performing in scenes that he has painted on the walls of the spaces he has shot. ... This is meta-photography spiked with dada."—*Chicago art critic Michael Weinstein, 2009*

"Like Magritte, Scott is an artistic trickster, toying with infinite mirror-within-a-mirror-within-a-mirror perspectives, impossible connections and compelling contradictions. I can't ever remember digital art blending with traditional art this well." —*New Orleans art critic Doug MacCash, 2010*

JOAN TRUCKENBROD (American, b. 1945)

ARTIST STATEMENT

In my studio practice I explore estuarine thresholds; video sculptural objects imbued with charged transformative rituals. These installations create a conduit to our natural ecology through cultural and environmental connections.

Video imagery seeps into the interstices of form, creating an uneasy synthesis or a radical combustion with the social, cultural or spiritually constructed meaning embodied by the physical object. An emotive dialogue erupts within the interstitial spaces between the ephemeral video narrative and the material world. Physical objects, embedded with memories and stories of their own, become more potent with the infusion of environmental and cultural references in the video imagery. Like the turbulent ebb of video crashing against the object, richly layered visual kinetics catalyze transformative experiences.

In these video installations, I create personal spaces that embody shifts from one realm or dimension to another. They are charged spaces symbolizing transformative experiences such as rites of passage with radical shifts in societal context. I am inspired by indigenous cultures whose lives are intimately intertwined with the natural world. Powerful rituals open portals to other realms of experience lived simultaneously – the ancestral and spiritual realms. Ceremonies are catalysts in creating transformative passages from one stage of life to another. For these ceremonies, symbols are painted on the body under the cover of darkness to emerge, and be revealed in the undulating, flickering of firelight during the performance of ceremonial dances.

Creating these video sculptures precipitates a fusion of ideas and images that permeate the environment, challenging the viewer to collaborate in the construction of meaning. The flickering light of video upon objects creates an interstitial space punctuated with narrative through flickering imagery. Contemporary electronic ritual and ceremony pulse in this space.

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EXHIBITION VOCABULARY

Shot List A list of shots that will be required to create your final video. The shot list is generally created after the script is developed.

Tripod The three-legged stand that's used to keep the camera steady. Sometimes video is shot without a tripod to give the "hand held" look, where the video is a little bit unsteady. This style gives the feeling of being candid, while a steady tripod shot looks professional.

Composition Visual makeup of a video picture, including such variables as balance, framing, field of view, and texture – all aesthetic considerations. Combined qualities form an image that's pleasing to view, and effectively communicates.

Filter Transparent material, typically glass, mounted at the front of a camcorder lens to regulate light passing through. Manipulates colors and image patterns, often for special-effect purposes.

Tally Light Automatic indicator on camera front and within viewfinder that indicates recording in progress; seen by both camera subjects and operator.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Joan Truckenbrod Activity **Recycled Bottle Fish**

Joan Truckenbrod uses images of salmon runs in her work to show the correspondence of the human and animal worlds, and she also uses recycled materials in her fiber pieces. Use recycled materials like Truckenbrod to create your own plastic bottle fish.

Materials

two-liter plastic bottles
permanent black marker
acrylic paint
sponges
buttons
fishing line
scissors
stapler
dish for paint



JOAN TRUCKENBROD, *SPIRIT SITE*, 2002
COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

PAUSE AND AFFECT

Instructions

1. Cut off bottom of plastic bottle with scissors.
2. Inside the bottle, draw two eyes with permanent marker near the smallest opening, coloring in the pupil.
3. Paint the inside of the eye white.
4. Squeeze a small amount of paint into a dish. Dip sponge into the paint, making sure the surface is covered. Dab sponge randomly inside the bottle. It is best to start near the eye and work your way out.
5. Let paint dry, then repeat the process with two more colors.
6. When paint is dry, squeeze plastic bottle together in the middle, about halfway from the opening.
7. Draw fins and tail onto the folded part using permanent marker.
8. Using scissors, cut out tail carefully along the lines.
9. Thread a needle with fishing line and knot so there is a double line.
10. Tie a button to one end of the line and poke the needle through the bottle from the inside out. The button should be inside the bottle.
11. Secure button to bottle with fishing line.
12. Cut the needle from the fishing line and secure with a knot.
13. Squeeze ends of bottle together and staple.
14. Hang fish from ceiling.

Extension Activity

Trout and salmon are among the world's most familiar freshwater fishes, but numbers have fallen over recent decades – in some areas, dramatically. Have students research the cause of the decrease in salmon and have them generate ideas to help reverse this trend.

ISBE Standards: 4A, 12A, 25A, 26AB

Gregory Scott Activity

Paint Yourself in a Masterpiece

From Magritte to Cassatt, the work of other artists is often a starting point for Gregory Scott's playful creations.

Recreating a masterpiece can be a daunting task, but in this approach you can make it fun! Review portraits created by famous artists, then use digital cameras and paint—to put yourself into their masterpieces.

Materials

camera
paints (tempera or acrylic)
paintbrushes
pencils
scissors
paper or canvas board
glue



GREGORY SCOTT, *TAXI*, 2009
COURTESY OF CATHERINE EDELMAN GALLERY, CHICAGO, AND THE ARTIST

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Instructions

1. Provide students with a list of famous paintings to choose from, and have them research their chosen artist and painting. Some examples include:
Mona Lisa – Leonardo da Vinci
American Gothic – Grant Wood
Girl with a Pearl Earring – Johannes Vermeer
The Scream – Edvard Munch
Self-Portrait – Vincent van Gogh
Nighthawks – Edward Hopper
The Son of Man – René Magritte
Portrait of Fritza von Riedler – Gustav Klimt
2. Have each student strike a pose similar to the one in their chosen painting. Be sure that they are paying attention to facial expressions and emotions. Photograph them in their pose. Print photos.
3. On a piece of paper or canvas board, have students sketch their interpretation of their painting.
4. Have students cut out their faces from their photos and trace into their paintings.
5. After their sketch is complete, provide them with paints and have them paint their masterpiece, paying close attention to use of color and technique.
6. Have students present their artist research and paintings to the class.
7. Display student artwork in the classroom or hallway of your school.

Extension Activity

Although we may be able to learn a lot about an artist, we may not be able to learn about the people that they painted. Have students create a short story about the person(s) in their chosen painting (who were they, what did they do for a living, why did the artist choose to paint them, etc.).

ISBE Standards: 3ABC, 4AB, 25AB, 26AB, 27AB

Websites:

Rockford Art Museum
www.rockfordartmuseum.org

Gregory Scott
www.gregoryscottimages.com

Joan Truckenbrod
www.joantruckenbrod.com

COVER IMAGE: *AT THE BEACH*, GREGORY SCOTT, 2010
COURTESY OF CATHERINE EDELMAN GALLERY, CHICAGO, AND THE ARTIST