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American Folk Art Museum Launches New Program Series

(New York, New York) The American Folk Art Museum (AFAM) is launching a free, virtual programmatic series titled *Both/And*, which will take an inclusive and innovative approach to understanding the breadth and complexities of the Museum collection. Beginning on September 21, 2023, this ongoing series is conceived and co-hosted by Mathilde Walker-Billaud, Curator of Programs and Engagement, and Brooke Wyatt, Luce Assistant Curator.

Inspired by artist and writer [Lorraine O’Grady](#) who uses the concept of *Both/And* to think in a non-hierarchical way, this series will examine the Museum’s collection beyond binary ideas of untrained vs. skilled artists, craft vs. art, and amateur vs. fine art, in order to provide a more inclusive narrative of art. Conceived as a series of investigations, *Both/And* will engage critically with classed, raced, gendered, and ableist formations that have often circumscribed the reading of objects and their makers within a museum context.

Exploring works made by folk and self-taught artists including Judith Scott, Martha Ann Honeywell, James Castle, Emery Blagdon, and Martín Ramírez, this series is centered around Wyatt’s continued work to produce collection-based exhibitions that promote an expanded view of American art.

“A significant portion of AFAM’s collection was created by BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, women-identified, and neurodiverse artists, as well as individuals whose lived experiences encompassed multiple forms of social disenfranchisement,” said Wyatt. “Through *Both/And*, we aim to address issues of exclusion and hierarchy.”

“We’re thrilled to inaugurate a new program series that takes the Museum’s collection as a starting point for critical discourse and dialogue” added Walker-Billaud. “Due to its history and specificity, the collection calls for multiple interpretations, sometimes conflicting. This series will encourage us to approach the objects with a form of humility and openness, taking power in the gaps of knowledge.”

Wyatt will lead each program alongside a guest speaker engaged in art practices and scholarship. Each program will take place over Zoom with ASL interpretation and live captioning in English. See below for an ongoing list of programs.

Crip Materiality with Jessica Cooley

September 21, 2023

On September 21, Wyatt will invite curator and scholar Jessica A. Cooley to present her curatorial framework of “crip materiality,” which addresses the unseen ableism in the care, conceptualization, and exhibition of material objects in museum institutions. The speakers will highlight the ethical questions raised in the collection, interpretation, and display of works by artists including James Castle, Judith Scott, Martha Ann Honeywell, and Martín Ramírez, as well as the collection of hand-tinted vernacular photographs currently on view in the exhibition *Material Witness: Folk and Self-Taught Artists at Work*.

Immaterial Mediators with Julianne Swartz

October 19, 2023

Wyatt will be joined by Julianne Swartz, a sculptor who combines sonic performative acts and installation to build spaces for intergenerational communication and care. Focusing on works in *Material Witness* through a spiritual lens, the speakers will discuss how historical and contemporary artists such as Judith Scott and Emery Blagdon have redefined our understanding of materiality and medium, weaving notions of public space, healing and spirituality together.

About the American Folk Art Museum

The American Folk Art Museum engages people of all backgrounds through its collections, exhibitions, publications, and programs as the leading forum shaping the understanding and appreciation of folk and self-taught art across time and place.

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