



T H E
S H E L D O N
Arts Without Borders

Chris Peimann
Director of Advancement
cpeimann@TheSheldon.org

Sarah Samples
Marketing Manager
ssamples@TheSheldon.org

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**SHELDON ART GALLERIES EXHIBITIONS FOCUS ON THE SYMBOLISM OF OBJECTS,
BOTH NATURAL AND MAN-MADE, IN OUR EVERYDAY EXPERIENCE**

ST. LOUIS - The Sheldon Art Galleries spring schedule includes four new exhibits, on view in the *Gallery of Music* and *Gallery of Photography*, that focus on reclaimed materials, nature and environmental impact. Artists Jason Ackman, Mel Watkin and husband Jerry Monteith, and Jamie Kehr approach their subject matters from very different angles, but each speaks to the value and beauty of the everyday objects in our world that are often taken for granted.

Gallery hours are Tuesdays – Fridays, Noon – 5 p.m.; Saturdays, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. and one hour prior to Sheldon performances and during intermission. Admission is free.

Jason Ackman - *Navigating Borders*
Gallery of Music

Artist Jason Ackman is intrigued by the symbolic meaning that can be found in the most ordinary, outdated and utilitarian objects. These objects, rich with meaning and significance, have many times outlived their usefulness or purpose. Their place as forgotten objects allows us to re-imagine them - we are able to see their metaphorical potential because we are able to distance ourselves from their original intent or purpose. Ackman's work explores these alternative meanings as they relate to the concepts of transition and discernment.

Jason Ackman is a sculptor and educator who has focused his studio practice over the past five years on the use of reclaimed lumber as a sculptural medium. The use of reclaimed building materials establishes narratives for his sculptural works. He and his wife Christy are also co-directors of Farwell House, a summer artist-in-residency program.

Mel Watkin - *Revolving*
Gallery of Music

Revolving is a 46-foot-long drawing of a life-size falling tree that cycles through the seasons of the year before returning to the earth. Mel Watkin explores the dichotomous forces of nature through drawings of trees surrounding her old farmhouse in rural Southern Illinois. While the drawings are realistically rendered, they are actually altered compilations of different species. Recently, her rural area lost over 3,000 trees in a *derecho*, leaving a massive visual, emotional and environmental gap.

For several years, replicating the huge scale of the lost trees has been a major factor in her work.. After spending years drawing large-scale trees and plants, her focus turned more detailed in a series of "Cross-Section" drawings on various kinds of graph paper. Using the circular format of "Revolving," these works concentrate on the pattern, flow and movement of the different kinds of bark that protect and strengthen trees.

Free Gallery Talk with Mel Watkin: Friday, May 6, Starting at The Gallery at The Kranzberg at 6 p.m. followed by Watkin discussing her exhibit, *Revolving*, with Q&A and cocktails at The Sheldon at 7 p.m.

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Jerry Monteith - *Attractors*
Gallery of Photography

Jerry Monteith's *Attractors* series uses the fishing fly as a paradigm object to portray strange, insect-like creatures. The figures pay homage to the incredible diversity of insect life, which we typically regard as an inconvenience at best. While "their kind" is said to represent 90 percent of the diversity of life on our planet, "our kind" typically ignores them. This exhibit embodies Monteith's appreciation of the small things in life and in art. While some pieces are at a scale equivalent to a large fishing fly, others - particularly the more complex ones, exceed this scale by several times.

Working as a curator, artist and teacher, Monteith retired from Southern Illinois University in Carbondale in 2021, after teaching sculpture and woodworking for 31 years. He and his wife, Mel Watkin, live within the Shawnee national forest where he collects and prepares wood from local trees for his practice.

Jamie Kreher - *Variant*
Gallery of Photography

During the pandemic, artist Jamie Kreher created photographs of her local environment as a means of escapism and to achieve a sense of freedom by being out in open spaces. Printed at postcard size and acting as artist documentation, Kreher has also inverted the colors and tones of her images and uses other image variances to create an uncanny visual quality. This suggests an "upside down," or another world, that may not be visible to the naked eye, but conveys anxiety about the pandemic and its evolving variants. At the same time, the works imply a sense of foreboding due to environmental damage and climate change.

Jamie Kreher is an artist and educator based in St. Louis, MO, who earned her M.F.A. from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and exhibits her work nationally and internationally. Her current projects emphasize the photograph's status as an everyday object while raising questions about preciousness, rarity, meaning and monumentality. She is currently a professor of photography and photography program coordinator at St. Louis Community College at Forest Park.

For more information, visit TheSheldon.org or call 314-533-9900. More information about each individual exhibit available upon request.

The Sheldon continues to monitor the regulations and recommendations set forth by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the City of St. Louis regarding the COVID-19 outbreak. **In accordance with City of St. Louis guidelines, we require everyone over the age of 5 wear a mask.** For an updated list of health and safety guidelines for concerts and gallery exhibits please visit <https://www.thesheldon.org/covid-updates/>.

Financial Assistance to the Galleries are provided by the Missouri Arts Council, a state agency and by the Regional Arts Commission and the Arts and Education Council.

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