



Exhibition Statement

A Collective Curiosity

Her Voice in the Arts

50 Years of Coeducation at Exeter

Virtual Exhibition, January 19 - June 6, 2021

What does it mean to be curious - how do we *experience* curiosity?

A Collective Curiosity, features eighteen alumnae whose work reflects an intentional desire to know, to explore, to discover, to transform. Their art ranges widely in style, medium, and themes and these artists have challenged the boundaries of art form, function and materiality while leaning into curiosity and collaboration.

Collectively and individually over this past year, and as we move forward, we are urged to be resilient, to persevere, to do things differently, to challenge ourselves, and to be disciplined. At the Lamont Gallery, like many other arts organizations, we have reimagined how to share artwork and exhibitions. When viewed in person, the placement of work in a gallery creates dialog, and what an artist explores and expresses through her work is often enhanced when placed in relationship to other pieces in the space. In this virtual platform we are challenged to look a bit longer and be even more curious in order to discover relationships and dialog.

Environment and Place

A number of the artists in *A Collective Curiosity* explore and work with themes of environment and place. The beautifully photographed New England landscapes of **Elizabeth Gardner '83** follow the trail of the sun as it passes through the day. These meditative photographs document her ritual of walking the landscape and being present in her environment. Her works are not unlike the deeply detailed virtual environments dreamed up by **Wendi Yan '18**. Each artist creates a conversation about how we interact with and document – or construct – our place in the world.

Through the exploration of color, light, plywood, furniture, and materials found in nature **Lindsay Packer '91**, creates activated spaces and explorations of environments. According to Packer, “my working process pre-supposes all the elements I require are already present in any given scenario and that it is my job to meet them with a non-hierarchical curiosity.” With a “call and response” method she moves through space placing ready-mades and positioning lights, constructing and de-constructing color and composition. The result: creating momentarily ‘alive’ geometric, ephemeral shapes with light that cause us to pause and reflect on the environments and places we encounter each day.

Artist and urban planner **Candy Chang '95** states, “communication tools are just as important an infrastructure system as roads, electricity and sewer drains.” It is in this spirit Chang re-imagines the use of public space. Chang creates monumental structures with the desire to prompt ritual, exploration, and communication of intimate thoughts, feelings, and experiences in our environments. In her piece *Before I Die*, oversized chalk boards run the length of abandoned homes and store fronts and explore the profound question: ‘What would I like to do before I die?’ This interactive piece invites passersby to share their thoughts and engage while reading and reflecting on what others have written. In her work *Light the Barricades*, Chang creates more opportunities for reflection when people encounter her billboard-sized, electrified shrines. These four pieces – situated in various locations across Los Angeles - challenge viewers to contemplate the doubts, resentments, and judgements that can permeate our minds and become emotional obstacles.

Object and Individual

Many artists in *A Collective Curiosity* use their work to explore themes of object, how they relate to us and the stories they tell about us as individuals. A common, disposable object – a baby’s pacifier – becomes whimsical when enlarged and sculpted with smooth, crisp details in porcelain. The *Big Binks* series by **Rebekah Wostrel '87** is a group of oversized pacifiers whose forms are somewhat subverted then altered with surface treatments that include materials such as encaustic, felted angora, forged iron and rubber-coated stainless steel. Wostrel explores our relationship to these common objects and states that “sometimes the combination of materials effects a tension or dissonance, where surfaces are in part welcoming and even delectable—but also off-putting.”

The weight and cool texture of Wostrel’s *Big Binks* are a curious pairing to the delicate yet enormous paper flowers of **Tiffanie Turner '88**. These flowers are not your average paper art; they are all-encompassing – *Three Chrysanthemums*, measure over 4 feet wide. Turner is not merely creating pretty flowers, these works speak of the individual and are “meditations on our tolerance of aging and imperfection, on what we consider ugly and what we consider beautiful.” She uses this object – the flower – as the means of exploration because she feels that “the natural world is so accessible to most humans it provides an easy ‘in’ to explore the themes of the work more deeply.”

Portrait and still life artist **Kate Gridley '74** uses the study and portrayal of objects to explore, story, memory and the individual. According to Gridley, her “studio is full of tools and voices.” Her highly detailed paintings of tools lined in neat rows or clustered in meaningful groupings, bring to mind portraiture. She captures the life of these objects and connects them to their owners. Gridley asks “Who held these tools, who sculpted the dwellings and the land, farming, logging and mining it into its current habit? If the tools could speak, what stories might they tell?”

These artists, among others featured in *A Collective Curiosity*, exemplify transformation, resilience, courage, and compassion. It is our hope that these works resonate with you and inspire a continued resilience and curiosity in each other and in our communities. Please join us as we continue to celebrate these remarkable women sharing their art and story through this virtual exhibition, artist talks, workshops, and more.

Aimee Towey-Landry, Lamont Gallery Attendant
Stacey Durand, Lamont Gallery Manager

Special thank you to Aimee Towey-Landry for her extensive research for this exhibition and her assistance in creating various plans for in-person and virtual exhibitions and programs.