



Media Contact:

Jerry Beck, Director of Marketing & Community
Engagement Museum 978-345-4207 ext. 312
Cell Phone: 978-590-3759
Email: jbeck@fitchburgartmuseum.org
Web: fitchburgartmuseum.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Still Life Lives! explores the beauty and bounty of contemporary still life by New England artists

Exhibition Dates: September 22, 2013 – January 12, 2014

Opening Reception: Sunday, September 22, 1-3 p.m.

Fitchburg, MA. -- This Fall, the Fitchburg Art Museum presents *Still Life Lives!*, a group exhibition that celebrates the vitality of the still life tradition and its themes of beauty, bounty, darkness, fragility, and fleeting moments. *Still Life Lives!* features paintings from FAM's permanent collection – gorgeous florals and fruits by Nell Blaine, Marc Chagall, Henri Fantin-Latour, William Harnett, Walt Kuhn, Georgia O'Keefe, and Marguerite Zorach, to name a few – surrounded by striking examples of the genre by contemporary artists active in the New England visual arts community.

The still life tradition – made popular by skillful seventeenth-century Dutch painters – certainly is alive and well in twenty-first-century New England. While the specific symbols of knowledge, commerce, trade, wealth, and mortality associated with those still life masters may have changed, the desire to portray such themes has not. *Still Life Lives!* begins a conversation about the myriad ways artists continue to respond to, and redefine, the legacy of still life today.

Curated by new FAM Associate Curator Mary M. Tinti, this exhibition features the following contemporary artists: Thomas Birtwistle, Michael Bühler-Rose, Caleb Charland, John Chervinsky, Emily Eveleth, Aaron Fink, David Furman, Matthew Gamber, Cynthia Greig, Judy Haberl, Elisa Hamilton, Jon Imber, Catherine Kehoe, Mary Kocol, Elizabeth Kostojohn, Pat Lasch, Laura Letinsky, Catherine McCarthy, Mary O'Malley, Olivia Parker, Scott Prior, Shelley Reed, Justin Richel, Janet Rickus, Evelyn Rydz, Victor Schrager, Tara Sellios, Randal Thurston, Kathleen Volp, Deb Todd Wheeler, and Kimberly Witham.

For example, Elisa Hamilton's small, square, mixed media studies of apples are

lively experiments in color, light, shadow, and contrast. Hamilton uses apples and other objects she finds around her apartment as a way to draw the joy and wonder she finds in the everyday. In Hamilton's world, a pair of worn-out shoes indicates a life well danced. A sink full of dirty dishes signals a great dinner party. And though the subjects may repeat, no two Hamilton images, or apples, are ever alike. With over a hundred apple drawings to her credit, Hamilton recently set herself a goal to create 365 of them. The result is a project titled, *An Apple A Day*. When viewed separately, each apple sketch is a lovely little still life. But when hung together, all 365 become a powerful testament to the different, extraordinary ways a person can see the very same object day after day.

Mary Kocol's photographs take the arts of floral arranging and traditional still life bouquets to stunning new extremes. To begin, Kocol selects a variety of garden blooms and immerses them in water, gently guiding their placement as the liquid freezes around them. She then holds the icy blocks of frozen flowers up to the sunlight and photographs them, immortalizing these seasonal blossoms at their most magnificent. Saturated with vibrant, swirling colors and bubbly fissures, Kocol's images seem full of motion and very much alive. But therein lies the magic of this body of work, for as Kocol exposes her subjects to the sun, the ice inevitably will begin to melt and the flowers will start to die. All that remains is the photograph, an image that both conjures and confounds notions of natural beauty and the futility of trying to freeze time.

Full of dainty dishes, woodland critters, and prettily patterned wallpaper, Kimberly Witham's photographs are disarmingly cute domestic vignettes. They smack of an aesthetic one might see in a Martha Stewart magazine or an Anthropologie advertisement, that is, until the viewer looks closer and discovers that each of these images has slightly darker undertones. No bird would perch in that way, no chipmunk would strike that pose. Witham's subjects are in fact road kill that she has collected and repositioned in her studio along side fine china and fabrics that complement them. The resulting photographs are sensitive, clever, and exquisite scenes that speak to concepts of life, death, and a tongue-in-cheek fascination with the perfect table scape.

Still Life Lives! and its programs are funded in part by the Elsi D. Simonds Lecture Fund.

With *Still Life Lives!*, FAM introduces our new *Learning Lounge*, a gallery of fun educational activities for all ages. Learn more about the art of still life and the exhibiting artists around the corner in the *Learning Lounge*.

The *Learning Lounge* at FAM is made possible by a generous grant from the Clementi Family Charitable Trust.

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The Fitchburg Art Museum is one of the most treasured cultural institutions in Central New England and serves the Cities of Fitchburg and Leominster and surrounding communities in North Central Massachusetts and Southern New Hampshire.

FAM was founded in 1925, and its four-building complex, with over 20,000 square feet of exhibition space, features exhibitions from its art historical collections as well as special loan exhibitions focused on regional contemporary art. Collection strengths include 19th Century American Art, American photography, African Art, Greek and Roman Art and Egyptian Art. The Egyptian collection is presented in an interactive gallery designed for families and school groups.

FAM plays a vital role in the cultural life of the region. Area schools, community groups and artist organizations are featured in FAM's Community Gallery, and the Museum maintains active educational partnerships with public and private schools and Fitchburg State University. FAM also participates in efforts to stimulate the local creative economy, particularly by partnering in community-based festivals and public art projects. FAM is an engine for creativity, education, community building and fun!

FAM Hours: Wednesday – Friday, Noon – 4 p.m., Saturday and Sunday 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. Closed Mondays.

Admission: Free for members, Children 12 & under, Fitchburg State University and Fitchburg Public School students, faculty and staff, City Ward 4B Residents, AAM and NEMA Members + 1, and Active Military and families. AAA & MTA \$5 buy one get one free admission, Corporate Member's employees and immediate family \$4.50, \$7 for adults, \$5 for seniors and students (13+).

The Museum is an excellent resource for students, home-schoolers and teachers, offering tours, lectures, studio art classes for children, youths and adults as well as weekly yoga lessons. The Museum is also a perfect venue for private functions.

The Fitchburg Art Museum has **FREE admission** every first Thursday 3 - 7 p.m. As part of the festivities come see the Central Mass Art & Agriculture Coalition (formerly the Fitchburg Farmers Market).

The Museum is wheelchair accessible.

**For further information: Call 978-345-4207 or visit
www.fitchburgartmuseum.org**

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