Fitchburg Art Museum

Still Life Lives!
September 22, 2013 - January 12, 2014

Definition: Inanimate but could have been living (rabbits, flowers, fruit). Can be 2-D, in relief, or 3-D

Themes, concepts
Domesticity
Temporary nature of life
Calmness
Cultural themes
Captures a moment – realistic or surreal
Expresses an emotion/mood and/or tells a story
Elevates the everyday / Symbolizes-- memories, events, moral values
Perfection of image -- Artist controls everything about it -- chooses the setting, the objects, the composition, the perspective, the colors, the lighting, etc.
Proving technical skill – composition, rendering, use of color and light.
Some artists show the imperfect (rotting fruit, fading flowers, leftovers from a meal), perfectly.

Artists’ Strategies:
Anthropomorphize objects
Appropriate imagery from other sources
Juxtaposition of things not commonly found together
Interiors and open window symbolism
Changes in color (to B&W, unnatural colors)
Changes in scale – monumental-- iconic
Neutral or absent background – floating in space-- iconic
Non-traditional subjects or materials
Refers to or imitates, historical subjects, styles, or technique, but combines with non-traditional subjects, styles, or techniques
Playing with the concept of time
Focus on a single object
Trompe l’oeil
Abstraction
Uses objects from everyday life
Uses objects with deep personal associations
Uses objects s/he created (unique)
Uses objects with cultural or historical symbolism, and either adopts the symbolism as commonly understood or plays against it
Repetitive imagery
Educational Goals for the exhibition:

1. Visitors will understand several ways contemporary artists are pushing against the boundaries of traditional still life.
2. Visitors will explore creating still lifes.
3. Visitors will understand some of the artists’ choices relating to still life genre, such as composition, symbolism, and mood.
4. Visitors will interpret still lifes through writing and conversations with companions.

How these goals are met in The Learning Lounge:

1. Visitors will understand several ways contemporary artists are pushing against the boundaries of traditional still life.
   - The exhibition itself shows this.
   - Illustrated Timeline, including Still Lifes in Advertising
   - Three artists are highlighted in The Learning Lounge, two with videos about their work.

2. Visitors will explore creating still lifes.
   - Create A Still Life table
   - One Subject, Many Variations station
   - The World’s Longest Still Life

3. Visitors will understand some of the artists’ choices relating to still life genre, such as composition, symbolism, and mood.
   - Change It and See Box
   - Create A Still Life activity
   - Symbols and Significance magnet board
   - Videos of artists

4. Visitors will interpret still lifes through writing and conversations with companions.
   - Reflect and Respond writing station