

Blurry Boundaries: Contemporary Artists, Imagination, and the Spaces Between

On a certain level, being imaginative means producing things in the mind that exist independent of reality, including scenarios that are invented or fantastic. While there may still be connections to day-to-day reality, the scenes, sensations, or ideas within the imagination are fictions. However, philosophically, it could be argued that what happens in the mind is just a different kind of reality. This vagueness about defining what truly is—or is not—real leaves potential for artists to investigate, create, and actualize their own narratives.

Blurry Boundaries addresses these ambiguities, or spaces between, by sharing a wide range of works—including sculpture, painting, prints, and art jewelry. There are invented characters, versions of legendary tales, musings about death, and scenes that simultaneously seem real and unreal. With narratives operating in a space between fiction, fantasy, and reality, the contemporary artists whose works are included represent a variety of backgrounds and perspectives.

While primarily drawn from RAM's collection, the exhibition spotlights loans from Wisconsin-based **Yeonhee Cheong** and Illinois-based **Paul Andrew Wandless**. Cheong's textiles address the near incomprehensibility of tragedy while Wandless' ceramic vessels and prints are filled with invented characters and scenarios. Additionally, the loan of *Lost at Sea* by **Edouard Duval-Carrié** represents a newly formed partnership between RAM and **Art Bridges**, a foundation dedicated to expanding access to American art across the nation. Duval-Carrié's large scale two-dimensional work addresses the propaganda of paradise, responding to the way historical imagery sometimes diminished cultural identity.



Lindsay Pichaske

The Jackal, 2013

Earthenware, glass, steel, and
hand-dyed found chicken feathers
50 1/2 x 31 x 11 inches
Racine Art Museum,
Gift of David and Jacqueline Charak
Photography: Jon Bolton

(below)

Edouard Duval-Carrié

Lost at Sea, 2014

Acrylic, glitter, and resin on aluminum panels
94 x 144 inches
Art Bridges



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In some ways, it is difficult to narrow down the possibilities of what could be included in an exhibition addressing ambiguity and the imagination. The works featured in this exhibition mostly—although not exclusively—rely on visualized narratives. Each artist, depending on their individual style and materials used, offers elements of a story—some depicting characters or scenes while others might rely on associations or metaphor. These elements are filtered through the artist, and therefore, provide spaces for various interpretations and shifting meaning.

Nuanced differences in how meaning is shared serve as loose organizational frameworks for understanding what has been gathered together for ***Blurry Boundaries***. The words surreal or dreamlike could be used to describe a large amount of work, including that of **Leonor Fini, Lindsay Pichaske, Robin Kranitzky and Kim Overstreet, Douglas Prince, Shoko Teruyama and Matt Kelleher, and John Wilde**. Rooted in the real, these works offer recognizable characters or elements combined into unlikely scenarios.

Yet, uncertainty can be present even in images and objects that do not veer much into the realm of the fantastic. **ADÁL (Adál Maldonado)** and **Tom Uttech** offer compelling depictions of interior scenes and exterior landscapes, respectively, that feel simultaneously familiar and unfamiliar.

And still others, such as **Frank Boyden** and **Yvonne Pacanovsky Bobrowicz**, address topics such as the human condition and the interconnectedness of things by using skeletons as characters or incorporating materials in ways that may evoke otherworldly ideas and associations.

A detailed look at the following select featured artists provides particular insights and inspirations:

In its reference to a true event, **Yeonhee Cheong's *Memento Mori Sewol*** is directly centered on a tragedy that has become a memory shaded by the collective and individual mourning and grief associated with it. It refers to the sinking of the MV Sewol ferry off the coast of South Korea in 2014. As a commemorative/memorial textile, the work is rooted in an actual occurrence while extending and complicating the histories and associations of the disaster in which 304 passengers and crew were lost. Cheong depicts



(above left)
Nicario Jimenez
The Day of the Dead, 2000
 Wood with paint, potato, and gypsum powder
 Open: 7 1/2 x 13 x 2 inches
 Racine Art Museum, Gift of Ann and Donald McPhail

(right)
Shoko Teruyama and Matt Kelleher
Floating Pipe, 2010
 Glazed earthenware
 19 x 10 1/2 inches diameter
 Racine Art Museum, Promised Gift of Barbara Waldman
 Photography: Jon Bolton

bodies on a blue field. In a different context, they might be floating or falling yet, in this one, it appears they are sinking. Cheong's background in fashion design encourages her to look at bodies as sites of experience, which reflect society, culture, nature, and identity. In a particularly poignant way, *Memento Mori Sewol* seems to draw attention to a liminal space—an imprecise transition from one state of being to another.

Inspired by the history and architecture of ancient dwellings and towns she encountered while living in Ireland and Corsica, **Kéké Cribbs** draws on the narrative potential of dreams, the past, and mythology to create work that often combines glass and other media. Cribbs builds imagery through etching surfaces as well as sculpting and painting wood. In some pieces, she employs a specialized technique that allows her to develop layers of color by firing vitreous enamel on the reverse side of glass. Reflecting on the source of content in her work, Cribbs describes her process: "I think it could be fair to say that my everyday life, my art and my dream time, are all of one...The world for me is best deciphered and analyzed through symbols which reveal compassion for the observed...I use this imagery to share my translations of the world as I perceive it to be."



In a series of large scale works entitled, *Imagined Landscapes*, **Edouard Duval-Carrié** takes on the complex relationship between art, colonialization, identity, and the concept of paradise. Drawing on historical works that sold a particular image of the Caribbean while diminishing the presence of those that live there, Duval-Carrié creates works that cannot be ignored. Reflective surfaces of glitter, glass, and resin attract the eye while metaphorically suggesting an illusion—one of an invented paradise. In *Lost at Sea*, the head of a man can be seen rising from the water—rather than seeming lost, he asserts his presence in the region. The purposeful ambiguity of the narrative echoes the fiction of the source paintings and encourages contemplation of an issue not wholly relegated to history.

Drawing on the history of retablos—Mexican devotional assemblages—**Nicario Jimenez** uses a mixture of boiled potato and gypsum powder, along with wood, to create sculptural compositions depicting everyday, historical, and religious events, as well as scenes of cultural struggle. Jimenez is a third generation storyteller, following in the retablos artist footsteps of his father and grandfather. The two works in RAM's collection, *The Mask-Maker's Workshop* and *The Day of the Dead*, reflect Nicario Jimenez's capacity to create engaging tableau that spur the imagination with characters who seem as if they could come to life at any moment.



(above right)
Yeonhee Cheong
Memento Mori Sewol, 2015
 Garment: serigraph on denim
 Fabric panels: serigraph,
 fiber-reactive dye on cotton fabric
 43 1/2 x 144 inches each
 Courtesy of the Artist
 Photography: Jon Bolton

(left)
Kéké Cribbs
Graine Uaile, 1991
 Glass and painted wood
 22 1/4 x 41 3/8 inches
 Racine Art Museum, Gift of Daniel
 Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser
 Photography: Jon Bolton



The ceramic vessels and clay prints of Paul Andrew Wandless—filled with scenes, symbols, and icons—reflect his interest in myths, parables, and fables as well as the stories and characters of his own invention. Wandless uses dress and action to place his subjects in a timeless space, which evoke the past as well as an alternate reality. Understanding an artist cannot anticipate how a viewer will interpret their work, Wandless looks for ways to make connections. As he suggests: “As an artist, craftsman and writer, I strive to engage and inform the viewer both visually and intellectually from my point of view...I hope to leave the viewer with something to think about or a sense of commonality with what is being communicated...This happens through a shared visceral experience between myself and the viewer, with my artwork acting as the opportunity and vehicle for this to occur.”

Lena Vigna

Curator of Exhibitions



(above)

John Wilde

Wild World II (The Way Things Seem to Be), 1963 – 64

Oil on panel

21 1/2 x 33 inches

Racine Art Museum,

Gift of Karen Johnson Boyd

Photography: Jon Bolton

(left)

Paul Andrew Wandless

Potters of Earth and Sea, 2021

Underglaze, watercolor underglaze

and linocut on earthenware, and wood

16 1/2 x 23 x 2 inches

Collection of the Artist

Photography: Paul Andrew Wandless