

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 26, 2015



University Galleries of Illinois State University is pleased to announce the opening of two new exhibitions, **Juan Angel Chávez: *Winded Rainbow*** and **Laura Letinsky: *A Moment on the Lips***. A public reception will be held on Saturday, February 28, 2015, from 5:00-7:00pm, and both exhibitions will be on view through April 4.

Juan Angel Chávez: Winded Rainbow

On view: February 24 through April 4, 2015

Gallery walk with the artist: Saturday, February 28, at 4pm

Opening reception: Saturday, February 28, from 5 to 7pm

Workshop for educators: Saturday, March 7, from 9am to 12pm (registration required)

Family activity: Saturday, March 7, from 1 to 2pm

Clothing and textile collection for Home Sweet Home Ministries: February 24 through April 4

Winded Rainbow premieres eight new works by Juan Angel Chávez and offers a historical view of the artist's practice through the inclusion of maquettes for his large-scale sculptures and installations from 2007-2014. Eight smaller-scale three-dimensional works from 2011-2012 are also included. The exhibition coincides with Chávez's recent desire to transition away from primarily constructing large wooden structures and toward making sculptures from accumulated materials like clothing, signage, and even hair extensions.

Many of Chávez's works over the past ten years relate to aspects of his experience in both Chicago's urban environment and in his native country of Mexico: the inventiveness, scavenging skills, and spontaneous construction of shelters pertinent to survival there have influenced not only his choice of salvaged lumber, traffic cones, PVC pipes, and billboards as materials, but also their transformation into immersive installations in which viewers become participants. One such work was *Neptuno* (2011), whose title was taken from a Mexican pop song that advises those seeking passage to the U.S.



to blend in by "try[ing] not to look like you're from Neptune." This colossal, curved, wooden corridor-like structure—which from different angles resembles a UFO or submarine—evokes the complicated dynamics of border crossing, particularly through smugglers' tunnels into the U.S. Chávez says that he makes art that "deals with issues of adaptation and survival," which he considers to be "universal experiences." Examples of other installations include his *Scraping the Bowl* (2012), a raised floor created from the residual material of a dilapidated barn that he and collaborators riddled with bullets and then burned down, and *Speaker Project* (2007), a 25-foot-long architectural "stereo speaker" that provided free practice and performance space within public arts centers in Boston and Chicago. Photographic documentation and maquettes for these and ten other works are included in the exhibition.

Inspired in part by an ancestor (six generations removed) who was a prospector throughout the Western United States and Mexico, Chávez has created several new and recent works relating to the idea of an explorer in a new land. His forefather's imagined resourcefulness and ingenuity regarding materials and survival are evident in the artist's choices. Chávez's new works, among

other things, include references to: shelter (a 12-foot diameter hut made primarily from salvaged clothing); gathering food (sculptures forged from tangles of bowed fishing rods and mammalian forms covered in synthetic hair extensions); fire (charred wood in multiple works); and communication (text-based works featuring dialogue from movies about the American West and the artist's mash-ups of American slang from 1850-1920 with contemporary Mexican phrases). Chávez's manipulation and contextualization of his chosen materials brings their histories to light through multiple layers of poetics and recognition.

University Galleries is collaborating with the Ecology Action Center, the Children's Discovery Museum, and Illinois State University's Art Education department on educational programming.

- Junior high and high school students from several schools will visit University Galleries through field trips subsidized by a grant from the Illinois Prairie Community Foundation. Following their curator-led tours of the exhibition, graduate students in Art Education will visit their classrooms to lead artmaking activities and discussions. An exhibition of the resulting artworks will be on display at University Galleries in May.
- Educators can earn recertification points by participating in a free workshop co-presented by the Art Education department on Saturday, March 7, from 9am to 12pm. The workshop will feature an exhibition tour, discussion, activities, and lesson plans. Please register by contacting Kendra Paitz at gallery@IllinoisState.edu.
- Families with young children are invited to participate in a free activity co-sponsored by the Ecology Action Center on Saturday, March 7, at 1pm. Kris Hall, Assistant Director of the EAC, will read *The Garbage Monster* aloud and discuss recyclable materials. A scavenger hunt through the exhibition will follow. No registration is required.
- Participants in two Children's Discovery Museum programs (Youth Maker Night on March 19, at 5:00) and (Homeschool Workshop on March 13, at 1:00) will tour the exhibition before returning to the Museum to build their own work in the Maker's Space. Registration is required. Please contact the Children's Discovery Museum at 309.433.3444.
- As always, free curator-led tours are available for classes and community groups.

Additionally, University Galleries is partnering with Home Sweet Home Ministries (which is lending materials for one of Chávez's sculptures) to collect textiles, clothing and shoes for its HSHRenew recycling program. The donations will be used by HSHM to support their programs to provide food, shelter, and hope to the hungry, homeless, and hurting in our community.

Chávez describes himself as a "Mexican-born artist, adapted Chicago native, distinctive visionary, and spirited explorer." In 2014, he was selected as the Chicago Ideas Week Artist-in-Residence and also received a Joan Mitchell Foundation grant. He has received grants and awards from the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation, Richard Driehaus Foundation, Artadia, 3Arts, Illinois Arts Council, and the Neighborhood Arts Program through Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs. Chávez's work has been included in solo and group exhibitions at National Museum of Mexican Art, Chicago; Herron School of Art and Design, Indianapolis; Matthew Marks Gallery, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Diverse Works, Houston; Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago; Mass Art, Boston; FIGGE Art Museum, Davenport, Iowa; and New Harmony Gallery of Contemporary Art, New Harmony, Indiana. Chávez lives and works in Chicago, where he teaches at the School of the Art Institute.

A 24-page booklet featuring an essay by Senior Curator Kendra Paitz will be published in March.

This exhibition and its related programming is supported in part by the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency; the Illinois Prairie Community Foundation—Mirza Arts and Culture Fund; and MECCPAC, a Dean of Students Office Diversity Initiative.

Laura Letinsky: A Moment on the Lips

On view: February 24 through April 4, 2015

Opening reception: Saturday, February 28, from 5 to 7pm

Artist talk: Thursday, March 5, at noon

A Moment on the Lips features ten photographs each from Laura Letinsky's two recent series, *Albeit* and *Ill Form and Void Full*. The artist has been making both bodies of work concurrently, starting on *Ill Form and Void Full* in 2010 and *Albeit* in 2012. Although both series include elements of the domestic still lifes for which she received wide recognition—leftover fruit rinds, spilled red wine, recently used plates, and not-quite-fresh flowers, all employed to reference satiation, need, and desire—these works represent a departure not only in Letinsky's method of making but also in her thinking about photography. Installed in two adjoining galleries, viewers can see how *Ill Form and Void Full* and *Albeit* have informed each other, while each series maintains its integrity.

For her *Ill Form and Void Full* series, Letinsky photographs "still lifes" that she constructs in her studio from actual objects and fragments of images from home décor and art magazines, advertisements, digital images, and her earlier work. At a quick glance, objects such as yogurt-covered spoons, sliced ham, squeezed grapefruit, fresh raspberries, ceramic platters, and melting lollipops seem to rest on sun-bathed tabletops, but upon a closer look, it becomes evident that these "objects" are reproductions. Her images teeter and tilt on shifting planes made from overlapping layers of white that serve as walls and tables. Letinsky deftly exploits the possibilities of positive and negative space, carefully slicing the shapes of goblets, vases, flowers and plates either into or out of images of other dishes, tablecloths, or florals. She invites the viewer to witness the labor of their making by allowing the pieces of tape holding the compositions together to show and the edges of cut pieces to curl thereby revealing bits of text on the verso.



Letinsky's resulting images shift a viewer's perception of a photographed space, calling, in the artist's words, "our want of illusions into question." They make the photographic moment evident as it is engendered by the camera's monocular lens. While discussing the inspiration for this turn in her work, Letinsky shares her view that photography, in its infinite reproducibility, feeds into the "endless cycle of obsolescence, repetition, compulsion that is endemic in our society" and these photographs offer a "propositional, in-between place" that undermines the authority of the camera.

As with *Ill Form and Void Full*, for her intimately scaled *Albeit* works, Letinsky composes an arrangement of images she has cut and torn from existing sources; however, she builds the composition on a flatbed scanner, turning over control of the light and depth of field to the tabletop machine. Letinsky discusses the scanner's movements across the surface as an all-seeing eye and a true democratic process compared with the singular lens of the camera.

Letinsky's work has been included in solo exhibitions at Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Denver Art Museum; Mumbai's Focus Photography Festival; Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography, Ottawa, Ontario; The Renaissance Society, Chicago; Stephen Bulger Gallery, Toronto; Yancey Richardson Gallery, New York; and the Photographer's Gallery, London, among others. Her work has been included in group exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, New York; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Nederlands Fotomuseum, Rotterdam; Smart Museum of Art, Chicago; Miami Art Museum, among others. Letinsky's work is included in the collections of the Art Institute of Chicago; Getty Center, Los Angeles; Microsoft, Seattle; Hermés, Paris; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; and the Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography. The artist has received grants or fellowships from the Richard Driehaus Foundation, Illinois Arts Council, John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, and Anonymous Was A Woman Foundation. Her publications include *Ill Form and Void Full* (Radius Books, 2014); *After All* (Damiani, 2010); *Hardly More Than Ever* (The Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago, 2004); *Blink* (Phaidon, 2002); and *Venus Inferred* (University of Chicago Press, 2000). Letinsky, a Professor at the University of Chicago, is represented by Valerie Carberry Gallery, Chicago, and Yancey Richardson Gallery, New York.

This exhibition was curated by Senior Curator Kendra Paitz, and is supported in part by the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency.

Please contact University Galleries at 309.438.5487 or galleries@illinoisstate.edu to schedule a free curator-led tour for your class or community group.

University Galleries is located at Uptown Station at the corner of Beaufort and Broadway streets. Parking is available directly above in the Uptown Station parking deck, and the first hour is free, as well as any time after 5:01pm. If you need special accommodations to participate in any event, please contact University Galleries at 309.438.5487 or galleries@illinoisstate.edu. All events at University Galleries are free and open to the public.

Like us on Facebook ([facebook.com/UniversityGalleries](https://www.facebook.com/UniversityGalleries)) or sign up to receive emails by clicking the Constant Contact link on our homepage.