

**University Galleries of Illinois State University is pleased to present *Rana Young: The Rug's Topography* from February 23 through April 1, 2018.**



- Opening reception: Friday, February 23, from 5 to 7pm
- Artist lecture: Wednesday, March 7 at noon
- Curator-led tours available by appointment throughout the exhibition

*The Rug's Topography* presents selected photographs from Lincoln, Nebraska-based artist Rana Young's 2015–2017 series of the same name. Young refers to the photographs as “blended self-portraits” of herself and her former partner of six years. They were made as she and her partner navigated both the dissolution of the romantic portion of their relationship and one partner's decision to transition from male to female. According to Young, their visual collaboration “served as a catalyst for the reconciling of emotional intimacy in the midst of separation.” She explains, “Our individual identities within a romantic context stemmed from the commonality of both having witnessed predominantly cisgender roles during our formative years. Our performance of those expectations was perpetuated by inexperience and an impulse to adhere to, or in my case ‘correct,’ our potential family structure.”

The series, which includes portraiture, landscapes, and interiors, is not presented as chronological documentation but rather as a circular narrative. Although we never see Young depicted, we see her partner at various stages of displaying traits and attire that are traditionally more associated with either the masculine or feminine—from a bare-chested, stubble-faced portrait in a suit jacket to a barefoot dress-clad reverie in the grass. One particularly tender photograph shows only her partner's feet and clean-shaven legs, which are crossed at the ankles against a plush charcoal rug. Subtle indentations indicate where a pair of socks recently pressed against the skin. Images alternate between those that are intentionally voyeuristic and those that reflect psychological states, whether an ominous tower of storm clouds, a vibrant rainbow caught on the wall, a wooden ladder protruding through dark geometric shadows, or a long hallway lit by a distant red lamp. Although the series stems from a particular relationship and set of circumstances, the works are open-ended. They question how intimacy can change over time, demonstrate the fluidity of gender, and celebrate empathy and understanding.

All events are free and open to the public. Contact [gallery@ilstu.edu](mailto:gallery@ilstu.edu) or 309.438.5487 to schedule exhibition tours.

Rana Young's work has been exhibited at Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design, Milwaukee; Antenna Gallery, New Orleans; Center for Fine Art Photography, Fort Collins, Colorado; Midwest Center for Photography, Wichita; and Detroit Center for Contemporary Photography, Detroit. She has an upcoming exhibition at Filter Photo, Chicago. Her work has been reviewed in the *British Journal of Photography*, *L'Oeil de la Photographie*, *Hyperallergic*, *Huffington Post*, *Progresso Fotografico*, and *LensCulture*. In 2017, Young was selected as a winner of *LensCulture*'s Emerging Talent Award. Also in 2017, she and Alec Kaus co-founded Photo-Emphasis, a web-based platform for sharing photography made by emerging and established artists. Young received her MFA from University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and her BFA from Portland State University. She lives in Lincoln, Nebraska, and is currently an instructor at Creighton University.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 5, 2018

*Rana Young: The Rug's Topography* is organized by University Galleries' Senior Curator Kendra Paitz and is co-sponsored by MECCPAC, A Dean of Students Office Diversity Initiative. Programs at University Galleries are sponsored in part by the Illinois Arts Council Agency. The opening reception is sponsored by Hyatt Place, Bloomington-Normal.

*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 [gallery@IllinoisState.edu](mailto:gallery@IllinoisState.edu). All events at University Galleries are free and open to the public.*

*For more information, visit [galleries.IllinoisState.edu](http://galleries.IllinoisState.edu) or call 309.438.5487. Find us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Sign up to receive emails by clicking the Newsletter link on our website.*