

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 10, 2024



MEDIA RELEASE

University Galleries of Illinois State University is pleased to present the exhibition *Grounds* from May 20 through August 6, 2024. All events are free and open to the public.

The 18 artworks in *Grounds* were selected from the permanent collection of University Galleries. With dates ranging from the early 18th century to the early 21st, these prints, paintings, photographs, and sculptures inform viewers about the multiple meanings of the term “ground” with respect to works of visual art. Artists include Terry Adkins, Nicolas Africano, Walter Bock, Robert Colescott, Mike Disfarmer, Jeanne Dunning, John Himmelfarb, Tom Hoadley, William Hogarth, Richard Hunt, Suzanne Jackson, Anita Jung, Dennis Kowalski, Henri Matisse, Deborah Muirhead, and Ann Purcell.

Among the most famous quotes by the 17th-century polymath Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz is the Latin phrase “nihil est sine ratione.” It can be translated several ways. Most commonly, it is rendered as “there is nothing without a reason.” This asserts that anything that happens—anything that *is*—is explicable and with some sort of cause. This principle is known as the principle of sufficient reason and has been in use among philosophers since before Plato's time. An alternative translation connects this philosophical tenet to problems that are central to what artists do, why they do it, and how we experience the things they create. This alternative translation is: “Nothing is without ground.”

In artistic terms, “ground” can mean several different things, often all at once. It refers to the aspects of a picture that are subsidiary to its main subject and make up the fictitious space within which that subject appears to exist (that is, background). It refers to the surface on which an image has been made, such as canvas, paper, stone, or wood. It refers to the physical space in which an artwork (especially a three-dimensional one) exists and is encountered by a viewer. In each instance, a “ground” is a thing which some component of an artwork is set against in a way that appears to give that component particular meaning. For any given artwork, multiple grounds coexist and often contradict or compete with one another.

In the etching *What Reason Could I Give?* by Terry Adkins, for instance, a consuming black constitutes most of the picture's surface, out of which a skein of ceiling fans and odds and ends seems to be emerging. All at once, this black is a background to the print's network of nebulous figures, a figure itself against the non-figural white of its border, a flat plane that emphasizes the flatness of the paper on which this image has been printed, and a cipher for broader social meanings that may or may not be germane to our understanding of Adkins' work of art. In each case, this single formal element serves as the basis for an array of possible associations and ways of looking at Adkins' print. Paying attention to what such “grounds” are and how they work is crucial for making the experiences we have with works of art coherent and meaningful.

The objects in this exhibition were selected to encourage viewers to pay close attention to some dimension of their form that might, in another context, disappear into the background. Empty space, white paper, raw canvas, and other subordinate formal elements are emphatic makers of meaning in these works. By foregrounding what are traditionally the passive causes of meaning in art, *Grounds*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 10, 2024

emphasizes one of art's primary functions: to train our comprehension of the aspects of experience that, though vanishing, make meaning possible in the first place. These aspects are grounds, without which there would be nothing.

Grounds is organized by Troy Sherman, Curator at University Galleries.

Events

All events are free and open to the public.

- **Fridays (May 24 through July 26) from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m.**
Independent drawing hour. Look closely at artworks in the exhibition and draw at your own pace. No registration required. Materials provided.
- **Saturdays (May 25, June 1, June 22, July 13, July 20) from 11:00 a.m. to noon**
Sensory-friendly hour. Visit before opening hours to enjoy dimmed lighting and a quiet space.
- **Wednesdays (May 29, June 12, July 3, July 17) from 8:30 to 9:30 a.m.**
Sensory-friendly hour. Visit before opening hours to enjoy dimmed lighting and a quiet space.
- **Saturday, June 8 from noon to 2:00 p.m.**
Drop-in art-making workshop for all ages. Explore the concept of figure/ground relationships through drawing, printmaking, and photography. No registration required. Materials and instruction provided.
- **Thursday, June 27 from noon to 4:00 p.m.**
Stop-motion animation workshop for all ages. [Registration required](#). Materials and instruction provided.
- **Friday, June 28 from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m.**
Poetry workshop. Write and perform poems in response to artworks on view.
- **Wednesday, July 17 from 2:00 to 3:30 p.m.**
Poetry workshop. Write and perform poems in response to artworks on view.
- **Friday, July 19 from noon to 4:00 p.m.**
Stop-motion animation workshop for all ages. [Registration required](#). Materials and instruction provided.
- **Tuesday through Friday, July 23 through July 26 from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.**
Summer camp for ages 10 through 14. [Registration required](#). All materials provided.
- **Saturday, July 27 from 2:00 to 3:30 p.m.**
Closing reception for the exhibition

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 10, 2024

- Free curator-led exhibition tours and workshops are available by appointment for classes and community groups. Contact Gallery@IllinoisState.edu to schedule.

University Galleries, a unit in the Wonsook Kim College of Fine Arts, is located at 11 Uptown Circle, Suite 103, at the corner of Beaufort and Broadway streets. Parking is available in the Uptown Station parking deck located directly above University Galleries—the first hour is free, as well as any time after 5:01 p.m.

You can find [University Galleries](#) on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#), and sign up to receive email updates through the [newsletter](#). Please contact Gallery@IllinoisState.edu or call (309) 438-5487 if you need to arrange an accommodation to participate in any events related to these exhibitions.