

LIBBY ROTHFELD

Selects: 2016 - 2024

Educator Handout: Grades 7-12

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

Since the mid-2010s, Libby Rothfeld has been exhibiting her sculptures, photographs, and installations in galleries and artist spaces across the United States and Europe. *Selects*, her institutional debut, presents work she has made over the past nine years in a variety of **mediums**: ceramic, photography, drawing, painting, **assemblage**, and various combinations of these. Demonstrating the breadth of Rothfeld's approach to making art, the exhibition contains a sprawl of styles and formats, from combinations of **found objects** to a slideshow of pictures of birds. What connects these ten very different artworks is the way that each one serves as a reminder of the humor and complexity buried within even the blandest, most familiar-seeming things.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

[Libby Rothfeld](#) is an artist who lives and works in New York City. She was born in New Brunswick, New Jersey.

VOCABULARY

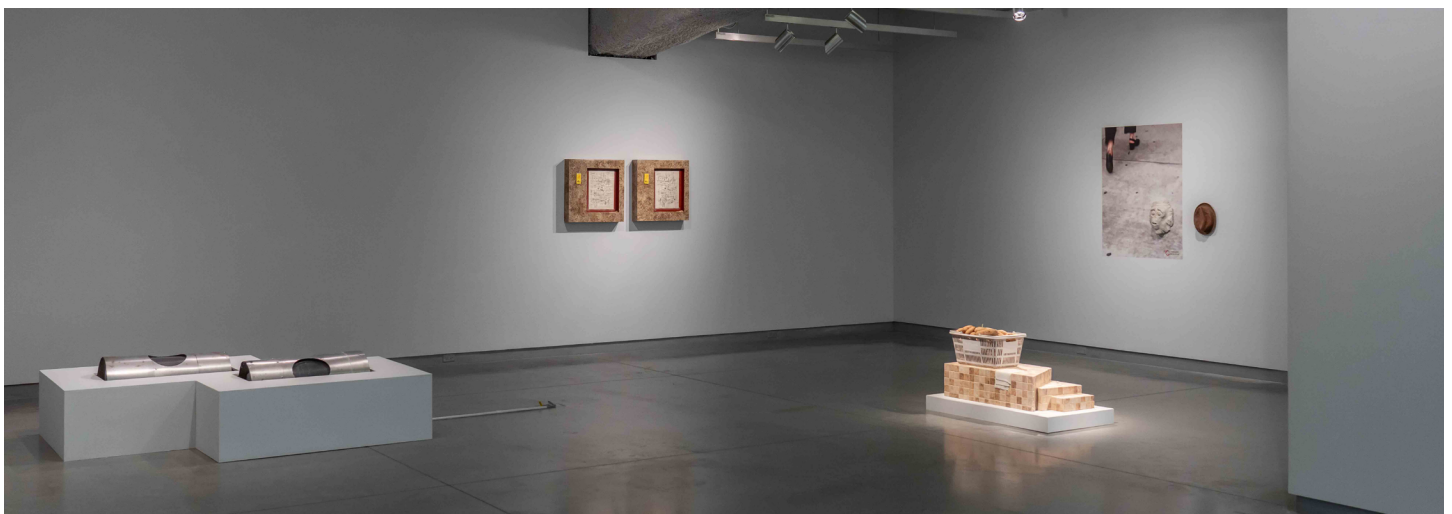
- **Appropriation**: an artmaking technique of using existing materials or imagery in a way that **recontextualizes** them without altering their form.¹
- **Assemblage**: art that combines existing objects to create new meanings.²
- **Context**: the situation in which something occurs.
- **Medium**: refers to the type of art (such as drawing, sculpture, or photography), as well as the materials an artwork is made from (such as ink, paper, or laminate).³
- **Readymade/Found Object**: an existing object presented (often in a way that is different from its intended function) as a work of art.⁴
- **Subject matter**: that which is portrayed or suggested in an artwork (such as a person, place, or thing).

¹Tate (n.d.). *Appropriation*. <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/a/appropriation>.

²The Art Story (n.d.). *Assemblage*. <https://www.theartstory.org/definition/assemblage/>.

³Tate (n.d.). *Art Term: Medium*. <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/m/medium>.

⁴The Art Story (n.d.). *Readymade and the Found Object*. <https://www.theartstory.org/definition/readymade-and-found-object/>.



Installation view of *Selects: Libby Rothfeld, 2016 - 2024* at University Galleries of Illinois State University. Photo credit: Jade (Minh Hà) Nguyễn.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1
RESPOND: VA:Re8.1 - Construct meaningful interpretations of artistic work.
SS.G. - Global interconnections.

Use the prompts below to analyze a sculpture in the [exhibition](#).

1. As a class, create a list of **subject matter** and **mediums** that you see in the sculpture. Discuss the **context(s)** students associate with each subject and medium.
2. Engage students in analyzing the composition of the sculpture. What does the **context** of images, objects, and materials in the artwork make them think or wonder?
3. Ask students to share their interpretations of the sculpture based on their observations from Steps 1 and 2.
4. Prompt students to individually or collaboratively select a **medium** or object in the sculpture to research. What are the origins, manufacturing processes, uses, and distribution routes of their chosen **medium** or object?
 - Advanced option: encourage students to research the individual components that make up their chosen **medium** or object. For example, grout is composed of water, cement, and sand. Cement is a mix of calcium, silica, aluminum and more, each of which have different sources, manufacturing processes, uses, and distribution routes.
5. Invite students to share their findings with the class.
6. Discuss if and how this information changes students' thoughts and feelings about the work.



Libby Rothfeld, *Option #3*, 2016. Tile, grout, plaster, towel, basket, potatoes. Courtesy of the artist. Photo credit: Jade (Minh Hà) Nguyễn.

2
CONNECT: VA:Cn11 - Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.

Provide students with the [scavenger hunt](#) to explore and analyze works in the exhibition. After discussing students' responses, share the information below.

Influenced by artists such as [Haim Steinbach](#), [Rachel Harrison](#), and [Robert Rauschenberg](#), Rothfeld often employs **readymade** and **found objects** in her work—such as laundry baskets, towels, salt shakers, and plastic containers. Beyond her use of consumer goods, she also **appropriates** artworks, imagery, and information. For example, *My Sister, My Daughter* includes two hand-drawn renditions of artist [Paul Klee](#)'s drawing titled [Drawing Knotted in the Manner of a Net](#). Additionally, *Customers* plays a slideshow of photographs of birds (some taken by Rothfeld, and others from unknown sources), while the voices of children read names of contestants from the reality television show *Hell's Kitchen*.

As a class or in groups, explore the work of Haim Steinbach, Rachel Harrison, Robert Rauchenberg, and Paul Klee.

1. Have students create a list of similarities and differences between these artists' and Rothfeld's work.
2. Invite students to share their observations with the class.
2. Ask students if and how their learning about Rothfeld's influences has impacted their thoughts, feelings, and understanding of her work.

CREATE: VA:Cr1.2 - Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

Prompt students to create an artwork inspired by Rothfeld's or the other artists' work that purposefully incorporates existing objects, imagery, artworks, and content (such as videos, memes, or GIFs).

Educator resources are available on the exhibition [webpage](#).

You can find [University Galleries](#) on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [X](#), and [Vimeo](#) 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 this exhibition.