

LIBBY ROTHFELD

Selects: 2016 - 2024

Educator Handout: Grades K - 6

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

- **Assemblage**: art that combines existing objects (such as salt shakers, a laundry basket, or bathroom tiles) to create new meanings.¹
- **Community**: a group of people (such as friends, family, or classmates); a place of belonging (such as school, a neighborhood, or a community center); or the city, state, or nation a person lives in.
- **Composition**: the arrangement of elements in an artwork.
- **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).²
- **Scale**: the relationship in size between two things.
- **Subject matter**: that which is depicted in an artwork—such as people, places, or things.

¹The Art Story (n.d.). *Assemblage*. <https://www.theartstory.org/definition/assemblage/>.

²Tate (n.d.). *Art Term: Medium*. <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/m/medium>.



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

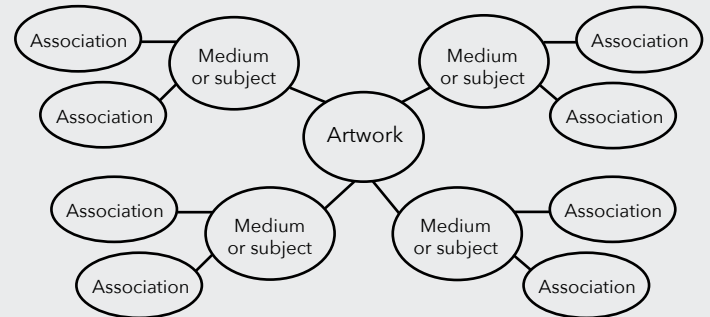
CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1

RESPOND: VA:Re7.2 - Perceive and analyze artistic work.

Select an artwork in the [exhibition](#) to focus on. Reference the instructions and model below to create a mind map of students' thoughts and observations.

1. Place an image or the title of the artwork in the center of the mind map.
2. Ask students to describe the **mediums** and **subject matter** they see in the artwork. Place student responses around the image or title.
3. Ask students to share what they associate with the mediums and subject matter described in Step 2. Place student responses around the corresponding **mediums** and **subject matter**.



Afterwards, ask students to share what they think the artwork might be about or why they think Rothfeld made the work the way she did.

2

CONNECT: VA:CN10 - Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.

When she was working as an assistant at a school in New York City, Rothfeld helped lead a project about students' communities. *Felix's Community (#5)* is an **assemblage** sculpture inspired by a conversation Rothfeld had with one of the students. As a class, analyze the artwork using the prompts below.

1. Create a list of the images, objects, and materials you see in *Felix's Community (#5)*.
2. Who and what do these things remind you of?
3. Imagine that this artwork represents a person's **community**. Based on the **composition** of images, objects, and materials, what might you know about the **community**?

In response to *Felix's Community (#5)*, guide students in creating a physical or digital collage representing people, places, spaces, and events in their **community**.

1. Have students create a list of people, places, spaces, and events in their home, school, or local **communities**. What colors, textures, images, or objects do they associate with each?
2. Prompt students to collect images based on their responses in Step 1.
3. Guide students in exploring different **compositions** with their images.
 - Consider how the distance between images changes how a person might read the artwork. For example, in *Felix's Community (#5)*, hand sanitizer bottles and salt and pepper shakers are arranged inside of a plastic container. Other than two shakers that are almost touching, all of the items are spaced apart. The closeness of these two shakers suggests that they have a connection that is not shared with the rest of the items in the container.
 - Consider the scale of images in relation to one another. For example, the number 5 is much larger than most other things in the **composition**, which could suggest that the number has special importance.



Libby Rothfeld, *Felix's Community (#5)*, 2020. Laminate, tile, grout, wood, plastic bags, Post-it notes, pencil, plastic tub, resin salt shakers, pepper shakers, hand sanitizer, face toner, inkjet print, and Plexiglas. Courtesy of the artist. Photo credit: Jade (Minh Hà) Nguyễn.

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 galleries@illinoisstate.edu or call (309) 438-5487 if you need to arrange an accommodation to participate in any events related to this exhibition.