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kemperMUSEUM
of contemporary **art**

MEDIA RELEASE



Polly Apfelbaum:
Waiting for the UFOs (a space set between a landscape and a bunch of flowers)
January 24–April 28, 2019

KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI—January 10, 2019—Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art is pleased to present *Polly Apfelbaum: Waiting for the UFOs (a space set between a landscape and a bunch of flowers)* with an opening reception taking place Thursday, January 24, from 6:00–8:00 p.m., kicking-off Kemper Museum’s twenty-fifth anniversary year. Raise a glass with the artist, with complimentary beer and wine provided by Café Sebastienne and cocktails thanks to Tom’s Town Distilling Co. of Kansas City.

Debuting new works exhibited for the first time in the United States, this major exhibition by internationally-renowned New York-based artist Polly Apfelbaum (American, born 1955), features textiles, ceramics, and works on paper with Apfelbaum’s artistic practice branching out into broader social and historical contexts, situated in the legacy of post-war American art.

“Apfelbaum is celebrated for her bold and vivid use of color, its vast signification, and the ability to engage space with objects that command the walls, floors, and spaces in between,” states Erin Dziedzic, director of curatorial affairs at Kemper Museum. “More recently, her large-scale woven rugs create literal space, activating the notion of gathering and claiming space for artists and women. Their large scale and deep color saturation make them seem like massive paintings, yet their position on the floor gives them greater tactility and accessibility.”

Waiting for the UFOs (a space set between a landscape and a bunch of flowers) has been specially designed for Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, after originating in 2018 at Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, UK, where it was praised as “an extraterrestrial landscape of vibrant ceramics, immersive installations and patterned paintings.” (*The Guardian*, September 20, 2018)

The exhibition includes *Life Spirit* (2018), a giant version of Gilbert Baker’s original 1978 Rainbow Flag symbolizing gay and lesbian community pride, marking the flag’s fortieth anniversary and enveloping the only wall remaining in the adaptable Charlotte Crosby Kemper Gallery; *Kneeline* (2018), in which hundreds of clay glazed beads hang from the ceiling, each on a single string, creating multiple false walls throughout the space; *Sun Targets* (2018), a collection of over 130 ceramic targets individually named after planets or constellations, displayed on an orange and yellow painted frieze the encircles the entire gallery; and *Wallflowers (Mixed Emotions)* (1990/2019), Apfelbaum’s very first target work, combining dozens of paper flowers into the circular pattern first explored by the artist nearly thirty years ago.

A review of the exhibition by Louisa Elderton celebrates the work as inclusive and political, stating: “The only older work on view is *Wallflowers (Mixed Emotions)* (1990), featuring now-faded red and beige glittery flowers forming a mandala, or another kind of target, since ‘wallflower’ is often a gendered term for women who are not seen by men. In Buddhism, the mandala is a symbol of the universe, and here Apfelbaum turns it into a bull’s-eye, pulling your stare into its vortex, as if refusing to go unnoticed.” (*Garage*, Vice Media, September 2018)

Also present throughout the gallery are a number of vibrantly colored rugs, woven in Oaxaca, Mexico. Titled *Halfpipe* (2018), *Squiggles* (2018), and *Sun Targets (Red, Blue, Yellow)* (2018), the works were created by indigenous women using traditional weaving and dyeing methods at the direction of the artist.

Museum visitors will be provided with shoe coverings and invited to walk on these works, allowing for the fully immersive experience the artist intends to create.

Ikon Gallery curator Christine Takengny summarizes the exhibition stating, “*Waiting for the UFOs (a space set between a landscape and a bunch of flowers)* brings to the fore essential formal qualities, especially colour and texture, that has always been key to Polly Apfelbaum practice. At the same time it inspires us – as the exhibition title already suggests – to question the conventional boundaries between high art and so-called popular culture.” (Contemporary Art Society, September 2018)

Apfelbaum will be in attendance at the Exhibition Opening, January 24, and give an Artist Talk on Friday, January 25, at 6:00 p.m. Both events are free and open to the public, as are fifteen additional public programs scheduled in conjunction with the exhibition, which runs through April 28, 2019. A complete list of Museum programs taking place in conjunction with *Waiting for the UFOs (a space set between a landscape and a bunch of flowers)* can be found at kemperart.org.

Support for Kemper Museum is generously provided by members and donors. Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art is open 10:00 a.m.– 4:00 p.m., Tuesday–Wednesday; 10:00 a.m.–9:00 p.m., Thursday and Friday; and 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m., Saturday and Sunday. All exhibitions and public programs at Kemper Museum are free.

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About Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art

Kansas City’s renowned FREE contemporary art museum, Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art opened in October 1994 and draws 100,000 visitors each year. The Museum boasts a growing Permanent Collection that uniquely bridges modern and contemporary works of art featuring artists such as Louise Bourgeois, Barbara Chase-Riboud, Keltie Ferris, Helen Frankenthaler, Hans Hofmann, Rashid Johnson, Joan Mitchell, Richard Mosse, Georgia O’Keeffe, and Ursula von Rydingsvard. Special exhibitions, installations, lectures, and workshops, as well as youth, teen, and family programs are regularly hosted at the Museum. For more information about Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art visit kemperart.org.

For high-resolution images, interview requests, and general media inquiries please contact:
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Image credit:

Polly Apfelbaum, *Life Spirit*, 2018, acrylic paint, 174 x 384 inches. Courtesy of the artist, Alexander Gray Associates, New York, Frith Street Gallery, London and Galerie Nächst St. Stephan, Vienna.

References:

Clugston, Hannah. “Polly Apfelbaum review – a trip into a technicolour dreamscape.” *The Guardian*. September 20, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2018/sep/20/polly-apfelbaum-review-a-trip-into-a-technicolour-dreamscape>

Elderton, Lousia. “Meet The Artist Examining the Colors and Queerness of the Gay Pride Flag: The history of the rainbow flag, a half-pipe in a gallery, and ceramic targets are just a few highlights of Polly Apfelbaum’s chromatic menagerie.” *Garage* by Vice Media. September 26, 2018. https://garage.vice.com/en_us/article/43838d/polly-apfelbaum-gay-pride-flag

Takengny, Christine. “*Polly Apfelbaum: Waiting for the UFOs (a space set between a landscape and a bunch of flowers)* at Ikon, Birmingham.” Contemporary Art Society Friday Dispatch. September 28, 2018. <http://www.contemporaryartsociety.org/news/friday-dispatch-news/polly-apfelbaum-waiting-ufos-space-set-landscape-bunch-flowers-ikon-birmingham/>