

Ball State Daily / Features

New exhibit provokes discussion about global issues

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Racism, censorship and warfare.

Director of the David Owsley Museum of Art, Robert La France, admits that those subjects might not make for appropriate dinner conversation, but at a temporary exhibit located in Ball State's museum of art, impolite dialogue isn't just tolerated, it's encouraged.

Fractured Narratives: A Strategy to Engage, features the work of 14 renowned and contemporary artists, including Maya Lin and William Kentridge, said La France.

The exhibit, originally from the Alford Collection of Temporary Art in Florida, and visiting Ball State for four months after Friday, uses video, paintings and still photos to draw in visitors and hopefully start a dialogue about global issues.

As a senior fine arts major, Claire Thomas has received many different reactions to her work.

Thomas' work isn't featured in Fractured Narratives, but she does specialize in tackling societal issues.

Thomas focuses on the perception of the female body and traditional gender roles.

Her straight-forward approach to nudity has garnered confusion, admiration and shock, but Thomas said she just wants her audience to think about what they see.

A goal, it happens, she shares with La France.

To help visitors grasp and discuss the messages behind Fractured Narratives, events including talks from a featured artist and the curators are scheduled to take place in the

following months.

George Wolfe, a professor emeritus at Ball State, looks at a photo by Dawoud Bey, featured in one of the first rooms of the exhibit.

Two African American males stare unapologetically back at him.

“On the surface, this just looks like two different people,” said Wolfe. “But once you realize where the settings are and how that relates to the racism in the south and the civil rights movement...”

That’s when the impact of the work hits you in the face, said Wolfe.

La France also hopes the exhibit will shake misconceptions students may have about the museum.

“The museum’s not about quiet, dead objects,” La France said. “These things come alive.”

And he doesn’t mean like in “Night at the Museum” either.

PechaKucha nights, where local artists invade David Owsley and show off their work, happen often. Sometimes the visitors even hold artistic demonstrations.

La France knows his museum, with its ancient works, special programs and deceptively quiet atmosphere, is conscious. He just hopes the newest exhibit will prove that.

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