MODERN METAPHORS
FEB 7–MAY 4, 2014

CURATOR STATEMENT

met·a·phor
1: a word or phrase for one thing that is used to refer to another thing in order to show or suggest that they are similar 2: an object, activity, or idea that is used as a symbol of something else

The work in Modern Metaphors begs to be examined. Symbolism and metaphors are prevalent in each piece displayed. Often, art can evoke emotions and feelings when a story can be told just by examining it. This exhibition features beautifully complex paintings, meticulous mixed media and photography that combine Old Master techniques with modern content by artists Katherine Ace, David Kroll, Bruno Surdo and Sergio Fasola. Each reminiscent of the Dutch Golden Age, these masterfully rendered still-life paintings, fairytale-inspired pieces and photographic compositions transport the viewer into a dreamy, yet oddly contemporary, realm.

Ace’s work has always been deeply rooted in ancient tales and mythologies. Her series of work featured in this exhibition focuses on redemption tales by the Grimm brothers. Kroll’s exquisite paintings are developed in a slow, organic way. Painting in refined layers, he explores the narrative and emotional content of each composition over time, producing a connection between the viewer and the power of landscape. Surdo is an expert at adapting age-old archetypes and mythological themes to present-day settings. His scenes of contemporary subjects struggling with the rigors of modern life weave perfectly with the impassioned compositions of classical painting. Fasola creates work with a classical bent. Using distortion, he introduces an unsettling aspect into the rigor of his photographic compositions.

I’d like to thank the RAM staff for continual support and encouragement: Linda Dennis, Denise Glasenapp, Jason Judd, Stacey LaRosa, Sarah Bursley McNamara, Scott Saporiti, Nancy Sauer, and Joanne Gustafson. A special thank you to Lynn Fischer-Carlson and Lisa Lindman who have supported this exhibition every step of the way. Deepest gratitude to the lenders who have shared their artwork: Ann Nathan Gallery, Schneider Gallery, Zolla/Lieberman Gallery, Dr. Ilene Greenblatt, Michael Vozzella and Mike Silver, and Richard Shoemaker and James Ruud.

Lastly, a heartfelt thank you to Katherine Ace, David Kroll, Bruno Surdo and Sergio Fasola whose contributions to Modern Metaphors are immeasurable.

Carrie Johnson Breitbach
Curator, Rockford Art Museum

Organized by Rockford Art Museum and curated by RAM Curator Carrie Johnson Breitbach, Modern Metaphors and its related educational programming are partially supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency. Learn more at rockfordartmuseum.org.
ABOUT THE ARTISTS

**Katherine Ace (American, b. 1953)**

"I am interested in complex storytelling using cultural myths and histories that reach back into our collective and personal pasts. Figures and still-life figures evolve as open-ended metaphors for concepts and environments that are themselves also metaphors, and therefore fold–like fabric, time or paint–back in on themselves. Perhaps the reason these tales endure is because the inner psychological journeys are personal and intimate, yet are also universal. The tales collected by the Grimm brothers have deep oral transmission fingers reaching way back into mysterious pasts. The ones I work with are redemption tales."

**David Kroll (American, b. 1956)**

"My blank canvases are approached without a predefined image and the painting is developed in a slow, organic way. Painting in increasingly refined layers allows me to discover the narrative and emotional content of each composition over time. Using this method, I try to express why a sunset fills us with wonder, why a certain quality of light can make a busy day suddenly still, and why the momentary sound of a bird call can seem—for that instant—like the most important thing in the world."

**Bruno Surdo (American, b. 1963)**

"The artistic forms I have created are images that communicate a personal commentary on the issue or question in mind. These shapes are then arranged in a pictorial space using the human form as the main vehicle for my expression. I use iconic and metaphoric symbolism which echo the narrative expressed by the use of space and the human form. I believe art is a continual form of expression and I feel committed to search for a language that brings my thoughts and feelings to the surface."

**Sergio Fasola (Argentine, b. 1953)**

Fasola was born in Santa Fe, Argentina, where he still lives and works. His photographs are constructed through a collision of past and present; pulling bits and parts from his own snapshots and melding them with canonical paintings, the final images present a surreal landscape where the line between reality and fiction is blurred. Fasola creates works with a clearly classical bent, giving birth to portraits, nudes, landscapes and still lifes. Using distortion, he introduces an unsettling aspect into the rigor of his compositions, one that points to the irony and dark humor throughout his work.
EXHIBITION VOCABULARY

ALKYD. Any of numerous synthetic resins that are used especially for protective coatings and in paint.

COMPOSITION. Organization or arrangement of one or more of the elements of art – line color, form, shape, space, texture and value.

FAIRY TALE, FOLK TALE. A characteristically anonymous, timeless, and placeless tale circulated orally among a people.

ILLUSTRATION. A design or picture in a book, magazine or other print or electronic medium that explains the text or shows what happens in a story.

METAPHOR. 1: a word or phrase for one thing that is used to refer to another thing in order to show or suggest that they are similar 2: an object, activity, or idea that is used as a symbol of something else.

SYMBOL. Something that stands for or suggests something else by reason of relationship, associate, convention, or accidental resemblance.
Sergio Fasola’s photographs find their roots in art history, but take on new life with modern twists. In this lesson, students will choose a classical painting to research, then recreate it using modern elements.

**Materials**
canvas or canvas board
acrylic or tempera paints
brushes
water cups
paper towels

**Instructions**
Have students examine Sergio Fasola’s photographs and compare them to the original artwork. What is similar about the pieces? What is different?
Describe the mood of the original paintings versus the mood of the reproductions. Are they similar or different? Have them use the visual elements (i.e., color, angle of pose, body language, etc.) to support their answers.

Have students select a famous painting that they would like to recreate. Have them research their portrait and the artist that created it. Some examples could be Vermeer’s *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, Da Vinci’s *La Gioconda*, Michelangelo’s *The Creation of Adam*, Rembrandt’s *The Night Watch*, Gower’s *Armada Portrait of Elizabeth I*, Jan van Eyck’s *Arnolfini Wedding*, or Da Vinci’s *Madonna of the Rocks*.

Using their artwork selection as their inspiration, have students create their own version of their chosen masterpieces, including items that we might use today (i.e., sports equipment, technology, clothing, etc.). Students should create their piece using acrylic or tempera paints and canvas or canvas board. For high school students, computers and Photoshop could be used instead, if available.

Display student artwork along with a copy of the original work.

**ISBE Standards:** 1C, 3A, 3B, 3C, 4A, 4B, 25A, 25B, 26B, 27B

**ACTIVITY #2**

**FAIRY TALE ILLUSTRATIONS**

**Katherine Ace** (American, b. 1953)

_Frog King_, 2013

Oil, alkyd and mixed media on canvas

Courtesy of the artist and Zolla/Lieberman Gallery, Chicago

**Katherine Ace** (American, b. 1953)

_Little Red Cap_, 2013

Oil on canvas

Courtesy of the artist and Zolla/Lieberman Gallery, Chicago
In this lesson, students will examine how Katherine Ace uses fairy tales as inspiration for her paintings. Using their favorite fairy tale as inspiration, students will create their own illustration.

**Materials**
- paper
- pencils
- markers
- crayons
- paintbrushes
- water cups

**Instructions**
Discuss with students where fairy tales originated: Fairy tales began as folk tales that were told orally. The purpose of fairy tales was to explain natural occurrences like the changing of the seasons and shifts in weather, or also to teach a lesson. Fairy tales are often “magic tales,” and begin with “Once upon a time...” and end with “happily ever after.” Fairy tales have existed all over the world. The first known recorded version of Cinderella, “Yeh-Shen,” is from China, dating to around 850 BCE.

In 1812, the Brothers Grimm published their fairy tales. Their first versions of the tales were not meant for children, and contained many images of violence that are considered inappropriate for children today. It wasn’t until the 19th century that the illustration of these fairy tales became more prominent. Artists have their own version of what the story should look like. Many children’s authors and illustrators have even created illustrations that are more diverse. *

Have students find their favorite fairy tales. They may be a Grimm’s tale, or perhaps a version from another culture. Students will then pick their favorite scene to illustrate. For example, if their tale is “Sleeping Beauty,” they may choose to illustrate the “wise women” giving Sleeping Beauty the gifts of virtue, beauty and wealth, or perhaps the scene where the castle gets covered with thorns and everyone falls asleep for 100 years.

Provide students with paper and pencils to sketch their illustration. Allow them to color or paint their illustration. Mixed media may also be used.

Have students show their work to the class, and have students guess which fairy tale the illustration represents.

* A list of popular fairy tale illustrators and their work can be found online at SurLaLune Fairy Tales, http://surlalunefairytales.com/illustrations/index.html

WEBSITES
Rockford Art Museum
www.rockfordartmuseum.org

Katherine Ace
www.katherineace.com

David Kroll
www.davidkroll.com

Bruno Surdo
http://bruno-surdo.com/
www.annnathangallery.com/artists/46/

Sergio Fasola
www.sergiofasola.com.ar
http://schneidergallerychicago.com/section/118332_Sergio_Fasola.html

Dick Blick Art Materials
www.dickblick.com

SurLane Fairy Tales
http://surlalunefairytales.com

Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE Standards)
www.isbe.state.il.us

COVER: Sergio Fasola, Diana (detail), 2007-2009. Courtesy of Schneider Gallery, Chicago