

New exhibit features 'unfamiliar' art

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Unfamiliar Again: Contemporary Women Abstractionists runs Aug. 24 through Dec. 23, 2017, in the Newcomb Art Museum. (Photo by Jefferey Johnston)

The Newcomb Art Museum opened its first exhibition of the fall semester this week, *Unfamiliar Again: Contemporary Women Abstractionists*.

Honoring the Newcomb College legacy of focusing on women artists, the exhibition features the work of Rachel Beach, Morgan Blair, Amy Ellingson, Brittany Nelson, Alyse Rosner, Barbara Takenaga and Anne Vieux. Their works defamiliarize common imagery, resisting easy comprehension.

“This is a timely exhibition with major institutions such as the Denver Art Museum and New York’s Museum of Modern Art increasingly looking at women

abstractionists,” said museum director Monica Ramirez-Montagut.

Such examinations “offer a critical counterbalance to the longstanding narrative of male artists working within the abstract tradition.”

Newcomb’s inclusion of contemporary women artists from across the U.S. — whether established, mid-career or emerging — and a focus on creative process distinguish *Unfamiliar Again*. Other recent museum shows have primarily showcased the aesthetic, or formal qualities of works, many created a half a century ago.

The methods of the exhibition’s artists are nuanced, time-intensive and often drawn from unlikely modernized sources. These include “DIY” videos on YouTube, Photoshop errors, digital distortions, smart phone apps and manipulated or synthetic materials such as scanned iridescent paper or faux-suede finishes.

“By devoting themselves to process, these artists experience revelation in the deliberate progression of steps of creative expression,” said Ramirez-Montagut. “Yet such discovery may remain elusive for viewers as the artists encourage inquiry rather than providing immediate answers.”

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