Strange Bedfellows
October 17 – November 23, 2014
VisArts Rockville
Curator Talk: November 15, 2014, 2-3pm

Participating Artists
Ingrid Burrington (Brooklyn, NY), Bean Gilsdorf (San Francisco, CA), Katie Hargrave (Chattanooga, TN), Leslie Holt (Hyattsville, MD), Benjamin Kelley (Baltimore, MD), Jennifer Levonian (Philadelphia, PA), A. Moon (Silver Spring, MD), Sebastian Martorana (Baltimore, MD), Dustin Nelson (Astoria, NY), Jacob Rhodes (Brooklyn, NY), Stephanie Williams (Alexandria, VA), Jenny Walton (Washington, DC).

About Us
Washington Project for the Arts (WPA) is an independent, nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization that serves as a catalyst for contemporary art. WPA supports artists at all stages of their careers and promotes contemporary art by presenting exhibitions, issues, and ideas that stimulate public dialogue on art and culture.
ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

Intimacy refers most often to close human relationships, describing the physical closeness, emotional bonds, or personal knowledge between individuals or tight-knit groups. *Strange Bedfellows* begins at this point and expands outward, exploring the ways relationships with others—whether physical, emotional, intellectual, or structural—impact our individual identities, public interactions, and civic life.

While the body might seem to be a solid starting point for an exploration of intimate relationships, it isn't necessarily so straightforward. The human body is fascinating, but terrifying, driven by inner workings even medical science can't always explain. Stephanie Williams’ mixed media sculpture, *Untitled (hopeless self-edit)* plays with this simultaneous allure and repulsion, featuring bright colors and tactile materials that draw in the viewer. Yet the work verges on monstrous, an overwhelming corporeality that is both familiar and grotesque.

Approaching the body clinically, Benjamin Kelley’s *Foramen Magnum* is named for a hole at the base of the skull that allows the spinal cord, among other crucial pathways, to enter the brain. As the artist states, the foramen magnum acts as “a gateway from the physical to the metaphysical chambers.” The work features several small instruments, nestled in a shatterproof case, designed to measure and document the size of this portal. But what could we learn about a person by measuring this existential gateway? While the objects reference a scientific objectivity, the work undermines its own claims to pure reason by evoking the 19th century pseudoscience of phrenology, while also pointing to the fragility of the body and its vulnerability to violence.

A. Moon’s *One Storey* introduces two figures whose movement through space, and past one another, suggest alluringly disembodied subjects. Gender, the singular axis of difference that defines heterosexual romance, is displaced by amorphous identities that register desire through shifting moments of difference and identification. Can they navigate the physical, linguistic, and cultural differences that separate them in order to solidify their relationship? Would this merger be ecstatic or banal? “If we ever consent to be in love,” the narrator states, “I promise I will find more singular ways to signify my desire and your desirability.”

Starting with an alluringly solid substance, Sebastian Martorana’s *His, Hers, & Ours* creates a physical portrait of a relationship, frozen in time. The lushness of the sculpted marble evokes a tactile pleasure; knowledge of the material’s weight makes its seemingly effortless suspension all the more impressive. Jennifer Levonian’s video, *Rebellious Bird*, also depicts a more clearly defined couple, but highlights the way these two individuals exist within a network of outside relationships, depicted in the video by overlapping narratives that transcend physical distances and historical time.

Networks of non-interaction are the focus of Ingrid Burrington’s *Center for Missed Connections*. While the missed connection advertisement wasn’t created by digital culture the format is especially well suited to it, providing a platform for real bodies that miss one another in physical space to reconnect (or at least attempt reconnection) online. The figures in Jenny Walton’s *Singles Faire* series also find themselves moving in close proximity to and yet past one another. The figures occupy their shared spaces awkwardly, enacting a set of rote poses. There’s an expected pattern and behavior they’re enacting, a set of movements they can’t seem to avoid.
The proscribed behaviors and assumptions that shape our personal lives are highlighted in Leslie Holt’s *Help Yourself* series. The hand-painted and embroidered canvases mimic the covers of popular self-help literature from the heyday of the genre, bringing a handcrafted aesthetic to an industry that attempts to mass-market solutions to ostensibly personal problems.

Intimacy is mediated through similarly material, if more handcrafted, methods in Jacob Rhodes *Candy Skins* project. The *Candy Skins* are a fictional subculture, made manifest through the production of ‘zines, album covers, and quilts, like those included in *Strange Bedfellows*. The group is, like any subculture, defined by shared codes of language, behavior, and dress, including a heightened focus on craft. Not content to construct their style from existing sources, the fictional *Candy Skins* obsessively produce their own clothing and other material goods. These objects become a stand in for other forms of intimacy, as the disruptive, queer desires that haunt these hypermasculine, homosocial relations are displaced through a hyper-fetishization of fashion and dress.

The mediation of relationships by cultural objects resonates with *Strike Two*, Dustin Nelson’s update of Strike, Sergei Eisenstein’s first feature film. While Eisenstein celebrated the montage’s ability to heighten meaning, Nelson replaces Eisenstein’s visuals and arresting edits with narration. The viewer of *Strike Two* relies on Nelson himself to dictate the action on screen, watching and recounting the movement in the film as it takes place. Further exploring the mediated creation of knowledge, *The Bean Gilsdorf Living History Museum*, asks how the preservation of spaces and objects communicate knowledge about other times and places. An official member of the American Consortium of Living History Museums, the museum offers visiting hours (by appointment), a K-12 curriculum, and an audio tour, in order to provide visitors with an authoritative portrait of the life of its founder, artist Bean Gilsdorf.

Historical objects play a key role in Katie Hargrave’s *My Ronald Reagan Collection*, as the recounts the circumstances that led her to possess two souvenirs of our 40th president—a dining room table given as a wedding gift to her grandparents by Nancy Reagan’s parents and a pack of cigarettes from the Reagan White House. The objects, acquired by accident and chance, come to represent her feelings towards Reagan himself, a figure whose political legacy she detests but finds herself living with, regardless. Though they never met, he’s a permanent presence in her life, a relationship that’s unwanted but unavoidable.

From the corporeal realities of the human form to the broad decisions that impact our civic and political institutions, we constantly define (and re-define) ourselves in relation to others. While these relationships may not always fit within our conventional expectations of intimacy, the consequences they bring to bear on our lives suggests they could all be considered worthy of the term.

-Blair Murphy
ABOUT THE CURATOR

Blair Murphy is a curator, writer, and cultural worker based in New York City and a 2014-2015 Helena Rubenstein Curatorial Fellow of the Whitney Independent Study Program. Before moving to New York, she spent seven years in Washington, DC working as an administrative jack-of-all-trades for various arts organizations, including Washington Project for the Arts (WPA), DC Arts Center (DCAC), and Provisions Library. She was Program Director at WPA from 2011 to 2013 and a curator with Sparkplug, an artist collective sponsored by DCAC, from 2008 through 2011. As a member of the collective BFAMFAPhD she collaborates with other concerned cultural workers to examine the impact of debt and precarity on the lives of creative people. She holds a BFA from Maryland Institute College of Art and an MA from Georgetown University.

ABOUT VISARTS ROCKVILLE

VisArts is a dynamic, non-profit arts center dedicated to engaging the community in the arts through educational programming, gallery exhibitions and a resident artist program. VisArts’ three galleries present multiple exhibitions each year with a focus on contemporary art from local, regional and national artists. VisArts’ exhibition-related programming includes conversations with artists, workshops, collaborative projects and an emerging curator program. Learn more at www.visartsatrockville.org.
A. Moon
One Storey
Digital Video, 2011
13:00 mins
NFS

2 Ingrid Burrington
CMC Citizen’s Handbook and Field Guide
Artist’s book, 2010
5.25” x 4.5”
NFS

3 Help Yourself series in order from L to R
Leslie Holt
Dance of Anger
Acrylic and embroidery on canvas, 2013
8” x 6”
$600

Leslie Holt
Women who love
Acrylic and embroidery on canvas, 2013
8” x 6”
$600

Leslie Holt
Men who hate
Acrylic and embroidery on canvas, 2013
8” x 6”
NFS
Leslie Holt

**Fat**
Acrylic and embroidery on canvas, 2013
8” x 6”
$600

Leslie Holt

*I hate you*
Acrylic and embroidery on canvas, 2013
8” x 6”
NFS

Leslie Holt

*The power*
Acrylic and embroidery on canvas, 2013
8” x 6”
NFS

Leslie Holt

*I’m ok*
Acrylic and embroidery on canvas, 2013
8” x 6”
NFS

Leslie Holt

*My mother*
Acrylic and embroidery on canvas, 2013
8” x 6”
NFS
Leslie Holt  
*Codependent*  
Acrylic and embroidery on canvas, 2013  
8”x 6”  
NFS

4 Sebastian Martorana  
*Yours, Mine, Ours*  
Italian Carrara marble, 2010  
36”x 60”x 8”  
NFS

5 Jennifer Levonian  
*Rebellious Bird*  
Digital Video, 2011  
8:25 mins  
NFS

6 *Singles Faire* series in order from L to R  
Jenny Walton  
*Singles Faire #55*  
Mixed media on panel, 2013  
5”x 7”  
$600  

Jenny Walton  
*Singles Faire #48*  
Mixed media on panel, 2013  
5”x 7”  
$600
Jenny Walton
*Singles Faire #59*
Mixed media on panel, 2013
7” x 5”
$600

Jenny Walton
*Singles Faire #49*
Mixed media on panel, 2013
7” x 5”
$600

Jenny Walton
*Singles Faire #57*
Mixed media on panel, 2013
5” x 7”
$600

Jenny Walton
*Singles Faire #13*
Mixed media on panel, 2013
5” x 7”
$600

Jenny Walton
*Singles Faire #58*
Mixed media on panel, 2013
7” x 5”
$600

Jenny Walton
*Singles Faire #53*
Mixed media on panel, 2013
7” x 5”
$600
Jenny Walton
_Singles Faire #60_
Mixed media on panel, 2013
7” x 5”
$600

Jenny Walton
_Singles Faire #56_
Mixed media on panel, 2013
5” x 7”
$600

Jenny Walton
_Singles Faire #46_
Mixed media on panel, 2013
7” x 5”
$600

Jacob Rhodes
_Drunkards Path_
Nylon, gingham, and embroidery floss, 2013
85” x 80” x 2”
$10000

Stephanie Williams
_Untitled (hopeless self-edit)_
Mixed media, 2014
8’ x 8’ x 4’
Price upon request

Dustin Nelson
_Strike Two_
Digital Video, 2013
1:29:18 mins
$200
WORKS ON FREE STANDING WALL

10 Bean Gilsdorf
*The Bean Gilsdorf Living History Museum*
*Artifacts*
Books, time-travel pills, mug, and furniture,
Dimensions variable
NFS

11 Katie Hargrave
*My Ronald Reagan Collection*
Digital Video, 2011
6:51 mins
NFS

12 Jacob Rhodes
*All Boots Up! (Candy Skin Quilt)*
Nylon, gingham, embroidery floss, leather tassels, 2013
50” x 48” x 2”
$6000

13 Jacob Rhodes
*Bleach N Wine (Candy Skin Quilt)*
Bleacher denim, gingham, embroidery, floss, and badge, 2013
50” x 48” x 2”
NFS

14 Benjamin Kelley
*Foramen Magnum*
Pelican 1200 case, rubber, gigli saw, inside calipers, scalpel, clipboard, and paint, 2013
4.87” x 10.62” x 9.68” (closed)
CURRENT AND UPCOMING WPA EXHIBITIONS + EVENTS

South Capitol Skyscape: Julie Wolfe
August 11 – October 31, 2014
10 I (Eye) Street SW, Washington, DC 20024
South Capitol Skyscape is a public art project that brings artistic life to the South Capitol Street Corridor. Julie Wolfe’s Meta 1 is the first artwork in the South Capitol Skyscape series.

Hothouse Video: Saya Woolfalk
September 20 – November 14, 2014
10 I (Eye) Street SW, Washington, DC 20024
An installation of video works from Saya Woolfalk’s last ten years of her practice, where she uses science fiction and fantasy to re-imagine the world in multiple dimensions.
**Not on view during (e)merge art fair**

The Lobby Project: Michael Crossett
October 21 – December 6, 2014
Opening Reception: October 21, 2014, 6-8pm
1200 1st Street NE, Washington, DC 20002
WPA presents a newly commissioned work by Michael Crossett, which celebrates the 10th anniversary of the NoMa Metro Station.

South Capitol Skyscape: Amber Robles-Gordon
November 3 – January 31, 2015
10 I (Eye) Street SW, Washington, DC 20024
Amber Robles-Gordon’s work is the second artwork in the South Capitol Skyscape series.

SELECT 2015
January 29 – March 6, 2015
GALA: March 7, 2015
Artistphere, 1101 Wilson Boulevard
Arlington, VA 22209
WPA’s 34th Annual Art Auction Exhibition + Gala, co-chaired by Judy and Andrew Sherman, Jessica Naresh, and Robert Shields.

The Lobby Project: JD Deardourff
Opening Reception: December 11, 2014, 6-8pm
1200 1st Street NE, Washington, DC 20002
WPA presents an exhibition of new work by JD Deardourff highlighting the NoMa neighborhood through screen-printed works in the style of comic book splash pages.

Professional Practices Workshop: Arts Journalism
October 27, 2014, 6:30pm
10 I (Eye) Street SW, Washington, DC 20024
Join us at the Capitol Skyline Hotel for a candid discussion on arts journalism and getting press coverage for your work with Philip Kennicott and Michael McCarthy, moderated by Robert Bettmann.
PARTICIPATE

Become a Member
Our artist members are partners in our mission; our work is meant to ensure their visibility and success. WPA is the only artist member organization in the region that offers programming to serve artists at every point in their career.

Donate
Your donation supports free programs and exhibitions throughout the year. As WPA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, your donation is fully tax-deductible.

Attend
WPA’s small but dedicated staff produces a robust schedule of high-quality public programs and exhibitions including critically-acclaimed group exhibitions, individual artist projects, public art projects, and events in our home at the Capitol Skyline Hotel. WPA programs include: SELECT, the longest running contemporary art auction in the region; Options, the 30+ year old biennial exhibition of emerging and underrepresented artists; ArtFile Online, our web-based registry of WPA artist images and contact information; and SynchroSwim, the beloved synchronized swimming performance art competition at the Capitol Skyline Hotel pool.

Artwork from our exhibitions is now available for purchase online via Square Market. Visit our page at:

squareup.com/market/washington-project-for-the-arts

FOR MORE INFO CHECK OUT WWW.WPADC.ORG

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