

The Georgetown VOICE

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With glass and embroidery, Georgetown’s art exhibits explore community, feminism, and humanity

By [Aubrey Butterfield](#)



Photo by Izzy Wagener

This fall, Georgetown University Art Galleries has two new exhibitions on display until Dec. 8. “Around the Table” is a food-themed, multi-artist exhibition at the de la Cruz Gallery and “That Hand-Touch Sensibility” is a collection of work from multimedia artist Alex McQuilkin at the Spagnuolo Main Gallery. Both galleries can be found in Georgetown’s Walsh building.

Using multimedia, “Around the Table” focuses on the values of conversation, shared experience, and coming together through the community-centered act of breaking bread. Artists featured include Jennifer

Wen Ma and Valeska Soares, with “interactive social convenings”—open discussion dinners—by Philippa Pham Hughes in collaboration with Thu Anh Nguyen.

“All of the artists are really engaging with social justice and that spirit of being involved within your community,” Emma McMorran (M ’22), exhibits and public engagement manager for Georgetown Art Galleries, said.

The exhibit, curated by historian Dr. Vesela Sretenović, was intentionally timed for the fall ahead of this year’s election. Sretenović brought the collection to Georgetown as part of her [NONALIGNEDART](#) Platform—art exhibitions, presentations, and programs focusing on the role of contemporary art in “engaging critical issues in art and culture of today.”

The pieces explore reflections on race, home, and belonging, and encourage defying divisions around the (dinner) table.

Soares’s featured piece, “Finale” (2013), is a collection of glassware, all containing unfinished alcoholic beverages. As the centerpiece of “Around the Table,” Soares illustrates the humanist nature of connections through intimate afterparties, with the leftover spirits representing unsaid and incomplete sentiments of humanity, left unshared in this environment.

Wen Ma’s piece, “BElonging” (2024), is another glass-focused fixture, formed of dangling clear orbs connected to a black leaf-looking base. Audio of over 50 participants from a variety of backgrounds are featured in the piece, who discuss their personal lived experience, exploring their identities as qualities that influence the everyday. These voices can be heard by stepping into the piece, which shuffles the recordings to play a unique perspective to each listener, eventually playing all the recordings, allowing each perspective to be heard by a listener.



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Hughes and Nguyen also created a collaborative “interactive social convening” entitled “Around the Table: We Should Talk” (2024), for the exhibit. Hosting dinners to discuss featured pieces, the gatherings are spaces for conversation about the themes of “Around the Table.”

Upstairs, “That Hand-Touch Sensibility” explores the history of women and their ties to art through the medium of embroidery. Reflecting on sexism when defining what counts as art versus craft, artist Alex

McQuilkin highlights quotes from Sol Lewitt's Paragraphs on Conceptual Art (1967) in a feminine, monochrome, pastel scheme. Lewitt is known for coining the term "conceptual art," which emphasizes the value of the idea behind the artwork as its own art form.

One piece, "Conventions of Art" (2023), features the quote, "The conventions of art are altered by works of art." Embroidered on a 24-inch diameter hoop, the baby pink cursive lettering matches the soft background, hung on a patterned wallpaper.

"She's created this transformative space that looks like a teenage girl's bedroom...but is poking fun at this art historical legacy," McMorran said. "Alex [McQuilkin]'s art is really tongue-in-cheek in challenging that [historical] narrative."

Curated by Helaine Posner (CAS '75), themes include the relations between labor, motherhood, craft, and their role as subjects of art in history. Honoring the historic legacy of embroidery in female circles, which was often considered to be a craft, as opposed to art, McQuilkin finds importance in the value of physical labor in both humanity and art.

"It's a very feminist exhibition," McMorran said.



Photo by Izzy Wagener

In the exhibition selections this fall, the Georgetown University Art Galleries aim to connect the community and facilitate dialogue, McMorran said.

"We hope that students will continue to engage in the works, but also really see the optimistic messaging in these exhibitions," McMorran said. "Art is for everyone, and so are these ideas of food and community and open conversations."

"Around the Table" is presenting various events for students to take part in this fall, including [participation](#) in Hughes and Nguyen's "We Should Talk" piece, and THANKS-giving Recipe Sharing at www.delacruzgallery.org.

“Around the Table” and “That Hand-Touch Sensibility” will be on exhibition in the Georgetown University Art Galleries until Dec. 8.

The de la Cruz Art Gallery is located at 3535 Prospect Street NW, and the Spagnuolo Art Gallery is located at 1221 36th St. NW. Both are accessible through the Edmund A. Walsh building.



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