Marilyn Arsem
American, born 1951
Lives in Boston
With the Others, 2013
Durational performance
Egyptian Galleries (Level 1)
As a performance artist, Arsem uses her own body as her primary material. She was drawn to the Egyptian galleries as the only space in the museum that contains other human bodies. In this work, Arsem considers life and death, ephemerality and eternity. Occupying the liminal space between visibility and concealment, she edges her way into gallery space without altering normal visitor circulation or the objects’ arrangements. Still though, her presence as a living, breathing being alters the space. Arsem’s use of jasmine essence references both ancient burial practices and contemporary Egyptian culture through the lively street scenes in which vendors sell the flowers. Through smell, and the insertion of an image that is full of life, but barely evident, Arsem activates an array of senses exclusively available to performance art.

Sandrine Schaefer and Philip Fryer
American, born 1981
Live in Boston
Untitled View, 2013
Durational performance
Carol Vance Wall Rotunda (Level 1)
Studies show that the average time spent looking at a painting is a mere 17 seconds. In Untitled View, Schaefer and Fryer consider how complex the act of viewing is. Earlier today, they collected sounds from many corners throughout the Museum, creating audial documentation of an institution characterized by its visual abundance. Moving from the margins to the center of the Museum, they project sounds from this invisible archive directly from their bodies, while engaging in a two-hour act of viewing a single artwork each. By watching with them and listening to the often unnoticed sounds, we might consider how the actions of staff, visitors and artists all shape our experience of art. Schaefer and Fryer’s performance creates a dynamic portrait of the Museum, making live art that comments on the act of consuming art objects.

John C. Gonzalez
American, born in 1980
Lives in Providence, RI
Family Meal, 2013
Collaborative performance with Restaurant Associates, Garden Cafeteria (Level G)
11 am - 4 pm, & Bravo Restaurant (Level 2) dinner 5:30 - 8:30 pm
Gonzalez’s projects often involve building dialogues about labor and creativity with people in fields other than his own. For Odd Spaces, he asked two cooks who work in the Museum’s kitchens to propose and prepare foods that have personal significance for them, some of which they often cook to share with their colleagues in the kitchen. For the Garden Cafeteria Hamilton Luna Alvarez designs a meal similar to what he ate growing up, explaining “You see an arepa, it’s Venezuela - it’s us.” For Bravo Restaurant Jodeson Francisco fuses traditional and contemporary Northern and Southern Brazilian cuisines, featuring some of the “many diverse cultures that are Brazil.” While the cooks’ artistic contributions may not be featured in an art gallery, their creativity as working artists shapes MFA visitors’ aesthetic experiences. Gonzalez highlights the important contributions of all employees who work “behind the scenes.” You may enjoy bites and meals by Alvarez in the Garden Cafeteria, and by Francisco in Bravo Restaurant.

David Levine
American, born in 1970
Lives in New York and Berlin
duration, 2013
Durational performance 7 pm
Druker Classroom (159) in the Linde Family Wing for Contemporary Art (Level 1)
In 1939, influential American critic Clement Greenberg published “Avant-Garde and Kitsch,” a meditation on the relationship between mass culture, high culture, and capitalism. In Levine’s duance, a hired actress, Angie Jepson, performs the entirety of Greenberg’s essay repeatedly as a personal monologue. The seriousness of her performance and the “fluid” of her appearance, dressed as Snow White, simultaneously subverts and celebrates Greenberg’s passionate criticism. The image of Snow White contained in a glass box echoes both Disney movie plots and a type of display that helps art resist the passage of time in museums. Levine’s work comments on kitsch’s capacity to reach a broader public, and ultimately outlast, the artistic avant-garde, as well as the avant-garde’s tendency to become kitsch itself. In his words: “The choice between Greenberg and Disney is still the choice every museum is expected to make — between Avant-Garde and Kitsch, between Enlightenment and Entertainment.”

Sandrine Schaefer
A Boston-based artist, writer, curator, and co-founder of The Present Tense, an art initiative that produces and archives live art events and exchanges. She has been actively showing her own work and the work of others since 2003.

Tony Schwensen
A professor at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Schwensen’s art practice examines the clash between artistic values and the economies of production and distribution. He holds a PhD from Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney and has worked in contemporary art since 1988 through artist-run initiatives and by exhibiting internationally.

David Levine
Currently a Radcliffe Fellow at Harvard University, Levine is a New York and Berlin-based artist whose work examines issues of spectatorship through theater, pedagogy and the visual arts. Levine has exhibited and staged performances at MoMA, Mass MoCA, Documenta XII, and PS122.

Kate McNamara
Director and Chief Curator at the Boston University Art Gallery, McNamara received her M.A. at The Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard and a B.A. in Curatorial Studies from Hampshire College. She has experience curating at MoMA PS1, Participant, INC., and AIR, Antwerpen, and is a co-founder of Brooklyn’s Cleopatra.

Odd Spaces: Performance Art Event & Panel Discussion
is curated and moderated by Liz Munsell, Assistant Curator of Contemporary Art & MFA Programs
Big Red & Shiny is a monthly e-Journal and Blog
www.bigredadandshiny.com
Special thanks to Alexa Beychok, Contemporary Art Intern; Gabriella Shypula, Contemporary Art Volunteer; Rita Freed, Chair, Art Ancient World; Tim Partridge, Executive Chef; Greg Eustachio, General Manager; Cooks Hamilton Luna Alvarez and Jodeson Francisco of Restaurant Associates, Shane Godfrey, photographer; and John Pyper and Stephanie Cardon of Big Red & Shiny.
Odd Spaces launches the MFA’s new performance art program, shifting the relationship between visitors and art to one of social exchange. While performance art often references visual art and art history, it also has a firm grounding in the present, in everyday life, and in human-to-human interactions. Where, then, is performance art’s place in a museum of environment? How can performance art expand the way we experience and define art?

Odd Spaces Performance Art Event & Panel Discussion

May 15th, 2013

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