2019 CHARLOTTE STREET FOUNDATION
VISUAL ARTIST AWARDS EXHIBITION

Fatimah Tuggar

Megan Pobywajlo

Boi Boy

KEMPER MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART | OCTOBER 3, 2019–JANUARY 26, 2020
Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art is pleased to host the 2019 Charlotte Street Visual Artist Awards exhibition, presenting recent work by three Kansas City–based artists: Boi Boy, Megan Pobywajlo, and Fatimah Tuggar. A jury of arts professionals selected the artists to receive this prestigious award as a testament to their practice and achievements in the visual arts. Each artist has risen to the challenge of presenting a selection of new work and expanding individual presentation methods at Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art.

The Museum also offers programming to accompany the exhibition, including a performance by the 2019 Charlotte Street Generative Performing Artist Award Fellow Sheri “Purpose” Hall.

Megan Pobywajlo

Touch is instrumental to artist Megan Pobywajlo’s practice. The objects in her photographs include food and flowers from her own garden and articles she has found at secondhand shops.

Growing up in California, Pobywajlo remembers learning in school about the NASA Apollo missions to the moon and the counterculture of hippies in the United States during the mid-1960s. Both made a lasting impression on her work. *(Mars) I still only cut the dying flowers* (2019), *(Moon 1) Slide light: In Class Demo* (2019), and *(Moon 2) Hold space for utopia in the darkest corner of our classroom* (2019) explore the 1960s as the rise in interest for all things outer space was taking form. The use of shadow and the placement of the objects in these works might remind viewers of the first photographs of American astronauts Neil Armstrong and Edwin “Buzz” Aldrin taken in 1969 as they landed on the moon. As a whole, Pobywajlo’s compositions look as if they could have been photographed in outer space by the Mars Rover or another NASA device, yet up close, many of the objects are recognizable, including an apple in the bottom right of *(Moon 1) Slide light: In Class Demo* (2019).

For Pobywajlo, this era seems defined by the desire for a utopia off the grid. Under this guise she strives to create versions of utopias in her pastel-colored photographs. Playing again with shadow in *(Fleeting and Still)* (2018), *(Freestyle) A pond a stone a freer style from a rigid place* (2018), and *(Invasive Bush Honeysuckle)* (2019), Pobywajlo creates seemingly utopian spaces, but the dark shadows are reminiscent of the painful history of the 1960s. She purposefully casts this shadow by chasing light to highlight the two overarching ideals of the time—while some people were trying to find space off the grid, others, particularly those involved in the Civil Rights Movement, were fighting for equality.

Pobywajlo sees her personal utopia as a garden, a place of fantasy and illusion but also a symbol of power in Western culture. This idea brings Pobywajlo’s intentions and her creations full circle, back to the idea of warmth and touch. Each object in the composition has been either nurtured or placed by the artist as if each is a part of her own garden of works.
Nigerian-born artist Fatimah Tuggar uses found objects and her own photographs to create computer montages. Tuggar refers to her works as an “alternative imaginary,” versus science fiction or Afro-futurism. She looks to the resources currently available in the world and then reimagines them to suggest another possibility. This is accomplished by employing systems of logic and fractal mathematics, a practice, the artist said, that was used in western Africa before it was considered useful in the West. Looking at technology as both a subject to analyze and a metaphor for power structures, Tuggar’s work often engages with the past, present, and future.

Water is a common theme in many of Tuggar’s photomontages presented at Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, depicted as a place of gathering, a resource, and a home. For example, *Dancing by the Poolside* (2001), features a small indoor pool where different groups of people gather. A central figure with her hands raised high above her head appears to be performing a dance. In the bottom right, three female figures encircle and are placing hands on one another, which could represent a communal dance. Nearly all of the figures in Western attire seem to be mid-dance, while all of the figures in African clothing are either talking or looking at the Western women. Tuggar shifts the gaze from one of the Western world’s perspective to that of African peoples viewing Western culture from their primary point of reference. In this instance, Tuggar’s use of technology to create layers, viewpoints, and montages, becomes metaphors for power structures.

In the photographic diptych montage *Home’s Horizon* (2019), Tuggar depicts on the left side a cylindrical mud home that sits on a horizon line made up of two upside down expanses of blue sky. At the bottom in what would be the water’s reflection is a two-story home and a white picket fence. The reflective nature of water matches the duality of what home means to different people in various places. In the diptych’s right image, a canoe rests on a horizon line dividing two images of water, where underneath is a reflection of NASA’s Orion Spacecraft. Both speak to the ideas of time, technology, and modes of transportation for trade and exploration. Here, Tuggar seems to be noting that there is a fine line between how we perceive important innovations in technology and that they may be more similar and reflect one another than they are different.

Tuggar evokes water in her imaginatively layered images to express the constantly changing global perspectives on power dynamics, one’s sense of home/homeland, and perceptions of technology.

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Fatimah Tuggar, *Home’s Horizon*, 2019, computer montage (inkjet on vinyl), diptych, edition 1 of 3, 23 x 40 inches, courtesy of BintaZarah Studios.

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**Cover images:**
- Top: Fatimah Tuggar, *Dream Team* (detail), 2009, computer montage (inkjet on vinyl), 36 x 60 inches, courtesy of BintaZarah Studios; center: Megan Pobywajlo, *Fleeting and Still* (detail), 2018, archival inkjet print on Dibond, 60 x 40 inches, courtesy of the artist; bottom: Boi Boy, *Revelation 13:13*, 2019 (detail), latch hooked wool and synthetic yarn foam, adhesive, rhinestones, 48 x 26 x 6 inches, courtesy of the artist.

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**PROGRAMS**

**2019 Charlotte Street Visual Artist Awards Exhibition Opening**

*Thursday, October 3, 6:00-8:00 p.m., cash bar*

Join us in celebrating the opening of the 2019 Charlotte Street Visual Artist Awards exhibition with artists Boi Boy, Megan Pobywajlo, and Fatimah Tuggar.

**Future Collectors Club Event**

*Wednesday, November 13, 5:00-7:00 p.m.*

Kemper Museum invites you to attend this special evening exploring the 2019 Charlotte Street Visual Artist Awards exhibition with seasoned collectors, meet the artists, and participate in the acquisition of a new work from the exhibition for the Kemper Museum Permanent Collection.

**2019 Charlotte Street Generative Performing Artist Award Fellow Performance:**

*Sheri “Purpose” Hall*

*Friday, January 10, 2020*

5:00 p.m. cash bar, 6:00 p.m. performance

Sheri “Purpose” Hall is a spoken word poet, author, ordained minister, and an activist. She will perform new works created since receiving the Charlotte Street Generative Performing Artist Award.

The 2019 Charlotte Street Visual Artist Awards exhibition is curated by Erin Dziedzic, director of curatorial affairs. Essays for this brochure published in conjunction with the exhibition are written by Jade Powers, assistant curator. Programming is supported by the Jack and Karen Holland Visiting Artist Program.
Artist Boi Boy has extensive experience making immersive spaces for large audiences and in this installation welcomes the challenge of the Charlotte Street Visual Artist Awards exhibition to begin to move introspectively, and to consider the function of sacred spaces within a museum setting. Exploring narrative structures in both cinema and sacred text, Boi Boy’s installation, Welcome Home (2019), recalls a transcendent, or exceptional, personal life moment. For some of the works Boi Boy uses latch hooking, a process of pulling yarn through a stiff woven base, to create fiber-based arch shapes resembling stained glass windows. These forms represent those seen in Catholic churches or other religious spaces, and conjure ideas of transcendent moments or experiences that can occur in sacred spaces. Boi Boy also includes a forest scene—complete with Astroturf and covered triangular objects protruding from the floor, faux plants, and a one-way mirror where viewers seem to peer into a seemingly watery infinity. Welcome Home evokes ways in which people retreat into avenues of the spiritual through iconic imagery, nature, and reflection.

In the recent past, Boi Boy created work using only one color because they believe each color corresponds to a unique set of personality traits within the artist. They do this by separating their personality traits and assigning a name and persona to each color. For example, teal which represents the persona of Boi Boy, pink for their persona of Pink, yellow recalls their persona of Matthew, and black represents their persona of Scott. This installation is the first time many of these colors and personas have come together in single immersive work.

The recreation of a living room space is also significant to the artist. For them it is a space for both entertainment and solitude, as well as evocative of transcendent moments that can take place while watching films. Inspired by the documentary Discotecuture, about five young designers from different disciplines working together to create their vision of a nightclub in the future, Boi Boy believes that when creating an installation, a person is formulating a set or stage for a play that has not yet been imagined. For this project, Boi Boy lays the groundwork for viewers to experience each of the works individually while shaping the possibility of evoking memory and transcendence within an installation, similar to those sparked by sacred spaces.

The two overarching themes: narrative structures that produce transcendent moments and the separation of personas within the artist are something Boi Boy has been working through in numerous projects. Welcome Home continues their explorations of these themes within a museum space.
OUR MISSION
Charlotte Street identifies the needs and fuels the evolution of an ever changing multidisciplinary arts ecosystem, acting as its primary provocateur. We cultivate the contemporary, the exceptional, and the unexpected in the practice of artists working in and engaging with the Kansas City art community.

GRATITUDE
We extend our deep appreciation to the individuals, foundations, and businesses that demonstrate their commitment to empowering Kansas City artists through support for our work. We extend a special thanks to those listed here who have been extraordinarily generous. Except where noted, the listings below reflect 2018 support and involvement.

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Gregory Volk
Art and Associate Professor at Virginia
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Darren Canady
Playwright and Associate Professor
at University of Kansas (Topeka, KS)

Denise Chapman
Associate Director of the Performing Arts at
The Union for Contemporary Art (Omaha, NE)

Patrick Alonzo Conway
Percussionist, wind player and composer
(Kansas City, MO)

Dr. Charlotte Farrell
Director at CPR – Center for Performance Research (Brooklyn, NY)

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Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art

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