



*We Didn't Come Here to Make Friends*

USF Contemporary Art Museum  
April 5 – May 4, 2013

Felici Asteinza  
Jaime Bird  
Michael Covello  
Rick Dailey  
Vanessa Diaz  
Stephen John Ellis  
Adam W. Hill  
Reiko Kawahara  
Sarah Krupp  
Chalice Mitchell  
Desireé Moore  
Kale Roberts  
Selina Román

*We Didn't Come Here to Make Friends*  
*MFA 2013 Graduation Exhibition*

### **School Director's Statement**

Congratulations to our Master of Fine Arts students in this graduation exhibition. Their artworks embrace and reflect many of the key directions of contemporary art practice.

For three years, these exceptionally imaginative students have engaged our distinguished faculty and endured challenging critique sessions as well as sleepless nights preparing for semester reviews. They have stretched well beyond their initial perceptions of what art can be and its impact on an audience.

The MFA at USF is acknowledged as a premiere program among its peers nationally. Its uniqueness resides in a demanding curriculum of studio practice and inquiry coupled with critical studies seminars in the history of art and elective courses throughout the disciplines of a major research university.

Faculty welcome the prospect to connect with our students, responding to new concepts and working as collaborators as well as conductors to uncover fresh dimensions in the forms, objects, performances and images that are created. Our valued staff provides resolve and ingenuity in solving formidable problems, from bureaucratic labyrinths to one-of-a-kind projects. The MFA program offers every graduate student the opportunity to work in any medium of materials and to select from among our eminent faculty for directed study contracts. Virtually unheard of at other institutions, this open invitation to explore, experiment and discover, leads to startling and innovative outcomes. The fruit of this philosophy toward graduate art studio studies, along with a varied student body from throughout the nation and beyond, endows this exhibition with delightful and provocative stagings of new art. This cohort of 13 MFA students is one of most eclectic, motivated and passionate we've enrolled in recent years. They have always been a challenge – and a delight!

The unorthodox nature of many of the works has generated a tremendous amount of consultation and cooperation between the Museum staff and our students. We offer our sincere gratitude for assisting these artists in realizing their envisioned realities and developing this exhibition.

And, again, congratulations to our graduating MFA students! The graduate studio experience affords the time and community to expand ideas about art and oneself, and the relationship of the two to the larger world. USF has benefited from your presence and we wish you the very best.

Wallace Wilson | Director  
USF School of Art and Art History

## Acknowledgements

The USF Contemporary Art Museum | Institute for Research in Art, is a nationally accredited museum, within the structure of a major metropolitan university. The museum is an exciting destination for visitors to see the work of both emerging and established artists, and provides a critical component to the educational process for all University students. However, it is of special importance to the graduate students in the School of Art and Art History.

In conjunction with its exhibition program at CAM, the Institute offers unique opportunities for students to interact with artists, curators and scholars through informal discussions, lectures, studio visits and interdisciplinary colloquia. It offers directed studies, graduate assistantships, internships, and a Graduate Museum Studies Certificate Program, providing experience that has valuable significance to the emerging artist. Given this context, students seek and benefit from the dynamic interaction of theory and practice, and fully engage as artists through the occasion of the annual MFA Graduation Exhibition.

In 2013, USFCAM is proud to showcase *We Didn't Come Here to Make Friends*, with ambitious projects by Felici Asteinza, Jaime Bird, Michael Covello, Rick Dailey, Vanessa Diaz, Stephen John Ellis, Adam W. Hill, Reiko Kawahara, Sarah Krupp, Chalice Mitchell, Desireé Moore, Kale Roberts, and Selina Román. Congratulations to these students, the School of Art and Art History faculty and staff, friends, and the Tampa Bay community that supports the artists, in this first distinguished milestone in their professional careers. *We Didn't Come Here to Make Friends* marks the seventh annual MFA Graduation Exhibition to be presented at CAM, and as always, animates the end of the season with great ardor and enthusiasm.

I thank the CAM staff for their collaborative spirit in presenting this challenging exhibition, notably Tony Palms, who is responsible for its design in consultation with the students, Neil Bender and John Byrd, Graduate Student Advisors and Associate Professors in the School of Art and Art History, and Wallace Wilson, Director. Don Fuller is recognized for his creative expertise as demonstrated in the exhibition graphics, web and this catalogue; Shannon Annis, Peter Foe and Vincent Kral for their management and installation strategies; Amy Allison for her skillful handling of related events, and of course David Waterman, for his patience and good humor throughout the activity.

Members of the Institute are recognized for their extended efforts to realize the exhibition and special events, Margaret Miller, Director; Jennifer Andrews, Noel Smith, Kristin Soderqvist, Megan Voeller and Randall West.

Alexa Favata | Deputy Director  
USF Contemporary Art Museum  
Institute for Research in Art



**Felici Asteinza**  
Florida  
BFA (2010) Florida State University

Felici is the co-founder of MILAGROS, a Florida-based collective comprised of a varied and ambitious cast of artists and musicians. The objective of MILAGROS is to reinforce individual strength through collaboration. Mutual respect and trust allow for a free environment for evolving creation. Elements of play and spontaneity culminate in surprise and elation. Synchronicities and serendipity birth a new mysticism, based in the celebration of growth.



**Jaime Bird**

Connecticut

BFA (2009) University of Washington

*"Unless it evokes a powerful leap for the jugular, we are not apt to pay much attention to it. Only when it shocks with relevance can it change the course of human inertia." - William Everson*

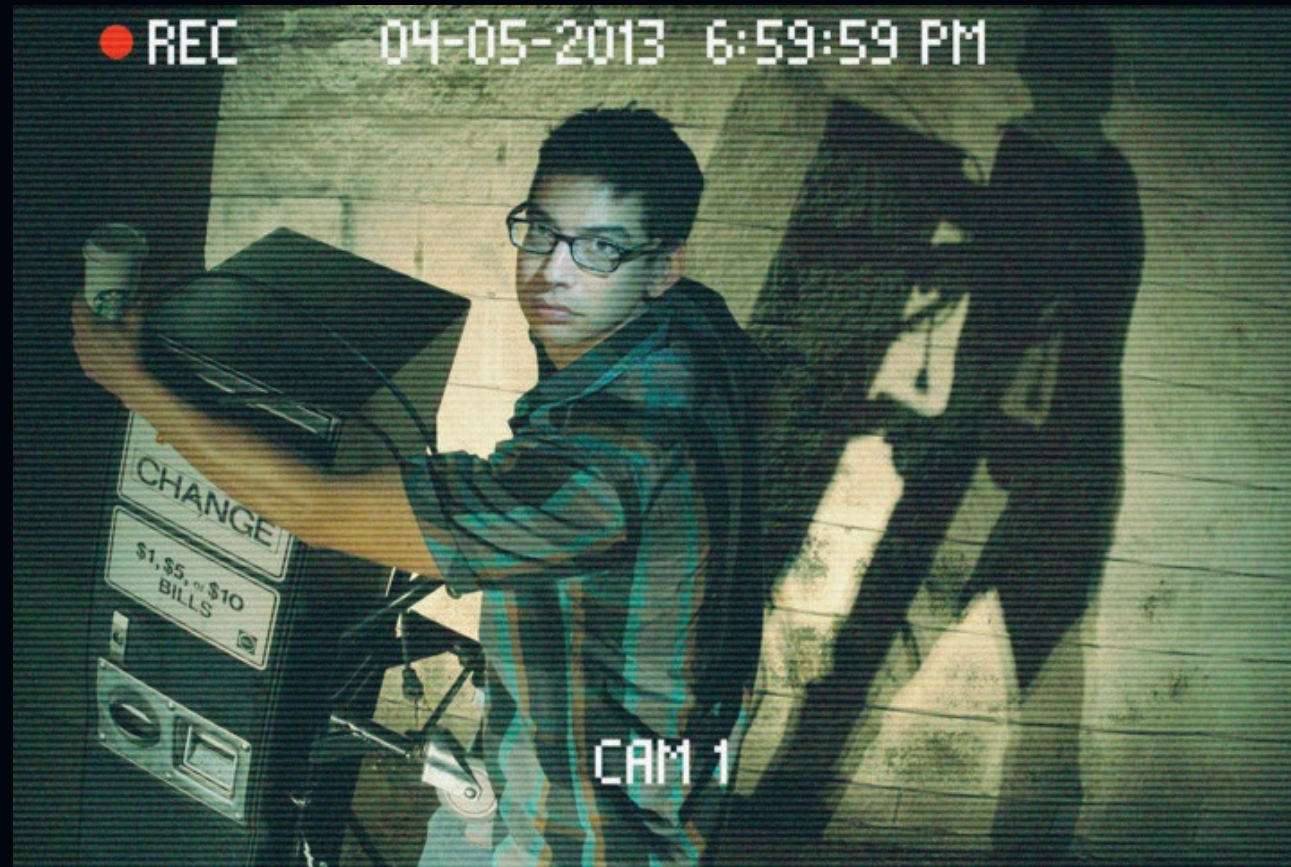
As a New Englander, I was raised in the light of our historical past, in the mythology of my forefathers. This rich, colonial heritage combined with the experience of tap dancing in a golden, sequin encrusted bear suit in my youth, have come to exemplify the foundation of my studio practice. My respect for the tradition of storytelling in my culture, along with the experience of the costumed stage spectacle, has formed my impetus for the creation of highly narrative performative works. These multi-media performances reference the fantasy of spectacle, the vigor of masculinity, and the tension of animal anthropomorphism in our society. I aim to use the power of live performance to push innovative and insightful critique about masculinity and the animal in our society. There is always more we can learn about our human relationships and animal connections. We will never have answers, but it is vital to maintain inertia.



**Michael Covello**  
New York  
BFA (2008) Cornell University

My painting vernacular is one of the unkempt, where a symphony of marks, colors, and shapes accumulate within a shallow, dense space. Through masking, over-painting, and removal, my paintings are simultaneously assembled and demolished, organized and then folded back in on themselves. Masked elements undergo continuous cycles of emerging, shifting, and concealment, and as an artist exploring and reacting to this unsteady terrain, I see my process as a suspension between remembering and forgetting.

Collaged elements and installation components enter as a form of studio archaeology, rooted in the wreckage, malfunctions, and failures of past works. Cut outs, negative spaces, peeled up paint, and shredded canvases inhabit my spaces, re-enforcing their own importance while simultaneously providing an expanded environmental context for the individual paintings.



**Rick Dailey**  
Washington  
BA (2009) Central Washington University

I assert dominance to secure my proliferation. Through the manipulation and creation of objects, I construct situations that evoke preconceptions of masculine ideals. I use absurdity, nostalgia, humor, and my knowledge of materials to draw awareness to the precarious nature of maleness. In doing so, I tear down the monumental walls I have erected that cause me to revoke other forms of masculinity. I hope viewers can use my exploration as a tool to reflect upon their own identities and release themselves from the confines of absolutism.





**Vanessa Diaz**

Florida

BFA (2009) Florida Atlantic University

Driven by a cannibalistic desire to consume the discarded and decaying contents of the dwelling, I salvage furniture, architectural elements, and reclaim materials that once served to provide comfort and shelter. Acting as an imprint of the body's consumption, furnishings absorb routine behaviors and habits which physically shape the domain; chairs with the arm rests worn down, sofa cushions sinking from body weight, scuff marks, stains, scratches.... Through a process of controlled deconstruction and re-assembly, I have an underlying intention to conceal evidence of previous use and declare these things as my own. I consider my work to challenge associations of function and to offer an uncanny observation of the domain experience.



**Stephen John Ellis**

Washington

BA Music and BFA Photography (2008) Central Washington University

Carried along within the currents of post-humanist thought, our contemporary culture has been laid upon the shores of the 21st century. We live in a world where social interactions are increasingly relegated to a virtual space and individual identities are becoming progressively augmented and fictionalized through the new media technologies they exploit. My work investigates the dissonant space between these increasingly irreconcilable manifestations of identity. As truth and fiction are amalgamated into a hybrid narrative, I seek to employ these systems of representation in a critical light.



**Adam W. Hill**  
Florida  
BFA (2009) Flagler College

As a child I always believed that “astronaut ice-cream”, the dried out chalky substance bagged in foil that I got in the gift shop, was the actual food that they were eating in space. I believed that the future could be what I saw in the dioramas of Disney’s Horizons, an animatronics future world where shiny silver tentacle armed robots messily made dinner, and Jetson-like robo-butlers vacuumed the floors. I believed in a future unburdened by the hard facts and realities of contemporary science, when it seemed that the limits of our imaginations were the only boundaries of possibility.

Outer space has always held a promise of adventure, something great, new, and unknowable, but at the same time presents us with our worst fears: isolation, disconnection, and an overwhelming smallness and insignificance. In my work the protagonists are thrust forward by curiosity, empowered by their discoveries, and daunted by the sense of an impending threat.



**Reiko Kawahara**

Japan

BA Art and Physical Education (2010) Bridgewater State University

I am a hybrid. Being born and raised in Japan and receiving both my BA and MFA degrees in the United States, I possess a trans-cultural identity. Using this autobiographical scenario as a starting-off point, I investigate various cross-cultural complexities through material, process, and narrative. My working methods in ceramics, sculpture, printmaking, and architecture are labor intensive and time consuming, echoing my long history as an athlete, which I have now left behind. In the work exhibited at the Contemporary Art Museum, I am investigating the psychological undercurrents of this trans-cultural identity through the extended metaphor of my relationship with my cat, Ume. Drawing into question the nature of maternal relationships and dialogs, my benevolent actions become a compulsion that cannot be contained or stopped.



**Sarah Krupp**  
Ohio  
BFA (2009) Ohio State University

As a sculptor, I am interested in the intersection of animal, material, and human tactile desires. Often using repetitive and tedious material processes as a space for introspection, I explore the emotive impact that arises from manipulating familiar animal forms to a point of being object/creature/monster. In a society that easily interchanges stuffed animals with real animals, I am fascinated by our culturally constructed definitions of animal form, proportion, volume, and texture. I look to press these unspoken definitions into the grey areas of visual classification.



**Chalice Mitchell**

**Maine**

**BFA (2003) Ringling School of Art and Design**

Through gestural paint strokes and stop-motion animation, my work references the physicality and movement of combat sports, primarily forms of grappling. Simultaneously investigating impermanence, embodiment, and power dynamics, my work challenges Cartesian Dualism.



**Desireé Moore**

Indiana

BFA (2009) Herron School of Art and Design

My version of filmmaking begins with observation and research, visual and textual analysis, and most importantly filling in informational blanks creatively. My misconceptions of ritual and religious practice, sororities, growing up with siblings, create a space for me to idealize and restructure what I don't know with bits and pieces of what I do know, creating uncanny scenarios that are strangely familiar.

Through implied narrative the film arrives at a moment in time, which is suspended in tension. These small moments are visually explored as a way to hint at what may have come before, what is currently happening, and what will occur.



**Kale Roberts**

Texas

BFA (2008) University of Texas El Paso

Queering, Fantasy, and Camp, are integral to my practice and sensibility. I invite voyeuristic eroticism through which I can educate the boundaries outside of normalcy. The sincerity in embodied experiences disrupts the established ways of seeing creating reverberations of potential and fluidity. My work embraces the in-between, as well as the malleability of the physical body and therefore the many facets of intersectional identity. Reality is Fantasy; let's keep playing.





**Selina Román**

Florida

BA Mass Communications (2001) University of South Florida

I investigate the ideas of perception, power, protection and femininity in my photo-based work. Using various garments to hide bodies and conceal faces, I challenge the viewer to contemplate that there is power in anonymity and that an unreturned gaze is just as powerful, if not more so, than the one that is exchanged.

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