

Spencer Museum of Art pauses to showcase diverse collection



Photographs courtesy of the artist. [Enlarge photo.](#)

Green Hammock, 2010, by Ke-Sook Lee. Recycled women's U.S. Army nurse uniforms, thread, mixed media
Lee will create a site-specific installation at the Spencer Museum of Art Sept. 11-14, 2014.

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While the Spencer Museum of Art prepares to undergo [renovations](#), the curators have prepared a special behind-the-scenes look at the museum.

In a new exhibition called "Holding Pattern," two galleries, split into three sections, feature new acquisitions that reflect the diverse rationales that prompt curators at the Spencer to seek and acquire new works.

It is rare for the group to come together and bring out their most recent collections, said museum director Saralyn Reece Hardy.

"The chance to have a little pause while we hold for this renovation gives us an opportunity to show some things that we wouldn't normally be able to," Reece Hardy said. "It's not just one thing. We are really collecting in a

very rich way to support the educational mission of the museum.”

Contemporary Asian works by two artists are showcased in Gallery 318. A floor installation titled “Dancing in the Field” by Japanese artist Ōkura Jirō features a set of 12 carved camphor wood sculptures, along with two prints by Jirō.

The second artist in the section, Ke-Sook Lee, formerly of Kansas City, was recently in residence at the Spencer to install “Ode to Sprout II,” made from varied shades of blue, green and lavender thread that sprout upward from bunched, hand-dyed spools toward the ceiling.

Curator Kris Ercums selected Lee’s “Green Hammock,” a large hanging sculpture constructed from U.S. Army nurse uniforms, to show Lee’s range in style from delicate to large and animalistic, said the Spencer’s communications coordinator, Elizabeth Kanost.

In Gallery 316, paintings, photographs and objects, from contemporary Chinese art to local printmaking and beyond, evoke some form of surreal landscape.

“Many of these works offer views into spaces that are imagined, invented or abstract,” said curator Cassandra Mesick in a press release. “Similarly, we invite visitors to contemplate the forthcoming transformation of the museum’s spaces.”

“The Second Battlefield” in the other half of the gallery room depicts nurses in World War I, highlighting their tasks in military hospitals and on the front lines, sampled from this year’s donation made by Eric Gustav Carlson of more than 3,000 works from the World War I era.

Senior curator Stephen Goddard said there is a sense of urgency to exhibit these pieces in small series at the Spencer during the next few years as Kansas University faculty develop World War I curriculum.

“There’s a lot of curricular things that are being done in conjunction with what’s available in the museum,” Goddard said.