

Spencer Museum's new exhibition highlights how 'Bold Women' have changed art and society

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Shelley Niro, "Raven at Night," 2022, museum purchase: R. Charles and Mary Margaret Clevenger Art Acquisition Fund, 2024.0134, image courtesy of the Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas.

LAWRENCE — Opening Feb. 18 at the Spencer Museum of Art, “Bold Women” explores how women have pushed the boundaries of art and spurred social and cultural change across generations and geographies. The exhibition showcases more than 75 works of art by nearly 50 artists in a variety of mediums including photography, video, painting, sculpture, textiles and installations.

Susan Earle, the Spencer Museum’s curator for European and American art, said the exhibition investigates boldness in terms of artistic innovation and its essential relationship to changes in culture over time. The expansive exhibition presents works across four galleries organized by themes including the role of women in preserving and liberating communities and women as leaders and knowledge-keepers.



Renée Fleuranges-Valdes, "Akofena: Defender of the Land," 2022, museum purchase: Peter T. Bohan Art Acquisition Fund, 2024.0133, Image courtesy of the Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas.

“‘Bold Women’ reveals and celebrates the depth and range of work produced by women of diverse cultural backgrounds, introducing audiences to their visionary practices and enriching our understanding of their distinct contributions to the global artistic landscape,” Earle said.

Earle organized “Bold Women” in collaboration with a group of advisers including Lawrence-based textile artist Marla A. Jackson, whose work is included in the show; Kansas City arts advocate Rose Bryant; Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Brooklyn Museum Kimberli Gant; Toronto-based curator and artist Wanda Nanibush; and KU students Lena Mose-Vargas, Sarah Dyer, Sara Johnson and Maggie Vaughn.

The Spencer Museum will host a variety of public programs related to the exhibition, including talks and workshops with featured artists Kandace Creel Falcón, Jackson, Rose B. Simpson, Mary Sibande and Hong Chun Zhang.

“Bold Women” will remain on view through July 6. Admission to the Spencer Museum and this exhibition is free for everyone.

The exhibition and related programs are supported by the National Endowment for the Arts, the R.C. Kemper Jr. Charitable Trust & Foundation, the Art Dealers Association of America Foundation, Every Page Foundation, a 2024 KU Racial Equity Research, Scholarship & Creative Activity Award from the KU Office of Research, Jeff and Mary Weinberg and Elizabeth Schultz. Additional support comes from the Spencer Museum International Artist-in-Residence program, the Linda Inman Bailey Exhibitions Fund, KU Student Senate and Friends of the Art Museum.

Related programming

Rose B. Simpson Artist Talk
March 7, 2-3 p.m., Kansas Union, Alderson Auditorium

Hear from visionary artist Rose B. Simpson (Santa Clara Pueblo), whose work integrates ancestral Pueblo pottery traditions with metalwork, automotive design, performance, installation, music and creative writing.

Mary Sibande Artist Talk
March 12, 3-4 p.m., Kansas Union, Alderson Auditorium

Join International Artist-in-Residence Mary Sibande, visiting from Johannesburg, South Africa, to create a site-specific installation for the exhibition in collaboration with KU students and faculty.

Chinese Ink Painting with Hong Chun Zhang
April 4, 2-3:30 p.m., Spencer Museum of Art

Join Lawrence-based artist Hong Chun Zhang to learn more about the installation she created for the “Bold Women” exhibition and the process of Chinese ink painting.

Kandace Creel Falcón Artist Talk
April 18, 3-4 p.m., Spencer Museum of Art

Join KU alums Kandace Creel Falcón and Lena Mose-Vargas for a discussion of Chicana feminism and a pair of paintings by Falcón featured in the “Bold Women” exhibition.

Storytelling through Quilts with Marla A. Jackson
May 4, 1-3 p.m., Spencer Museum of Art

Explore how artists tell stories through quilts in this hands-on workshop with artist and educator Marla A. Jackson, whose quilt “Sankofa” is featured in “Bold Women.”

