



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 13, 2011

The Williams College Museum of Art Presents
Expressions by guest curator Jenny Gersten in
The Gallery of Crossed Destinies

July 16—September 11, 2011

Photos available upon request.

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Williamstown, Mass. – The Williams College Museum of Art (WCMA) is proud to present *Expressions*, the current installation in *The Gallery of Crossed Destinies*. Featured as one of the centerpieces of the museum’s *Reflections on a Museum* reinstallation project, *The Gallery of Crossed Destinies* invites us to consider how our perceptions of objects change in the museum setting. The museum invited four guest curators—a florist, a group of high school students, a theater festival director and an athletic coach—to create their own narratives from a miniature “collection” of 25 artworks. Each curator has responded to the same objects to conceive a distinct exhibition, determining every aspect of presentation from art placement to wall text. Each exhibition explores how objects evoke stories and how these narratives change depending on how they are presented and who presents them.

The current installation, *Expressions*, is by Jenny Gersten, Artistic Director of the Williamstown Theatre Festival (WTF). Gersten approached the exhibition by connecting to the art through the medium of theater. She was interested in how artworks express themselves and wanted to endeavor to give the artworks a voice. Gersten reached out to theater artists, specifically playwrights, and showed them particular images of art selected

for the exhibition and asked them if they would either write something for it, or choose something already written that might accompany the work in some way. The result will culminate with readings by actors from the WTF's non-Equity company.

Actor/director/MacArthur Recipient Bill Irwin will direct the performance of works by Samuel Barclay Beckett, Liz Flahive, Alexandra Gersten-Vassilaros, Howard Korder, Donald Margulies, Itamar Moses, and Bess Wohl. When asked about the connection between the visual art and the written art Gersten responded, "There are very few chances to exercise one's imagination anymore. In the digital age when we can look up anything at any moment, it can be very limited. This is one of the great opportunities to exercise your imagination." The performance will take place at WCMA, Tuesday, July 19 at 2:00 p.m. The exhibition will be on display Saturday, July 16 through Sunday, September 11, 2011.

The Gallery of Crossed Destinies is a project inspired by a text that Williams Professor Mark Haxthausen assigned to his students to encourage critical thinking about museum practice. In Italo Calvino's fantastical novel, *The Castle of Crossed Destinies*, a group of travelers meet at an enchanted castle where guests must communicate with only a set of tarot cards. Continually shuffled, these cards—like the art objects in *The Gallery of Crossed Destinies*—tell new stories with each sorting.

The artwork presented in *The Gallery of Crossed Destinies* features an eclectic mix of some of the museum's finest treasures. The collection includes such items as oil paintings by Edward Hopper and George Inness, artifacts from ancient China and Egypt, and sculpture by Louise Nevelson and Claes Oldenburg. The ongoing exhibitions are on view in the Class of 1935 Gallery, where three large windows have been reopened after having been covered for almost 20 years. This new, dramatic influx of light has had a transformative effect on the gallery space. The windows act as a metaphor for the project as a whole, visually connecting the museum with the outside community.

The previous projects of *The Gallery of Crossed Destinies* were *Light Affects* by local florist Chad Therrien and *The Art of Emotion* by 9th graders at Mt. Greylock Regional High School. Aaron Kelton, the head football coach at Williams College, will curate the gallery this coming fall.

The Gallery of Crossed Destinies is facilitated by project manager Miriam Stanton, Graduate Student in the History of Art, Class of 2011; Lisa Corrin, Class of 1956 Former Director of the Williams College Museum of Art; Joann Harnden, Coordinator of Education Programs; and Cynthia Way, Director of Education and Visitor Experience.

About Jenny Gersten

Gersten was the Associate Producer of the Williamstown Theatre Festival from 1996 to 2004, and in 2010 was named the Artistic Director of the WTF. The 2011 season is her first in the new post. For the past three years she served as the Associate Producer of the New York Shakespeare Festival/Public Theater where she produced many plays and a few musicals. Prior to that she was the Artistic Director of the Naked Angels theater company in New York City. She is also a volunteer and a former staff member of The 52nd Street Project, a theater mentoring program in Hell's Kitchen, which her husband, Willie Reale, founded in 1991. Her only experience in museums and visual arts is due to her archaeology major at Oberlin College, during which time she had internships at the Oriental Institute in Chicago and the American Museum of Natural History in New York. She also has served as a casting director for the contemporary artist Gregory Crewdson.

The Williams College Museum of Art

The Williams College Museum of Art is located on Main Street in Williamstown, Massachusetts. It is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. The museum is wheelchair accessible and open to the public. Admission is FREE. For more information, contact the museum at (413) 597-2429 or visit wcma.williams.edu.

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