



Play videos! UK museum brings art to Commonwealth's big screen



Janet Biggs video, "Duet," juxtaposes NASCAR pit crews in action with a classical violinist and singer. **Janet Biggs** Courtesy UK Art Museum

BY RICH COPLEY

University of Kentucky football fans have become used to seeing a variety of images on Commonwealth Stadium's jumbo video screen including replays, UK Athletics promotions and fans in the stands.

Thursday night, the big screen will feature art.

The University of Kentucky Art Museum will take over the screen to present "Videos for a Stadium," a program of artistic sports videos. And we're not talking about NFL Films or ESPN 30 for 30, both recognized as high quality sports video production companies.

"We have to use 'sports videos' in quotes, because if you and I were to talk about sports videos, we would imagine highlight clips or something," UK Art Museum director Stuart Horodner says.

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These instead will be artistic clips, most running in the three- to six-minute range, by artists such as Paul Stephen Benjamin, Joe Sola, Janet Biggs, Alix Pearlstein and more.

“For me, the project and the selection and what the videos are about is that aspects of body, training, movement, teamwork, the psychology of competition, those are all the things that I feel sports has; that sports is defined by — practice and getting physically fit, the notion of winning and losing and putting yourself in the competitive zone,” Horodner says. “Once we decided this was going to be an interesting venue, I felt like I could interpret ‘sports-related’ loosely and use those conditions as a selecting process and put together a program of interesting material.”

There are artists whose work directly represents competition, such as Biggs’ “Duet,” which juxtaposes a classical violinist and singer with images and sounds of a NASCAR pit crew.

But others are more representative of movement and the body, like Pearlstein’s “Moves in the Field,” and things associated with sports, like Benjamin’s “Oh say Ocean Remix,” a video that slowly peels a cacophony of national anthem performances down to a final few notes.

The latter video will air near the beginning of the program, and Horodner says the aim is to create a game-day atmosphere, with touches including concession stand food, UK announcer Carl Nathe introducing the videos, a performance by UK cheerleaders and, of course, the stadium atmosphere. The videos will be shown on monitors in the recruiting room as well as on the stadium video screen.

Initially, Horodner and the museum staff were just looking at the stadium as a site for a potential fundraiser.

“We were just looking for different places to throw a party, throw a fundraiser ... and we were in the recruiting room, which is behind the end zone, which has an amazing straight-line view of the big jumbo screen, and I was just kind of standing there and said to the folks there, ‘How would it be if we used the screen as a video screen or a movie screen?’” Horodner says. “They said, nobody’s done that, but it’s a high-quality screen. You could certainly do that.”

To Horodner, the event is another step in trying to move the museum and its reach beyond the walls of its facility in UK’s Singletary Center for the Arts.

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“When we do things off site,” Horodner says, “I want them to be really ambitious and interesting and have a sense of, ‘Wow.’”