


The Ramapo News

Art at Berrie Center highlights feminist perspective

By Kim Bongard

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Photo by Dana Wehmann

The work of Melanie Baker and Anonda Bell are on display in the Berrie Center's Kresge and Pascal Galleries until Friday, Oct. 19. Both artists incorporate the feminist perspective in their striking and thought-provoking works.

Baker's immensely dark charcoal drawings bring attention to the power of men through powerful male figures like Napoleon, President Trump and Scott Pruitt.

Many of her drawings focus on the back of their heads and the details of their suits. Drawing these men from such unique angles depicts an intricate portrait of power from different perspectives. "It's all about power and what it looks like to me from where I sit," said Baker, an artist from Brooklyn, N.Y. "That's about relating to the way power looks to us through the eyes of history and through the eyes of contemporary politicians and leaders."

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Baker will work on many projects at a time, sometimes dedicating months to her drawings. In recalling the inspiration for her work, she recalls feeling very powerless when reading about political events in the paper.

“When I saw them in person, I was very excited by how deep the black is and also the way the work is topical without being predictable,” Mr. Jenkins said. “Then with the Kavanaugh hearings, they are even more current.”

Jenkins said the overall response to the gallery has been very positive.

“People who not acquainted with contemporary art generally can understand what the pictures are,” he added.

Anonda Bell is the director and chief curator of the Paul Robeson Galleries at Rutgers University in Newark. “[Bell] also works with feminism in a smart way. Both shows have an undercurrent about male power,” Jenkins said.

Her exhibition titled “The Suburbs At 4 A.M.” depicts the experience of women in the post-war era. Bell draws inspiration from Alberto Giacometti’s work and her personal experiences of transitioning from an urban to suburban lifestyle.

“There’s a whole lot of work that women traditionally have done in the home environment and it’s not being acknowledged through payment of money and it’s also not being acknowledged through any kind of recognition.”

Different from a linear narrative, the scenes—bedroom, bathroom and kitchen—portrayed in her work intricately show the rambling complex thoughts running through the mind of a suburban insomniac at 4 a.m.

Bell’s intricate technique parlays into her intricate analysis of the scenes depicted. In capturing the bathroom scene, she took a closer look at lingering germs and the concept of hygiene. In her mixed-media work, she uses a unique technique by cutting printer paper to create a variety of textures.

“[The technique] is very versatile and accessible all around the world, it’s light and easy to maneuver. That’s how I originally got into it, I had moved around a lot [and] anywhere in the world you can always find paper.”

Senior visual arts major Daniel McElrone helped adhere Bell’s works to the walls in the Kresge Gallery. After working with Bell in Ramapo’s gallery, McElrone was offered and accepted an internship with Bell at the Paul Robeson Galleries at Rutgers University in Newark.