



## Smart to the Core: Embodying the Self

January 29–May 19, 2019



**New exhibition series to expand object-centered teaching in the University of Chicago’s celebrated College Core**

**Exhibition features works by Ayana V. Jackson, Ma Quisha, Hank Willis Thomas, and others**

The Smart Museum of Art launched a new curricular exhibition program this winter with *Smart to the Core: Embodying the Self*. Organized through the Museum’s Feitler Center for Academic Inquiry and curated for teaching in the

University of Chicago’s famed undergraduate Core, the *Smart to the Core* exhibition series provides primary source material for discussion, questioning, and interpretation by students and faculty from many fields and disciplines while at the same time opening a window into the intellectual life of the University for the broader public.

The first iteration, *Embodying the Self*, brings together more than two dozen works by modern and contemporary artists who engage with fundamental questions about identity: Who am I? Where do I fit in the social world? How do I embody and perform different aspects of my identity in everyday situations? Through more than two dozen works, artists in the exhibition explore the visual construction of selfhood across a range of gender, sexual, racial, ethnic, and intersectional identities. The exhibition is produced in partnership with “Self, Culture, and Society,” a year-long course sequence for over 500 undergraduates taught by 33 faculty from the University’s Division of the Social Sciences. Future iterations of *Smart to the Core* will engage with other Core sequences and disciplines.

“The Feitler Center’s *Smart to Core* exhibition series will not only deepen the Smart Museum’s support for the teaching and research mission of the University of Chicago but will also help us write the future of academic museums in the 21st century by diversifying the canon of art history and confronting important issues of our current moment,” said Issa Lampe, Director of the Feitler Center, Deputy Director for Academic and Curatorial Affairs at the Smart Museum, and one of the exhibition’s co-curators.

Smart Museum staff have collaborated with faculty and instructors to incorporate teaching sessions in the *Embodying the Self* exhibition for a number of College Core sequences to date, including “Self, Culture, and Society,” “Power, Identity, Resistance,” “Readings in World Literature,” “Reading Cultures,” “Media Aesthetics,” and “Gender and World Civilization.” Staff are available to co-teach additional sessions for courses in any department throughout the spring academic quarter. Co-teaching inquiries can be sent to Issa Lampe ([issalampe@uchicago.edu](mailto:issalampe@uchicago.edu)) and Berit Ness ([bness@uchicago.edu](mailto:bness@uchicago.edu)).

When visiting on their own, guests can find examples of books and articles currently read and discussed by students in “Self, Culture, and Society,” from the fields of psychology, sociology, critical theory, gender and sexuality studies, postcolonial studies, and critical race studies. The reading table is organized in collaboration with the Seminary Co-op.

“*Smart to the Core* is a long overdue opportunity for students and faculty alike to refract our Core texts through the lens of images and objects thoughtfully curated to spark discovery and dialogue,” said exhibition co-curator Anne Beal, Lecturer in the Social Sciences Collegiate Division at the University of Chicago. “The shift in medium from written word to art object offers a chance to rethink alterity, intersectionality, domination, and other abstract concepts in vividly tangible ways that deepen our understanding and appreciation of both the canon and more contemporary social theory.”

“I took this course in my first year at the College, and it has been one of my favorite classes to date,” added Martina Lentino, an Art History and Latin American Studies major who serves as the exhibition’s Undergraduate Research Associate. “Although challenging, the Core completely reshaped the way in which I think about the world, which was a very eye-opening process. I’m thrilled to participate in a project that will make the course more interdisciplinary and intersectional.”

*Embodying the Self* runs concurrently with the Smart Museum’s presentation of *Solidary & Solitary: The Joyner/Giuffrida Collection*, a major touring exhibition that likewise raises questions about identity and representation through an intergenerational array of works by African American artists, with a particular emphasis on abstraction.

A robust slate of interdisciplinary programs including gallery discussions, film screenings, artmaking workshops, panel discussions, and family days will accompany the exhibition. Additional information about exhibition-related public programming can be found at [smartmuseum.uchicago.edu/calendar](http://smartmuseum.uchicago.edu/calendar).

### **Artists**

*Embodying the Self* by Arthur Amiotte, Marcel Duchamp, Melvin Edwards, Robert Gober, Ayana V. Jackson, Geng Jianyi, Win McCarthy, Ana Mendieta, Kent Monkman, Yasumasa Morimura, Zanele Muholi, Lorraine O’Grady, Catherine Opie, Howarda Pindell, Adrian Piper, Ma Qiusha, Paul Mpagi Sepuya, Cindy Sherman, Anna Shteynshleyger, Frances Stark, Tony Tasset, Hank Willis Thomas, Gillian Wearing, Carrie Mae Weems, and H. C. Westermann.

## **Curators**

*Embodying the Self* is co-curated by Issa Lampe, Deputy Director for Academic and Curatorial Affairs and Director of the Feitler Center for Academic Inquiry; John Kelly, Christian W. Mackauer Professor of Anthropology and of Social Sciences in the College; and E. Anne Beal, Lecturer in the Social Sciences Collegiate Division; in collaboration with Berit Ness, Assistant Curator of Academic Initiatives.

## **Support**

Support for this exhibition has been provided by the Smart Museum's Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Endowment, Feitler Center for Academic Inquiry Fund, Eloise W. Martin Fund, and the Museum's SmartPartners.

The exhibition is presented in the Janis Kanter and Thomas McCormick Gallery and the Edward A. and Inge Maser Gallery.

###

## **Images**

UChicago students in Elizabeth Fagan's "Power, Identity, Resistance" section gather for a discussion during an interactive class visit to *Embodying the Self*.

## **About the Smart Museum of Art**

The Smart Museum of Art at the University of Chicago is a site for rigorous inquiry and exchange that encourages the examination of complex issues through the lens of art objects and artistic practice. Through strong community and scholarly partnerships, the Museum incorporates diverse ideas, identities, and experiences into its exhibitions and collections, academic initiatives, and public programming. The Smart first opened in 1974. Admission is always free.

## **Mission**

The Smart Museum of Art at the University of Chicago opens the world through art and ideas.

### **Smart Museum of Art**

The University of Chicago  
5550 S. Greenwood Avenue  
Chicago, IL 60637

773.702.0200

[smartmuseum.uchicago.edu](http://smartmuseum.uchicago.edu)  
[smart-museum@uchicago.edu](mailto:smart-museum@uchicago.edu)

### **Hours**

Tuesday–Sunday, 10 am–5 pm  
Thursday evenings until 8 pm

Galleries are closed Mondays and holidays.

Admission is always free. All are welcome.