

Spring Exhibitions at the University Art Museum

Ronny Quevedo: *offside*

Rodrigo Valenzuela: *Video Works*

Fruit Soup: Contemporary Vanitas by Audrey Flack and Gracelee Lawrence

On view January 25 – April 2, 2022

Artist Talk with Ronny Quevedo and Rodrigo Valenzuela: Thursday, March 3, 4:30 – 5:30 pm

Artists' Reception: Thursday, March 3, 5:30 – 7 pm



Ronny Quevedo, *pachuco, pacha, pa'lante*, 2019, pattern paper and gold leaf on muslin, courtesy of the artist and Alexander Gray Associates, New York

ALBANY, NY (January 19, 2022) — The University Art Museum is pleased to present three new exhibitions opening on January 25, 2022. In ***Ronny Quevedo: offside***, multi-media artist **Ronny Quevedo** occupies the arched walls of the museum's main galleries in a newly commissioned work, *fuera de lugar* (2021), comprised of diagrammatic vinyl lines that recall both dress patterns and gymnasium floors. This work is inspired by his mother's and father's respective careers—a seamstress and a professional soccer player. Throughout this exhibition, which includes artwork from 2012 to the present, Quevedo's own family's emigration from Ecuador to New York serves as a catalyst for work reflecting on socio-political issues of migration, Indigenous architecture, and communal spaces.

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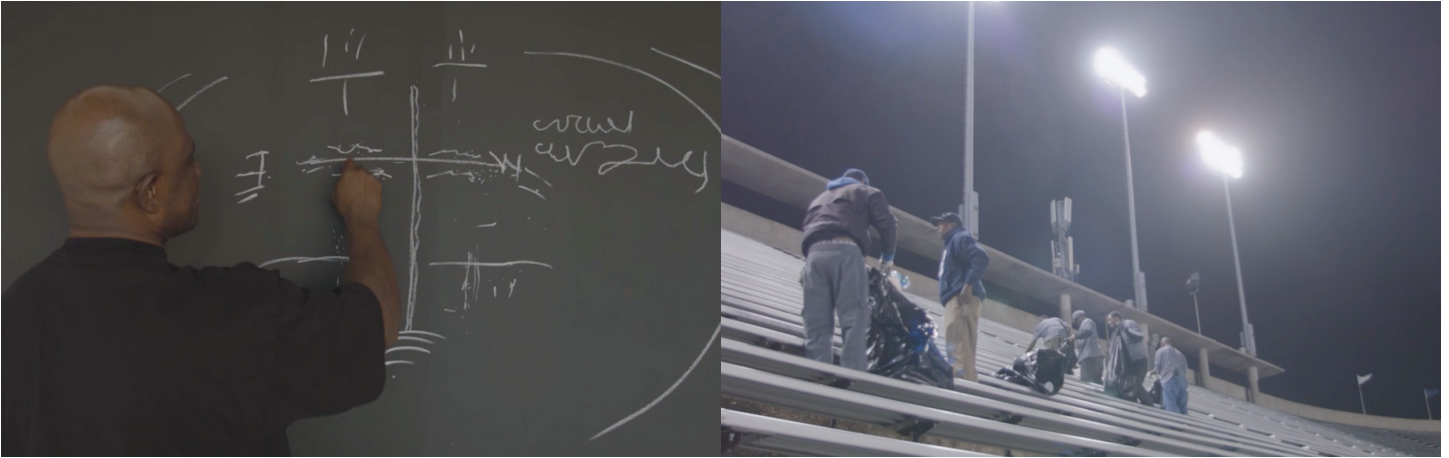
In *fuera de lugar*, gymnasium lines recall the indoor soccer leagues which for Quevedo and others who migrated to New York became places of comradery and belonging. This belonging is tempered by the title *fuera de lugar*, the Spanish term for “offside,” a reference to the rule in soccer that restricts a player’s movement: they are penalized for going too far when unopposed. Literally translated, it reads “out of place,” suggesting displacement; but this displacement also opens the possibility of exploring new bounds, uncharted territories, and liminal sites.

Quevedo’s second newly commissioned work, *a mother’s hand* (2021), references pre-Columbian platform architecture and agricultural plans, as well as present-day bleachers. Its modular quality, a grid within a grid, not only plays with the modernist exploration of the grid and modularity in the 1960s design by Edward Durell Stone of the museum within which this work is sited, but also bears witness to the much earlier exploration of the grid in pre-Columbian textiles. Moving across both space and time, *a mother’s hand* pays homage to both those pre-Columbian textile traditions and the manual labor of Quevedo’s mother, a seamstress whose materials inspired the dress patterns seen throughout the exhibition, gilded and endowed with a sense of the sacred. Further recentering us, Quevedo has added carbon paper drawings on four walls of the museum, oriented to the cardinal directions. Simultaneous with this new—and ancient—sense of orientation, Quevedo’s *offside* pays homage to the past and forms new visions of belonging for a future which, like the outcome of a game, is yet to be determined.



Ronny Quevedo, *Ulama, Ule, Olé*, 2012, milk crates, zipties, and shoe laces, courtesy of the artist and Alexander Gray Associates, New York

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Rodrigo Valenzuela, *El Sísifo* (still), 2015, video, 11:02; color, sound, courtesy of the artist

Rodrigo Valenzuela: Video Works on view in the Nancy Hyatt Liddle Gallery features two video works by multi-disciplinary artist **Rodrigo Valenzuela**. A former day laborer in landscape, construction, and other sectors, Valenzuela frequently draws an analogy between soccer goalkeepers and his former job on an overnight cleaning crew in office buildings. In the two videos on view, *Prole* (2015) and *El Sísifo* (2015), sports provide a backdrop for investigating issues of race, labor, solidarity, and workers' agency.

In *Prole*, Valenzuela has gathered several immigrant workers together to engage in two unscripted activities: indoor soccer and a discussion of worker unionization. The video's title "prole" means "offspring" in Spanish. It is also the Latin root of "proletariat" or the "the working class" and according to Valenzuela, the son of a Chilean labor organizer, it can be used both in a derogatory manner by the privileged against the working class and as proud affirmation of class identity when spoken by a worker.

In *El Sísifo*, three voices speak about their Sisyphean commitment to their work while a split screen shows a man drawing diagrams on a chalkboard on the left and a crew cleaning a stadium post-game on the right. The first voice is the Bear Bryant (b. Arkansas, United States, 1913-1983), legendary 25-year head coach of the University of Alabama's football team, giving a motivational speech to new players. The last voice is National Football League player and two-time Super Bowl champion Ray Lewis (b. Florida, United States, 1975), delivering a pep talk on effort and brotherhood to the players at his alma mater, the University of Miami. Between Bryant and Lewis, one of the cleaners tell his story of migrating to the United States for work, declaring he is not ashamed of his labor and is willing to work hard at whatever he has to do.

The video slightly misleads the viewer. While listening to Bryant's and Lewis's voiceovers, we might assume the man on the left is drawing football plays on the chalkboard. In fact, he is drawing the strategies that he and his crew use to clean the stadium, a plan that involves teamwork and choreography analogous to game play.

Both videos offer a validation of the unseen labor behind the spectacles of sports and capitalism. With their intersection between personal voices and the politics of labor, capitalism, and collective action, they invite critical reflection on how labor is regarded in U.S. society and the effect that status has on real lives.

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Audrey Flack, *Greek Muse*, 1977, dye transfer on paper, Collection of University Art Museum, University at Albany, State University of New York, on behalf of The University at Albany Foundation, Gift of Stephen and Linda Singer; Gracelee Lawrence, *Massaged into Existence*, 2021, 3D printed silk polylactic acid, courtesy of the artist

Photographs from the University at Albany Fine Art Collections by Photorealist painter **Audrey Flack** and recent 3D printed sculptures by artist **Gracelee Lawrence** share unexpected commonalities in ***Fruit Soup: Contemporary Vanitas by Audrey Flack and Gracelee Lawrence*** on view in the Collections Study Gallery. Using an intricate three-layer (cyan, magenta, yellow) dye-transfer process, Flack's photographs explore color saturation and also function as sources for her groundbreaking vanitas still lifes from the 1970s and early 1980s. Printed in multi-colored, reflective filaments, Lawrence's objects—which begin as 3D scans of bodies and fruit—exist in a transfigurative space between physical and digital reality. Paired together, Flack's and Lawrence's works provide meditations on time and subjectivity, mechanical and digital reproduction, and capitalist consumption in our contemporary world.

Through Flack's photographs we begin to understand her larger interests in photographic vision and color as well as reoccurring themes such as life and death, luxury and consumption. Flack symbolizes these using traditional iconography from 17th-century Dutch vanitas still lifes as a starting point—for example, fruit and flowers which although luxurious show signs of decay and the vanity of life. In addition to incorporating personal objects and cosmetics, Flack gave this genre a 20th century update by mirroring the spectacle of contemporary consumer culture through glittering light that sparkles among mirrored and glass objects.

Lawrence's work in *Fruit Soup* explores the continued salience of Flack's themes in the 21st-century as seen in her production of digitally-skewed fruits and vegetables dealing with hybridity, reproduction, humor, and sexuality. Just as 17th-century Dutch still life revealed a story of commerce and power—the citrus fruits featured in those paintings, often imported from the New World, were considered luxurious and “exotic”—so too does Lawrence's

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work intertwine with issues surrounding contemporary foodways. The objects are all printed with polylactic acid (PLA) filament, a vegetable derived bioplastic most commonly made from fermented corn starch. In what the artist calls a “material poetics,” the works ask us to consider produce as a vehicle for understanding hegemonic systems of power and control, nutrition and intimacy, and technological invention.

The juxtaposition of Flack and Lawrence invites us to contemplate these issues of photography, the digital, and reality; of foodways and consumption. Creating a space for new ideas like these to emerge from visual dialogue is central to the Collections Study Gallery mission. The gallery’s rotating exhibition schedule highlights artworks from the Collections with past exhibiting artists and/or emerging or established contemporary artists, and works in tandem with the Collections Study Space, giving access to 3,000 objects reflecting students, faculty, other researchers and scholars, and the community.

The works from *Audrey Flack: 12 Photographs 1973 to 1983* are contextualized with researched texts by Lily Hopkins (Milton & Sally Avery Arts Foundation Intern, class of ‘21) and Iszzy Hernandez (Collections Intern, class of ‘22).

Support for the University Art Museum exhibitions and programs is provided by The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, the Harpo Foundation, the Office of the President, Office of the Provost, The University at Albany Foundation, the University Auxiliary Services at Albany, the Robin Kanson Lewis '70 Exhibition Endowment Fund, and the Jack and Gertrude Horan Memorial Endowment Fund for Student Outreach.

Museum Hours: Tuesday through Saturday 11 am – 4 pm. Masks required for all visitors. Please note that hours and visitor guidelines are subject to change. For the most up-to-date information, please visit our website at www.albany.edu/museum, or call (518) 442-4035.

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