



ALBANY MUSEUM OF ART

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **ALBANY MUSEUM OF ART HOSTS PANEL DISCUSSION ON ‘WHAT IS ART?’**

Five Member Panel Will Address Centuries Old Question at 7 pm Tuesday, April 17, at the Albany Museum of Art

**[For Release April 13, 2018 – Albany, GA]** – Have you ever walked through a museum or a gallery, looked at a piece and asked yourself, “Is that *really* art?”

In fact, have you ever asked yourself, “What *is* art?”

On the surface, it appears to be a simple question. The answer, however, is complex. What qualifies as art changes with the evolution of society and technological advances. So, can *anything* be art, and who makes that decision?

On Tuesday, April 17, five panelists intimately involved with art will tackle the topic, *What Is Art?* The 7 pm event will take place immediately after the 6 pm opening reception for interdisciplinary artist Justin Hodges’ installation *Time Time and a Half* in the AMA’s East Gallery. Hodges’ work combines a digital reproduction of Gustave Courbet’s 1849 realist painting *The Stonebreakers* with large stones and modern-day tools.

“That’s tough,” Hodges, a lecturer at Georgia Southwestern State University, said in regard to the question of “What Is Art?” “When I was invited, I thought, ‘That’s going to be challenging.’”

Joining Hodges for the panel discussion will be sculptor Glenn Dasher, the former dean of the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Alabama in Huntsville whose exhibition *Monuments to Human Imperfection* is showing in the AMA’s Haley Gallery; Rob Matre, owner of the Matre Gallery; Paula Williams, executive director of the Albany Museum of Art, and Femi Anderson, owner of Renaissance Art Café in Albany.

The audience also will be able to participate in the discussion, which will be moderated by Chloe Hinton, director of education and programming at the AMA.

“What makes something a work of art? For some, it’s personal,” Williams said. “You like the color, the form, the emotive quality, or you just 'know what you like.'”

“Or perhaps it’s because it is familiar through previous exposure, therefore it is within your comfort zone. So often art takes a form people don’t recognize, and they ask, 'Is that art?’”

There also can be economic reasons for defining a work as art, she said.

“There are definitely times when art is deemed to be ‘good art’ by the auction houses or galleries who drive the prices,” Williams noted. “And some would argue that good art is that which makes you think—or, better yet, changes your mind.”

Hodges, who teaches an online art appreciation course at Georgia Southwestern, says the question of what is art is one he frequently deals with in his classes.

“For me, looking at the contemporary state of art making, it has to do with context and it has to do with intention,” Hodges said in a recent interview. “If you look back at history, the earliest records were mostly about—the historians think—natural resources, what food was available to the individuals making these paintings in these caves.

“If you go back to the Venus of Willendorf (a figurine discovered in Austria in 1908 that dates to 28,000-25,000 BC), it was sort of an amulet and it had to do with fertility. So, we think maybe an individual carried around this in the hopes it would make them more fertile, more likely to have children.”

Definitions of what constitutes art have changed over the centuries with societal shifts and the introduction of new technology, he noted.

“In the past, it (art) had to do with ritual and religious sorts of things, It really wasn’t until the beginning of the Renaissance when we see this idea or concept of ‘art’ coming into being,” Hodges said. “Before that, it had to do with skilled labor and craftsmanship and that sort of thing.”

But is a work’s status as art determined by the creator or the observer experiencing it?

“In contemporary times, what we’re look at is the notion that if an artist says they’re making art, they are making art,” Hodges said. “That’s tricky because quality becomes the question—not whether it’s art, but whether it’s good art.

“That, for me, is where I sort of sit on it, If it is made in such a way that the context around it is an art context, then I address it as art, generally. And then my question, as someone who has studied art, is, does it communicate well and is that message important—something we need to know, consider, think about, or is it something that just perpetuates a market, that takes away the rich history that art is?”

Do you agree, or do you have a different view of what should be considered art? You can explore this question with our panelists at this event, which is free and open to the public.

The Albany Museum of Art, located in Albany, Georgia, houses an impressive collection that includes 19th and 20th century American and European art as well as a substantial collection of sub-Saharan African art including masks, sculpture, pottery, textiles, and musical instruments. The Albany Museum of Art is accredited by the American Association of Museums. The Albany Museum of Art is open 10 am through 5 pm Tuesday through Friday and noon until 5 pm on Saturday. Admission is free.

For more information about the AMA please visit our website, [www.albanymuseum.com](http://www.albanymuseum.com) or call 229.439.8400.

**CAPTION INFORMATION:**

**Photo 1: Justin Hodges, lecturer at Georgia Southwestern State University, will lead a panel discussion at 7 pm Tuesday, April 17, at the Albany Museum of Art on the topic of “What Is Art?” (Photo courtesy of Justin Hodges)**

**Photo 2: Paula Williams, executive director of the Albany Museum of Art, will participate in a panel discussion titled “What Is Art?” at 7 p.m. Tuesday, April 17, at the AMA. (Photo courtesy of the Albany Museum of Art)**

**Photo 3: Glenn Dasher, sculptor and former dean of the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Alabama in Huntsville, will participate in a panel discussion titled “What Is Art?” at 7 p.m. Tuesday, April 17, at the Albany Museum of Art. (Photo courtesy of the Albany Museum of Art)**

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