



ALBANY MUSEUM OF ART

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AMA TO HOST PANEL DISCUSSION ON *THE SYMBOLISM OF BORDER WALLS*

The Event is Scheduled for 6 pm Dec 4 at the Albany Museum of Art

[For Release Dec 2, 2019 – Albany, GA]— *Smoke Bombs and Border Crossings*, an exhibition of photography by Nancy Newberry, has opened the door for an important discussion at the Albany Museum of Art on the symbolism and purposes of border walls, both in art and in society.

The Symbolism of Border Walls is set for **6-8 pm on Wednesday, Dec 4, 2019**. Albany State University faculty members Matthew Stanley, assistant professor of history, and Roger Marietta, associate professor of political science, will serve on the panel, which will be moderated by AMA Executive Director Andrew James Wulf, Ph.D.

The event is free and open to the public.

“The story of the migration of peoples in and through the American Southwest goes back millennia, from the first peoples who arrived from Asia over 20,000 years ago, to the arrival of the Spanish in the 1500s and the absorption of this region by the United States as a symbol of Manifest Destiny in the 19th century,” Wulf observed. “The arrival of the physical barrier between the United States and Mexico is a relatively late addition to this conversation, yet evermore prescient as a theme today.”

Symbols are emotion-evoking images that have the power to affect people’s thinking and behavior. Walls are ancient, deep-rooted symbols of safety and protection.

In her photography, Newberry, a resident of Texas, merges documentary portrayals with dreamlike creations to investigate notions of nationalism and community through the use of playful, symbolic images of Mexican charros, American cowboys and military groups at the Texas-Mexico border. Her *Smoke Bombs and Border Crossings* exhibition continues in the AMA’s East Gallery through Jan 4, 2020.

The panel will explore general U.S. immigration history and how events of the past inform today’s social-political realities. Included will be the symbolism of wall and the different political purposes barriers such as Hadrian’s Wall, the Great Wall of China and the Berlin Wall have served throughout history.

Panelists will look at the U.S.-Mexican border region's culture and history. Discussion will delve into the arguments for more security and a higher degree of surveillance at the border, and what should be done in response to the challenges that are confronting the border zone.

"It's important to discuss why symbols matter throughout history, how they are a part of reality, and how political and social commentary are present in today's art," said Annie Vanoteghem, director of education and public programming at the AMA. "We will discuss the interaction between individuality, cultural identity, nationalism and community."

Newberry's photography in *Smoke Bombs and Border Crossings* captures three segments of people who are involved in the current U.S. Southern border discussion—Americans, Mexicans and uniformed military. All of her subjects are dressed elaborately and with pride, but their faces—their individuality—are hidden in shadow.

"These photographs leave us to discuss with one another what it means to be a community and what it means to build a wall, both symbolic and literal, through that community," Vanoteghem said. "Works of art such as these help viewers come to a deeper understanding of what is going on in today's political and social world."

"The vast majority of art is made as social commentary, in this case as a response to the physical and symbolic division of the American people. Composed like a modern-day Spaghetti Western film on the Texas-Mexico border, the photographs have identity, nationalism and community at the forefront. These are issues that our country deals with daily as we decide what it actually means to be divided by a wall."

CURRENT AMA EXHIBITIONS

- *Origami Variations*, works by Gloria Garfinkel, is in the Haley Gallery through Feb 8, 2020.
- *Smoke Bombs and Border Crossings*, photography by Nancy Newberry, is in the East Gallery through Jan 4, 2020.
- *Georgia Artists Guild of Albany*, 26th annual juried exhibition, is in the West Gallery through Jan 4, 2020.

ABOUT THE ALBANY MUSEUM OF ART

The Albany Museum of Art, located at 311 Meadowlark Drive in Albany, Georgia, adjacent to Albany State University West Campus just off Gillionville Road. The museum is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. The Albany Museum of Art is open 10 am through 5 pm Tuesdays through Fridays and noon until 5 pm on Saturdays. Admission is free.

For more information about the AMA please visit our website, www.albanymuseum.com or call 229.439.8400. Be sure to follow the @AlbanyArtMuseum on Twitter, AlbanyMuseum on Instagram and AlbanyMuseumOfArt on Facebook.

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