

Do inanimate objects invoke empathy? In a material world, humans collect, buy, lose, trade, create things. We cherish objects and pass emotional sensibilities to lifeless materials. By imbuing things and stuff with sentimentality and living memory we animate our objects, but how do we distinguish between what is 'me' and what is 'mine'?

The exhibition *Object Empathy* features three Colorado-based artists whose work explores and reimagines sentimentality through intimate and personal practices. Alongside their artworks, personal effects are displayed as 'human artifacts' building a bridge between empathy and objectivity.

The works of Alejandra Abad, Marco Cousins, and Daniel Granitto, explore ancestral, personal and familial stories that manifest empathy in their art. The personal effects, as chosen by the artists, arranged beside their art, invites the viewer to emotionally interact with and personify the objects, creating a dialogue between the art, the artist, and the object.

The work of interdisciplinary artist Alejandra Abad acts as an ode and celebration of her heritage and ancestry. Abad presents two video works, the first, *Mis Hijos* is a series of photographic vignettes and animations overlaid with the gentle voice of Abad's mother reciting a handwritten poem to her children during the pandemic.

The second, is a stop-motion animation of the *Pájaro Guarandol*, a folkloric dance and theatrical performance story from Venezuela. Abad accompanies her recounting of the *Pájaro Guarandol* with original music using "el cuatro", a traditional Latin American string instrument that belonged to her grandfather. The story of the *Pájaro Guarandol* is about a bird who gets shot by a French hunter for picking a flower titled the "Rosa de Montaña". The curandero (a healer) pleads for mercy and brings the bird back to life. The "Rosa de Montaña" is native to the Venezuelan state of Yaracuy, where Abad's grandfather was

born. This stop-motion animation features lithographs and original music (Abad sings and plays the cuatro). The lithographs depict the seed necklace used by el curandero (a healer) along with a healing potion (Abad acted in the role of el curandero in a play as a child). She uses the cuatro that belonged to her grandfather to play her version of this song. *Both videos remind us of our connection to our own personal histories and how our heritage and ancestry informs our present and future moments.*

Presenting a series of intimate self-portraits in medium format photography and video, artist Marco Cousins gives the audience a look inside his home while also examining iconography and the vulnerable aspects of what it means to be a free, black human being in America. With this current body of work, created entirely in 2020, Cousins aims to focus on intimacy of the self and a look into the softness that exists within the human experience. *His work is an example of how objects can inform perceptions of self, and perception of others.*

The paintings of Daniel Granitto are a series of works that capture fleeting moments. An exploration of calm and beauty in the mundane, and celebrate the precious family moments in an almost childlike wonder. Granitto makes paintings and drawings based on photos he takes as he moves through his daily life. Having a direct and personal relationship with the subject is essential, which is why he works exclusively from his own photos. *Each painting presented is a snapshot of Granitto's life, each work immersed in the familial.*

By combining different elements of sentimentality, Object Empathy connects the object, to the artwork, to the artist. Exploring the undeniable human connection to objects, and building the bridge between empathy and objectivity.

— Kiah Butcher