

EXHIBITIONS

BEMIS × CENTER

CARMEN WINANT:

The last safe abortion

+

SYNCHRONICITIES:

Intersecting Figuration
with Abstraction

**WINTER + SPRING
EXHIBITIONS**

January 18–May 4, 2025

About

Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts facilitates the creation, presentation, and understanding of contemporary art through an international residency program, exhibitions, and educational programs.

Residency Program

For more than four decades, Bemis has provided artists from around the world dedicated time, space, and resources to conduct research and create new work. Bemis offers artists private live/work studios, financial support, technical/administrative assistance, and opportunities for intellectual discourse about contemporary art. Nearly 900 artists have participated in the residency program.

Bemis's Curator-in-Residence Program provides a curator the opportunity to participate in the Bemis Residency Program, serve as a professional resource to Bemis artists-in-residence and the Greater Omaha arts community, and organize exhibitions and public programs at Bemis Center.

Bemis's Sound Art + Experimental Music Program, launched in 2019, is a special track within the Residency Program for artists working in sound, composition, voice, and music of all genres. Participating artists receive financial, technical, and administrative support, along with dedicated facilities for rehearsing, recording, and performing. The program includes LOW END, a performance venue offering free live shows for the public to experience the

latest innovations by local, national, and international sound artists and experimental musicians.

Exhibition Program

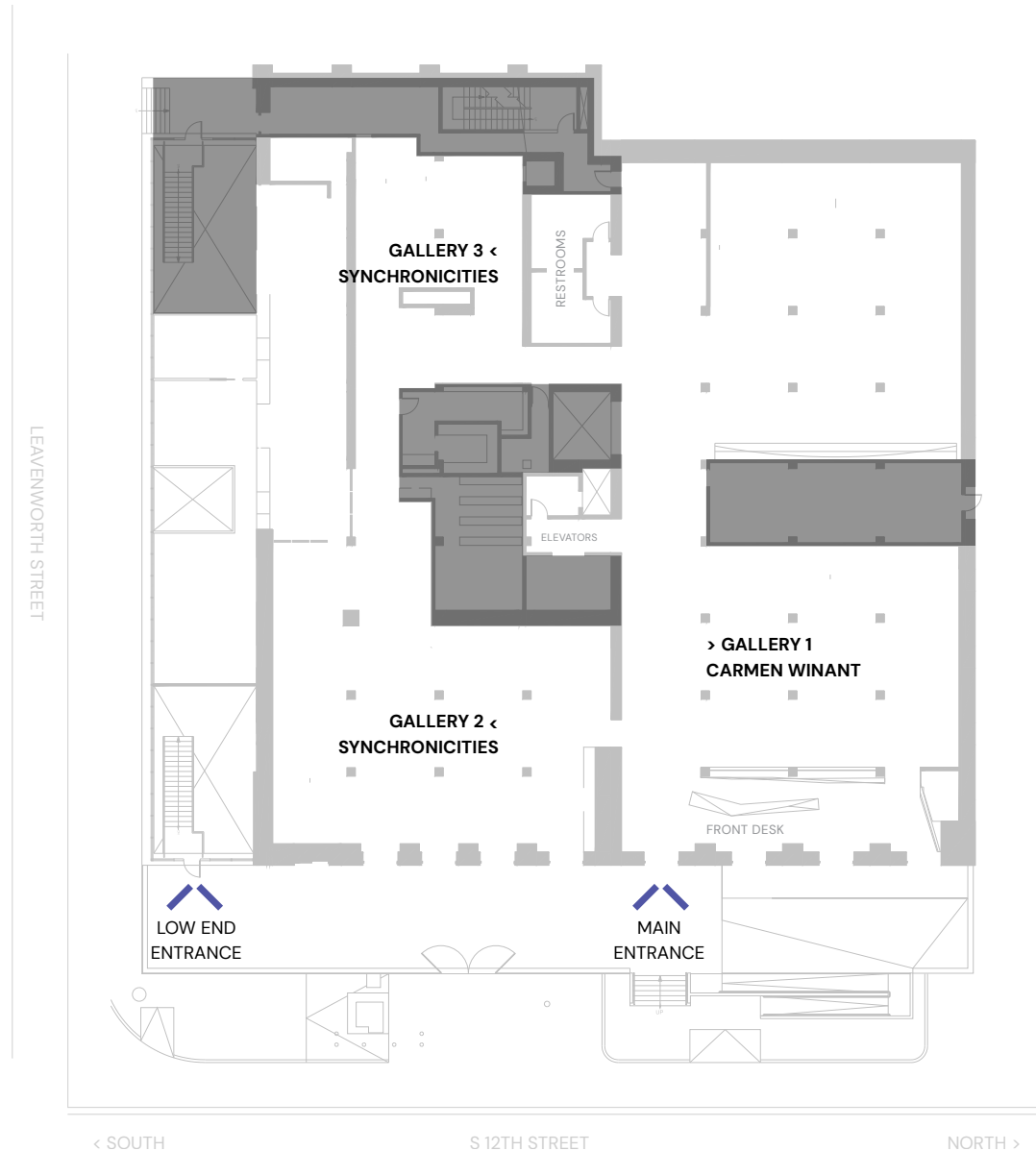
Bemis Center's exhibition program features solo and group exhibitions of artwork in all media by local, national, and international artists. Exhibitions are always free, open to the public, and frequently introduce the community of Omaha to the most experimental and provocative art forms today.

Public Programs

Throughout the organization's history, Bemis Center has offered artist-driven, community-responsive programs that bolster civic engagement in the creation and understanding of art. Public programs provide regular opportunities for the public to learn about and be inspired by the visual arts. Through artist-led classes and workshops, ARTalks, open studio events, panel discussions, film screenings, and performances, the community has direct access to artists and to their diverse approaches to artmaking and interpreting the world around us.

Map

- Gallery 1** *Carmen Winant: The last safe abortion*
- Gallery 2 + 3** *Synchronicities: Intersecting Figuration with Abstraction*



Abortion care is work. Which is to say that it is, and looks, entirely regular. As in any healthcare context, cotton gowns are washed and folded, patients are checked in, medical equipment is sterilized, fundraisers are organized and attended, exam table paper is changed, blood is taken, pamphlets are distributed, birthday parties for colleagues are throw in-office, snow is shoveled in front, phones are answered, information is input on a chart or file, lunch is taken, nurses embrace, again and again.

Clocks: I watch the time before the doctor enters, until my period comes, as the workday passes, until the mandatory waiting period closes, before the supreme court session opens, until it's too late to make a choice.

I have taken to describing this project as being about abortion-care workers. I do not say "this is a project about abortion" because such a statement would void the human beings—largely women—who are at its center. This is a lesson I have learned (too slowly) as the work unfolds. My entry point on projects is often the *idea*: of birth work, of abortion care, of domestic violence advocacy. But people are not concepts; care work does not exist without care workers. There is no access to safe, dignified, and humane

abortion care without Francine, Chrissy, Sri, Colleen, Deb, Beth, Gayle, Tammi, Barb, Jackie, Carol, Theresa, Harriet, Marge, Jennifer, Karen, Adele, Sunita, Terel, Gina, Brenda, Gwenne, Dorothy, Cynthia, Dolores, Jean, Navdeep, Joan, Ginnie, Papusa, Jill, Marilyn, Cathy, David, Sondra, Susan, Mickey, Diane, Amy, Chele, Linda, Lynne, Jane, Martha, Ellen, Ann, Jennifer, Rose, Terri, Regenia, Jesse, Sarah, Melissa, Martha, Kimela, Jamie, Sally, Lindy, Kellie, Deirdre, Elaine, Jen, and Phyllis.

The archive: sometimes I am asked why I work with "the past." As if it were not also our present?

I was recently at a dinner party and someone there, in introducing my work, described me as "an artist who makes work about birth." I blushed at that description, which, however well-meaning, wasn't quite right. I *am* moved in birth in its own right—as a mysterious and expansive phenomenological experience—but most of all I am interested in it as a channel through which to make study of feminist healthcare networks and radical social movement building, in relation. Giving women information (pictorial or otherwise) about their bodies and reproductive options is a tool in feminist world-building. Which is to say, I am interested in how we build kin.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Carmen Winant, Detail of *The last safe abortion*, 2024. Courtesy of the artist and the Whitney Museum of American Art. Photography by Jake Holler.





Carmen Winant, *The Future (What Kinds of Times Are These?)*, 2023. Courtesy of the artist and Minneapolis Institute of Art. Photography by Charles Capistrant.

Feminist workplaces: environments that not only serve women and marginalized people's needs, but offer interest-free loans to their own employees; are non-punitive; have norms of compassion; are not guided by profit; approach staff wellbeing is just as important as that of their patients (what do they need to survive? Can they pay their electric and childcare bills? What if their kids are sick, or their mother is in jail?); humanize their workers; treat the whole person, not just the body; eschew the colonial legacy of Western medicine; understand that their employees are of the community; discern sexism, racism, ableism, economic precarity, and the carceral state as interrelated

systems of oppression that act on people; champion a different, more bearable world.

The anti-abortion movement has been weaponizing graphic, oversize photographs of so-called aborted fetuses for so long, and to such great effect, that it calls to question: *what is the visibility of abortion care work?* If anti-choice photographic propaganda strategically decenters everything but what's in the amniotic sac (the mother or birthing person, the labor, the care, the facts), then what clues does that offer us—about our values, and theirs? Charlotte Shane writes: "My pregnancies were not separate from me—they were not in me but of me."¹ How might

1. Shane, Charlotte. "The Right Not To Be Pregnant." *Harpers Magazine*. October, 2022.

we harness photography as an animating tool in liberation struggle, in which care workers themselves are the subject?

Mistakes: having used other people's pictures in my work for so long, I re-taught myself to photograph for this project. Despite teaching this medium, decades have passed since I was behind the camera, and it turns out that instructing and doing are not the same. I use my late father in law's 35mm camera; my partner reminds me how to load film in its back and how to guess at exposures when the light meter isn't working, which it mostly is not. I go forth, regularly forgetting to input the correct ISO setting, and struggling with the manual focus. The first rolls I get back from the lab horrify and humble me. I demonstrate steady improvement—sensitizing to the camera and the light—but decide to include the mistakes nonetheless. I appreciate the art of imperfect pictures, and hope they stand as a record of my own perpetual re-learning.

The sky: I encounter a handful of pictures of the sky in various archives. I start to take my own as I travel to photograph clinic workers. I look down from the airplane and up from the clinics. My son watches me as I practice exposing for the atmosphere with my borrowed, light meter-less camera and says, mama, where does the sky end?

2. Piercy, Marge. "The Right To Life." *The Moon is Always Female*: Knopf, 1980.

3. Ahmed, Sara. "Living A Feminist Life." *Duke University Press*, 2017.

When I had an abortion between the births of my two children (born 22 months apart), it was comfortable, legal, and safe. It was easy to make an appointment, receive care, and recover at home. I did not wedge a sharp object up my vagina and into my uterus, drink poison, take scalding hot baths, or throw myself down a flight of stairs. I did not lay bleeding on a dirty motel floor. I did not lose my fertility. I did not die, and I was not traumatized. This is the world I inherited, and the one I seek to visually represent as my political inheritance and imperative. "I will choose what enters me, what becomes my flesh," writes Marge Piercy in her 1980 poem "The Right to Life."²

Is art enough? The truth is that I am ambivalent. I desperately want it to be serviceable tool in an urgent moment. But what good is metaphor, on the ground and in the streets? In making this project, I encountered many pictures of women answering the phones in the archives, and took many rolls of that same quotidian act. Answering the call: the most lifesaving act, and the least photographic. As I stood there, mute and fumbling with my camera, I couldn't help but wonder: why am I not answering the phone?

Sara Ahmed writes: "Feminism: the dynamism of making connections."³ For a long time, I worked alone in the studio, making artwork about feminist coalition. It was lonely, and



Carmen Winant, *The last safe abortion*, 2024. Courtesy of the artist and the Whitney Museum of American Art. Photography by Jake Holler.

illogical. By degrees, it occurred to me that building (intergenerational, multiracial) relationships was the point of the work, rather than its subject. What would happen if I considered artwork to be the means of coming to know feminists, many of them in the struggle since before I was born, rather than its end? What if building social alliances—also known as friendships—was the outcome of the work and not only its subject? What if my work was reciprocal rather than extractive?

The tableaux: In the archives, I encountered many staged scenarios, in which clinic staffers posed as patients receiving services, photographs that were presumably used to share information about the experience to prospective patients.

I love this idea, of using pictures to teach and to guide, especially through a vulnerable experience; it strikes me as very tender. There was one tableau that struck me post of all, in which Allison modeled as a patient moving through the process of receiving an abortion. No step is left unphotographed, or deemed too small: she sits at home; looks up the clinic number; makes the call; walks to the building; rings the bell; goes up the elevator; checks in; waits in the reception area; and on. Nurses hold her hand, do a pregnancy test, fit her for a diagram, perform a vacuum aspiration, set her up to rest in a recovery room full of plush, reclining chairs, heating pads, and other women resting, talking, and reading magazines. A photograph for every movement. The final set of pictures



Carmen Winant, *Untitled (Dedicated to Gerri Santoro and the Friendship Abortion Clinic)*, 2023. Courtesy of the artist and Minneapolis Institute of Art. Photography by Charles Capistrant.

show Allison walking out after the procedure, into the magic hour.

Sri says: “We are determined to provide the last safe abortion in Ohio. Our phones are ringing. If we do the last legal abortion in Ohio, that is what we will do. We will stay open for as long as we possibly can. We will do abortions for as long as we possibly can.” I hear versions of this same sentence, nearly verbatim, from clinic staff everywhere I go. “We will provide the last safe abortion in _____.” Words as resolute as they are elegiac.

These images are drawn largely from the clinics themselves. Some come from institutional collections, and others are my own photographs. All the photographs in this book have been individually granted permission

by those who appear in them, or they show people who are no longer living. The only exception are a series of photojournalistic images, for which we have also been granted permission. No patients appear, though some are staged. They are a gift.

*Carmen Winant
December 16, 2023
Originally published in The last safe abortion, MACK, 2024*

SYNCHRONICITIES: Intersecting Figuration with Abstraction

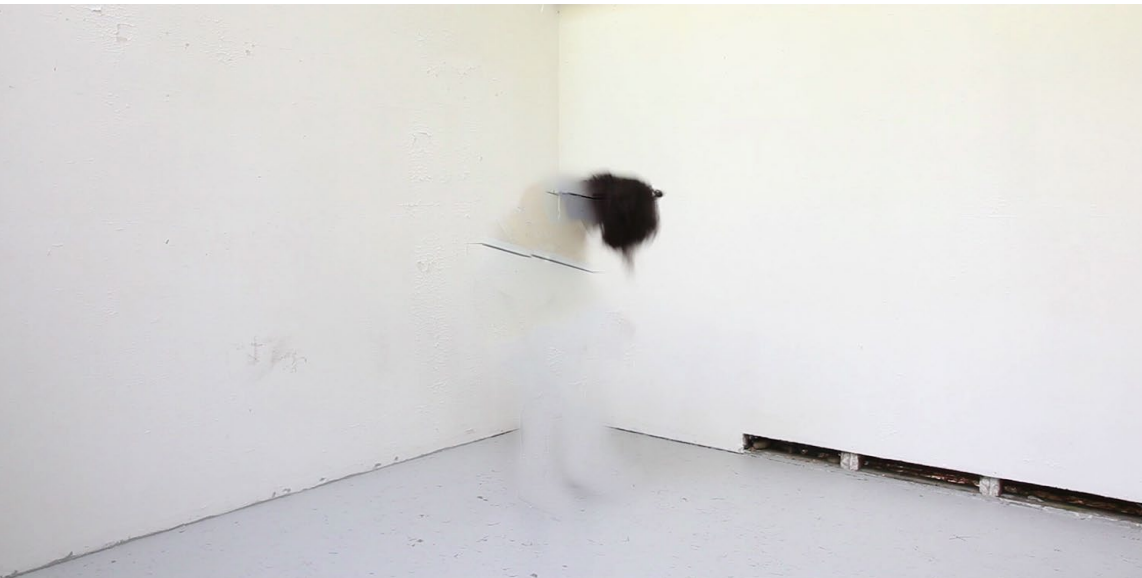
CURATED BY RACHEL ADAMS, CHIEF CURATOR AND DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS

“I have invented the word synchronicity as a term to cover ... things happening at the same moment as an expression of the same time content.” –Carl Jung

Sondra Perry's *Double Quadruple Etcetera Etcetera I and II* (2013) elicits an almost visceral effect. Two figures, on opposing walls, gyrate and move, blurring and blending into the space they occupy. In Perry's practice, she uses digital manipulation to deconstruct the representation of the body, questioning how technology shapes and distorts our understanding of selfhood and its subjective embodiment. She has stated, “The preoccupations of my work are around technologies of representation, technologies of lenses, surveillance,” and “how Blackness or Black culture show up in those spaces, how they navigate,

how they explode representation altogether.”¹ Additionally and in the context of this exhibition, the work highlights ideas not only around the level of surveillance that our bodies (especially bodies of color) are constantly under, but also how one might attempt to camouflage, or rather, abstract oneself in order to feel true freedom.

In *Synchronicities: Intersecting Figuration with Abstraction*, each artist celebrates the fluid and dynamic relationship between abstraction and figuration. At its core, this exhibition challenges the notion that abstraction and figuration must exist as separate, opposing forces. Instead, it proposes

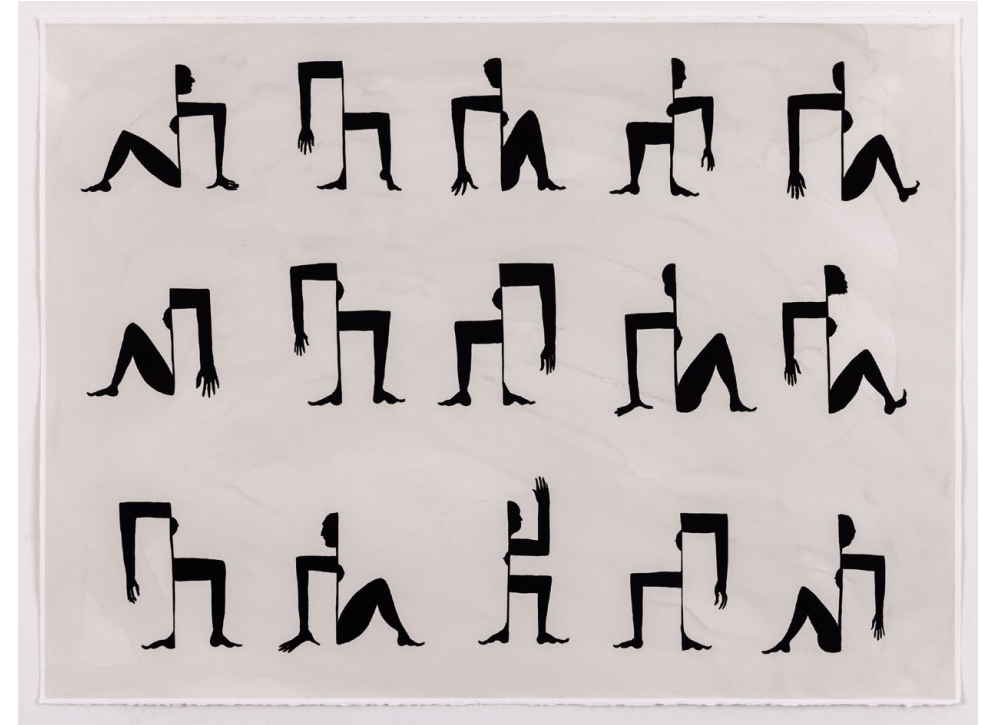


Sondra Perry, *Double Quadruple Etcetera Etcetera I & II*, 2013. Two-channel high definition video (color, silent), 9 minutes. Courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York.

1. Sondra Perry, “Sondra Perry Double Quadruple Etcetera Etcetera I & II 2013,” MoMA, <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/428542> last accessed January 2, 2025.



Heather Rasmussen, *Untitled (Holding leg over chair with mirror)*, 2017. Courtesy of the artist.



Amy Pleasant, *Split Seated 2*, 2024. Courtesy of the artist.

that these two modes of artistic expression—at times understood as diametrically opposed—are, in fact, deeply intertwined, one informing and enriching the other. The artists in *Synchronicities* engage in creative dialogues that transcend traditional boundaries, offering new ways of perceiving the human form, identity, emotional experience, and ultimately speaking to total bodily autonomy.

The nine artists in this exhibition—Leia Genis, Sheree Hovsepian, Liz McCarthy, Laura Hart Newlon, Sondra Perry, Amy Pleasant, Christina Quarles, Heather Rasmussen, and Carolyn Salas—bring unique

perspectives to the conversation between abstraction and figuration. Spanning a diverse range of media, including painting, sculpture, photography, video, and installation, they all converge around the central idea that these two artistic strategies can inform one another to deepen our understanding of the complexities of the body, identity, and human experience. And when installed together, connections between how artists are working this way become evermore apparent.

The exhibition's title, *Synchronicities*, is a reference to Carl Jung's theory of synchronicity, a concept that

explores the idea of meaningful coincidences—events that occur together in a way that seem highly significant, even though they lack a direct causal connection.² While the artists in this exhibition are intersecting forms that are figurative and abstract that are not coincidental in the final work, these forms come together in their studios through exploration, thoughtful placement, and the act of creation. And rather than being fixed categories, abstraction and figuration are presented as mutable,

fluid approaches that evolve and transform in relation to one another.

In this way, the artworks in *Synchronicities* speak to coexistence, or the idea that these intersecting modes of figuration and abstraction are, at times, reliant on each other—they are not only complementary but also generative. Abstraction can distill and express emotions and psychological states in ways that figuration cannot; while figuration, grounded in representation, offers

2. Joe Cambrey, "Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle," International Association for Analytical Psychology, <https://iaap.org/jung-analytical-psychology/short-articles-on-analytical-psychology/synchronicity-an-acausal-connecting-principle/> last accessed January 2, 2025.



ABOVE: Leia Genis, *Selective History 19*, 2024. Courtesy of the artist.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Sheree Hovsepian, *Leaning in 3*, 2019. Courtesy of the artist and Rachel Uffner Gallery.

a concrete point of access to these abstractions, making them more relatable and accessible to the viewer. Together, they provide a multi-layered, nuanced approach to understanding the world around us, as well as our place within it.

As the exhibition planning process unfolded, it became apparent that all the artists under consideration are female or female-identifying, unintentionally adding another layer to the curatorial concept. While figuration and abstraction are genderless, the feminine body is a

recurring trope throughout art history and into present day. The works in this exhibition are no different and yet, the artists take chances on how bodies are represented through abstraction. They utilize abstraction to convey emotions or states of mind that are difficult to articulate through figuration alone. By moving beyond literal representation, they create works that resonate on a visceral level, evoking feelings of dislocation, transformation, and transcendence. Abstraction becomes a language for expressing what is often unspeakable, offering a means of communicating the inner life of one's self. Simultaneously, figuration serves as a grounding force, offering a point of reference that allows the viewer to connect with the work on a human level. By returning to recognizable forms—whether through the human body, faces, or gestures—these artists provide access points to the more abstract elements of their work. The human figure becomes both a literal and metaphorical vessel for exploring themes of identity, belonging, and perception.

Synchronicities aims to reinterpret figuration through the lens of abstraction. The artists challenge the fixed, conventional notions of identity and representation, and in their works, the body is portrayed as fluid, fragmented, and ever-evolving. Rather than presenting a stable, singular view of the self, these works emphasize a multiplicity of experiences and emotions, clearly suggesting that the body—like abstraction itself—is always in a state of flux.



Public Programs

Jan 18 3 PM
PANEL DISCUSSION
The Art of Access: Archives as a Creative Catalyst
 Visiting panelists—including exhibiting artist Carmen Winant, historian Catherine Medici-Thiemann, PhD, and Whitney Museum of American Art Head Archivist Tara Hart—will speak about how artists and historians work with archives, how feminist archival practices and feminist work challenge the traditional structures of archives, and who gets access to the archive. Moderated by Katie Anania, Assistant Professor of Art History at University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Jan 23 7 PM
TOUR
Curator-Led Tour
 Join Rachel Adams for a tour and discussion of both exhibitions on view.

Feb 13 6–8 PM
RESIDENCY
Meet + Eat
 At this casual community potluck, Bemis's current artists-in-residence and curator-in-residence will give short talks about their practices and aspirations for their residencies. Bring a dish to share—we've got the drinks.

Feb 27 7 PM
PERFORMANCE
MY BODY, MY VOICE: Personal Stories Shared
 Facilitated by Omaha-based Agribella Orbis (Beaufield Berry and Christi Leupold), this event explores the diverse perspectives and personal experiences surrounding the issue of abortion through true stories shared by members of our community.

Mar 1 3 PM
TALKS
OMA ARTalks
 Explore Bemis's current exhibitions from the perspective of Omaha-based artists, creatives, and community leaders. Speakers will share how specific works of art in each exhibition have deeply resonated with them.

Mar 6 6 PM
LECTURE
Lisa Sutcliffe, Curator of Photographs at The Metropolitan Museum of Art

This lecture explores the history of both interwar collage and surrealism and how these art historical movements have continued to shape contemporary art, including the figurative and abstract works in the group exhibition *Synchronicities*. Lecture funding provided by:



Mar 29 12–4 PM
RESIDENCY
Open House / Open Studios
 The ultimate behind-the-scenes Bemis experience: Participate in an artist-led, hands-on art activity for visitors of all ages, engage in a tour of the current exhibitions, and go beyond the galleries to discover Bemis's upper floors, where you can visit with artists-in-residence to see their studios and view their works in progress.

May 1 7 PM
TOUR
Curator-Led Tour
 Join Rachel Adams for a tour and discussion of both exhibitions on view.

2025 LIVE @ LOW END



mattie barbier
 January 23



Mark Guiliana
 February 6



Setting
 February 20



Paolo Angeli
 March 20



Niecy Blues
 March 27



The Turntable Trio
 April 3
 + Sound workshop at 5:30 PM. Space is limited.



Kassa Overall
 April 17



Kalia Vandever
 May 1

Free admission | Performances at 8 PM

Bemis Center's Sound Art + Experimental Music Program and LOW END performances are made possible by



Board of Directors

Todd Simon
PRESIDENT

Thomas Simms III
VICE PRESIDENT

Chris Russell
TREASURER

Marcia Kerrigan
SECRETARY

Arun Agarwal

Brian Bartels

Lili Cheng

Ryan Ellis

Marcus Fischer

Devin Fox

Nancy Friedemann-Sánchez

Emiliano Lerda

Jay Lund

Lee Emma Running

Polina Schlott

Joaquin Segura

Aaron Shaddy

Annette Smith

Rodrigo Valenzuela

Robert Duncan | EMERITUS

Ree Kaneko | EMERITA

Chris Cook | EX-OFFICIO

Staff

Rachel Adams
CHIEF CURATOR AND
DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS

Abby Fogle-Erickson
COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE +
ENGAGEMENT MANAGER

Matthew O'Reilly
RESIDENCY ARTS TECHNICIAN

Hana Brock
EXPERIENCE ASSOCIATE

Rachel Grace
COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

Keith Rodger
SOUND ART + EXPERIMENTAL
MUSIC PROGRAM TECHNICIAN

Ben Budesheim
DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANT

Parker Herout
EXPERIENCE ASSOCIATE

Jillian Schley
EXHIBITIONS MANAGER

Chris Cook
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Julianne McFadd
ADMINISTRATOR

Carlie Waganer
RESIDENCY PROGRAM
COORDINATOR

Emily Cox
OPERATIONS DIRECTOR

Abby Neddo
DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

Acknowledgements

Carmen Winant: The last safe abortion

Originated by the Minneapolis Institute of Art
Curated at Bemis Center by Rachel Adams,
Chief Curator and Director of Programs

Exhibition generously supported by:



Carmen Winant: The last safe abortion advisory committee:

Beaufield Berry; Sophie Clark, Clark Creative Agency; Andi Curry Grubb,
Planned Parenthood North Central States; Senator Jen Day; Bekah Jerde;
Catherine Medici-Thiemann, PhD, historian; Jen Pavkov, Creative Director, Women's
Fund of Omaha; and Ashlei Spivey-Arthur, Executive Director, I Be Black Girl

Synchronicities: Intersecting Figuration with Abstraction

Leia Genis, Sheree Hovsepian, Liz McCarthy, Laura Hart Newlon,
Sondra Perry, Amy Pleasant, Christina Quarles, Heather Rasmussen,
and Carolyn Salas

Curated by Rachel Adams, Chief Curator and Director of Programs

Exhibition Acknowledgements

EXHIBITIONS MANAGER

Jillian Schley

INSTALLATION TECHNICIAN

Will Anderson

EXPERIENCE ASSOCIATES

Hana Brock and Parker Herout

TRANSLATION

Roxana Corral

The creations of exhibiting and visiting artists reflect the diversity of their artistic, personal perspectives and are not necessarily those of Bemis Center, its staff, leadership, or supporters.

Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts

724 S. 12th Street
Omaha, NE 68102

402.341.7130
bemiscenter.org
info@bemiscenter.org

Gallery Hours

Wednesday	11 AM–5 PM
Thursday	11 AM–9 PM
Friday	11 AM–5 PM
Saturday	11 AM–5 PM
Sunday	11 AM–5 PM

Admission

Thanks to the generous support of individual donors and foundation, government, and corporate partners, Bemis Center offers free admission to all of its exhibitions and public programs.

Photo Policy

Visitors are welcome to take photographs without flash. Please refrain from photographing other visitors without their permission. Tag us on Instagram @bemiscenter or #bemiscenter or on Facebook @Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts.

Help Keep Bemis Free and Accessible!

Learn about Member, Donor, and Sponsor options at bemiscenter.org/support.



SUPPORT

Follow Us

@bemiscenter #bemiscenter



Accessibility

Access details are available at bemiscenter.org/accessibility and the front desk.

Please ask staff for assistance.