

MASS MoCA

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Walk in My Shoes

Kidspace exhibition features Jamie Diamond, Jesse Fleming, and Aaron Johnson



Jamie Diamond, *The Walls*, 2008
Archival pigment print, 60" x 40"

North Adams, Massachusetts — Beginning this June, Kidspace at MASS MoCA kicks off four years of related exhibitions, organized under a single narrative and developmental arc. The series of experiential exhibitions expands the traditional process of problem-solving by involving three key habits of mind: empathy, optimism, and courage. In the first year, **Walk in My Shoes** (June 20, 2015 – May 23, 2016) features artwork chosen to activate empathic responses and amplify awareness of one's feelings and compassion towards others. In year two, **Happiness Is** (June 17, 2016 – May 22, 2017), a group costume exhibition, uses celebratory themes and expressions of joy that lead to increased optimism. Year three features **Out of the Box** (June 17, 2017 – May 21, 2018), an exhibition in which an artist converts the Kidspace gallery into an experimental playground for courageous artistic explorations. During the fourth year, **From the Mouths of Babes** (June 16, 2018 – May 20, 2019), 6th graders from Kidspace partner schools will present an arts-based solution to a societal issue of their choosing. Working with an artist, museum educator, art therapist, and social worker, they will conceptualize and execute an artistic response to the problem. The four-year exhibition project will be accompanied by an evaluation that documents: 1) confidence in the three aforementioned habits of mind; 2) openness to engaging in a complicated problem-solving process; and 3) application of problem-solving social issues through art.

The first exhibition project **Walk in My Shoes** opens in the Kidspace gallery on June 20, 2015, and features paintings, videos, and photographs by Jamie Diamond, Jesse Fleming, and Aaron Johnson.

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Jamie Diamond presents seemingly realistic images in her family portrait series, which in fact are artificial relationships that she constructs among strangers; from a quick glance, one might assume a strong familial bond. In another project, Diamond videotaped fraternity brothers posing for two minutes. Without background knowledge, the videos pose such questions as, “Who are these boys?” and “Why are they smiling?” A viewer makes assumptions to answer these questions, but then forms new ideas when the answers are revealed. Feelings of empathy change, depending on what is known. Additionally, Diamond explores how empathy and compassion are projected towards inanimate objects, particularly dolls. She will create a doll specifically for the exhibition, which will be presented alongside close-up photographs of similar dolls displaying a range of facial expressions. Included in the exhibition is an interactive station in which children can role-play different identities for a photo booth.



Jesse Fleming, still from *Mirror Mirror*, 2014
Single channel version, high definition

Jesse Fleming shows *Mirror Mirror*, a film of two participants who attempt to sync with each other through a simple call-and-response activity in which they randomly list colors or numbers. The exercise creates a mysteriously observable connection between the partners. Viewers become active participants in the process when they sense that the partners are successfully in tune, and remain empathetically connected as the video subjects stay focused on each other.

Fleming will also create an interactive experiment in which visitors are able to replicate the exercise on site, an act that, according to the artist, completes the work by visitors having a direct experience with it.

Artist **Aaron Johnson** pairs socks with paint, forming playful, yet sinister monster-like figures in his eerie compositions. Viewers may form immediate reactions to the works, similar to the way people often rush to judge others from a superficial perspective. Closer observation, however, may yield different and perhaps more empathetic responses. Johnson distorts and disfigures the human form to create fantastical rather than realistic images, presenting a light-hearted opportunity to explore the visual mechanisms by which impressions of others are formed.

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Aaron Johnson, *Ship of Fools*, 2014
Socks and acrylic on canvas, 71x88 inches

Walk in My Shoes opens on June 20, 2015, with an opening reception from 11am to 1pm.

Curator Laura Thompson speaks at 11:15am about the four-year project and, more specifically, about *Walk in My Shoes*; Jesse Fleming talks about his work at 11:30am; and refreshments, art-making, and tours of the new exhibition are available all day. Also opening on June 20 is *Ran Hwang: Untethered* on the second floor of the Hunter hallway, adjacent to Kidspace. Patrons may meet this famed button-

bird artist of Kidspace's *Freedom: Just Another Word For* (2013), who has made a new, 140-foot-long site-specific bead and string installation of birds.

About the Artists

Jamie Diamond received her MFA from the University of Pennsylvania in 2008, and her BA from the University of Wisconsin in 2005. Her work is grounded in photography, questioning notions of identity, intimacy, and reality. Her interests include the dialogue surrounding representation and photography's relationship to truth. She has exhibited her work in solo and group exhibitions nationally and internationally, including at Galerie Frank Pages, Geneva, Switzerland; AJL Gallery, Berlin, Germany; Galerie Jan Dhaese, Gent, Belgium; Ramis Barquet, New York; Radiator Arts, Long Island City; The Bronx Museum; P339 Gallery, Brooklyn; Samson Projects, Boston; Mana Glass Gallery, Jersey City; Kurant, Tromsø, Norway; Projects Gallery, Philadelphia; and Icebox Project Space, Philadelphia. Her work has appeared in numerous publications including *The Philosophy of Photography Journal*, *The New York Times*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Hyperallergic*, *Vanity Fair*, *The Art Blog*, and *Phaidon*. Diamond is a recipient of the Toby Devan Lewis Fellowship Award (2008) and the NYFA Fellowship Award in Photography (2014), was an artist in residence at Mana Residency (2014), The Bronx Museum (2014), Lower Manhattan Cultural Council (LMCC) Swing Space (2013), and LMCC Work Space (2008-2009), and was a visiting artist at New York University (2009). Diamond currently lives and works in New York City and teaches photography at the University of Pennsylvania and the International Center of Photography.

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Jesse Fleming designs his work to elicit collective versus independent self, empathy, attunement, compassion, and group potential experiences. He is investigating a quality of non-self-referential experience through media and technologies that help lower the perceived boundary between self and other. Fleming has exhibited nationally and internationally in Los Angeles, New York, Austin, London, and Barcelona; has created films for the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Guggenheim Museum, New York, The Getty Museum, Los Angeles, and The Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles; and has exhibited at 356 Mission Road, Los Angeles, the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, The University of Texas at Austin, and Borusan Contemporary, Istanbul, Turkey. Fueling his media works as a mindfulness practitioner, Fleming has a decade of meditation training and practice in ancient contemplative techniques and secular mindfulness with a certificate in Mindfulness Facilitation from UCLA's Mindful Awareness Research Center at The Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior. His work is in the permanent collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, and Borusan Contemporary.

Aaron Johnson is an artist interested in the grotesque and the absurd as channeled through his radically innovative approaches to painting. He has lived and worked in Brooklyn, New York, since 1999, and holds an MFA from Hunter College (2005). His work has been included in museum exhibitions at The Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art, Peekskill, NY; The Knoxville Museum of Art, Knoxville, Tennessee; and the Katzen Arts Center at American University. His work has been exhibited at galleries internationally, including Stux Gallery, New York; Marlborough Gallery, New York; Irvine Contemporary, Washington, DC; Galleri Brandstrup, Oslo, Norway; Gallery Poulsen, Copenhagen, Denmark; and MiTO Contemporary Art Gallery, Barcelona, Spain. He is the recipient of awards including The MacDowell Colony Fellowship, The Corporation of Yaddo residency, and The Marie Walsh Sharpe Art Foundation Space Program residency. Johnson has lectured at many universities and institutions including The Museum of Modern Art, The Rubin Museum of Art, and Lehman College. He has taught art to children through organizations such as Studio in a School. Johnson's work has been reviewed in numerous publications, including *The New York Times*, *The Huffington Post*, *The Village Voice*, *ARTnews*, and *ArtForum*. Roberta Smith in *The New York Times* describes Johnson's paintings as "works that are visceral, beautiful and flamboyantly timely, which is saying a lot."

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Related Programming

During the school year, Kidspace continues its 15-year partnership with the North Adams Public Schools and the North Berkshire School Union. Over 1,400 students and teachers will participate in group visits; Art Assembly performances; artist residencies with Diamond, Fleming, and Johnson; and professional development for teachers. Additional programs will include talks with authors and educators about the theme of empathy, to be announced in the fall.

Sponsorship

Kidspace at MASS MoCA is a child-centered art gallery and hands-on studio that presents exhibitions and educational experiences in collaboration with leading artists. Education at MASS MoCA is made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services. Additional support is provided by the Brownrigg Charitable Trust, the Milton and Dorothy Sarnoff Raymond Foundation, and the Alice Shaver Foundation, all in memory of Sandy and Lynn Laitman; John Hancock; the Amelia Peabody Charitable Foundation; Holly Swett; the Massachusetts Cultural Council; the Xeric Foundation; the C & P Bittenwieser Foundation; the Berkshire Bank Foundation – Legacy Region; Price Chopper's Golub Foundation; the Gateway Fund and the William and Margery Barrett Fund of the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation; and an anonymous donor.

Images

A collection of high-resolution images is available here: bit.ly/1MNbSOP.

Kidspace Public Hours

Free public hours are offered during the school year every day except Tuesdays, from 11am to 5pm, with art-making on the weekends and during school holidays. During the summer (July-August) the gallery is open every day, including Tuesdays, with art-making from 10am to 6pm.

About MASS MoCA

MASS MoCA is one of the world's liveliest (and largest) centers for making and enjoying today's most important art, music, dance, theater, film, and video. Hundreds of works of visual and performing art have been created on its 19th-century factory campus during fabrication and rehearsal residencies, making MASS MoCA among the most productive sites in the country for the creation and presentation

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of new art. More platform than box, MASS MoCA strives to bring to its audiences art experiences that are fresh, engaging, and transformative.

MASS MoCA's galleries are open 11am to 5pm every day except Tuesdays. The Hall Art Foundation's Anselm Kiefer exhibition reopens on April 15, 2015. Gallery admission is \$18 for adults, \$16 for veterans and seniors, \$12 for students, \$8 for children 6 to 16, and free for children 5 and under. Members are admitted free year-round. For additional information, call 413.662.2111 x1 or visit massmoca.org.