



CRACKS IN THE GLASS CEILING

GVSU Art Gallery
Haas Center for Performing Arts
January 13 - March 31, 2023

Exhibition Learning Guide



About This Guide

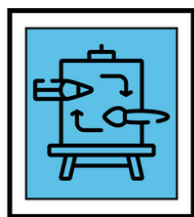
The information below can be used as a launch pad into learning about the themes of the exhibition. The questions and prompts can be used to start a deep-dive discussion about the artwork on view.



Breaking Barriers

A 2018 survey of major museum collections shows that 91.7% of North American artists in museum collections born after 1944 are white. Many museums and galleries were built to be exclusionary, positioned in and structured as white spaces for white patrons while Black communities experienced systemic, generational poverty at a higher rate correlating with a lack of access to arts education and the capital required to pursue representation. As an anecdote to these conditions, Muse Gallery in Grand Rapids provides an inclusive, collaborative space for creatives to pursue projects, host events, and facilitate workshops—putting creative control in the hands of artists.

- **Consider how social and economic barriers have excluded Black artists from public discourse and display. How do museums help shape our cultural values?**
- **To learn more, read *An Incomplete History Of Exclusion: Modern and Contemporary Black Art and The U.S. Art Museum* in the Southern California Interdisciplinary Law Journal by Tiffany Li. And follow Muse Gallery @mymusegr.**



Pushing Boundaries

The artists in this exhibition work in a variety of styles and genres, including street, pop and urban art, graffiti and graphic arts, fiber arts, and even music. They are influenced by earlier artists like Jean-Michel Basquiat, David Hammons, and Jacob Lawrence, whose pioneering, genre-bending works helped to reshape the landscape of contemporary art. Similarly, the artists here seek to push the boundaries between traditional genres in order to reflect their personal experiences as well as the bigger picture of American history and pop culture.

- **What cultural influences or references do you see in the work in the gallery?**
- **What is the result of these blurred boundaries? How do you approach understanding artwork that incorporates elements of pop culture and other media?**



Activism in Art

Artists in this exhibition engage directly and indirectly with social and racial justice, and economic issues. Stylistically, their works embody both joy and anxiety, while embracing the angst and excitement of living in 21st-century America. Appropriated cartoon characters, invented or reinterpreted narratives, and iconic imagery challenge viewers to consider how systemic racism, discrimination, and exclusion have shaped art and culture. Other artists in the exhibition take a more subtle approach to activism by celebrating Blackness, challenging definitions of beauty and value, and participating in a dialogue about equity and change.

- **Can you identify some of the issues addressed by artists in the gallery? How does their work help you to think differently about your world?**
- **How does the use of cartoons, icons, or other existing imagery help you engage with and understand the ideas in the work?**

To learn more visit gvsu.edu/artgallery/convergence.