

PRESS RELEASE

This fall the Minneapolis Institute of Art presents the first solo U.S. museum exhibition of works by artist Sara Cwynar

Co-organized with the Milwaukee Art Museum, “Sara Cwynar: Image Model Muse” will feature three of Cwynar’s recent films and photographic works from her ongoing *Tracy* series



Sara Cwynar. *Tracy (Gold Circle)*, 2017. Dye sublimation print on aluminum. 30 x 38 in. (76.2 x 96.52 cm). Courtesy the artist; Cooper Cole, Toronto; Foxy Production, New York.

Minneapolis Institute of Art
2400 Third Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55404
artsmia.org

MINNEAPOLIS—August 9, 2018— This fall, the Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia) will present an exhibition of artworks by contemporary conceptual photographer and filmmaker Sara Cwynar. Her first solo show at a U.S. museum, “Sara Cwynar: Image Model Muse” will debut at Mia on September 14, 2018, and run through January 20, 2019, before traveling to the Milwaukee Art Museum, co-organizer of the exhibition. The exhibition is curated by Gabriel Ritter, Curator and Head of Contemporary Art at Mia, and Lisa J. Sutcliffe, Herzfeld Curator of Photography and Media Arts at the Milwaukee Art Museum.

Brooklyn-based artist Sara Cwynar (b. 1985, Vancouver, Canada) explores the subjects of color and design, both in film and photography, and considers the ways they have operated politically, socially, and historically, particularly in the context of how beauty is conceptualized. Mia will present 11 photographs from the artist’s ongoing *Tracy* series in the museum’s contemporary galleries, along with three of her most recent films—*Soft Film* (2016), *Rose Gold* (2017), and *Cover Girl* (2018)—in the nearby black box theater.

“Sara Cwynar’s work is at the vanguard of a younger generation of conceptual photographers who, in the digital age, explore the relationship between physical reality and its reproduction,” Ritter said. “Her work questions the permanence of objects when popular culture renders the lifespan of images increasingly short. The obsessive materiality of her photographic images call attention to their constructedness, serving not only as a compelling formal device, but as a metaphor for how beauty and desire are also constructs in and of themselves.”

The *Tracy* series features a suite of studio portraits of the artist’s eponymous friend and muse set against vividly colored backdrops of reds, greens, and multi-colored grids. The portraits are superimposed with found objects and photographs from the artist’s vast collection of stock images and text clippings that visualize the interrelated histories of color and the representation of women. The manipulated, collaged images are then re-photographed, an intentional process to confuse or complicate the straightforward portraits.

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“Cwynar’s multi-disciplinary practice across photography, film, and performance echoes and responds to video and performance art of the 1960s and 1970s, in which the artist is both subject and object of the camera,” Sutcliffe said. “Presenting her full range of work provides opportunities for conversations about how women and objects have historically been depicted in art.”

Cwynar’s films, shot on 16 mm film, are meditations on the emotional impact of color, design, and popular imagery and their role in the manifestation of desire for objects and others. She builds multilayered theses that look not just to the history of design and production, but also to how the political realm we inhabit dates, fades, and changes. Through voiceovers in her films, Cwynar extensively quotes philosophers, cultural theorists, and writers; sources range from the writings of Jean Baudrillard and Martin Heidegger to Lauren Berlant and Toni Morrison. She also considers how a post-feminist landscape can make both the sexism and counter-sexism of earlier decades appear dated, even kitsch. Yet Cwynar constantly returns to the theme of progress and reaction and explores how these are still powerful forces, regardless of the forms they may now take.

Soft Film (2016), Cwynar’s first film, explores consumerism, value, and disposability, along with sexism and the emotional charge of color. The artist is shown arranging purchases of dated products from eBay, including velvet jewelry boxes and cologne bottles shaped like presidential busts, as well as photographs of New York’s Twin Towers and a photo series of unknown origin taken in South Korea in the 1970s depicting a Kenyan businessman inspecting a new factory under construction. A male narrator discusses “soft misogyny,” among other topics, and is heard at times being directed by the artist.

Rose Gold (2017) uses the introduction of the rose gold-colored iPhone 6S by Apple in 2015 as a springboard for exploring the themes of commercialism, built-in obsolescence, and image-saturated advertising, all of which touch on notions of materialism, excess, and changing perceptions of color, gender, and branding. Cwynar and a male voice actor are heard narrating anonymously, and the artist appears throughout the film, at times posing with an outdated beige landline telephone.

Cover Girl (2018), Cwynar’s latest film, features footage of the industrial production of cosmetics, as well as Cwynar’s friend Tracy, *Tracy* series protagonist, at times posing while applying makeup or holding cosmetics bottles. The work explores the commercial production of color and dives into perception, truth, and standards of beauty.

In 2017, Mia acquired the diptych *Three Hands* (2016), a digital print and the first work by Cwynar to enter the museum’s permanent collection. The work features a black and white image of a handshake surrounded with notes and a dizzying assortment of colorful found objects and images—ranging from Greco-Roman antiquity to recent yearbook photos, color charts, military weaponry—all of which are laid down flat to create a sprawling collage that the artist has re-photographed from a high vantage point. Cwynar conflates trinkets and household items from her personal collection with images of world history, flattening not only physical and representational space, but history and meaning as well.

The exhibition opens March 8, 2019, at the Milwaukee Art Museum and runs through July 21, 2019.

Visiting Artist Lecture at the University of Minnesota

Sara Cwynar will discuss Mia’s exhibition of her work, “Sara Cwynar: Image Model Muse.” The lecture is presented by the University of Minnesota’s [Visiting Artist and Critics Program](#) and co-hosted by Mia. Students and the public can register for the free event [here](#).

Wednesday, September 12, 7PM

[Regis Center for Art & Katherine E. Nash Gallery](#)
405 21st Ave S, Minneapolis, MN 55455

About the artist

Sara Cwynar (Canadian, born 1985) lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. She received a Bachelor of Design from York University, Toronto, Canada, in 2010 and an MFA from Yale University, New Haven, Conn., in 2016.

Recent exhibitions include “Sara Cwynar: Tracy,” Oakville Galleries, Ontario, Canada (2018); “Hard to Picture: A Tribute to Ad Reinhardt,” Mudam, Luxembourg; “Subjektiv,” Malmö Konsthall, Sweden; “You Are Looking at Something That Never Occurred,” Zabludowicz Collection, London, UK (all 2017); and “Greater New York,” MoMA PS1, Queens, N.Y. (2015/16).

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Cwynar's works can be found in the permanent collections of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Canada; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, N.Y.; Minneapolis Institute of Art; Milwaukee Art Museum; Dallas Museum of Art; Fondazione Prada, Milan, Italy; and Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt, Germany; among other institutions.

About Contemporary Art at Mia

In 2008 Mia launched an initiative to focus on the art of our times. Through its new Department of Contemporary Art, the museum brings a fresh dynamism to its galleries by collecting and exhibiting works by living artists. This initiative emphasizes the relationships among historical art, diverse cultures, and contemporary art-making.

Contemporary art of the region continues to be represented by the Minnesota Artists Exhibition Program (MAEP) as well as by selected projects with local artists, architects, designers, and other creative thinkers. In collaboration with other Mia curatorial departments, the Department of Contemporary Art engages both local and global artists to create public and site-specific work at Mia.

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About The Minneapolis Institute Of Art

Home to more than 90,000 works of art representing 5,000 years of world history, the Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia) inspires wonder, spurs creativity, and nourishes the imagination. With extraordinary exhibitions and one of the finest wide-ranging art collections in the country—Rembrandt to van Gogh, Monet to Matisse, Asian to African—Mia links the past to the present, enables global conversations, and offers an exceptional setting for inspiration.

General admission to Mia is always free. Some special exhibitions have an admission fee.

Museum Hours

Tuesday, Wednesday, Saturday 10am–5pm

Thursday, Friday 10am–9pm

Sunday 11am–5pm

Monday Closed

For more information, call + 1 612 870 3000 or visit artsmia.org

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