

Kate Gilmore



Kate Gilmore and Stamatina Gregory: Women on a Mission

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This past week, I had the opportunity to interview Kate Gilmore '97, the artist behind one of the exhibits in the Bates College Art Museum, and Stamatina Gregory, the curator of Gilmore's work. As we walked through the interactive work, I had to sidestep big metal boxes placed on soft grey rugs. These were all part of the exhibit meant to be hit with hammers by viewers, and just a small demonstration of the "impact" of Gilmore's work.

Gilmore, a Washington, D.C. native, moved to New York after graduation and earned her Master's in Fine Arts from The School of Visual Arts in New York City. Since then, she has been creating work meant to express her emotions regarding power issues and gender-related challenges women face.

Gregory, a doctoral candidate studying the relationship between photography and politics, has been lauded numerous awards and honors for her curatorial work. She describes a curator's task as negotiating between the artist and the institution of the exhibit; this includes the artist's desired audience and the institution's goals of accessibility.

Gilmore and Gregory have worked together for about ten years, with Gregory using her power as a curator to present Gilmore's work in an accessible yet intellectual fashion. Both want Gilmore's work to be open to all, and thus Gregory strives to design exhibits so that even viewers with limited knowledge of feminist issues can relate. Gregory does so by highlighting universally understandable themes of emotion, such as struggle, ambition, rage, and dissatisfaction.

Speaking to the accessibility of her work, Gilmore clarified, "I hope that lots of different people have access to this work. People are going to enter it on different levels, because of their backgrounds... I hope everyone can enter it and have a conversation about what is happening in the work."

For Gregory, she clarifies that she has “always been interested in performance because [she] think[s] performance has a history and a lineage and the potential to be political and accessible at the same time. And, it’s historically been used as a form of political protest.”

Gregory highlights how in Gilmore’s work, performers are physical representations of the precarity that modern women exist within; she clarifies “the protagonists in Kate’s work are always negotiating for their own safety... they have a goal that they can complete that is possibly stressful on their bodies and even on their consciousness, and you can see there’s sometimes a breakdown that happens physically and emotionally.” She goes further, highlighting the “archetype of the woman on the edge” who is hysterical, crazed, and emotional, and all too often used as a negative example of dedicated female figures in popular media.

When discussing their future directions, Gilmore hoped that her work would be internationally supported, with a larger audience and population reached. She clarifies, “I am an artist that makes things for a public – if I don’t have a public, the art is dead.” Gregory clarified that her ever-long curatorial goal is demonstrating that “racism and heteropatriarchy are nothing new – these things are what our society is structured around.”

Both artists toured around campus and into several visual and performing arts classrooms, and their energy and political activism were readily visible. As both left campus, moving towards their goals seems difficult but must be started. For us art consumers, the works currently on display in the Bates College Museum of Art are interactive and thought-provoking, and I hope you are able to visit the exhibit before it is taken down!



Kate Gilmore '97 and Stamatina Gregory cover their ears while a viewer interacted with the artwork.
PHYLLIS GRABER JENSEN/COURTESY PHOTO



A member of the Bates community slams the interactive sculptures at the Bates College Museum of Art.
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