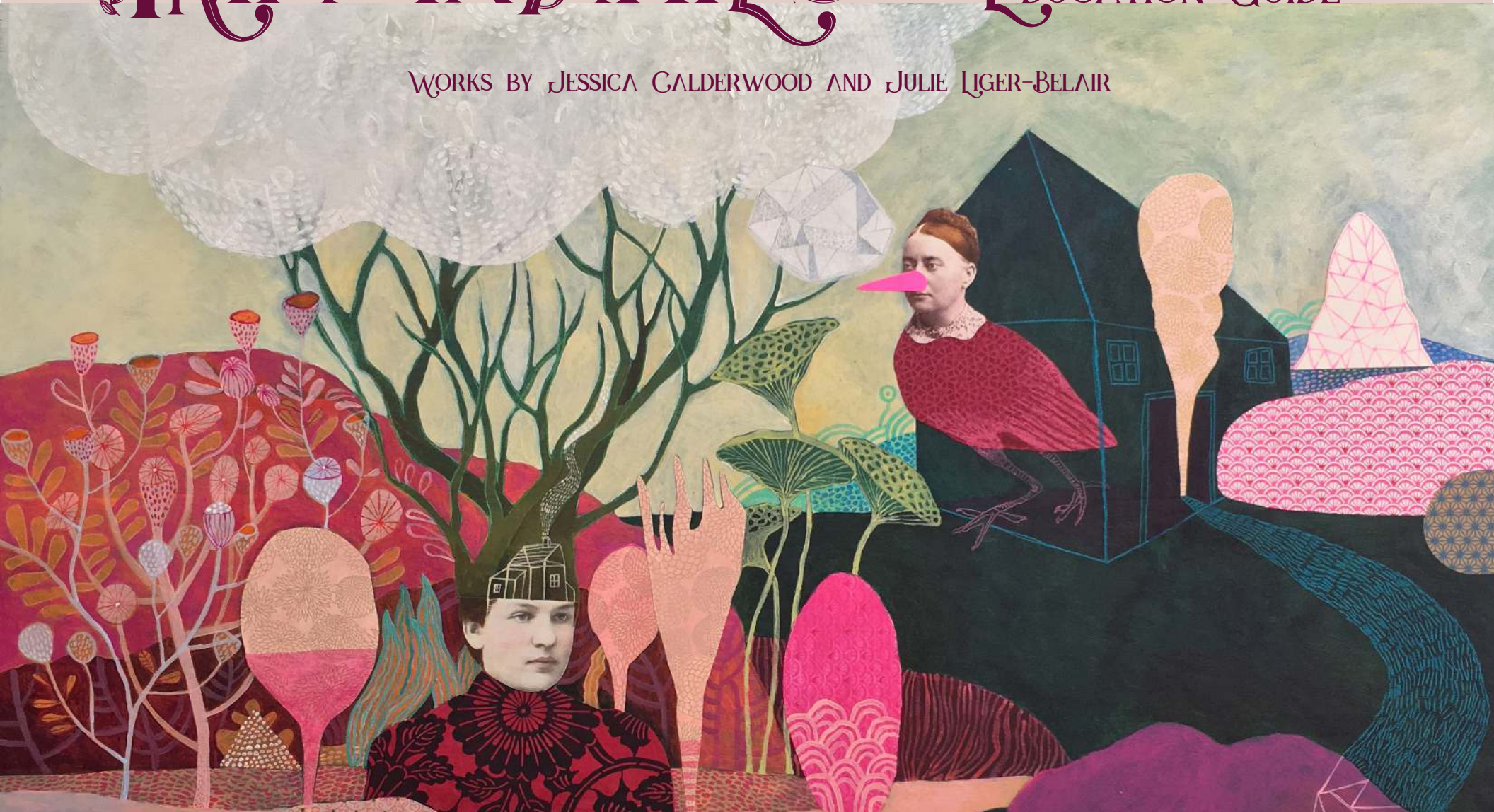


ABSURD

IMAGINARIES

EDUCATION GUIDE

WORKS BY JESSICA CALDERWOOD AND JULIE LIGER-BELAIR



JESSICA CALDERWOOD

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

is an image-maker and sculptor that works primarily with the mediums of metal, enamel, porcelain and traditional craft materials like felt and polymer clays. She combines traditional and industrial metalworking processes with craft-based processes as a means to make statements about contemporary life. Calderwood received her BFA from the Cleveland Institute of Art and her MFA from Arizona State University, with an emphasis in metalworking. Her work has been exhibited throughout the U.S. and internationally in curated and juried exhibitions. Her work has also been published in Metalsmith Magazine, American Craft, NICHE, Ornament, the Lark 500 series, and the Art of Enameling. Calderwood is currently Associate Professor of Art at Ball State University School of Art in Indiana.



JESSICACALDERWOOD.COM

JULIE LIGER-BELAIR

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

spent childhood summers in Canadian wilderness, observing and collecting natural elements. These early experiences shaped her imagination and knack for combining materials. For the last two decades, Liger-Belair has collected Victorian era photographs and “cabinet cards,” late 19th century portrait photographs mounted on thick paper. She incorporates these photos into assemblages and mixed media collages to create what she calls “alters to everyday life.” Liger-Belair studied printmaking, photography, illustration and metal smithing at Ontario College of Art and Design. ironic and the sacred – to tell a story about the disconnect between our private and public selves. Liger-Belair is represented by Galerie St. Laurent + Hill in Ottawa, Canada.



JULIELIGERBELAIR.NET



ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

Absurd Imaginaries brings together two figurative artists Jessica Calderwood and Julie Liger-Belair who draw on surreal motifs and folklore in playful yet subversive explorations of gender, identity and fantasy. While distinct in their materials and processes, the two artists share more than a few similarities in their work.

At first glance, their use of traditionally “feminine” florals, pinks and pastels, along with decorative elements and craft materials creates a cheerful, whimsical appearance. A closer look, however, reveals darker, more complicated themes as the female figures, at the center of both artists’ work, are amputated, constricted and masked. Confined to pedestals like dolls on display, as in Calderwood’s sculptures, or truncated and merging with their patterned environments, as in Liger Bellaire’s Victorian characters, the figures in both of the artists’ work are just that; characters. Even in their fantastical states, they lack mobility and autonomy.



By simultaneously revealing and concealing the female figures, the artists create a dance between invitation and denial. Their works explore disconnects between societal expectations, traditional gender roles, and individual desire and identity.

Some of the questions the works ask us to consider:

WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHOICE AND POWER?

HOW DO WE HANDLE THE MANY FACETS OF WOMANHOOD,
SOME OF WHICH ARE IN TENSION?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE FEMININE IN OUR 21ST CENTURY WORLD?



Exhibit is on view January 11- March 1, 2019

KEY IDEAS & TERMS

Fantasy

Surrealism

Collage

Autobiographic

Private vs. Public Self

Stereotype

The materials I'm working with have a lot of layered meaning to them. Working with this craft material that is so female-dominated has all of this extra information to it that I find pretty important.

-Jessica Calderwood



BEFORE VIEWING



- How does our understanding and expression of fantasy change from childhood to adulthood? Do you have any fantasies you've maintained since you were very young?
- How do you present yourself differently to different groups of people or audiences? Who are some of these audiences? What parts of yourself do you hide or tone down, based on who you think you need to be to these groups? When is that kind of hiding helpful to you? At what point does it start to take a toll?
- How do stereotypes affect how you choose to present yourself to others?



“The Nowhere Plan”
Julie Liger-Belair

WHILE VIEWING



- Compare and contrast which parts of the body Calderwood and Liger-Belair conceal? Why do you think they're choosing these parts to hide? What might they be trying to say about womanhood, beauty, or their own identities as women?
- For Jessica Calderwood's large sculptures, she cast molds of her own legs, feet, and even shoes. Do we view this work differently, knowing we're looking at the artists' own body? How might we see these sculptures differently if she was not literally using her own body in her art? What connections might she be making between her identity as a woman and these strange characters?



"Violet"
Jessica Calderwood

WHILE VIEWING



- Surrealism blends realistic elements with fantasy. Between the two artists, compare and contrast which parts of their art they choose to be fictional, and which look realistic? How do these choices about fantasy and reality reflect what they might be saying about what is real and what is imagined- or what others want to see about women?
- Julie Liger-Belair uses photos from Victorian era portraits in her collages. Describe the expressions and styles that you notice in these photos. What connections do you think she might be making about the way women presented themselves in that era, in those photos, to women today?



“Her Words Were Muddled”
Julie Liger-Belair

AFTER VIEWING



- How do Calderwood and Liger-Belair use fantasy to visualize stereotypes about gender roles and/or female identity?
- How can you tell when concealing parts of one's identity is an act of empowerment or an act of oppression?



“Lost 1”
Julie Liger-Belair

CREATE IN THE SPIRIT OF THESE ARTISTS



- Examine advertisement images and select examples of images where women's bodies seem to be amputated or key parts covered, in ways that restrict their movement or hide their identity. Based on what the advertiser is trying to sell, why do you think they chose to hide these parts? Using these examples, create a collage in which you remake the image and “liberate” the characters.
- Create a surrealist collage. Think about an expectation others have about you because of a stereotype- because of either your gender, age, ethnicity, where you live, etc. Find or take a portrait photo of yourself. Incorporate this photo into a surrealist collage in which you combine realistic parts of yourself, the way you see yourself, with other parts that reflect how others see you- or how you think you need to be for others. Play with scale, combining materials, and patterns to make it absurd!



“Bloom”
Jessica Calderwood