

## PRESS RELEASE

Zillman Art Museum - University of Maine

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**High resolution digital images available upon request**



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Admission to ZAM is FREE in 2023 thanks to Birchbrook

## Zillman Art Museum (ZAM) announces New Exhibition

BANGOR – The Zillman Art Museum - University of Maine, located at 40 Harlow Street in Bangor, ME, opens a new exhibition that will run May 19 through September 2, 2023. ZAM is open Tuesday-Saturday from 10 am - 5 pm and brings modern and contemporary art to the region, presenting approximately 21 original exhibitions each year. Admission to the Zillman Art Museum is free in 2023 thanks to the generosity of Birchbrook.

### **LESLIA SOCHOR: BODY LANGUAGE**

May 19 - September 2, 2023

*Body Language* features textile-inspired works by Maine-based painter Leslia Sochor. The daughter of Ukrainian immigrant parents, Sochor grew up in Philadelphia and studied fine art at the Philadelphia College of Art.

A simple spool of thread was the catalyst for Sochor's inquiry into the ancestral ties between women in her family and their connections to textiles and sewing. The artist concentrates on thematic narratives through colorful spools, mannequins, and beautiful clothing. The theme explores the way in which humans use clothing and fashion to present themselves and define their identity.

The body becomes a dynamic vehicle for beauty, power, political messaging, and the art of fashion. In a broader sense, Sochor is investigating the pros and cons of store-bought fashion's accessibility and its source of production. High fashion has long been associated with the couture and designers of Paris and New York, but ready-to-wear clothing has come at a human cost. In 2012 the tragic fire in a large garment factory in Dhaka Bangladesh brought awareness to the poor working conditions of the factory and the treatment of its workers. Sochor was moved to paint *Made in Bangladesh* "as a means of addressing the inequities of labor practices and subjugation of workers in many parts of the world who sew our fashions," she says.

Sochor's oil paintings of thread spools segued into using pattern paper to highlight the process of sewing. Her translucent images are painted with thin layers of oil placed on a collaged surface of sewing pattern paper that Sochor has integrated onto stretched canvas. The multilingual instructional text of the pattern paper remains visible. The markings on the individual pattern pieces are carefully considered and are critical to the overall intent of each piece. Incorporating the pattern is not unlike designing and constructing a garment with its many steps; laying and pinning, cutting, and finally sewing the fabric. Sochor's dedication to detail suggests the careful craftsmanship associated with hand-tailored clothing. The semi-transparent layers and diverse palette of the paint evoke luscious and sultry drapery. Sochor uses cast shadow and tone to show the curves of her subjects, filling out the attire she has designed for them. Sochor reveals her versatility with the movement of *Cinderella* and the stillness of *Jazz Fest Mama*. There is a juxtaposition between the sumptuous folds of fabrics as in *Leopardess* and the crisp lines of the mannequin form series.

Sochor pays homage to her artistic influences by painting fellow Ukrainian artist, Louise Nevelson as well as Georgia O'Keefe. Sochor says, "Both of these women consciously crafted a signature style of dress which was aesthetically and intentionally driven to create an image; a persona. Their clothing was an authentic form of expression – their whole lives were works of art." Sochor illustrates this by creating one of O'Keefe's understated black and white dresses. In contrast, Nevelson is the only body in the exhibition painted with a head to convey the gestalt of Louise. Sochor explains, "It was imperative in creating her persona to portray her scarf and false eyelashes." These featured works are a testament to how clothing and fashion are embedded in history and identity.

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#### **LESLIA SOCHOR**

left:

*Leopardess*, 2016

Oil on collaged sewing pattern paper

right:

*The Fitting*, 2014

Oil on collaged sewing pattern paper

Both works: Courtesy of the artist

