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Explore the meanings of 'Red' at Hunterdon art exhibit

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"Checkmate," above, by Margeaux Walter is among the works included in "RED," on view now at the Hunterdon Art Museum in Clinton.

Discover the many shades of meaning for the color red at the newest exhibition at the Hunterdon Art Museum, 7 Lower Center St. in Clinton.

"RED," features works by 10 artists who use red not necessarily as a predominant color, but because it conjures up a specific emotion or plays a vital role in the work's narrative, organizers said.

As exhibition curator Heather Cammarata-Seale explains, red is a paradoxical color; a color of contradictions and extremes.

“Love and anger. Life and death. Good luck and danger. Royalty and revolution. Disgust and desire. These associations impact the way we react to the color,” Cammarata-Seale said. “The way we respond to someone wearing the color red is very different than our response to someone enrobed in black.”

And, while red is often used to attract consumers – think of the branding for Target, McDonald’s or Coca-Cola – the color can signify quite the opposite, as demonstrated by artist Julie Heffernan.

Heffernan’s contribution to the exhibition shows a resolute character fighting to survive in a world facing imminent environmental disaster, Cammarata-Seale said. The landscape and atmosphere of this world are suffused with red, a warning sign that the Earth is warming up to climate change.

Artist and environmental activist Pat Brentano also seeks to make everyone aware of the toll human action takes on the natural environment. While her work is heavily reliant on black, white and gray, she features pointedly positioned washes of red as a marker of urgency, danger and decay.

Serena Bocchino’s art visually interprets American jazz music. Her “Fever” series, of which four works are included in this show, take the song made famous by singer Peggy Lee as its point of departure.

“Using an improvisation technique to create a visual experience akin to an auditory one, Bocchino creates abstract shapes, marks and lines by spontaneously drawing with graphite and carefully pouring pure paint directly onto the canvas,” Cammarata-Seale said.

The artist uses red paint not only to represent the syncopated rhythms of jazz music but also to embody the heat and passion related in the song’s lyrics.

Also included in “RED,” are works by Emily Barletta, Cathy Choi, Valerie Hammond, Heidi Howard, Sean McDonough, Margeaux Walter and Kimberly Witham.

Cammarata-Seale, the curatorial associate for modern and contemporary art at the Princeton University Art Museum, said she hopes viewers will draw a deeper appreciation of the multiple meanings the color red can represent after seeing this exhibition.

“I hope that visitors realize that red is not only visually impactful but filled with historical, metaphorical, and symbolic meaning, she noted. “I hope they recognize that artists are not only using the color for its beauty but for its cultural associations and inherent chromatic qualities.”

Two artists featured in this exhibition will lead programs in 2017 at the Museum: Serena Bocchino will lead “All About Line: Drawing Workshop,” while Pat Brentano will teach “The Art of Observation: Drawing, Writing, and Learning to See.” For more information on both workshops, visit www.hunterdonartmuseum.org

The Museum is at 7 Lower Center St. in Clinton, New Jersey, 08809. Our website is www.hunterdonartmuseum.org and our telephone number is 908-735-8415.

Museum hours are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday and suggested admission is \$5. For more information, visit www.hunterdonartmuseum.org or call (908) 735-8415.