

Intro:

Host: No matter who you are, you probably enjoy art. From contemporary to experimental, art finds itself in everyone's lives. On campus, students from various backgrounds express themselves on a daily basis, however there are not many places to highlight these student artists. With the Utah Museum of Fine Arts (UMFA) being one of the oldest art galleries in the state, it mostly showcases art from around the globe. The Gittin's gallery on the other hand, is a new space that opened up for student work.

Host: My name is [HOST], and this is U Stay Informed, the podcast where we dig into what's really happening at the University of Utah. The conversations nobody's having in class, but everybody's having on the walk home.

Host: In today's episode, we dive into the Gittin's gallery and the artists that call it home. We have Liesel Taylor, Olive Yoo, and Kiera Ohrn as guests this episode to share their view on the Student Juried Gallery event. My co-host Joshua Kraemer will give us a better look into the event.

Josh, take it away

Audio Story:

Lead in: Every year since its opening, the Gittens Gallery at the University of Utah has held a juried student gallery event.

I'm Joshua Kraemer with *U Stay Informed* talking about art on campus

[Sound Byte]

Josh: The Gittin's Gallery located in the Film Building, is home to gallery events that house student work. Every year, the Gitten's gallery hosts a juried student art gallery show where anyone can submit a piece of art they have made for a chance to have it displayed, and it is one of the few places on campus where students can show off their art

[Sound Byte]

Liesel: Every Year they have the student juried show, and they open applications to students; and pretty much you have to have your piece gallery ready. It's a good practice for figuring out how to put hanging wire on the back of your painting, or you know what constitutes as gallery ready.

Josh: I had the opportunity to speak with three artists who submitted art for the show. Who you just heard was Liesel Taylor, a painting and drawing major at the U

Liesel: There was a large landscape about five feet by three feet, there was a wooden mushroom, and then a wooden belt that I encouraged viewers to interact with. In an art gallery setting to try and have things be interactive, because most things you cannot touch; and I wanted to play with that. And like, have people like this, people could touch, but in the setting, it's so intimidating when you're not supposed to touch almost anything, and then people look at you funny because they haven't read the description and they're like 'no don't touch that'.

The two wood pieces were for a wood sculpture class that I took. The mushroom was actually for an assignment called "just making a box", and it technically counted because, you know, it had the opening and then the four sides; and the belt was for a piece called "The Body", and my idea for that one is to have, like, see how it interacts with other people's bodies. The landscape painting was just for fun, I had taken a landscaping painting course over the summer, just on a larger scale, and I had that canvas available to me, so I decided to make it happen

Josh: There are a lot of student events on campus, but the juried art gallery is a special one. Many student artists make and submit pieces even if they aren't an art major. Olive Yoo is a Design major who minors in ceramics and submitted a film art piece

Olive: My first piece was a pot and I actually named it the day that the applications were due because I don't really name my pieces, so I called it the unfazed star. I've always been interested in video and video editing and shooting. Last semester I directed and shot my first short film and it was really fun, but it was also very difficult, and I have a lot of respect for directors and everyone involved.

I would say my art is completely about my life experiences, but in all of my pieces, especially ceramics, I do a lot of surface decoration. Almost all of the images I put on top of the clay are little motifs that I feel only I would know unless I explain them to

people. Like a certain day I took a picture of the sky that I really liked, or the shape that I really like that I draw a lot. Same with my video where it gets all very personal and I feel like I have this style where the art doesn't really make sense necessarily because it's so personal to me

Josh: The gallery may be in the Film building, but that hasn't always been the case. A few years ago, they started construction, and finished the Gittin's gallery where it is now. It is under the department of Art and Art History and is one of the few student art galleries on campus.

Olive: We used to have like two galleries that we put art in, and one of them was in the art building, and it's a new classroom, and it used to be a gallery, and then they renovated it. So now we just have the Gittin's gallery, but we have student shows there, we have what's called "The Holliday Sale" every December.

Josh: The event awards an artist with a prize if the curator and other judges rate their work the highest out of the whole competition. This year's winner is Kiera Ohrn

Kiera: I made a video called "Eggs" with a few sculpture pieces. It was a video for my experimental video class and I was inspired by the idea from these ads I was getting on my Instagram about freezing your eggs and egg donation, and I thought that was a bizarre thing to see on my Instagram feed and why I was getting this, and then I started thinking, what are they doing with those eggs, and is it free? Like making free and skeptical of eggs, like we're born with all our eggs that we will have for the rest of our lives, and then to be donating them to some strange company, was inspiring to me.

I try to make somewhat serious things, but make them kind of funny and absurd and uncomfortable. Like if you watch it, it can be like, that was crazy; what did I just watch? Where you're kind of like looking for a sign. I just remember showing up and being like oh my god, this is a big deal. People invited their family and friends and I showed up. I didn't know there were awards, but it's a great event and a lot of people come through and scout artists out.

When they were announcing the winners, my friend Valentine got runner up and I was like, oh my god Valentine, like so excited for her. Then when they said my name, I was like honestly not expecting it at all. I was in shock and very excited, and then I didn't know I won money for it, I didn't know that was a part of it. I thought it was like, good job here's a ribbon, so money's cool, it's going to pay for my next projects. I found out Moses, who I've been with the whole time in the gallery knew I was best in show the

whole time, and he was like “it was so hard to keep from you”. It was a really sweet special moment for me.

Josh: The gallery is down for now, but will be back up and running a new rotation of art in March for another event.

This has been Joshua Kraemer signing off U Stay Informed

[Sound Byte]

Host: Thank you Josh for that amazing story! Next, we will go over to our conversation about art on campus from Angel Arias’s point of view.

Interview:

Angel: I just want to start this interview by asking you to introduce who you are and what you do.

Colin: My name is Colin. I'm a student here at the U in psychology and communications and I'm also working in social psychology research lab and down at Swig.

Angel: Are you concerned that there's a lot of political polarization in America? (9:15) Do you think that that's an issue?

Colin: Yes, I do think that that is an issue, and that political polarization not just exists, but it's kind of been increasing over the past couple of years.

Angel: What do you think is driving that?

Colin: I think there's definitely a lot of misinformation and social media algorithms are really feeding into it where people kind of enter echo chambers and see stuff that they already like and agree with. They don't see a lot of opposing perspectives. I also think that a lot of it also comes from the top. I think that our political leaders are also leaning

into this polarization and kind of on both sides are framing it as an us versus them in a lot of their campaigning.

Angel: Have you had any experiences on campus that have validated this view that you have on political polarization?

Colin: I don't know if I've had any specific experiences on campus. Usually I try and, like when there's people tabling and asking them to debate them, I don't usually engage. I can't think of any specific on-campus experiences.

Angel: Do you think that this political polarization is also affecting college campuses in general?

Colin: Yeah, I think so. I think that when it comes to connecting with other peers, sometimes you can be a little hesitant because you're not sure. With the increasing divisive nature of a lot of political issues, it can be hard to make connections with people because you're like, oh, is there a certain issue that we're on opposite sides of the spectrum? I've also heard some people feel like in their classes sometimes professors even kind of lean into that, but I don't have any personal experience. Of course, if it's affecting college campuses in general,

Angel: Then you would say that it's also at least somewhat of an issue at the University of Utah campus.

Collin: I think so, yeah.

Angel: Now, one thing I noticed, I'm not from Utah. I did notice that, so I'm from the Northeast, and the reason why I bring that up is because I feel like the political climate in Utah is a little bit more diverse. Like up in the Northeast, it's very liberal, and most people are a bit more narrow-minded, and I think that there's a little bit more of a diversity of opinion on campus. So how do you think that that plays into this polarization?

Colin: Yeah, I think, I mean, I'm also not from Utah. I'm originally from Los Angeles, which is also very liberal and maybe not so open to other perspectives. Then I think coming on campus, I think that, I mean, there's definitely a lot of people that kind of engage in these debates and conversations, and when it comes to the polarization, I think that people might tend to find their groups, and maybe even it is exacerbated by these two different sides because people find their political groups and political camps and then view the others as opposition and not as people to actually engage with in debates.

Angel: Do you think that, compared to California, that it's easier or more difficult to engage people in these kinds of conversations casually?

Colin: I think it's probably a little easier in California, at least for my experiences, where I feel like I would talk a lot more about politics and going on and stuff back home, versus here, I think it's a little bit of like, oh, with the anticipation of some disagreement, I look towards other conversation topics.

Angel: So is that because you fit in more politically in California, or do you think that it's just because Californians are more open to debate?

Colin: I think it probably is more so that I fit in more politically in California. I think here, definitely, people are very much open to debate. Personally, I'm not very into conflict and confrontation, so I tend to avoid those situations.

Angel: Do you think that the university has any responsibility (13:35) to address the problem or to address political polarization?

Colin: I think that it should definitely be on their radar. I'm not sure how effective any position or statement they take could be or any action they could take, because as far as I'm aware, I haven't seen it totally negatively impacting the education on campus,

more so just the culture and community, as opposed to actual learning and curriculum and stuff.

Angel: So realistically, what are the negative impacts that you think that this political polarization is having on the student body?

Colin: I think there's probably a little more cognitive stress on students, because they're more divided on a lot of issues. And then also, I guess, just learning to be civically engaged, like voting and stuff. They might not necessarily feel like they have access to 100% of the information.

Angel: Can you elaborate on that last part of it?

Colin: think if you're in a very polarized, down one pipeline, then I feel like college is very much a place where you're supposed to grow as a person and learn how to civically engage and be a good citizen, and being exposed to these pipelines might push you away from that, where you're leaning more into the extremes and not having 100% verified and objective information on these issues. So I did notice walking around campus that there are occasionally those tables that are set up basically as debate platforms.

Angel: So what is your thought on that in general? Do you think that that's a good way to actually engage students, or do you have a different opinion?

Colin: I don't think it's a bad way to engage with students. I have some issue with it when it comes to people filming those debates and forming it for content, posting it online. I think if it's just for the actual in-person interaction, then I have no issue with it. I actually think it's good. I think it's a little challenging because the people sitting at those tables obviously have a lot more experience and knowledge and are more prepared in the moment to have those debates than the people just walking by on their way to class

might not be as prepared, and so their arguments might not be as strong. But I think overall it's not an ineffective way to engage with people.

Angel: So if you were to take a look at this from the largest perspective possible, thinking beyond the university, thinking more at the nationwide level, if there was one thing that you could do to reduce political polarization, one change you could make, what would you do?

Collin: Oh, that's a tough question.

Angel: Take a moment. You can think about it if you need to.

Colin: I think probably if there was a way to get people to actually become educated more so on policy and focus less on the sensationalism of a lot of what's happening in our politics today. I think that a lot of people get swept up in the personality of political leaders as opposed to the actual policies and the effects and consequences of those policies. And also just engaging in more conversation about and looking more at the commonalities that both sides of the aisle have. But yeah, if I had a way to implement that, then I probably would be in Congress right now and not just on campus. So I don't know. Yeah.

Angel: So it sounds like you're saying some kind of almost like a class or some kind of education program to bring people together could be a way to bridge that gap.

Colin: Yeah, I think so. I think definitely class and then also just kind of like, (17:48) not that politics is like stigmatized, but definitely like more normalizing, like an open debate and conversation about it, which like some channels are like trying to do. But I think making sure that like people feel that they are able to like express their opinions and that they're empowered and enabled to like do that effectively and like through an informed way.

Angel: Do you have any closing thoughts on this topic?

Colin: I don't think so, no.

Angel: Thank you for your time, Colin.

Colin: Yeah, thank you.

Host: Thank you both for the wonderful conversation

Host: This is the end of the episode. Thank you to everyone who participated and those listening. If you want to see more, please like the episode and share with others, that would mean a lot to us here on the show. This has been U Stay Informed with [HOST] signing off