william cordova

can’t stop, won’t stop: tenets of southern alchemy
Ruth C. Horton Gallery
Connections in grades K-12

Laurie Steelink

Spirit Is Alive, Magic Is Afoot
Miles C. Horton Jr. Gallery and Sherwood Payne Quillen ’71 Reception Gallery
Connections in grades K-12
The Moss Arts Center would like to thank each of the artists for providing these images for our educational resources. For more information about each artist, visit the links and additional resources in the guide.
ABOUT THE MOSS ARTS CENTER GALLERIES

The Moss Arts Center at Virginia Tech provides transformative arts experiences to children through gallery tours, artist engagements, and special school-day performances from renowned touring artists for children, teachers, and families.

Explore exciting new opportunities to connect with the arts through exhibitions and study guides created especially for young audiences. Contact us to register for a gallery tour and to sign up for emails to learn more about the Moss Arts Center’s PK-12 programs.

Plan Your Visit

Gallery Hours
Tuesday-Friday, 10 AM-5 PM
Saturday, 10 AM-4 PM
(during exhibition run dates)

Admission to the galleries is always free and open to the public. The Ruth C. Horton Gallery is located downstairs in the Moss Arts Center near the Alumni Mall entrance. The Miles C. Horton Jr. Gallery and Sherwood Payne Quillen ’71 Reception Gallery are located upstairs near the Turner Street entrance. Find parking information here.

We’re Here to Help

Please reach out to schedule a visit or for questions about teaching, learning, and engaging with our programs.

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WE WANT EVERYONE TO ENJOY THE EXHIBITION

Please prepare your students for their visit to the Moss Arts Center by practicing museum manners before you visit. The following guidelines will ensure that everyone can enjoy the exhibition.

- Do not touch the works of art. Always stay a safe distance away from each work of art.
- Do not lean on the gallery walls or pedestals. You may sit on the benches or the floor.
- Food, gum, and beverages are not allowed inside the galleries.
- Please remove backpacks and place them in a safe place away from the art.
- Use only pencils when writing or drawing in the galleries.
- Photography is allowed, but please do not use a flash.
Artist Statement

I am interested in the metaphysics of space and time and how objects and perception change when we move around in space. I was born in Lima, Peru; moved to Miami, Florida at an early age; and spent a short time in Houston, Chicago, and New York City. These transitions between countries, between economies, between the nuance of language and culture, have developed for me an understanding of the visual world, its potential for limitations and its potential for resilience. I invest in these nuances to find a critical space, which pushes past complacency to modes of resistance in the present moment.

— william cordova

About the Exhibition

During his residency at Virginia Tech, artist william cordova worked with graduate students in the School of Visual Arts, and students in the School of Architecture helped to install a larger-than-life collage. cordova also spoke with students in the College of Architecture, Arts, and Design and the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences. Bringing together reclaimed materials to create a three-dimensional collage piece supported by large scaffolding, students were given the opportunity to work directly with cordova in a hands-on, collaborative installation process.

< william cordova; lasonic tc (baron samedi), 2022-2023; mixed-media collage and gold leaf on paper; 55 3/8 x 107 ¼ inches; image courtesy the artist and Sikkema Jenkins, New York
Other works in the exhibition include large wall-mounted gold-leaf artworks, which reference resilience and innovation within the Andean, Asian, and African diasporas in the Americas. Focusing on the history of the region, cordova highlights the presence of Indigenous groups and origins of European presence in the Americas. His work also highlights the origins of hip-hop, another site of resilience reflecting on dreams and hopes for the future. The unity provided by the genre of hip-hop creates a community, much like the communities of immigrants cordova highlights in his work.

Helpful Terminology

Magical Realism: Chiefly Latin-American narrative style that is characterized by the matter-of-fact inclusion of fantastic or mythical elements into seemingly realistic fiction.

Protest art: Creative works grounded in the act of addressing political or social issues.

Surrealism: A 20th-century literary, philosophical, and artistic movement that explored the workings of the mind, championing the irrational, the poetic, and the revolutionary.

Synopsis of Artwork

Using ephemeral and precarious materials, cordova reflects on modern-day cultural production and transformations. Taking inspiration from cultural protests, he incorporates a wide range of media into his works, including screen printing, sculpture, ink, and paint. Utilizing a variety of materials, including found and discarded objects, feathers, collage, and other reclaimed detritus, cordova’s multimedia practice weaves coded statements on contemporary social systems and economies within the

Activities in the Galleries

Sketch It!

Recommended for students in grades 6-12

Ask students to begin sketching an artwork within cordova’s exhibition. Create a short time limit; after about one to three minutes, ask each student to pass their work to another student. The second student will continue the work of the first student, and so on for five turns or so. The resulting layered sketches bear the work of several students, similar to the collages in cordova’s exhibition. Discuss how each drawing reflects the work of each individual student, but also the work of the group. Ask students how they felt about working together, trusting the next student to continue to tell their story through the drawing.

^ VIRGINIA VISUAL ARTS SOL: 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 7.3, 7.4, 7.5, 8.3, 8.4, 8.5, AI.3, AI.5
personal history of objects, challenging the functionality of art as a purely aesthetic pursuit. Often, cordova will use reclaimed objects and office supplies, preferring them to art supplies due to the cost. He incorporates surrealism and magic realism in his works, refusing to settle into a singular style, but rather continuing to evolve and take risks. Imbued with personal memories and cultural artifacts, cordova’s artworks speak to the passage of time and its impact on local communities.

**Biography**

William Cordova (b. 1971, Lima, Peru) is interested in the ephemeral visuality of transition and displacement, and how objects and perception change and adapt within time and space. Moving from his hometown of Lima to Miami at an early age, and briefly living in Houston, Chicago, and New York City, Cordova integrates the cultural nuances and histories from these environments within his work. Afro-Peruvian cosmology, Andean architecture, and metaphysics deeply influence his work, intersecting and merging with contemporary visual languages.

Cordova graduated with a bachelor of fine arts from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1996 and went on to earn a master of fine arts from Yale University in 2004. He has participated in numerous artist residencies, including Artpace in San Antonio, Texas; the Core program at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, Texas; the Headlands Center for the Arts in Sausalito, California; the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Skowhegan, Maine; and American Academy in Berlin, Germany.

Cordova most recently organized *can’t stop won’t stop: meditations on resilience* (2022) at...
Activities in the Classroom

Discussion: Immigration and Resilience

Recommended for students in grades K-5

Select a book to read to the class about immigration to America. Explain what immigration is, and how families choose to leave their homes behind in search of a better life for themselves and their descendants. Some students may be immigrants themselves, and if they are comfortable, they may want to share their stories with the class. Create a safe space for students to express their thoughts and feelings on what the immigration process may have been like for them. Other students can consider a time that they left their home to go on a big trip, and what that experience felt like. Discuss the bravery and resilience involved in the choice to leave everything behind and take time to validate each student’s experiences.

ENGLISH, READING, AND LITERACY SOLS: K.1, K.2, K.8 or K.9, 1.1, 1.2, 1.9 or 1.10, 2.1, 2.2, 2.7 or 2.8, 3.1, 3.5 or 3.6, 4.1, 4.5 or 4.6, 5.1, 5.5 or 5.6

the LeRoy Neiman Center for Print Studies, which featured three print projects by cordova, Fab 5 Freddy, and Lee Quiñones in dialogue with one another. His work was also the subject of the solo exhibition on the lower frequencies i speak 4 u at the Baltimore Museum of Art (2022). His first major survey exhibition, now’s the time: narratives of southern alchemy, was presented at the Perez Art Museum in Miami in 2018. Notable group shows include The Culture: Hip-Hop and Contemporary Art in the 21st Century at the Baltimore Museum of Art (2023); Lux et Veritas at NSU Art Museum in Fort Lauderdale, Florida (2023); the 13th Havana Biennial in Cuba (2021); and Pacha, Llaqta, Wasichay: Indigenous Space, Modern Architecture, New Art at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City (2018).

His work is included in the collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York; Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts; Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut; Museo de Arte de Lima in Peru; Ellipse Foundation in Cascais, Portugal; Museum of Contemporary Art, Perez Art Museum in Miami; NSU Museum in Fort Lauderdale; and La Casa de las Americas in Havana, Cuba, among others.

william cordova; fractales radicales (pa micaela bastidas y pedro chango monges), 2022 (detail); photo courtesy Andre Leon Gray
Links and Additional Resources

In the Artist’s Studio with william cordova

william cordova: on the lower frequencies i speak 4 u

Bibliography


About the Exhibition

Artist Laurie Steelink was in residence in the Creativity and Innovation District (CID), during which time she met with students in the CID and worked with graduate students in the School of Visual Arts to complete the installation of this educational exhibition acknowledging the Tutelo and Monacan People and their homeland. She also spoke with classes in the College of Architecture, Arts, and Design and the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences. *Spirit Is Alive, Magic Is Afoot* includes installations of historical and contemporary material documenting the continuing activities of Indigenous people in the Blacksburg area, plants native to the region, and local agriculture.

While in residence at Virginia Tech, Steelink worked with students and faculty to research local Indigenous history. Students will have the opportunity to learn about native groups indigenous to the Blacksburg area. Steelink’s work encourages visitors to consider the land upon which Virginia Tech is situated and the Indigenous groups who traditionally call this region home. The exhibition also considers wider Indigenous histories, beliefs, and practices, in particular connection to Steelink’s tribal affiliations in Arizona.

Synopsis of Artwork

Laurie Steelink is a multidisciplinary artist who works in a wide variety of media, including painting, photography, and sculpture. Steelink’s work often addresses trauma and the process
of healing, offering solace to the viewer along their journey. Exploring her personal connections to the Akimel O’odham, a group of Indigenous Americans living in central and southern Arizona, Steelink creates assemblages of found objects and reassembled paintings to question authenticity and consider spirituality.

Steelink often repurposes her own paintings, cutting up acrylic on cardboard panels to create three-dimensional sculptural works. Steelink’s artwork features bright colors, asymmetrical compositions, and creative shapes. Using her creativity to reconnect with and reference her ancestors, culture, and community, Steelink is able to better define her artwork as an expression of her personal identities.

Biographies

Laurie Steelink

Multidisciplinary artist Laurie Steelink is a citizen of the Akimel O’otham Nation from the Gila River Indian Community. Born in Phoenix, Arizona and raised in Tucson, Steelink received a bachelor of fine arts from the San Francisco Art Institute, and a master of fine arts from Mason Gross School of the Arts, Rutgers University. She served as archivist for the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection in New York and was director of Track 16 Gallery in west Los Angeles from 2002 to 2016. In 2012 Steelink founded Cornelius Projects, an exhibition space in San Pedro, California, that she named after her father. The curatorial focus at Cornelius Projects is primarily the cultural history and the artists of San Pedro and the Harbor Area. Steelink’s work has been exhibited internationally, and she has participated in Native American Indian Marketplaces at the Autry Museum of the American West in Los Angeles and with the Santa Fe Indian Market in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Activities in the Galleries

Art Critic

Recommended for students in grades 9-12

Introduce students to Laurie Steelink’s background and general exhibition information. Allow students to wander freely throughout the gallery for five minutes. Ask students to select a work from the show that intrigues them, and spend another five minutes studying the work and describing the piece in detail, including color, pattern, shape, materials, etc. Students should take notes and consider what elements of the work help to make the piece cohesive. Students should also think about how the piece fits into the larger show. Have one or two students share their “critique” with the group and discuss with the students what they like and dislike about the show.

Guiding Questions for Students:

• What color scheme is used? (e.g., triadic, monochromatic, complementary, analogous)
• Is there a high or low contrast in the values used? How does this affect the artwork?
• Does this piece have a focal point, or is there an intentional lack of a focal point?
• What messages do you think the artwork is trying to communicate? How do you feel when you look at the piece?
• Is the artwork successful or not, and why? Are the techniques used appropriate and well executed?

VIRGINIA VISUAL ARTS SOL: AI.3
Laurie Steelink dedicated a section in her exhibition to the work of Victoria Ferguson, a member of the Monacan Indian Nation of Virginia and director/docent for the Solitude-Fraction site, to honor the heritage and land on which Virginia Tech resides. With over two decades of dedicated research, Ferguson has uncovered first-person documentation and archaeological information to reveal the daily lives of Eastern Siouan populations through the early European colonization period. Ferguson’s work explores sustainable food systems, Indigenous technologies, and the resilience of traditional knowledge in the region.

Ferguson’s handcrafted functional objects, including twined hemp wrap skirts, honeysuckle and pine needle baskets, locally-sourced pottery, and beaded deerskin, reflect both the practical and the artistic facets of regional Indigenous craft. Cattails, an exceedingly significant plant with many uses in regional Indigenous technology, frame Ferguson’s work. Like Steelink’s use of the Saguaro cactus, the cattails intertwine physically and socially and are understood as valuable members of the community.

Helpful Terminology

**Akimel O’odham:** A group of Native Americans living in an area of what is now termed central and southern Arizona, as well as northwestern Mexico in the states of Sonora and Chihuahua.

**Assemblages:** An artistic composition made from scraps, junk, and odds and ends (e.g., paper, cloth, wood, stone, or metal).
Activities in the Classroom

Nature Walk and Cyanotype Making

Recommended for students in grades 3-8

Take students on a nature walk around the school grounds. Identify any native plants and discuss the importance of the local ecosystem. During the nature walk, encourage students to select a small handful of leaves, flowers, stems, or sticks that appeal to them. After the walk, distribute cyanotype paper to students in the shade or indoors. Instruct students to arrange their collected nature items on the cyanotype paper before returning to the sun. Once students have their designs arranged, carefully move cyanotype paper into the sun and expose for five minutes (on cloudy days, it may take closer to 20 minutes). Return to the classroom to rinse the cyanotype paper.

Guiding Questions for Students:

Reflect on the process of creating art using cyanotype paper and natural elements. What surprised you about this process? What did you find most valuable and why? How did you select the natural item(s) for your artwork? How did your selection impact the artwork as a whole?

• Compare and contrast this technique to others you have used in the past. What is unique about working with this material? What was most challenging? For what types of creative designs would cyanotype be most useful?

• If you were to use this technique to create another artwork, how would you approach your design? Describe the choices you would make and explain your artistic reasoning.

• Why might an artist choose to use cyanotype paper in their art? How could artists use this technique to achieve a distinct design or to convey a particular message?

• By engaging with the natural world, how do artists create new meaning? Why is art that engages with the natural world important to society?

› VIRGINIA VISUAL ARTS SOL: 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.7, 3.12, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.7, 4.12, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.7, 5.12, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.12, 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4, 7.12, 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4, 8.12
Links and Additional Resources


Laurie Steelink: Plugged-in Virtual Connections Studio Series

Bibliography


† Laurie Steelink; *A Haunting (Blood Language)*, 2022/2011 (detail); acrylic on paper adhered to wood screen; 71 x 71 x 1 inches; courtesy of the artist

▲ Laurie Steelink; *Target (with Hoop)*, 2022 (detail); acrylic on paper and mixed media consisting of metal hoop, 24 wood archery arrows, plastic zip ties, leather cord, bells, gear tie, and motorized lazy Susan; 89 x 60 x 60 inches; courtesy of the artist