



FALL 2025 EXHIBITIONS

STUDY GUIDE



CLARE GRILL AND MARGAUX OGDEN

Things I Had No Words For

Ruth C. Horton Gallery



DANA FRANKFORT AND JOSEPHINE HALVORSON

Seeing and Reading

*Miles C. Horton Jr. Gallery and Sherwood Payne
Quillen '71 Reception Gallery*

Thursday, September 4-Saturday, November 22, 2025



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We would like to thank the artists and their galleries for providing these images for our educational resources. For more information, visit the additional resources in the guide.

Cover: (left) Clare Grill; *Crack*, 2024 (detail); oil on linen; 58 x 44 inches; courtesy Derek Eller Gallery, New York

(right) Josephine Halvorson; *Roadside Memorial*, 2021; acrylic gouache on panel; 22 x 24 inches; © Josephine Halvorson; courtesy of Sikkema Malloy Jenkins, New York



ABOUT THE GALLERIES

The Center for the Arts at Virginia Tech provides transformative arts experiences to young people through gallery tours, student exhibitions, workshops with artists, 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 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 Center for the Arts 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 WANT EVERYONE TO **ENJOY THE EXHIBITION**

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

- Always stay a safe distance away from each piece to keep the art untouched for all viewers.
- If you want to rest and observe, you can sit on the benches or floor (watch out for gallery walls and pedestals, as these aren't meant to be leaned against).
- Food, gum, and beverages are not allowed inside the galleries.
- Please remove backpacks and put 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.

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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CLARE GRILL AND MARGAUX OGDEN

Things I Had No Words For

Ruth C. Horton Gallery

Suitable for students in grades PK-12

About the Exhibition

Clare Grill and Margaux Ogden both demonstrate a centrality of touch in their carefully worked surfaces. Their paintings, the compositions of which are at once found and constructed, derive power from the evidence of their making.

Grill's softly layered paintings draw from antique embroidery and domestic textiles, creating abstract compositions that resonate with the textures of memory. Working on linen, she drags paint across the surface to reveal its weave before building delicate veils through cycles of painting, scraping, and wiping. Her forms emerge slowly as if unearthed, inviting viewers into a contemplative, intimate space. Born out of intuitive decisions — often guided by natural occurrences like daylight or shadow falling across the surface — Grill's paintings are documents of marks made with brush or fingers and colors added or removed. In essence, they tell the story of the artist's process and the passage of time.

▲ Clare Grill; *Flip*, 2024 (detail); oil on linen; 46 x 42 inches; courtesy of the artist and Derek Eller Gallery, New York



In contrast, Ogden's paintings are vivid, architectural, and systematic. Her compositions unfold across the canvas in imperfect mirroring, evoking imagery from both the natural and built world. Subtle shifts in the works encourage viewers to engage more intensively, noticing the variations that animate her iterative, generative approach. Using diluted acrylic washes, she creates rhythmic, freehand paintings, allowing chance and human touch to disrupt the logic of the grid. Her colors — bold, unusual, often luminous — pulse across the surface with both an optical and emotional charge.

For both Grill and Ogden, the substrate plays a crucial role, formally and compositionally. The surfaces are not arbitrary or static; rather, they serve as a tactile element integral to the final painting. Each artist's relationship with materiality becomes a means to contemplate broader themes such as time, history and memory. Despite their distinct techniques and visual results, both engage in a similar pursuit of sustained observation, contemplation, and response.

▲ Margaux Ogden; *Bathers* (Cadmium Yellow, Hansa Yellow, Primary Red & India Yellow Hue), 2024 (detail); acrylic on canvas; 64 x 48 inches; courtesy of the artist

Artist Statements

My work often borrows from antique embroidery samplers. I like their obsessive handiwork, gorgeous materiality, their somber mood and feminine energy. I unravel their imagery, layering over and then picking at it with brushes and fingers, burying it and dusting it off until each painting seems to breathe and buzz in its own color climate.

To make paintings requires utter attention and complete care. In a noisy world, it's a radical act of being quiet, being open, and looking with eyes wide like it's dark out.

— Clare Grill

As is often the case with my work, I'm searching for a gesture or glimpse into art history or contemporary life ... and then using these fragments to build out a system of abstraction.

The patterned repetition of color speaks directly to my work, especially how the image evolves when it spins. There's an eerie beauty to it. It feels very much reflective of nature.

— Margaux Ogden

Biographies



Clare Grill

Clare Grill (b. 1979, Chicago, Illinois) received a master of fine arts from the Pratt Institute in 2005 and attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in 2011. Grill lives and works in Queens, New York.



Margaux Ogden

Margaux Ogden (b. 1983, Boston, Massachusetts) received a bachelor's degree from Bard College in 2005, a post-baccalaureate in fine arts from Brandeis University in 2010, and a master of fine arts in painting from Boston University in 2012. Ogden also attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in 2011 and participated in a residency program at the British School at Rome in fall 2021. Ogden lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.



DANA FRANKFORT AND JOSEPHINE HALVORSON

Seeing and Reading

Miles C. Horton Jr. Gallery and
Sherwood Payne Quillen '71 Reception Gallery

Suitable for students in grades PK-12

About the Exhibition

Dana Frankfort and Josephine Halvorson explore the role of text in painting — its potential as both language and image. Their approaches diverge sharply: Frankfort invents language on the canvas, while Halvorson discovers it in the world.

Frankfort's energetic works feature single words or phrases painted in gestural, layered washes of color. But legibility is not the point — her letters dissolve into painterly marks, blurring the line between reading and seeing. Frankfort's use of language is emotional, open-ended, and performative; words become shapes, tones, and even moods. Working primarily in oil, she embraces the medium's viscosity and unpredictability — dragging, layering, and scumbling the surface into what Halvorson once described as “the prettiest mud you’ve ever seen” in a press release for Frankfort's 2023 show at Olympia in New York. Frankfort has likened her paintings to landscapes — vast, weathered spaces shaped by color, gesture, and atmosphere. Her words drift like clouds, hovering at the edge of meaning and visibility.

▲ Dana Frankfort; *Magical Marker*, 2017 (detail); oil on canvas over panel; 48 x 48 inches

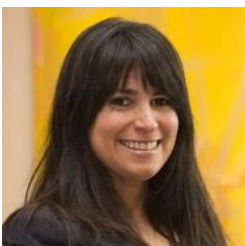


Halvorson, by contrast, paints at the scale of encounter. Her subjects are observed on-site — objects and surfaces that bear the traces of time, labor, and use. A collapsed wooden sign with fragmented lettering, a rusted potbelly stove partially obscured by encroaching plants, or a carved 18th-century tombstone where autumn leaves have gathered at its base: she renders each with fidelity and care, capturing not just what the object says but how it has aged, weathered, and endured. If Frankfort's paintings evoke the atmosphere of the horizon, Halvorson's are made at arm's length; both offer a kind of landscape, but from entirely different vantage points. Working with acrylic gouache on absorbent grounds — materials inspired by fresco painting — Halvorson preserves the immediacy of each brushstroke and the shifting effects of daylight. Her works are portraits of presence, marked by deep attention to material, time, and mortality.

Together, Frankfort and Halvorson reflect on what it means to look, read, and interpret. Whether text is conjured in the studio or found in the field, each artist shows that words as images carry not just meaning — but memory, place, and feeling.

▲ Josephine Halvorson; *5 Acres*, 2024 (detail); acrylic gouache on panel; 35 x 42 inches; © Josephine Halvorson; courtesy of Sikkema Malloy Jenkins, New York

Biographies



Dana Frankfort

Dana Frankfort (b. 1971, Houston, Texas) received a bachelor's degree in art history from Brandeis University in 1995 and a master of fine arts from Yale University in 1997. Frankfort attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, also in 1997. From 1999-2000 she was an Museum of Fine Arts, Houston Core Studio Art resident. Solo exhibitions include Southwest School of Art, San Antonio (2018); James Harris Gallery, Seattle (2011); Inman Gallery (2012, 2010, 2007); Sorry We're Closed, Brussels (2008); Bellwether Gallery, New York (2007); and Kantor/Feuer Gallery, Los Angeles (2006). Frankfort's paintings are in the permanent collections of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Rice University, Houston; St. Edward's University, Austin; and the Jewish Museum, New York. Frankfort lives and works in Houston.



Josephine Halvorson

Josephine Halvorson (b. 1981, Brewster, Massachusetts) grew up on Cape Cod, where she first studied art on the beaches of Provincetown and with Barnett Rubenstein at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Halvorson attended the Cooper Union School of Art (BFA, 2003), Yale Norfolk (2002), and continued her interdisciplinary education at Columbia University's School of the Arts (MFA, 2007). Recent solo exhibitions include *On the Ground* at the Ogunquit Museum of Art, Maine (2022) and *Contemporary Voices* (2021) at the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum in Santa Fe, where she was the museum's first artist-in-residence in 2019. Other notable solo exhibitions include the Foster Prize Exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston (2019) and *Measures* at Storm King Art Center, New Windsor, New York (2016). In 2015 she presented her first museum survey exhibition, *Slow Burn*, at the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art in Winston-Salem, curated by Cora Fisher.

Halvorson has been awarded residencies and fellowships from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation (2021); Moly-Sabata in Sablons, France (2014, 2017); the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation in Captiva, Florida (2016); a Harriet Hale Woolley Scholarship at the Fondation des États-Unis, Paris (2007-2008); and the U.S. Fulbright Fellowship to Austria (2003-2004). She was a recipient of the 2009 Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Grant and was the first American to receive the Rome Prize at the French Academy at the Villa Medici, Rome, Italy (2014-2015).

Helpful Terminology

Abstract: Art that doesn't show things exactly how they look in real life and instead uses shapes, colors, and lines to share ideas or feelings.

Allusions: A brief, indirect reference to a person, place, thing, or idea of historical, cultural, literary, or political significance. It relies on the audience's existing knowledge to understand the implied meaning.

Brushwork: The texture and quality of the paint as applied by the artist's brush; it can appear smooth, rough, expressive, or intentional.

Color field: A style of painting where large areas of a single color or simple shapes are used to create emotion or impact.

Composition: The way an artist arranges different parts of a piece — like shapes, colors, and space — to guide how we look at it.

Contour: The outline or visible edge of a shape or form; in painting, contour lines help define space or subject.

Diptych: A piece of artwork on two separate, often hinged panels.

Evocations: The act of bringing something into the mind or memory, creating an image or impression.

Imbalance: When things in an artwork aren't evenly spaced or symmetrical on purpose, creating interest or tension.

Imperatives: Commands or instructions that direct someone to perform a specific action.

Materiality: The physical quality and presence of materials used in the artwork (paint, canvas, wood, etc.).

Palette: The set of colors an artist chooses to use in a piece. It can create a certain mood or feeling.

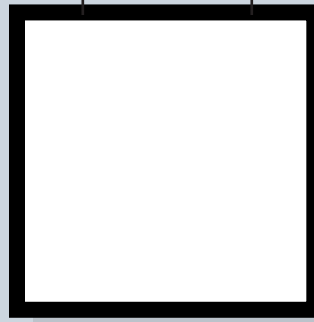
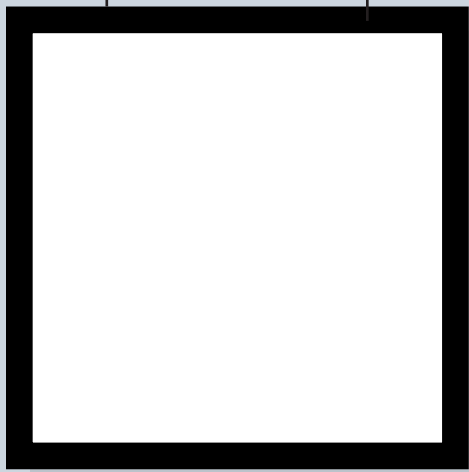
Pattern: Repeating shapes, lines, or designs that create rhythm or texture.

Symbolism: The use of objects, colors, or forms to represent larger ideas, emotions, or themes.

Symmetry: When both sides of an artwork look the same or very similar, giving a sense of balance and harmony.

Text as image: A visual strategy where letters or words are treated as shapes or design elements, rather than purely for reading.

Texture: How something looks like it might feel — smooth, rough, soft — even if it's just paint on a flat surface.



Activities in the **GALLERIES**

Symmetrical Sketch

Margaux Ogden's work explores ideas of imbalance, repetition, and symmetry through bright and bold colors. Using the grid on the next page, encourage students to attempt copying one of Ogden's works on the blank grid, reinforcing the idea of symmetry. Talk with students about how symmetry means that both sides can look the same, like a butterfly's wings or a folded piece of paper. Ask them to notice shapes, lines, and colors that repeat, and help them match those parts on either side of the grid. Let them know it's okay if it's not perfect; artists like Ogden play with balance in fun and surprising ways!

► **Virginia Visual Arts SOLs:** K.12e, 1.12e, 2.12e

Drawing What You "See"

Clare Grill's artistry is all about visual mindfulness and abstract interpretation. To increase this sensation within students, encourage them to sit in front of Grill's work and quietly observe for two to three minutes. On a spare piece of paper, let students create a drawing that doesn't copy the painting but instead captures the feeling or atmosphere they get from it, using soft colors and abstract marks. For example, if after looking at the painting, they view it as a peaceful or gentle artwork, perhaps they use soft, swirling pencil lines to capture this emotion.

For an additional challenge, see if students can include at least one geometric shape that they "felt," but didn't really "see."

► **Virginia Visual Arts SOLs:** 3.1a, 3.12, 4.1a, 4.14, 5.1a, 5.17

Whisper Words

Dana Frankfort is known for painting words in a way that makes them part of the picture, not just something to read. The words help to hold the painting together, like the structure of a building. They hide, peek out, and mix with the colors. In this way, her artworks can be viewed by young learners like a puzzle made of paint, giving us instructions and calling us to remember feelings.

Instruct your students to find a word in one of Frankfort's paintings that resonates with them. It's alright if they can't read the word entirely; that's the fun of this activity! Have your students write their chosen word (or what they think their chosen word may say, if it is partially obscured) on a blank sheet of paper. Next, encourage the student to draw their word again in three ways:

- As a *whisper*
- As a **YELL**
- As a *silly voice*

In this way, you are encouraging your students to practice phonetic expression and visual

► **Virginia Visual Arts SOLs:** K.1a, K.2b, K.3b-c, 1.1b, 1.2a, 1.3c, 1.13c, 2.1a, 2.2a, 2.13b

One Object, One Moment

Josephine Halvorson makes art from direct observation, paying special attention to what she notices from the stillness of an object, in an attempt to portray that object in a way the viewer can learn from it. Help students practice slow looking and imaginative storytelling through the lens of a single, ordinary object, just like Halvorson, who paints everyday things exactly as she sees them.

In the gallery, prompt each student to select one of Halvorson's works that appears as if it's in a space of quiet and waiting. Ask them to sit in front of the artwork for a full minute without drawing or writing and simply observe. Encourage them to question what the object might be saying or waiting for.

Have your students fill out the *One Object, One Moment* reflection sheet, putting the title of their chosen reflection artwork on the top row.

One Object, One Moment Reflection

Title of artwork:	
Artist:	
I see...	
I wonder...	
If this object could talk, it would say...	
This object feels like...	
This object has been here for ____ years.	
The sound that would pair with this painting is...	
The smell that would pair with this painting is...	

► **Virginia Visual Arts SOLs:** 6.2a, 6.3, 7.2a, 7.3, 8.2a, 8.3b-c

Activities in the **CLASSROOM**

Contrasts and Compliments

The artistic energies of Clare Grill (quiet and atmospheric) and Margaux Ogden (bold and structured) greatly differ. However, their combined exhibition is proof that different styles can coexist and inform one another. After observing the artwork in the galleries, have your students create a collaborative diptych or single artwork in two parts: one soft, the other structured.

Prompt students to fold or divide a sheet of paper in half. On the left side, students will channel Grill, using gentle lines, hazy blending, soft repetition, and pale color. On the right side, students will shift into Ogden-mode, constructing sharp forms, energetic patterns, and vibrant color combinations using geometric logic. Encourage students to find a connecting element between the works (for example, color palette, patterns, lines, etc.) and make sure it is present in both halves.

After creating the diptych, encourage students to write or share in reflection:

- Which side felt more natural?
- What did the two sides teach about individual mark-making styles?
- Where is the harmony or tension in the final image?

► **Virginia Visual Arts SOLs:** 6.12, 6.17, 7.12, 7.17, 8.12, 8.17

Word/Object Switch Sketch

What happens when we switch the intentions of an artwork? Josphine Halvorson and Dana Frankfort share a exhibition that engages in cross-media activity, collapsing boundaries between word and object. Halvorson, known for her attentive paintings of weathered and context-bound objects (doors, clocks, vents, tools, etc.), renders the world not as still life but as lived evidence of things that hold time, place, and meaning. Frankfort, in contrast, begins with text; her paintings present words as mutable, emotionally charged entities.

After touring the gallery, ask students to reflect on specific works and prompt them to question what specific objects would say if they could speak, and in contrast, how would this word be portrayed in object form?

Following the class discussion, ask each student to select one object they observed in Halvorson's works and one word from Frankfort's paintings and write it down for later reference. Task the class with creating one of the following visual art pieces:

- **Object as a Word:** Students will use letterforms, expressive mark-making, or symbolic color to "spell out" their object's voice. For example, an air vent might become the word "relief" with calming colors plastered on top, letters leaking through steam in a reverberating font.
- **Word as an Object:** Students will take a word seen in Frankfort's works and reinvent this word as an object. For example, the word "soft" might shape into a folded fabric of a bedspread or a childhood stuffed animal, nestled in the corner.

Intentionally limit materials to drawing pencils, oil pastels, and markers (all of these materials encourage layering and texture without the complexity of paint). Encourage students to focus on material honesty and their direct depiction of the words and objects. Have everyone write a brief reflection to accompany their artwork using the following prompts:

- What did you notice when you turned your object into a word (or vice versa)?
- What story does your new artwork tell that the original painting didn't?

► **Virginia Visual Arts SOLs:** 6.2a, 6.3, 7.2a, 7.3, 8.2a, 8.3b-c

Additional Resources

Clare Grill

Josephine Halvorson

Margaux Ogden

Olympia | Dana Frankfort: *Life and Death*

Symmetry and Geometry Activity

The American Reader: Regarding Diptychs