Telling Stories: Resilience and Struggle in Contemporary Narrative Drawing
on view at Toledo Museum of Art beginning Nov. 21

TOLEDO, Ohio – Three internationally renowned artists who represent the extraordinary vitality of contemporary drawing will be featured in a special exhibition beginning in November at the Toledo Museum of Art. *Telling Stories: Resilience and Struggle in Contemporary Narrative Drawing* displays the work of the Inuit artist Annie Pootoogook of Cape Dorset, Canada, and two American artists, Amy Cutler of New York and Robyn O’Neil of Seattle, to showcase the power of drawing as a distinctive form of expression. Each artist creates open-ended narratives within natural landscape settings that imaginatively consider the complexities of modern human relationships. Their remarkable compositions that rely upon inventive mark-making systems and new approaches to rendering space incorporate the surface of the paper to call attention to the medium's distinct properties.

*Telling Stories: Resilience and Struggle in Contemporary Narrative Drawing* will be on view at TMA from Nov. 21, 2020, through Feb. 14, 2021. Twenty-five large and small-scale works and an animated film are drawn from TMA’s holdings and public and private collections across North America.

“Drawing has seen a remarkable resurgence as a preferred means of art-making over the last 35 years by young artists who have discovered exciting new possibilities for the medium," said Robin Reisenfeld, TMA’s senior curator of works on paper. "The exhibition offers a lens into this accessible and ever-evolving form of expression by bringing together three artists whose central practice utilizes graphite and paper. *Telling Stories* also supports the Museum’s visual literacy initiatives and mission to provide a diversity of exhibitions for a broad array of audiences.”
Unfolding within remote natural environments, the imaginative stories on display incorporate strategies of resilience, depicting the changing circumstances of human engagement – whether in collective harmony or through self-destructive impulses and shifting alliances. Told primarily through pencil and paper, their tales of hardship and survival allude to the world of ambiguity intertwined with our everyday existence. At the same time, the works draw on a range of cultural and stylistic sources, characteristic of the global nature of contemporary artmaking.

Robyn O’Neil is well known for her monumental graphite compositions that depict tiny, anonymous male figures who inhabit vast and forbidding natural settings. Her distinctly contemporary works in style and mood build upon the longstanding tradition of landscape art to consider human struggles in nature, extreme weather and nature’s ephemeral beauty. Scenarios that often recall the collective sense of anxiety and isolation found in the imaginary worlds of artists Marcel Dzama and Henry Darger are inspired by a wide range of artistic sources – ranging from the Northern Renaissance artist Hieronymous Bosch (1450-1516) to the 19th-century American Hudson River School painters and their evocation of nature’s grandeur and destructive forces.

Annie Pootoogook’s colorful, directly observed compositions that chronicle the everyday domestic and social activities of her Cape Dorset community challenge romanticized portrayals of Inuit life often found in traditional Inuit graphic art. Her scenes of interior home life and outdoor recreational and hunting activities sprinkled with references to western rituals of media consumption and modern technology document contemporary Inuit experience as a fluid continuum between past and future. Pootoogook’s perceptive and inventive drawing style utilizes flattened and cinema-like perspectives, the isolation of objects, and the distortion of scale to capture the rapidly changing, local Inuit culture and its absorption into our global society.

Amy Cutler taps into a broad range of visual motifs, fairy tales, and personal experiences to create dreamlike compositions. Often these depictions feature female characters engaged in illogical, repetitive tasks accompanied by animals. Her large-scale, exceedingly detailed graphite composition *Fossa* (2016) utilizes the paper’s surface to imagine a fictional, self-sustaining community of women dwelling within the confines of tall, hollowed-out tree trunks. Cutler’s enchanting worlds that combine the pencil’s fine, metallic line with magic realist motifs exist outside of time and place and subvert narrative conventions, commenting on the prescribed roles and expectations society places on women.
Telling Stories: Resilience and Struggle in Contemporary Narrative Drawing is sponsored in part by 2020 Exhibition Program Sponsors Taylor Cadillac and ProMedica with additional support from the Ohio Arts Council.

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The Toledo Museum of Art is a nonprofit arts institution funded through individual donations, foundation grants, corporate sponsorships and investments. The Ohio Arts Council helps fund programs at the Toledo Museum of Art through a sustainability grant program that encourages economic growth, educational excellence and cultural enrichment for all Ohioans. Glass Pavilion® and Toledo Museum of Art Glass Pavilion® are registered service marks.

Admission to the Museum is free as always, but visitors are required to reserve a museum pass in advance through tickets.toledomuseum.org or by calling 419-255-8000 ext. 7448. The Museum is open Tuesday through Sunday from noon to 4 p.m., with special hours for 10 a.m. to noon reserved for at-risk populations; and is closed Monday and major holidays.

The Museum is located at 2445 Monroe Street at Scottwood Avenue, just west of the downtown business district and one block off I-75 with exit designations posted. For general information, visitors can call 419-255-8000 or 800-644-6862, or visit toledomuseum.org.