

Call and Response: Off the Grid

This exhibition is the result of the Fitchburg Art Museum and ArtsWorcester's fifth "Call and Response." The show combines ten pieces from FAM's permanent collection, which were on view at ArtsWorcester in the fall of 2016 as part of the "call," with ten works that were selected by Interim Curator Lisa Crossman from the artworks submitted as a "response." **Off the Grid** takes a classic compositional device as its theme. Based simply on the intersection of horizontal and vertical lines, the grid has been used as a device for perspective, as a technical tool to enlarge an image or as a compositional framework to emphasize horizontal or vertical planes.

The idea of a grid brings to mind urban planning, the graph that underlays text on a page, weaving and much more. In Western art, we've come to think of the grid as a symbol of modernity, imagining its function as an ordering system based on science and logic. The grid has been used as the basis of abstract compositions by artists such as Piet Mondrian and Agnes Martin, but also by city planners, architects, and graphic designers.

The works from the collection included in the show range from Eadweard Muybridge's **Horse Running**, which uses the camera to document time and movement to a Kente cloth from Ghana and a page from the Quran. Berenice Abbot's photograph **New York at Night** captures the regularity of Manhattan, while the perspective of Edwin Whitefield's nineteenth century **Map of Fitchburg** is slightly askew. ArtsWorcester artists Colette Bresilla, Carolyn Crane, James Dye, Meaghan Hardy-Lavoie, Tom Grady, Kathy Murray, Linda Nelson, Joan Ryan, Edwin Smith and Jill Watts explore the grid as it pertains to a compositional device internal to the work itself or document the usage or occurrence of the grid in the world. For instance, Nelson's documentation of scaffolding alludes to the grid in architectural design and urban planning. Ryan's repetition of the television screen implies the seriality of an image referenced in grids by such artists as Andy Warhol or individual pixels of the image on a television screen. And Grady's application of color references the enlargement of pixels or the gradations of tones on a color grid used by designers. This exhibition considers the possibilities of working on, or beyond, the grid.

Many thanks to Juliet Feibel and Scarlett Hoey of ArtsWorcester for making this collaboration possible.

Call and Response: Off the Grid is on view until August 13, 2017 and organized by FAM's Interim Curator Lisa Crossman.