

# EDUCATOR GUIDE



## ***Lauren Henkin: Props***

November 22 - March 01, 2020



## **Welcome!**

Dear Educators,

We are delighted to have you join us at the Contemporary Arts Center (CAC) for Lauren Henkin's first installation exhibition, *Props*. The exhibition is on view from November 22, 2019 - March 1, 2020.

Henkin asks us flatly: "Is this art?". We are taught to always say "Of course!", but her question goes deeper than the simple, time-old retort. Why is it art? Why do we have names for certain types of art. We are encouraged to define sculpture, installation, architecture, and her term for these works: interventions.

Her pieces, all titled *Prop*, are located throughout the building in places that are not traditionally used to show art. She encourages us to reconsider these spaces, think about what we see and don't see, how the space is changed because of her interventions.

We invite you to explore, create, immerse yourselves, and discover what stories, connections and lessons can be found within this exhibition.

Enjoy your visit!

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## ABOUT THE ARTIST

### About the Artist

#### Lauren Henkin

- Born in 1974 in Washington DC, grew up in Maryland
- Graduated with a BA in architecture from Washington University
- Currently based in Maine
- The largest collection of her works is at Yale
- Began photographing while studying architecture in school



### About Henkin's work

- Went to school for architecture—more conceptual architecture; enjoyed model-making and thinking about architectures' role in space
- Moved into photography as a way to see spaces for architecture—became interested in our relationship to space, scale
- Known for photography and artist's books; founder of Vela Noche, a publisher of handmade books and editions.
- Enjoys working collaboratively—sees connections especially between visual and written arts
- Henkin always felt she was better with her hands and working in 3-D; states she was not good at drawing
- Questions the relations that may exist between extant, architectural forms and the natural or urban landscapes in which they sit
- Concerned with notions of placement and scale, her photographic body of works recurses to crops and scale-plays to imbue each with human qualities
- Considers how sculptures intervene in the spaces—affect the perspective of the viewer

## Quotes

“While studying architecture as an undergraduate, I experimented with the relationships between constructed forms and the natural landscape, and how scale affects those relationships. Working primarily in models, I created architecture as interventions into existing conditions, with an interest in fostering experiences that enlivened the senses while proposing a more integrated approach to how architecture relates to its surrounding environment.”

-Lauren Henkin

“Props will make people ponder, laugh, and question their assumptions. In the in-between, Lauren plants radicals that illuminate via disorientation. Props is so captivating because it plays with the idea of the provisional in a playful, yet poignant way.”

-Steven Matijcio

## About the exhibition

The work of Lauren Henkin, which spans photography, video and sculpture, questions the relations that may exist between extant, architectural forms and the natural or urban landscapes in which they sit. Concerned with notions of placement and scale, her photographic body of works recourse to crops and scale-plays to imbue each with human qualities. The site-specific sculptural installation imagined by Henkin for the Contemporary Arts Center, *Props*, gives life to Zaha Hadid’s concrete blocks and angular designs, adding, here a conundrum of pipes, there a set of ergonomic yet a-functional benches to rest on. By imagining these structures as addendums, Henkin gives precedence to that, which is typically considered peripheral: support, buttresses, sticks, and trusses. Activating unutilized areas of the Lois & Richard Rosenthal Center, such as an access ramp, the back alley of a lobby or the flank of a staircase, her interventions open broader conversations about provisional architectures within the museum context. Set in Hadid’s jewelbox, the props further the discussion initiated by the architect, deliberately blurring the boundary between the inside and outside of the building’s galleries and playfully disrupting the typical ballet of visitors’ circulation.

## **Vocabulary/Key words**

Sculpture	Installation	Scale
Intervention	Perspective	Space

## **Themes**

*Perspective:* Henkin's desire for the viewer to engage with the works from various perspectives and consider differences from various angles.

*Relationship with architecture:* Henkin creates pieces which are meant to create a dialogue with the architecture/space within which they are located. The work and the space around it simultaneously contribute to viewers' understanding of the other.

## **PRE-VISIT DISCUSSIONS**

### ***ABOUT THE CONTEMPORARY ARTS CENTER***

In 1939, Betty Pollak Rauh, Peggy Frank Crawford and Rita Rentschler Cushman took the advice of Edward M.M. Warburg, the founding father of the American Ballet and a founder of the Museum of Modern Art. He suggested that rather than stress about finding non-existent art jobs in New York, "Why not starting something in Cincinnati? Plenty of room there. If you decide to try, come and see me and I'll help you." By August of that year, Peggy Frank Crawford, Betty Pollack and Rita Rentschler raised \$5000 (about \$93,000 today) and created the Modern Art Society (MAS). For almost a year their "office" consisted of a letter file and a portable typewriter set up in one or another living room. Within a few years, the MAS had exhibited Renoir, Van Gogh, Gauguin, Picasso, Beckman, Klee and many more in the lower levels of the Cincinnati Art Museum. In 1952, the MAS changed their name to the Contemporary Arts Center and in 1964 they earned a space of their own in downtown Cincinnati. In 2003, the CAC moved into the Lois & Richard Rosenthal Center for Contemporary Art designed by architect Zaha Hadid. The NY Times called the structure, "the best new building since the Cold War."

The Contemporary Arts Center is a non-collecting institution, meaning there is no permanent collection. All exhibitions are borrowed from artists, collectors and other art galleries and institutions. We strive to create exhibitions that allow visitors to

“open their minds” to the arts, and to the dialogue that can be had when viewing contemporary art. We believe that art and the creative process belong to all people and that contemporary artists are an important part of how we see and interact with our world today.

### **ABOUT THE LOIS & RICHARD ROSENTHAL CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY ARTS**

In the late 1990s, after acquiring the lot on which the Contemporary Arts Center now sits, a committee narrowed a field of over 300 architects chose to design the building—first to 97, then to 12 and finally 3 of the most exciting designers working in the world today. From them, a unanimous choice emerged: Baghdad-born, London-trained Zaha Hadid.

The decision was in keeping with the CAC’s 60-year history of promoting the new. Though Hadid had been the subject of adulation, study and controversy, her work exhibited at major museums with international critical acclaim, she had only completed two freestanding structures during her career. As a largely untested inventor, a woman and an Arabic Muslim, Hadid had not found the construction world easy to enter. This renowned building is Hadid’s first American building, and is the first American museum building designed by a woman. Groundbreaking took place in May 2001 and the new Center opened to rave reviews on May 31, 2003. The seven-story, 82,265 square-foot Contemporary Arts Center is named the Lois & Richard Rosenthal Center for Contemporary Art after the CAC’s former Chairman of the Board and the most generous contributor to the new building. It sits on a narrow 11,000-square-foot footprint, and includes a 2,366-square-foot black box performance space.

Born in Iraq in 1950, Hadid received her degree in mathematics from the American University in Beirut and studied at the Architectural Association in London where she won the Diploma Prize in 1977. Upon graduation, Hadid became a partner at the Office of Metropolitan Architecture where she worked with influential architects Rem Koolhaas and Elia Zenghelis. Establishing her own practice in London in 1979, she soon gained international attention with her groundbreaking plan for the Peak International Design Competition for Hong Kong in 1983. In 2004, she became the first female recipient of the Pritzker Architecture Prize, which is the equivalent to the Nobel Prize for Architecture. In 2008, she was listed as one of Forbes Magazine’s “100 Most Powerful Women,” and in 2010, Time Magazine named her one of the “100 Most Influential People in the World,” and UNESCO Artist for Peace. She was awarded the Stirling Prize for Architecture in 2010 and 2011. In 2012, Hadid was

awarded Damehood by Queen Elizabeth II. And, in 2015, she received the Royal Gold Medal from the Royal Institute of British Architects. Hadid died in 2016.

## **RULES AND GUIDELINES**

- Visitor admission and school tours are free at the Contemporary Arts Center.
- We require that there must be a chaperone for every 5 students under the age of 18 for self-guided groups. For docent-led tours, the required ratio is 1 to 10 for students through grade 5 and 1 to 15 for students grades 6-12.
- No backpacks, coats or lunches are permitted in the galleries, but personal belongings may be stored in the large bins or lockers we have available. Instructors may keep any emergency bags and purses with them.
- Currently photography is permitted in all areas of the museum. The CAC encourages you to post photos to various social media sites using @CincyCAC and #CincyCAC.
- Pens are not permitted in the gallery spaces. Pencils are available for use at the front desk.
- Walk throughout all galleries- no running, climbing, or roughhousing. If visiting with students under 18 please provide guidance and supervision.

## **ACCESSIBILITY INFORMATION**

- Our facility is ADA compliant and we will make every effort to provide accommodations when requested.
- Hearing protection is available upon request.
- Fidgets are available upon request.
- Sensory maps and social stories are available upon request.
- Large text is available upon request.
- Two quiet spaces are available—the Lower Level Lobby and the Contemplation Room.
- For further inquiries or requests, please contact Shawnee Turner at [sturner@cincycac.org](mailto:sturner@cincycac.org)



## ARTWORK DISCUSSIONS

*These discussions can occur prior to, during and after viewing.*

- What is the difference between sculpture and installation?
- Henkin calls these works “interventions” and titles them “prop.” Why do you think she calls them that?
- How do the works intervene in the space? Do they tie spaces together—or do they create tension?
- How does her art relate to the space around it, both within the museum and outside of it?
- Would you pay attention to the spaces that these works occupy if the pieces were not there? How does the art affect the space?
- How do the locations of these pieces contribute to your understanding of Henkin’s work? How do they contribute to your experience in the museum?

## LESSON PLAN IDEAS

1. Discuss the differences between sculpture and installation. Have students brainstorm about a location for a theoretical installation. Have them investigate the aspects of the space. What is interesting about it? What is it used for? What kind of story does it tell? Then have the students imagine what their installation would be. What materials would they use? How might they construct it? Why? What story are they telling?
2. Have the students plan an installation in a personal space, such as their locker or bedroom. Using the above idea as a prompt for planning, have the students document their installation and write about their choices and their intentions.
3. Transform an area in/around the school through an installation. As a group, have students use idea one for planning. Have the students work collaboratively through the process and discuss the choices and intentions in a verbal critique.

4. Most installation art is large-scale; challenge your students to create miniature installations. This could be done through model-building or in unexpected places around the classroom, school, or outside.

## **ARTWORK AND WALL TEXT INFORMATION**

### **Introductory Wall Text**

Does our ability to engage and evaluate art change when we're asked to look at it outside a traditional gallery?

Lauren Henkin asks this question with Props, her first site-specific sculptural "interventions." She strategically locates her sculptures to activate underutilized, although public, spaces within Zaha Hadid's ground-breaking first museum. Found in bathrooms, hallways and stairwells, the sculptures expand and challenge what "site-specific" and "installation" mean, and encourage viewers to consider Hadid's intentions for the spaces. Through sympathetic and contrasting materials, Henkin explores the architecture and interjects her own interpretations of the building and its surrounding environment.

*Lauren Henkin: Props runs through March 1, 2020. The exhibition was organized by CAC staff and curated by former CAC Curator Steven Matijcio, now Director and Chief Curator of the Blaffer Art Museum at the University of Houston.*

*This exhibition is generously supported by ArtsWave, the Ohio Arts Council and the Maine Arts Commission, an independent state agency supported by the National Endowment for the Arts.*

## Artworks and Object Labels

*Prop I, 2019*

Wood, adhesive, metal

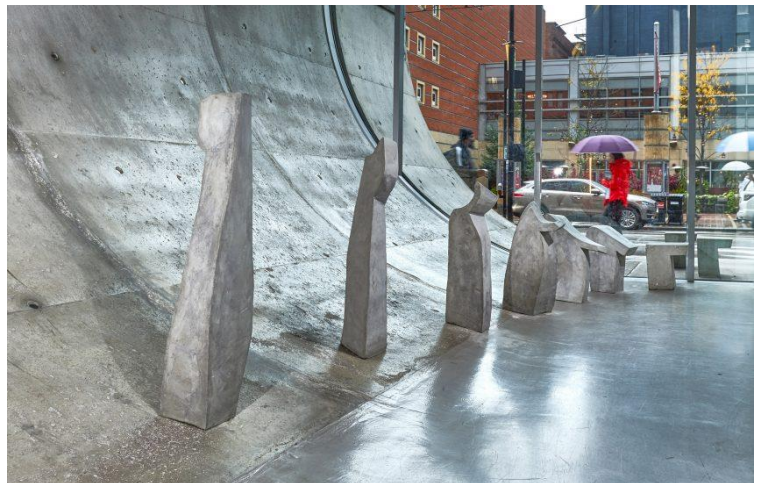
Location: Lobby, entry vestibule



*Prop II, 2019*

Concrete, board, foam

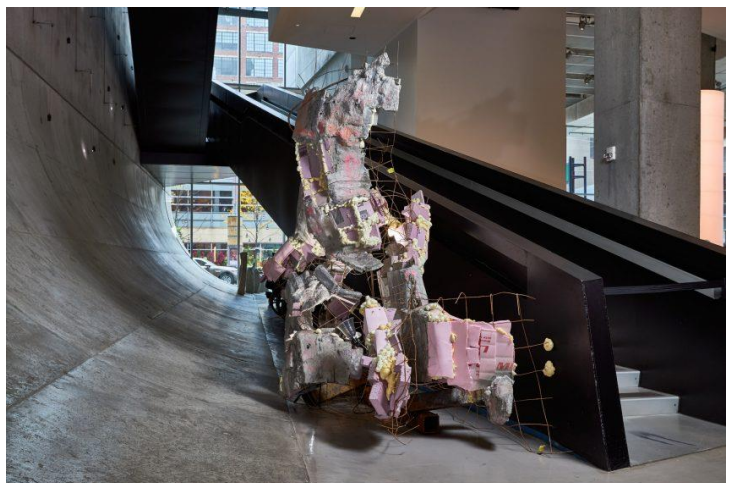
Location: Lobby, near lockers



*Prop III, 2019*

Concrete, steel, foam, paint

Location: Lobby, between stairs and Urban Carpet



*Prop IV, 2019*

PVC pipe, adhesive, metal

Location: 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, women's restroom



*Prop V, 2019*

Wood, metal

Location: Stairwell between 2<sup>nd</sup>  
and 4<sup>th</sup> floor



*Prop VI, 2019*

Wood, double-sided mirrored  
acrylic, metal

Location: Glass skylight between  
lobby and 2<sup>nd</sup> floor



*Prop VII, 2019*  
Electrical cable  
Location: 4<sup>th</sup> floor, hall  
outside of restrooms



*Prop VIII, 2019*  
PVC Pipe, adhesive, metal  
Location: Lower level, men's bathroom  
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## RESOURCES

<https://www.laurenhenkin.com/>

<https://www.laurenhenkin.com/contemporary-arts-center-cincinnati/>

<http://lenscratch.com/2016/06/lauren-henkin-2/>

<https://www.terrain.org/2018/arterrain/lauren-henkin/>

<http://southboundproject.org/photographer/lauren-henkin/>

<https://www.dezeen.com/2019/11/09/props-installation-contemporary-arts-center-in-cincinnati-zaha-hadid/>

## **LEARNING STANDARDS**

Common Core Standards

<http://www.corestandards.org/>

Ohio Common Core Links

<http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Learning-in-Ohio/OLS-Graphic-Sections/Learning-Standards>

<http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Learning-in-Ohio/Fine-Arts/Fine-Arts-Standards>

Kentucky Common Core Links

<https://education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/kyacadstand/Pages/default.aspx>

[https://education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/kyacadstand/Documents/Kentucky\\_Academic\\_Standards\\_Arts\\_and\\_Humanities.pdf](https://education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/kyacadstand/Documents/Kentucky_Academic_Standards_Arts_and_Humanities.pdf)

Indiana Standards Links

<https://www.doe.in.gov/standards>

<https://www.doe.in.gov/standards/fine-arts-dance-music-theatre-visual-arts>

Aesthetic Perspectives: Attributes of Excellence in Arts for Change

<http://www.animatingdemocracy.org/aesthetic-perspectives>