

South of Grand Neighbors

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Salon 4700 -
'PROGRESSIVE' ART APPRECIATION



Best Version Media

Cover photo by Heather Strooh

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Written by Kathie Strooh with the expertise of Amanda Reynal and Jeffrienne Young

Des Moines is well known for its progressive views and being attentive to the needs of the people who live here. The Des Moines Art Center is known as a cutting-edge contemporary art museum, and when the desire for a more comprehensive relationship with the Art Center was voiced by some of their members, they set about to provide a solution. This effort galvanized the creation of the newest member affiliate group of the Art Center, Salon 4700. Salon 4700 Board President Amanda Reynal reflects on the need for the group: "Des Moines is oozing with artistic talent and often people find it hard to interact with artists or don't know where to seek out what they are looking for. We hope to bridge the gap between the creative community and people who are interested in getting up close and more in depth with the art world." The French word 'salon' refers to parlor gatherings for conversations held in France and England since the 17th century. Gertrude Stein's salon is the best known, and served as an inspiration where Picasso, Matisse, and numerous other artists gathered to discuss art, literature, and politics. Interestingly, Salon with a capital "S" was an official art exhibition of the Academie des Beaux-Arts in Paris under the royal patronage of Louis XIV, serving as an official acceptance of art until the Impressionists organized their own exhibitions outside the authority of the royal Salon. "Salon 4700" is a contemporary take on the French term 'salon' for members interested in contemporary visual art. The 4700 in this Salon is the Grand Avenue address of the Des Moines Art Center.

Salon 4700, in its inaugural year, meets several times at the Art Center and other venues around Des Moines. Salon members have

the opportunity to meet local and international artists and to discuss their works with them and other members. Amanda Reynal describes an event held this past winter, "Our winter event was held at Lucca in the beautiful new upstairs space. The group sipped wine and gathered to hear a talk by the Art Center's Senior Curator Gilbert Vicario. Every attendee met someone new that night and learned something about curating that they didn't know. Programs Co-chair Jeffrienne Young, MD, discusses her interest in the group. "In college, my passion was the visual and performing arts. I have a B.A. in Fine Arts from Harvard, and I was fascinated by windows opened to different cultures as I studied Ancient Egyptian art, 18th- & 19th-century French art, and 20th-century landscape architecture, to name a few of my favorite topics. My husband and I both share a passion for contemporary art and mid-century modern architecture. The Des Moines Art Center was one of the very reasons that we felt reassured when we moved here from the East Coast over a decade ago. Neither of us could imagine living in a city without access to a great art museum. For me, the arts are a fabulous means of furthering my education, exploring unfamiliar places, and expressing myself."

When asked about the formation of this new group, Art Center Director Jeff Fleming replied,

"We listened to the community. Members in this age group expressed an interest in a more in-depth relationship with the Art Center focusing on the benefits of both education and social interaction. We agreed and moved forward to create such a group." Meetings of Salon 4700 are not



limited to studio visits. Members are given the opportunity to interact with the Art Center director, curators, and visiting artists. They also have the ability to attend private tours of exhibitions, art collections, and to travel with the Art Center director on art related trips, as well as tour private collections. Please check the Art Center's website, desmoinesartcenter.org for more information on Salon 4700 or call Membership & Visitor Services Manager Julia Mason Gray at 515.271.0327.

A (progressive) Conversation with Creators, held June 12th, started at the Fitch Artist Studios and ended in the studio of Rick Lozier with hors d'oeuvres and cocktails. At each studio the members of Salon 4700 were able to view interesting works, listen to a brief lecture given by the artist, and discuss their works with the artist and other members. It was a wonderful opportunity to interact with some of the creative minds around Des Moines, and to learn about their techniques and different media used to create their works of art. This was also a hands-on session with members working collectively on an interactive screen-printing project. The Salon 4700 group was divided into three groups and spent time with each of the four-featured artists: Catherine Dreiss, Jeffrey Thompson, Larassa Kabel and Robert Spellman. The short bios from each of the artists prompted a host of back and forth comments from Salon 4700 members and the artists. Familiar with open house shows, the artists all felt this was a distinctly different time to talk in depth with people who asked pointed questions and were eager to learn what prompted the artists to create the works they showcased. We're not sure who enjoyed the discussions more, the artists or the Salon members, but both groups left with a more inclusive understanding of the evolution of the art currently being created in Des Moines, Iowa.



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