

PRESS RELEASE
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MEDIA CONTACT:

Jill Gibboney
Director of Marketing and Communication
513-562-6280
jill.gibboney@artacademy.edu

EXHIBITING ARTIST CONTACT:

Sarah Stolar
Executive Director of Academic Affairs and Academic Dean
sarah.stolar@artacademy.edu
505-919-9354

From: Art Academy of Cincinnati

RE: ART EXHIBITIONS

Gary Gaffney: *Everything Else* & Sarah Stolar: *Selected Works from The Grief Club*

Exhibition Dates: Gaffney: August 22-September 26, 2025

Stolar: August 18-September 26, 2025

Opening Reception: Friday, August 29, 2025 from 5-9pm

Location: SITE1212 at the Art Academy of Cincinnati
1212 Jackson St, Cincinnati, OH 45202

Gary Gaffney: *Everything Else*

Sarah Stolar: *Selected Works from The Grief Club*

The Art Academy of Cincinnati celebrates the past of a beloved professor and the next generation of leadership with two exhibitions.

The Art Academy of Cincinnati is honored to present two concurrent exhibitions—Gary Gaffney: *Everything Else* and Sarah Stolar: *Selected Works from The Grief Club*—in our Pearlman and McClure galleries.

In the late 1990s, Gary Gaffney was Sarah Stolar's professor at the Art Academy of Cincinnati. Over the years, they remained in touch, and Gary often encouraged Sarah to return to the AAC in some capacity as a professional academic. Today, Sarah serves as the new Executive Director



Art Academy
of Cincinnati
College of Art & Design

of Academic Affairs and Academic Dean, appointed just a few months after Gary's passing in February 2025.

These simultaneous exhibitions feature a retrospective of works by Gary Gaffney and new works by Sarah Stolar, underscoring the enduring legacy between teacher and student. Gary's mentorship deeply informed Sarah's artistic philosophy and teaching approach, resulting in a continuation of his influence through her work with students. In this way, the values and vision that Gary championed live on in the next generation of artists and educators—creating a lasting legacy that speaks to the heart of the Art Academy's mission.

Gary Gaffney: *Everything Else* - Pearlman Gallery

Everything Else commemorates the work and lasting impact of artist and teacher Gary Gaffney. This exhibition presents a variety of artworks produced over the course of Gaffney's career—drawings, collages, sculpture, mixed-media and text-based works—and demonstrates his dedication to creative expression and its critical importance in our lives. A beloved presence at the Art Academy for over forty years, his February 2025 passing was felt deeply by the Cincinnati art community and generations of AAC students who were positively impacted by his kindness, energy, and creative spirit. Everything Else celebrates Gaffney's remarkable artistic legacy and lasting impact.

Gary Gaffney (1944—2025) was born in New Orleans, LA. He earned a BFA in Printmaking from the University of New Orleans (1974) and an MFA in Drawing from the University of Cincinnati (1977). His distinguished art career included solo exhibitions at Louisiana State University Shreveport, University of Dayton, Warsaw Project Space, and Thomas More College. He participated in many group exhibitions, including Landscape '84 at the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati, OH; Earth, Mind and Spirit at the Sun City Art Museum in Sun City, AZ; Drawn to Art at the Fitton Center for the Arts in Hamilton, OH; and Angels at the Carnegie Arts Center, Covington, KY. In 1978, Gary Gaffney joined the faculty at Art Academy of Cincinnati, where he remained an important fixture, encouraging students for over four decades. He created the Minumental exhibition in 1987; featuring tiny artwork created by students and faculty, it would go on to become an enduring AAC tradition. In 2013, he was honored by the Art Academy with Professor Emeritus status.

Art Academy of Cincinnati extends heartfelt condolences and thanks to the Gaffney Family, who loaned artwork to make this exhibition possible.

Sarah Stolar: *Selected Works from The Grief Club* - McClure Gallery

Selected Works from The Grief Club presents work from Sarah Stolar's most current interdisciplinary project. In 2018, Sarah became the primary caregiver for her artist mother after she was diagnosed with advanced-stage Alzheimer's disease. This experience initiated a new body of work that continues beyond her mother's death, prompting Sarah to use dark humor and irony to explore the emotional complexities of grief. The Grief Club is informed by 17th-century Dutch vanitas paintings—with their references to pleasure and the certainty of death—and the Kübler-Ross model of the Five Stages of Grief, which she has personified as

entertainers. These figures embody the Celtic tradition of keening women: paid mourners who wail lamentations, feast, dance, and perform provocative acts in a party-style funeral known as "the merry wake." The work challenges traditional experiences of sadness and socially sanctioned methods of coping by interpreting the raw and real ways many humans find comfort. Selected Works from The Grief Club presents a series of paintings and other works from the project.

Sarah Stolar (b. 1974, Chicago, IL; she/her) is an interdisciplinary artist living and working in Cincinnati, OH and Santa Fe, NM. Her practice spans painting, drawing, multimedia installation, film, video, and performance art. She is also a core member of La Pocha Nostra, the oldest cross-border performance art troupe in the world. Rooted in a 30-year investigation of the feminine psychological narrative, common threads in her work include loss of innocence, sexuality, power, death, spirituality, and identity. Sarah is the daughter of artist and educator Merlene Schain (1948–2022) and a descendant of 19th-century German painter Adolph von Menzel and Rookwood Pottery master potter John von Menzel of the American Arts and Crafts Movement. She grew up in her mother's art studio and award-winning art school, Schain Studios, in Cincinnati, and holds a BFA in Painting from the Art Academy of Cincinnati and an MFA in New Genres from the San Francisco Art Institute. A dedicated educator for over two decades, she currently serves as the Academic Dean and Executive Director of Academic Affairs at the Art Academy of Cincinnati.

ABOUT THE ART ACADEMY OF CINCINNATI

The Art Academy of Cincinnati, established in 1869, is an independent college of art and design. Degrees granted are the Associate of Science in Graphic Design; the Bachelor of Fine Arts in Creative Writing, Design, Illustration, Painting and Drawing, Photography, Print Media, Digital Arts Animation and Sculpture; and the Master of Arts in Art Education. Accredited by the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD), the Art Academy is a charter member of both NASAD and the Association of Independent Colleges of Art and Design. The AAC is also accredited by the Higher Learning Commission and is a member of the Strategic Ohio Council for Higher Education (SOCHE). The AAC's mission is to create and sustain radical, forward thinking, contemporary visual artists and designers whose creative contributions make a substantial difference in all the lives they touch.