

# Budding Community Collaboration with the UNH Museum of Art

This fall, the University of New Hampshire's Museum of Art hosted Not For Sale, an invitational exhibition with the support of the local art community.

## Rebecca Colby, Staff Writer

A wonderful space, with no budget or staff, and a blank slate. That is what Benjamin Cariens, associate Professor and department chair of art and art history at the University of New Hampshire, proposed when he reached out to local curators from Katzman Contemporary Projects and the Rochester Museum of Fine Arts.

Besides his familiarity with their work, Cariens appreciated the curator's celebration of regional artists as well as some UNH graduates, and that community engagement was the positive force that he hoped to use to breathe new life into the gallery.

Cariens gave the curators full creative reign over the project, taking a hands-off approach, and they came back with the idea of Not For Sale, an invitational exhibition displaying the work of 40 regional artists spanning from Portland, Maine to Lawrence, Massachusetts.

The concept of Not For Sale focused on the creativity and developing process of artists rather than the finished, marketable and commercial product from an artist, asking, what insight would you share with your younger self?

This exhibition comes in the wake of the closure of the UNH Museum of Art in late January, a shock and loss for the art community. Following emotions of surprise and loss, Cariens said, "My most immediate feeling was, 'how do we keep that space active?'" Thus began the efforts to revive and restructure the space into something new.

The art department was able to retain the space without staff or a budget. In the spring, students organized and carried out an exhibition from start to finish; more details on the student-led art exhibition as well as budget cuts to the Museum of Art can be found in an article from The New Hampshire staff writer Cassandra Chabot and an article from The New Hampshire staff writer Emma Kostyun. Not For Sale is the first externally sourced exhibition since the closure, and its ties to the local art community may signal further community-based engagement with the exhibition space and the UNH art department.



Madeline Marshall

The department has already continued to display this initiative for further community engagement. In November, Jennifer Caine, painter and senior lecturer at Dartmouth College, will be showing several of her pieces. Starting in January, the Ogunquit Museum of American Art is scheduled to show parts of their permanent collection in the UNH gallery, indicative of a closer working relationship established between the museum and the UNH art department. Cariens is also currently working with several student groups to possibly organize another student work show in March and April 2025.

Despite setbacks with the closure of the Museum of Art, Cariens says that there is a silver lining to this cloud. The current exhibition and future shows bring a fresh perspective to the UNH art gallery, as well as the student body and surrounding communities.

“I think that it’s going to be a huge benefit to our students and our community,” said Cariens, “It’s important for us to feel like we’re a part of this community and I think it’s even more important to understand that the university is here for them as well.”

The Not For Sale exhibition closed Oct. 11 at the Paul Creative Arts Center.

The people and organizations responsible for the exhibition:

Eric and Julie Katzman  
Amy Regan  
Matt Wyatt  
Katzman Contemporary Projects  
Rochester Museum of Fine Arts  
See Saw Art

The featured artists in Not For Sale:

Alex Leith, Alicia Ethridge, Ashley Page, Bethany Engstrom, Brett Marcel, Chris Thibault, Claudia Rippee, Cozette Russell, Damion Silver, Dave Pettengill, Dean McCrillis,  
Douglas Breault, Edgar Paredes, Forrest Elliot, Forrest Knight, Hannah Hirsch,  
Heather Morgan, Holden Willard, Jackie Brown, Jason Bagatta, Kerri Kimura, Kevin Kintner,  
Kevin Xiques, Kristy Cavaretta, Lauren Karjala, Lydia M. Kinney, Marcus Green,  
Matt Demers, Meg Hahn, Mike Howat, Miles Warner, Ned Roche, Rachelle Beaudoin, Raquel P. Miller, Richard Yu-Tang Lee, Ryan John Lefebvre, Sean Weare, Steven Cabral, Susan Schwake, Tara Lewis, and Tracy Hayes