

For Immediate Release

February 5, 2013

In March, the Crisp-Ellert Art Museum will present a selection of works by New Hampshire-based artist Anna Von Mertens.

Von Mertens' work begins with her exhaustive research into a variety of subjects and unusual phenomena that encompass the visual, scientific and historical. She spends hours meticulously translating this empirical data into paintings, hand-dyeing and hand-stitching fabric as a means to examine and map universal topics that might also shed light on the personal.

The exhibition will kick off with an artist talk in conjunction with Flagler College's "Ideas and Images: Visiting Scholars and Artists" program on Thursday, February 28 at 7pm. An opening reception will be held on Friday, March 1 from 5 until 9pm.

The exhibition will include works from the series *You and Me* and *Portraits*, as well as *Endings* and *Look to the Heavens*. Each of these series' exposes the artist's penchant for seeking out isolated bits of information in order to make universal ideas and events more personal, and the vast more intimate.

In her latest body of work, *You and Me*, Von Mertens explores the visual subtleties that occur between the currents surrounding magnetic poles. While each work in this series refers to a single source image, subtle variations bespeak both a visual and emotional shift. In some, a concentration of white bursts forth from the black background, in others there is a gradual shift from white to grey to black that creates an imbalance, leaving dark voids in the composition. According to the artist, these pieces tell the story of the "attraction and repulsion, immersion and escape that are negotiated as part of a relationship." In a somewhat comic twist Von Mertens has given each work the title of a rock song, stating, "this relationship has been summed up in many a rock song...and I certainly am playing off the clichés of romantic love. But the personal motivation behind the work is the relationship between mother and child and the roller coaster ride of parenthood."

Von Mertens' *Portraits* are a collection of works in which the artist begins with the idea that an "aura" could be the awe felt when in the presence of a great work of art. She uses this as a jumping off point to then interpret an aura for a variety of iconic art historical paintings, from Warhol to Whistler to Velasquez. The artist researched the relationship between the artist and sitter in portraits she felt were particularly unique or intense, the personalities of both, as well as the historical context of the work. Her research into aura photography, "the prescribed codes of color placement," informed these forays into abstraction. Von Mertens' states that even though she first considered the concept of auras absurd, these works "return to the original intention of a portraitist working to capture the essence of their subject." By remaining faithful to the dictates of aura photography, it allowed the artist to remain true to the original portrait. Further, rather than questioning the authenticity of the aura photograph, Von Mertens' chose to

“respect the desire to investigate our existence more fully. We hold our beliefs in diverse--and precarious--ways.” She holds that amid the questions of between belief and representation, these *Portraits* represent the universal search for beauty.

Anna Von Mertens received a B.F.A. from Brown University and an M.F.A. from the California College of Arts and Crafts in 2000. Recent exhibitions include “*40 Under 40: Craft Futures*” at the Smithsonian American Art Museum's Renwick Gallery in Washington D.C., as well as Ballroom Marfa, Texas, the Berkeley Art Museum, and the forthcoming “*Uncontainable Portraits*” at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. In 2010, Von Mertens was awarded the United States Artists Simon Fellowship, and in 2007 was the recipient of the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Biennial Award. She was the head resident at the San Francisco Arts Education Project in 2001 and an artist-in-residence at the MacDowell Colony in Peterborough, New Hampshire in 2002. Her works can be found in private and museum collections nation-wide, including the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Berkeley Art Museum, the International Quilt Center and Study Center, Lincoln, Nebraska, and the Smithsonian Museum's Renwick Gallery.

For further information on the exhibition and related programs, please visit the website at www.flagler.edu/crispellert, or contact Julie Dickover at 904-826- 8530 or crispellert@flagler.edu.

“Ideas and Images: Scholars and Artists in Residence” features an international composition of artists and authors, introducing a fresh and creative component to the greater St. Augustine community. Each event is free and open to the public. Call (904) 819-6282 or visit www.flagler.edu/our-community for more information. If you are a person with a disability and need reasonable accommodations, please contact Lynn Francisco at 904-819-6460. Sign Language Interpreters are available upon request with a minimum of three days' notice.