

# Educator Notes

## Ritual

December 15, 2017–November 25, 2018



## About the Artists & Artworks: Iteration I

Yuji Agematsu was born in Kanagawa, Japan, in 1956, and moved to New York without ever visiting the city previously. His work *zip: 07.01.11 . . . 09.30.11* (2011) is the result of a daily walk that the artist has been undertaking since 1997, in which he collects what he finds on the streets of New York and places it into the cellophane used to wrap packs of cigarettes.

Baseera Khan was born in Denton, Texas, in 1980, and lives and works in New York. *Psychedelic Prayer Rugs* (2017) was designed by the artist and fabricated in collaboration with artisans in Kashmir, India. Presented diagonally on the gallery floor facing the *qibla*, the direction of Kaaba in Mecca, Khan's rugs combine personal symbols—the gay pride pink triangle, a poem in Urdu passed down from her mother, and the Purple Heart medal—with traditional Islamic references.

Joachim Koester was born in Copenhagen, Denmark, in 1962, and lives and works in Copenhagen and Brooklyn, NY. In his film *Tarantism* (2007), a group of dancers silently performs a series of frantic, frenzied movements for the camera. The dancers are reenacting the *Tarantella*, an Italian dance meant to cure the symptoms of a tarantula spider bite.

Deana Lawson was born in Rochester, New York, in 1979, and lives and works in New York. Shot on location in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Lawson's photograph *As Above, So Below* (2013) was inspired by a ceremonial event that Lawson witnessed during her first trip to the country. The sacrifice of the pig and, subsequently, the woman's placement of the pig's head on top of her own resonated strongly with Lawson, and she traveled back to Haiti to restage the image.

Kate Newby was born in Auckland, New Zealand, in 1979, and lives and works in Auckland and Brooklyn, NY. Her ongoing sculptural series of pocket pieces combines handmade objects and casts of found items, ranging from nails, coins, and stones, to soda can pull tabs and bobby pins. Carried by individual AAM staff members in the pockets of their own clothing throughout the duration of the exhibition, Newby's works are shown to visitors through personal interactions and conversations.

## About the Exhibition

What do you do every day that you most look forward to? What are your daily practices and do they make you feel connected to something greater, or to yourself? The AAM's exhibition *Ritual* considers the ways in which rituals impact culture, community, and how we are known, both as individuals and collectively. Generally defined as a series of established actions carried out for spiritual, social, political, and personal significance, rituals are embedded into everyday life.

Embodying its own calendar ritual, the exhibition will be on view at the AAM for an entire year, presented in three distinct iterations.

This exhibition presents a diverse collection of works by over fifteen artists exploring the act of ritual through three distinct rites: rites of passage, communal rites, and rites of personal devotion. The show reaffirms the ability of rituals to constantly transform our perceptions, our perspectives, and ultimately our experiences.

## Questions for Discussion

- | What do you do every day that you most look forward to?
- | How is ritual different from routine?
- | What rituals did you learn from your family? What rituals did you pick up from your friends?
- | What can we learn from ourselves by identifying our daily rituals?

## Suggested Activities

### Understanding our Rituals

The exhibition *Ritual* reaffirms the ability of rituals to constantly transform our perceptions, our perspectives, and ultimately our experiences. Have a conversation with students about their own personal daily rituals. Look for common rituals that are shared by the majority of the group, as well as those that are unique to each student.

Challenge each student to alter one personal ritual behavior for one week—either by making a noticeable change to that behavior, or by skipping it altogether. Ask students to make observations on the effect of that change in terms of the way they feel at the end of the week. Is the new behavior the new ritual, or will students return to their old rituals?

Following page: Yuji Agematsu, *zip: 07.01.11 . . . 09.30.11*, 2011 (detail). Mixed media in cigarette cellophane wrappers (92 units) on wood-backed acrylic shelves and latex paint (3 units); overall: 31 3/4 x 137 1/4 x 5 1/4 in (87 x 2175 x 13.3 cm); Installation dimensions variable. Courtesy the artist and Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York. Photo: Stephen Faught

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