FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

An exhibition of work by 2nd year graduate students in the Department of Art at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

OPENING RECEPTION: Friday, March 8, 6:00-8:00 pm

In media ranging from plaster tiles to drone-captured video, Amanda Boggs, Kathryn Fanelli, BIBIANA medkova, Kenneth Murphy, and Xuân Phạm ask, how do we define edges and defend borders? On the Edge presents recent work from these five current graduate students at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, whose work investigates and traces boundaries. The exhibition will be on view March 4-29 at UMass NYPOP Gallery, 526 W.26th Street, Suite 314, New York, NY, 10001. A celebratory opening reception will take place on Friday, March 8, at 6:00-8:00 pm, and live performances by Amanda Boggs and BIBIANA medkova will take place on Friday, March 8 at 6:30 pm and 7:30 pm, respectively.

In this moment, considerations of boundaries feel particularly pressing: while politicians obsessively defend their countries’ borders, the media reports that their constituents are increasingly tribalized. And yet, boundaries are forever being contested and defended, debate over differentiation a common thread throughout human history: holy texts not only chronicle skirmishes over land dating back millennia, but also define which foods are and are not acceptable for human consumption. It is not just the existence of an edge or border which is significant, however, but the very process of drawing it—the act of “bordering,” through which distinctions are formed.

The five artists in On the Edge investigate processes of articulating difference—between here and there, us and them, then and now, presence and absence. Trained as a harness-based aerialist, Amanda Boggs feels an unusual affinity for drones, which likewise experience the world on both vertical and horizontal axes. Originally developed for surveillance, mapping, and warfare, in Boggs’ hands, the drone becomes an uncertain, unpredictable
presence, hovering between prosthetic eye and subject as it captures eerie, dreamy video. Kathryn Fanelli’s work traces the seam between presence and absence—existence and nonexistence. Fanelli, whose family worked in carnivals when she was young, draws on the ephemeral materiality of these traveling spectacles, in media including warped mirrors, spun sugar, and a network of electrical wiring with LED lights. Fluent in the languages of digital media, data and processes, BIBIANA medkova interrogates the relationship between technology, history, and identity. In their installation for On the Edge, medkova addresses the self-mythologizing which shapes nationalism, and the symbols which guard the borders of nations. Kenneth Murphy’s paintings oscillate between historical and contemporary: here, the long history of male artists depicting themselves in the act of painting their own portraits—from Vincent Van Gogh to Norman Rockwell—meets the brilliant colors and square format of an Instagram selfie. Xuân Phạm’s work examines the relationship of the body to its environment, addressing the vulnerability of both, and the blurred lines between interior and exterior. With a floor of plaster tiles, which slowly crumble to dust as visitors tread on them over the course of the exhibition, Phạm’s installation quietly questions how we decide what to protect, and where our concern ought to lie.

The five artists in On the Edge explore sites of differentiation, and the ways that these liminal spaces are formed. Some address the anxiety of defining the self: can the “I” only exist in opposition to the other? Others ask, how can we navigate multiple—sometimes conflicting—identities and histories?

Curated by Alexandra Foradas (Curator of Visual Art, MASS MoCA), and organized with the assistance of Coe Lapossy, Lecturer in the Department of Art, this program was made possible (in part) by a grant from the UMass Arts Council. The exhibition and reception are free and open to the public.

Images and checklist: https://bit.ly/2IhJrPs

------------------------------------------------------------

For 25 years, UMass Amherst’s New York Professional Outreach Program (NYPOP) has served UMass visual art students, facilitating travel to New York city and hosting intensive, two-day encounters with arts professionals.

In 2016, NYPOP’s reach was expanded to include all departments in the College of Humanities and Fine Arts, providing the invaluable service of helping humanities and arts students understand their limitless opportunities and bridge the divide between academia and the professional world.

NYPOP’s space in Chelsea provides students, faculty, and alumni a venue to showcase their work in New York. The NYPOP studio is available to members of the HFA community to host panel discussions, readings, exhibitions, and performances.

For further questions, please contact the gallery at 212.633.6826, or nypop@umass.edu.