

# Educator Notes

## Margaret Kilgallen: that's where the beauty is.

January 12–June 16, 2019

Gallery 1



## About the Exhibition

Margaret Kilgallen's *that's where the beauty is.*, will be the largest exhibition of her work since her 2005 show *In the Sweet Bye & Bye* at REDCAT, Los Angeles. The exhibition examines the artist's interests in printmaking, American and Non-Western folk history and folklore, and feminist strategies of representation. Kilgallen obtained much of her imagery from the hand-painted storefront signage in the Mission District of San Francisco, printed matter found in thrift stores, and old-fashioned typography. She often preferred flat graphic images in muted colors and recycled house paints and wood panels over polished materials. Her artwork celebrates the beauty found in the handmade, empowers those who live and work in the margins, and challenges traditional gender roles and hierarchies. The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue, serving to mark the ongoing legacy and spirit of one of California's innovative artists.

## About the Artist

Kilgallen was born in 1967, in Washington, DC, and died at the age of thirty-three in San Francisco, just as her work was gaining prominence. She is known for her association with the Bay Area Mission School—a loosely formed group of artists who shared an affinity for old wood, streetscapes, and anything raw or unschooled—and for her inclusion in the exhibition *Beautiful Losers: Contemporary Art and Street Culture* (2004–6). She studied at Colorado College, Colorado Springs (1989), earning a BA in Printmaking and Studio Art. Pregnant and suffering a recurrence of breast cancer, in 2001, Kilgallen installed her works in the *East Meets West* exhibition at the Philadelphia Institute of Contemporary Art and in her Master of Fine Arts thesis exhibition at Stanford University. Kilgallen gave birth to her daughter on June 7, received her MFA on June 17, and died on June 26, 2001. Other exhibitions of her work have taken place at the Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, and the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco (both in 2004), as well as the Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, and San Jose Museum of Art, CA (both in 2002).

## Questions for Discussion

- I If you could paint a sign, what would it say?
- I Describe the artist's use of color, shape, and line. How do these choices affect your experience?
- I Describe the artist's use of material. What might this tell you about the artist?
- I Compare the artist's style to American folk art. What similarities and differences do you notice?

## Suggested Activity

### Prints by Hand

Prepare for the activity by gathering Styrofoam plates, pencils, water-based printing inks, rubber brayers, white paper, wooden spoons, and smocks to protect clothes from mess.

Have students begin by looking at Margaret Kilgallen's piece *Surfer Girl* (ca. 1999), encouraging them to imagine themselves doing an activity they love. Give students the Styrofoam plates and pencils and have them draw themselves participating in their favorite hobby on the surface. Once students are happy with their drawings, have them add color to the surface by rolling the brayers in ink and covering the plate.

Finally, have students transfer the drawing to a piece of paper by placing the paper on top of the ink-covered etching, smoothing with a spoon. Carefully peel away the paper to expose the finished product. Continue as many times as you wish, encouraging students to use various colors and experiment with the process of printmaking.

After finishing their artwork, have students gather together to share their prints with one another and discuss which print is their favorite. Encourage students to notice how their individual prints are different and find where their hands left marks, a process important to Kilgallen.

Margaret Kilgallen, *Surfer Girl*, ca. 1999. Acrylic on wood, 14 x 15 1/2 x 1 3/4 in (35.56 x 39.37 x 4.45 cm). Collection of Marialidia Marcotulli

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