Open This End
Contemporary Art from the Collection of Blake Byrne opens Aug. 25

Displaying work by some of the most significant and compelling artists of the past 50 years, Urban Arts Space and Hopkins Hall Gallery present Open This End: Contemporary Art from the Collection of Blake Byrne on display through November 7.

Blake Byrne is a retired television executive, the son of an Ohio State alumus and professor, and is a noted art collector and philanthropist. Open This End features a selection of work from renowned artists including works by Andy Warhol, Gerhard Richter, Mike Kelley, David Hammons, Tony Smith and many others.

The majority of the works in Open This End can be seen at Urban Arts Space, 50 W. Town St. in the historic Lazarus building. Hopkins Hall Gallery on campus features Jimmy Carter, a multimedia work by Jennifer Steinkamp. Visitors to campus may also view Felix Gonzalez-Torres' public work, Untitled (For Parker) (1994) on the former Levis Bookstore façade at 15th Avenue and High Street.

The exhibition incorporates numerous themes important to contemporary art, including Pop Art and Conceptualism, the Pictures Generation, performance art and the Object Body, California Conceptualism, Minimalism, German Pop and European art since the 1980s, identity politics, and portraiture and self-portraiture. The collection is intertwined with social issues of the contemporary world, including race, gender, education, philanthropy, communication and ethics.

The exhibition's name echoes a 1962 painting by Andy Warhol. The earliest piece in the show, "Open This End" frames the exhibition as a present to be unwrapped, a gift for audiences to experience and discover.

The exhibition was scheduled to coincide with the school calendar so that it will be on view for one semester and can be incorporated into the art history curriculum.

Three courses are being offered here to complement the exhibit: Classics H2220; Classical Mythology/Contemporary Art, taught by Richard Fletcher; and History of Art 4640; Contemporary Art Since 1945. Visual arts of Europe and the United States from 1945 to the present; and History of Art 5001: The Task of the Curator, both taught by Kris Paulsen.

There will also be a philanthropic component to the project in the form of a panel presentation that will be of interest not only to art history students, but to those studying law and business as well. Topics of discussion will include art collecting, philanthropy, ethics as they relate to the business of art, and the contributions individual collectors have made to establish the permanent collections of our public and private museums.

Several universities with connections to Blake Byrne and his family, including Duke University, Columbia University, Lewis & Clark College, have or will feature Open This End as it travels across the country. The exhibition celebrates Byrne's 80th birthday.

Byrne's parents attended Ohio State, and his father taught in the College of Engineering. Blake Byrne and his family established a scholarship fund for electrical engineering students in honor of his father and his father's mentor, Professor Perry Okey. The John F. Byrne and Perry Okey Memorial Scholarship is given to first-generation college students at Ohio State. For more details, visit the Urban Arts Space website (uas.osu.edu) or call (614) 292-8861.