

## **Experiences in Femininity Exhibition**

### Project Description:

A student-conceived and curated exhibition, Experiences in Femininity (EIF), is an exploration of the diversity and critical dialogue of the feminine experience. The juried exhibition features selected works based on the UNO student's knowledge and engagement with the theme. Works selected range from book arts, soft sculpture, poetry, 2-D, to digital media. To expand our student-led exhibition, additional programming, and a local artist collaboration has been included. These additions highlight the rich capacities of our students and their engagement with contemporary feminist thought.

EIF began in 2023 as a 2.5-week-long display in the UNO Criss Library and has occurred annually since. For the 2025 exhibition, Experiences in Femininity has expanded to the Osborn Family Gallery. This year the exhibition will hang inside a physical gallery, with accompanying walls and professional lighting. Additionally, the exhibition will be held for three months, which includes opportunities for programming and furthering community engagement. Our plan is to introduce a publication to collaborate with local scholars to promote their research, along with written statements and images from our artists. Together, with the support of faculty like Dr. Adrian Duran (CFAM), artists, and curators, the exhibition will continue in future years. Our mission is to carry on the momentum of the past two years' work and create a vital legacy to UNO and beyond.

### Activities and Project timeline:

At the beginning of the fall semester, our curatorial team met with faculty and library staff to sort through previous show materials and created an agenda for August 2024 to May 2025. We begin the curatorial process by setting expectations for what we plan to accomplish and developing projects from the exhibition year prior. In particular, we reach out to faculty members and artists to be a part of our lecture series. Our 'call for art' poster and Google submission form are the first projects completed in December. In the submission form, we directly outline the exhibition prompt, artist eligibility, artwork size requirements, the library's liability statement, and major deadlines for artists to follow. We will develop this form into a QR code poster, which will be hung in the building across campus and the digital signage within Weber Fine Arts building and UNO Criss Library. This allows artists easy access as they can scan the poster and have all the logistics of being a part of EIF at their fingertips. To push for applications, we reach out to faculty and set up times for us to speak to their classes encouraging students to submit their work and answer frequently asked questions.

Our submission period will close on February 1<sup>st</sup>. From there we utilize Catalog It, a database that allows for easy access and organization of artwork submitted. We meet with the EIF jury, which is made up of our curatorial team, and art and art history faculty to decide which works are included. We judge artwork based on interpretation of the prompt, the written artist

statement, and technical skill. We also consider our space limitations within the gallery and our ability to install all sculptural pieces effectively and safely.

After selecting works we email artists notifying them of their acceptance or rejection. In the acceptance email, we outline artwork drop-off and how artists can transport their work to us safely for us to begin installation in mid-February. This email also includes Criss Library's equipment and exhibiting agreement which is a liability form for participants to sign regarding the library's handling and display of their artwork.

We design an exhibition poster featuring artwork, the opening reception date, and our lecture series. These posters are shared across campus buildings, digital signage, social media, and local art galleries, and emailed to all School of the Arts students. From here we begin preparing for our opening reception. We order catering, email artists about parking, and draft our curator talk. Our lecture series takes place after the opening reception in which we have art history faculty present their scholarship and artist discuss their work. This allows us to provide further in-depth education to all those in attendance at our exhibition.

This to-do list is a reiteration of what we've completed in the past two years of E.I.F. With the potential generosity of the Fuse Grant, we will create our roughly 30-page exhibition catalog. This publication will highlight artists' work, scholarly research, and creative writing relating to the feminine experience. It will be available at our opening reception and lecture series to broaden the exhibition's reach.

#### Student Faculty mentor roles:

Dr. Adrian Duran is a faculty mentor for the research component of the EIF exhibition and proposed publication. With his expertise on contemporary art and relevant feminist scholarship, he will provide guidance on the publication and editing necessary to crafting an ethical and critical publication. The EIF publication, aims to serve as an example of the critical feminist works being made by student, faculty, and staff throughout the University of Nebraska system.

#### List of previous internal funding:

NONE

#### Budget and Budget Justifications:

At the 2024 UNO Research and Creative Activity Fair, the EIF exhibit won "Outstanding Undergraduate Exhibit." Participating jury members were impressed by the effort and community engagement involved in the exhibition and supporting research. For the 2024 exhibition, we secured \$450 in funding through the UNO Art Club, of which, funds were used to support equipment costs, marketing, and customary catering. However, this funding is untenable for the 2025 conception of EIF. We are pursuing secured funding for not just estimated costs for installation, marketing, and catering, but also an exhibition catalog.

A critical component of this grant proposal is the funding for the printing costs for a printed exhibition catalog, which can support the creative endeavors of students, faculty, and staff within the University of Nebraska system. A growing number of students, faculty, and staff are critically engaged in feminist work, adding to the already thriving dialogue about the state of women's and gender equity in the world. For example, the No Limits Conference, which took place at UNO last year gathered dozens of Nebraska scholars, of diverse disciplines, to add to the conversation on the history and scope of gender studies in Nebraska. The catalog will be a full color 40–80-page book, published in collaboration with the UNMC printshop and a student graphic designer. This would be an ample workforce development opportunity for this contributing graphics student.

The EIF publication would include critical writing, scholarship, and artwork that engage in this field of inquiry. Contributing scholars will have opportunities to be included in the lecture series, a program which will be hosted in tandem with the exhibition March-May of 2025.

In the three-month span of the exhibition, EIF plans to host 3-4 guest lecturers. The College of Fine Arts & Media (CFAM) is dedicated to sharing a wealth of relevant knowledge to students, faculty, and staff, often requiring that students attend a guest lecture series. This EIF lecture series will support the efforts of CFAM in encouraging students to engage in critical discussions of socio-political and cultural significance.

#### Printing Costs with UNMC Printing

100 copies (free contributors' copy)

= \$1,000

#### Opening Reception Costs:

= \$600

Total Costs: \$ 1,600

To The Committee:

I am writing in support of the FUSE application submitted by the *Experiences in Femininity* exhibition student committee, headed by Kennedy Wallman, Toni Parker, and Julia Mulloy. This will be the third iteration of this exhibition, and the organizers are applying to this grant to expand their capacity and initiate new resources, programming, and documentation. Most exciting among these are an increased number of lectures during the run of the exhibition and a catalog that will bring together student and faculty contributions and offer enhanced archival potential for the endeavor.

As you will read in the application materials, the *Experiences in Femininity* exhibition began in 2023 in collaboration with UNO's Criss Library, installed on mobile walls in the lower floor near Archives and Special Collections. This same format was used for the 2024 exhibition, but the students have secured a spot in the Osborn Family Gallery for 2025, a much welcome change to a more permanent and professional gallery space.

This exhibition could not be a more important example of the power of attending to marginalized and lesser-represented voices. As conceived by its organizers, femininity is a broadly expansive and inclusive category that affords voices that exist beyond the traditional parameters of cis- and heteronormative manifestations of womanhood. Amplifying these voices is an ethical imperative in a moment where LGBTQ+ and DEIA initiatives are under attack across the nation.

Another important element of this project is its crossover with UNO School of the Arts curriculum, including our Studio Art, Art History, and Arts Management concentrations. The last of these just came online this F24 semester, in part in response to UNO's larger movements towards workforce preparation. Organizing exhibitions and publications such as these offers our students opportunities to not only engage real world arts professionalism, but also to add enormous momentum to UNO's broader arts and culture ecosystem. These are the next generation of arts professionals and they have brought an exciting proactivity and energy to our university and community. Their efforts to date were rewarded with the "Outstanding Undergraduate Exhibit" at the 2024 UNO Research and Creative Activity Fair. This FUSE grant will be an unprecedented accelerant to this project and catalyze its existence for future generations of UNO undergraduates.

I support this application with full-throated enthusiasm. These are exactly the kinds of students and activities that brought me to UNO and I will offer any and all support to them for as long as the *Experiences in Femininity* exhibition perseveres.

Many thanks,



Adrian R. Duran, Ph.D.

Professor, School of the Arts