

**John O'Reilly: A Studio Odyssey presents a striking visual journey;
fuses literature, art history and autobiography**

The artist's first solo exhibition at WAM opens May 13



Worcester, MA—April 11, 2017—Nationally celebrated artist John O'Reilly, whose photomontages mix contemporary and historical images to frame new insights into human interactions and the human form, will be the focus of a new exhibition at the Worcester Art Museum. *A Studio Odyssey*, on view from May 13 through August 13, 2017, covers the artistic range of O'Reilly's 50-year career, examines the evolution of his creative process, and gives the artist his first solo exhibition at the Museum. An opening reception takes place on Thursday, May 18 from 5:30 to 8 p.m.

The work of Worcester-based John O'Reilly is featured in prominent collections worldwide, including New York's Museum of Modern Art, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Whitney Museum of American Art, Harvard Art Museums, Boston's Museum of Fine Arts, and the Worcester Art Museum. He is best known for self-portrait photomontages that use Polaroid photographs and mix images of himself with fragments of photos of works by other artists. Confronting both personal and world history, the artist draws on his vast knowledge of art, literature, and music history—including the French writer Jean Genet, American novelist Henry James, and Greek poet Constantine Cavafy—to explore the ideas of transgression, subjectivity and isolation, and the relationship between time and memory.

O'Reilly's work also delves into issues of homosexuality, both as an aspect of his own identity and as an often-repressed, complicated narrative within society. More recently, he has incorporated found coloring books into his art, reconnecting with his World War II childhood and exploring his own feelings about mortality. More informal in construction, but no less complex, the resulting collages simultaneously communicate innocence and anxiety, a reflection of O'Reilly's conflicted feelings during his youth.

Curated, in collaboration with the artist, by Nancy Kathryn Burns, the Museum's Assistant Curator of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs, *A Studio Odyssey* features 85 of O'Reilly's works—including over 20 created since 2000. A self-guided tour directs visitors through the Museum to works in its collection that have inspired the artist and that connect to pieces shown in the exhibition.

"The exhibition seeks to provide a visual narrative illustrating the major literary sources that

affected John in his development as an artist. In addition to the rich art historical references in his photomontages, the artist often returns to literature as a foundation for his production,” said Ms. Burns. “The ‘studio odyssey’ we’ve created, is a journey through the subjective world of John’s creative process.”

John O’Reilly: A Studio Odyssey has been generously supported in part by Stephen J. Javaras and Robert A. Collins and through media partnership with Worcester Magazine.

Image caption: John O’Reilly, *Self-Portrait*, 1965, black paper, various printed matter, gelatin silver print, and casein montage on Masonite, Chapin Riley Fund, 2015.70

About the Worcester Art Museum

Founded in 1896, the Worcester Art Museum’s encyclopedic 37,500 piece collection covers 51 centuries of art. Highlights include the Medieval Chapter House, Renaissance Court, and Worcester Hunt Mosaic, as well as the recently integrated John Woodman Higgins Armory Collection of arms and armor. The Museum is internationally known for its collection of European and American art. It was the first in America to acquire paintings by Monet and Gauguin and one of the first to collect photography. As the first U.S. museum to focus on collaborating with local schools, it has been at the forefront of engaging audiences and giving them a meaningful and personal experience.

The Worcester Art Museum, located at 55 Salisbury Street in Worcester, MA, is open Wednesday through Friday and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; and every third Thursday from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Admission is \$14 for adults, \$6 for children 4-17, \$12 for seniors 65+, and \$12 for college students with ID. Members and children under four are free. Museum parking is free on a first-come, first-served basis; street parking is also available. For more information, visit worcesterart.org.

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For more information, please contact:

Worcester Art Museum
Julieane Frost
508-793-4373
JulieaneFrost@worcesterart.org