

Teaching Guide

JOHN SAURER

let it loose



Friday, September 15

Alumni Panel Discussion, 5:00 p.m.
Viking Theater, Buntrock Commons

Opening Reception, 6:00 - 7:30 p.m.
Flaten Art Museum, Center for Art & Dance

Thursday, September 28

Lunchtime Artist's Conversation
11:30 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.
Flaten Art Museum, Center for Art & Dance

SEPTEMBER 8 -
NOVEMBER 21, 2023

 **ST. OLAF FLATEN ART MUSEUM**

LOCATED IN THE CENTER FOR ART AND DANCE - ST. OLAF COLLEGE
MTWTF 10 am - 5 pm | Th 10 am - 8 pm | S-S 12 - 4 pm | stolaf.edu/flatten



About the Flaten Art Museum

Flaten Art Museum advances excellence in the liberal arts through exploration of values and vocation, inclusive programming, and global engagement – hallmarks of a St. Olaf College education. It engages campus, local, and worldwide audiences in creative and critical thinking through encounters with art that the museum collects, interprets, exhibits, publishes, and preserves.

Why Teach with Art?

Object-based learning fosters critical thinking, creative expression, writing, public speaking, and the understanding of alternative perspectives through group discussion and visual literacy. The Flaten Art Museum works with faculty across academic disciplines to customize class visits and design assignments that align with course objectives. Museum staff make object-based learning approachable and enriching with a learner-centered method of talking about art called Visual Thinking Strategy (VTS).

Student engagement can happen during a single class period or a sequence or related visits. Resulting projects may include conversation in a foreign language, creative writing, research papers, soundscapes, dance, musical performance, drawings, personal reflections, exhibition labels, blog posts, and more. If you are interested in teaching with the Flaten Art Museum, please email museum director Jane Becker Nelson at beckerj@stolaf.edu.

About the Exhibition

John Saurer: Let it Loose celebrates St. Olaf College Professor of Art John Saurer's fruitful artistic career as he marks 29 years of teaching at the college. Saurer's work is notable in its technical variety, spanning sculpture, drawing, installation, and printmaking.

Printmaking—Saurer's primary teaching area—has a unique capacity for reproducibility, an approach that echoes throughout Saurer's work in other media. Cast elements, repeated forms, and matrixes with individual components that create a larger whole express the artist's attraction to repetition, order, and technical refinement.



Featuring works of art made as early as 1995, this exhibition brings together a significant portion of Saurer's body of work for the very first—and last—time. The show's title, "Let it Loose," is drawn from a favorite Rolling Stones song and expresses Saurer's desire to distribute this work to the community. With the Flaten Art Museum's help, Saurer is making much of the work in the exhibition available, free of charge, to individuals and collecting institutions. Please visit the museum attendant to reserve a work of art to be collected at the conclusion of the exhibition.

About the Artist



During his 29 years at St. Olaf, John Saurer has taught over 2,700 students in courses such as 2D and 3D Foundations, Lithography, Relief, Intaglio, Figure Drawing, Casting, Welding, Topics in Studio Art, and Senior Studies. His teaching extends beyond the studio, too. Saurer has led numerous off-campus study courses through St. Olaf's Smith Center for Global Engagement, including the *New York Art Interim* and *Drawing from Nature in the Bahamas*, and Alumni & Family Travel excursions.

Saurer earned his BA at Hope College and his MFA at Colorado State University. His many exhibitions include shows in Minnesota, Montana, Michigan, New York, Georgia, Ohio, North Dakota, Utah, Colorado, Iowa, and Rosario, Argentina. Saurer's awards and honors include Minnesota State Arts Board grants, Faculty Development grants, a Nygaard Foundation grant, and the Egon Schiele Prize. He has served as a member of the Minnesota State Arts Board, the MAEP Artist Panel at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, the Gallery Committee at the Northfield Arts Guild, and juror for numerous exhibitions. His commissions include The Martha Miller Center for Global Communication (Hope College), The Behavioral Sciences Building (Colorado State University), and Gethsemane Lutheran Church (Hopkins, Minnesota).



Questions for Looking

1. Much of Saurer's work depicts or references the environments in which he has lived, suggesting that his physical surroundings have shaped him as an individual and an artist. In what ways do you think your environments have influenced the shape of your past and current self? (Recommended looking: *Hey!*, *Monuments Series*)
2. Saurer's work can be incredibly tiny. Look, for example, at *Origins – Dry (Graphite)* and *Wet (Ink)*, which captures the act of drawing a lentil-sized mark under a microscope. Saurer's work can also be quite massive. *First Day, 1995-2023* spans from the floor to ceiling of Groot Gallery.
 - a. Where else do you see the artist playing with scale in the exhibition?
 - b. Compare and contrast two works with very different scales. How does scale impact your perception of the work? How is it important to the concepts in the work?
3. Saurer works across many different artistic mediums, including sculpture, printmaking, and drawing. This approach demands a wide range of technical facility and skill with material.
 - a. Choose a work of art. What materials do you think went into making it? How do you think the artist constructed or created it?
 - b. How does the medium chosen by the artist relate to the concept of the work?
4. Get comfortable in front of a work of art, then plug your ears. Imagine the work has a soundscape. Describe what you hear.

5. Saurer likes to invite chance into his process. The arrangement of his print installation, *Criss-Cross*, relies on chance. Each time the piece is installed, a game spinner determines whether an individual print will be hung vertically or horizontally. Take a look at *Criss-Cross* in the exhibition, then compare it to one former installation of *Criss-Cross* below:
- In what ways are these iterations of *Criss-Cross* different and the same?
 - How does the reliance on chance make you feel about the role of the artist?
 - Which installation do you prefer, and why?
 - If you were installing this piece, would you want to decide the order, or would you leave it up to chance?



6. This exhibition's title was inspired by the Rolling Stones song, "Let it Loose." The FAM gathered Saurer's favorite songs for the studio on [this Spotify playlist](#). Take a moment to listen to "Let it Loose" as you explore the exhibition.
- If you had to choose one work of art from the exhibition that best exemplifies the song, what would it be? Why?
 - Do you like to listen to music while you work? Why or why not?

Additional Resources

- [John Saurer's website](#)
- John Saurer: Let it Loose* [Exhibition Guide](#)
- Essay: *All that Glitters is Not Gold*, Melanie Pankau, [Build on this Gesture](#) exhibition catalog (pp. 27-30)
- Let it Loose* [Spotify playlist](#), curated by John Saurer