

## Curator's Statement by Richard Fletcher

*Come Along With Me* explores the communication between Ohio artists' experiences, the artwork they create, and how that creative process can translate into lessons or guidelines for others. From the mundane context of daily life to unique and formative moments, *Come Along With Me* engages these narratives to bring the viewers into an intimate and interactive conversation with art as experience.

The Ohio Art League (OAL) is a catalyst for creative activity across the state and a meeting point for artists. *Come Along With Me* brings together a selection of OAL artists at different phases of their practice. The selected artworks represent an eclectic range of media—from painting, sculpture, photography, and video to installations and site-specific assemblages—and depicts different temporal phases in the artists' lives.

*Come Along With Me* encapsulates my research of how ancient literature, philosophy, and mythology can be reactivated through contemporary artistic practices. Ancient ethical handbooks were written out of the lived experiences of the philosophers who compiled them and engaged their audiences with guides for their own lives. *Come Along With Me* maps this phenomenon onto the contemporary art context.

The exhibition's title is inspired by the interrelated stories, experiences, and creative works of two women artists: the visual artist Eva Hesse and the writer Shirley Jackson. During her trip to Germany in 1964-5, Eva Hesse experienced a crisis in her own art, abandoning painting. During this period, she rails against the domestic constraints imposed upon her by married life and experiments with a series of drawings that involved the interplay of arrows and boxes. At the same time, Hesse was reading Shirley Jackson. Jackson's last work, written during this time that Hesse was in Germany, was the unfinished and posthumously published novel *Come Along With Me*. The story follows a woman who, when her husband dies, proceeds to pack up her house, erase her name and catch the first train out of town.

The serendipity of the connection between Hesse and Jackson, and their marriage of the mundane yet creative life, generates the core shift from the ancient ethical handbooks to contemporary artistic works in *Come Along With Me* the exhibition. The overt feminism of the exhibition appears in the ratio of female to male artists (14:4) and is grounded in how Hesse and Jackson challenged two entrenched misogynistic stereotypes. First, the idea that women artists are making work as a form of personal therapy, leaving the polemic interventions in society to male artists. Secondly, the idea of 'mansplaining', whereby men occupy the position of bestowing their wisdom and life-lessons on the passive, female listener. *Come Along With Me* shows how these stereotypes can be disturbed by bringing artists' experiences *and* lessons together in the same exhibition.

*Come Along With Me* also brings artists and visitors together in the sharing of stories, the exchange of ideas, and the potential for developing new communities in Columbus and across the state. Each artist is called upon to act as a guide, not only to their own, singular experiences, but also on behalf of larger networks and communities.