

# GALLERY GUIDE

## CHRISTINE GAFFNEY: *WELL-BALANCED*

May 16 – August 23, 2025

The Contemporary Dayton is proud to present the work of interdisciplinary artist Christine Gaffney, whose sculptures and videos serve as intimate self-portraits and reflections on the psyche and the complexities of female identity. Her practice explores the tension between public persona and private self, frequently using her own body as a sculptural object to assert agency and blur the line between subject and maker.

In the video *Layers and Layers of Cake* (2020), created in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the artist takes on the role of a domestic performer. Channeling Martha Rosler's iconic *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975), Gaffney appears in full makeup, wearing an apron in front of a handmade backdrop, as she methodically bakes a cake from scratch. What begins as a traditional cooking demo slowly unfolds into a fragmented, stream-of-consciousness monologue, highlighting the absurdity, repetition, and pressures of domestic roles.

Also created in 2020, the video *When I Wonder* turns inward. In this piece, Gaffney records herself speaking about her art practice but edits out all complete thoughts, leaving only the pauses, hesitations, and fragmented speech. She appears nude from the shoulders up, with no makeup and unkempt hair, seated in front of a stark black background. The result is a raw and vulnerable portrait that eliminates context, demanding that the viewer confront her presence in its most stripped-down form.

In her recent mixed media sculpture *Unrequited Love is Knot Knot Love* (2025), Gaffney addresses the emotional imbalance of unreturned affection. Constructed from two chairs—symbols of both support and placing someone on a pedestal—along with pool noodles, stuffed textiles, handmade concrete hands and ceramic arms, and found objects, the sculpture manifests the tension between emotional vulnerability and intellectual reasoning. One form holds a hand-sewn heart, the other a foam brain, representing the inner conflict between emotion and logic in experiences of longing and love.

Across both video and sculpture, Gaffney embraces a sense of urgency and compulsion in her materials, pacing, and construction. What might traditionally be perceived as technical flaws—rough edits, awkward silences, visible seams—are embraced as deliberate formal choices. Her work resists the conventions of classical art, favoring a raw, honest aesthetic that explores personal identity, vulnerability, and the performance of femininity.

## Artist Biography

Christine Gaffney is an interdisciplinary artist from Dayton, Ohio. She holds an MFA from the California Institute of the Arts, where she studied Art and Technology and Integrated Media. She also studied Fine Art at Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, NY and the Columbus College of Art and Design, and holds a Master's degree in Library and Information Science from the University of Pittsburgh.

Gaffney's practice explores themes of body image, body politics, feminism, and disability justice. Her work—ranging from video to mixed media sculpture—often employs her own body as material, challenging conventional boundaries between subject, object, and maker.

Gaffney has recently taught at Sinclair College in Dayton and the Columbus College of Art and Design, and is currently developing a new body of ceramic work while studying at Queen City Clay in Cincinnati. Gaffney lives in Miamisburg with her teenage son.



Courtesy the artist

## Exhibition Checklist

*For pricing information, please see the Welcome Desk.*

*Unrequited Love is Knot Knot Love*, 2025, mixed media including textiles and ceramics, 45 x 85 x 38 inches

*Layers and Layers of Cake*, 2020, digital video, 4 minutes, 13 seconds

*When I wonder*, 2020, digital video, 13 minutes, 27 seconds

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