

Taber Art Gallery exhibits Sheryl Anaya's 'Absurd Appetites'

HOLYOKE – A woman spreads slices of salami on a baguette while taking a bath.

Eggs on beds of bread lay nestled among blankets of Swiss cheese and lettuce. Pears wear aprons. Hot dog ends appear inside gelatin cakes. Men's work shirts have been stitched into quilted table linens.

These pieces and more comprise the world of Texas artist Sheryl Anaya's "Absurd Appetites (Tables for Two)," now on display in the Taber Art Gallery at Holyoke Community College.

The exhibit opened Tuesday, Jan. 21, with the start of the spring semester at HCC and will continue through Thursday, March 13. The gallery will host an opening reception Thursday, Jan. 23, from 5-7 p.m., with an artist's talk at 6 p.m.

"Absurd Appetites distorts the norms of a typical dining experience," Anaya says in her artist's statement. "Considering the deconstruction and consumption of the body, absurd actions surprise and set the tone for the examination of our roles within gendered labor, sexuality, and domestic space. Humor tempers the seriousness of these topics to avoid



Sheryl Anaya sets one of the dining tables in her exhibit "Absurd Appetites."

Submitted photo

confrontation at the dinner table."

Throughout the gallery there are tables set for two diners. Each includes a stack of sandwich bread inside which there are mini projectors that display videos on the walls.

"The videos are all of me making sandwiches in various stages of undress, doing things you wouldn't normally be doing in those settings," said Anaya.

"Absurd Appetites" continues a theme Anaya began with her master's

thesis exhibition that centered around the third century story of St. Agatha, the patron saint of bakers and breast cancer patients and a Christian martyr who was imprisoned, tortured, and mutilated by a Roman governor.

"My original piece was a 20-by-8-foot table, she said. "Absurd Appetites turns that into a more intimate experience, and really leans into the absurdity of some of the food items."

Anaya is a queer Puerto Rican artist and educator based in Fort Worth, Texas. She received a master of fine arts in studio art with an emphasis in sculpture from Texas Christian University in 2023 and received her bachelor of fine arts from Texas Woman's University in 2013. Her work examines identity and empathy through the universality of the human experience, intimate relationships and nostalgia, whether humorous or gut-wrenching.

The Taber Art Gallery, located off the lobby of the HCC Library on the second floor of the HCC Donahue Building, is free and open to the public Monday through Thursday from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. during regular school sessions.