

**Media Release**

For More Information Contact:  
**ELIZABETH MEISSNER-GIGSTEAD**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
(920) 746-0707  
[egigstead@millerartmuseum.org](mailto:egigstead@millerartmuseum.org)

**Figurative and Still Life Painter Alicia Czechowski's Work on View  
in "Alicia Czechowski: Beyond the Painted Surface" opening  
June 1 at Miller Art Museum**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (Sturgeon Bay, WI)—May 23, 2019—Figurative and still life painter Alicia Czechowski, a Detroit native now based in Baltimore, MD whose work is represented in the Miller Art Museum's permanent collection, will be featured in the Museum's newest exhibition, ***Alicia Czechowski: Beyond the Painted Surface***. The public is invited to attend the opening reception from 5 – 6:30pm on Saturday, June 1 where Miller Art Museum Executive Director Elizabeth Meissner-Gigstead will welcome visitors and introduce the exhibiting artist, who will speak about her figural work. The welcome and brief artist talk are scheduled for 5:30pm.

Czechowski, notwithstanding an MFA in Art from Wayne State University, is a self-taught artist. Visual art, like music or dance, is the result of continual practice and a love for the chosen medium of expression. As a child with a natural aptitude for drawing and a lust for sheer visual experience, she began drawing with whatever materials came to hand. Her drawing skills developed during her teens, keeping a sketchbook handy at all times with the result that she did thousands of impromptu studies from life of happenchance subjects that struck a chord; people and animals at rest and in motion, random objects, buildings, vistas, and extempore imagined imagery.

"Alicia's imagery is very broad. The exhibit encompasses 37 works depicting a range of conventional, yet extraordinary subject matter," says Meissner-Gigstead. "She has a very vested interest in the history of oil painting in America, drawn from the realism of the Ashcan School—an early 20<sup>th</sup> century art movement known for its gritty urban subject matter, dark palette, and gestural brushwork."

Viewers to the exhibition will be confronted with seemingly everyday imagery—a bowl of fruit, shoes, luscious pastries, vases, fine china, elaborate and mundane floral arrangements, a pile of spectacles, the human figure, an iron to name a few—all reinterpreted through the artist's transcendental lens.

Alicia says of the chosen body of work, "... In representational art subject matter is always subordinate to the end result. And no matter how literal the subject of a painting may appear, its real content is not defined by "appearances"... When I paint a still-life, I find that most objects possess a narrative by, and beyond, their contours and color. Broken china, for instance, comes with the fact of its initial creation as a thing of utility or decoration, and a life of use. The china object, after achieving clay's higher destiny, breaks, and instantly takes an evocative new geometric arrangement... Whatever I paint, figure or still-life, the subject morphs as I continually reinterpret it in my mind. Painting is a definite pursuit and indefinite image that I only know when I, at last, see it."

Growing up in Detroit, Czechowski had ready access to the superb collection of the Detroit Institute of Arts. At the age of ten she did her first copy of a painting, a still-life by Claesz, which she rendered on much reduced scale in colored pencil, and then she did a somewhat more ambitious quarter-scale oil copy of "Trappers on the Missouri" by Bingham. Later, she did full scale oil copies of paintings, or details of paintings, by Frans Hals, Rubens, Chardin, Gainsborough, Van Dyke, Velasquez, Fantin-Latour, Fragonard and G. D. Tiepolo in the National Gallery and The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Through copying works by these artists, Czechowski's aim was to imbibe something of the virtuosic fluidity and transcendent expressiveness of their handling of the painting medium.

She says, "Being at work with your brushes and colors in front of a living, breathing painting by one of the greats, like Hals or Velasquez, is the most potent learning experience. It's the best way to learn to paint, almost like journeying back in time and actually watching them at work at their easels."

Alicia Czechowski's work is in private collections throughout the USA, in Mexico, Germany, the UK, and Japan. She has had solo shows in New York City, Connecticut, Maine and Wisconsin, as well as exhibiting widely throughout the US. She did over two hundred freelance illustrations for The New Yorker magazine during 1988 to 1995. Czechowski has taught painting, artistic anatomy, 3-D design, and drawing at Wayne State University, Portland School of Art, University of Utah, Heartwood College of Art, and was Professor of Art at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee for five years. Her work is in the permanent collections of the Rahr-West Museum, Miller Art Museum, and Haggerty Museum of Art.

Works on view for *Alicia Czechowski: Beyond the Painted Surface* have been provided courtesy of the artist, Abel Contemporary Gallery of Stoughton, WI, and the Miller Art Museum's permanent collection. The Museum acquired *Fish Head* in 2001, which was a gift of the Virginia Jones and J. Thomas Maher III Collection of Wisconsin Art. The exhibition will be on view in the main gallery of the Miller Art Museum through Monday, July 22, 2019; the Museum will be closed for the installation of the exhibit from May 28 – 31 as well as Thursday, July 4.

The museum is located within the Door County Library at 107 S. 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Sturgeon Bay. Hours are Monday 10-8, Tuesday through Saturday 10-5. Closed Sunday. Admission is free; an elevator is available to access galleries on the Ruth Morton Miller Mezzanine. For more information about the exhibit or the museum, call (920) 746-0707 or visit [www.millerartmuseum.org](http://www.millerartmuseum.org).

### **About the Miller Art Museum**

The Miller Art Museum is a multifaceted nonprofit organization showcasing an array of visual art through ever-changing thematic, invitational and juried exhibits and houses a stunning permanent collection of Wisconsin art. The museum's rich legacy of serving the community was launched in 1975 and continues through its mission to foster and inspire the creative life of the community and to be a catalyst for enrichment through cultural, art appreciation, and educational programming for people of all ages.

### **Image Information:**

1. Alicia Czechowski, *Three Quinces in a Dish*, 2017, oil on linen panel, 13" x 15". Collection of the artist.
2. Alicia Czechowski, *Ranunculus*, 2014, oil on linen, 18" x 14". Courtesy of Abel Contemporary Gallery.
3. Alicia Czechowski, *Porcelain Ruins #3*, 2017, oil on linen, 7" x 12". Courtesy of Abel Contemporary Gallery.
4. Alicia Czechowski, *Poem of the Pillow*, 2014, oil on linen, 36" x 39". Collection of the artist.

5. Alicia Czechowski, *More Porcelain Ruins*, 2018, oil on linen panel, 24" x 36". Collection of the artist.
6. Alicia Czechowski, *Yo-Yo*, oil on linen, 16" x 20". Collection of the artist.
7. Alicia Czechowski, *Fish Head*, oil on linen, 10 ½" x 12". Gift of Virginia Jones and J. Thomas Maher III Collection of Wisconsin Art.

###