ACTIVITIES
Tell a colleague, a friend, family member, or staff member about Home ECONomics. Invite him or her to visit the Wignall Museum with you. Which artwork should she or he definitely see? Why?

Kim Abeles uses smog to create images. Use natural resources – positive and negative – to try to create your own images. Explore moisture, sun, heat, smog, and other elements to create an experimental work.

Carole Frances Lung asks you to participate in her installation. Please create a work based on her instructional video.

Forage edibles in your yard and neighborhood. Search the internet for information on foraging safely and create a dish out of the food you forage. Host a potluck and invite your friends to do the same.

FACULTY – Create a scavenger hunt where you ask your students to identify a work of art that connects to a theme or concept that you’re studying currently. Request an example of a successful scavenger hunt from the Wignall Museum to use as inspiration. This activity would be applicable in many courses, across disciplines. Contact an ASK ART: ADVOCATE for assistance in creating one for your own use in the classroom!

Kim Abeles,
Dinner for Two in One Month of Smog, 2011, smog (particulate matte) on porcelain dinnerware and linen, 38 x 49 x 28 inches. Courtesy of the artist.
ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

Home ECONomics brings together artists who embrace the origins of what Home Ec was – a progressive interdisciplinary study with an emphasis on science as it applied to the individual, family and community with the mission of improving the quality of life. Originally dubbed “Oekology,” which later became “Ecology,” the founders of the discipline believed that our communal house extends well beyond any walls, and that this larger community could best be tended through the synthesis of the life and social sciences. The artists in Home ECONomics continue the tradition by honoring the early tenets of Home Ec. They employ methods that range from biology, chemistry, and engineering, to sewing, cooking and animal husbandry to broaden our understanding of the environment and further our stewardship of it.

QUESTIONS FOR VIEWING

Does the work presented in Home ECONomics alter your understanding of the history and purpose of home economics programs in the US?

Which artworks in the exhibition are most memorable to you? Why?

Which single artwork best or most accurately illustrates the themes of Home ECONomics?

Which single artwork best or most accurately illustrates the themes presented in Home ECONomics?

Carole Frances Lung presents work by her alter ego, Frau Fiber. Frau Fiber asks viewers to participate in the installation to create functional items out of old t-shirts. What do you think the significance is of engaging spectators to work collectively and what might the significance be of the materials used in the creation of the collaborative works?

Vaughn Bell creates works that merge considerations of sustainability, and personal and public space. How do you interpret the work on view in Home ECONomics? What is Bell trying to convey in these works?

Many of the artists use recycled materials in their work. Why is this important and why did the artist choose to use these materials?

Some of the artists in the exhibition utilize a playfulness and humor in their work. Identify a work that employs humor.

Alison Petty Ragquette created an installation of bacterial diseases, although at first glance the work seems innocent. Ragquette presents a critical view of our culture’s desire to protect our children in the natural world. Do you agree with her perspective? Why or why not?

Phil Ross creates building materials out of fungus. Consider the implications for sustainable building practices using this and similar products.

SPURSE explores experimental foraging as part of a sustainable food practice. Consider the ways in which you could positively impact global demand for food products and your local ecology. Why might this kind of exploration and contemplation be important in the future of the planet?

Consider a work in Home ECONomics that merges science and technology in their work. What scientific or technological aspects are apparent in their work?

ESSAY PROMPTS

Write a well-researched paper on Ellen Swallow Richards and the history of home economics in the United States.

Consider the title of the current exhibition, Home ECONomics: communal housekeeping for the 21st century. How would you title the exhibition if you were the curator? Defend your revised title in a well-developed essay with analysis of the artwork.

Monica Martinez creates worm homes as an exploration of utopian food economies. Research US urban farming histories and draft an essay that explores the implications of Martinez’s work within that burgeoning market.

Kim Abeles uses the setting of the dinner table to present her smog images. Consider the implications in the artist’s choices and write a piece responding to the work.

Home ECONomics presents two similar objects – a handmade broom and a handmade mop. Consider both, read the artists statements and write a piece comparing and contrasting both sculptures and the choice to make by hand an object that can easily and cheaply be purchased at any home goods store.