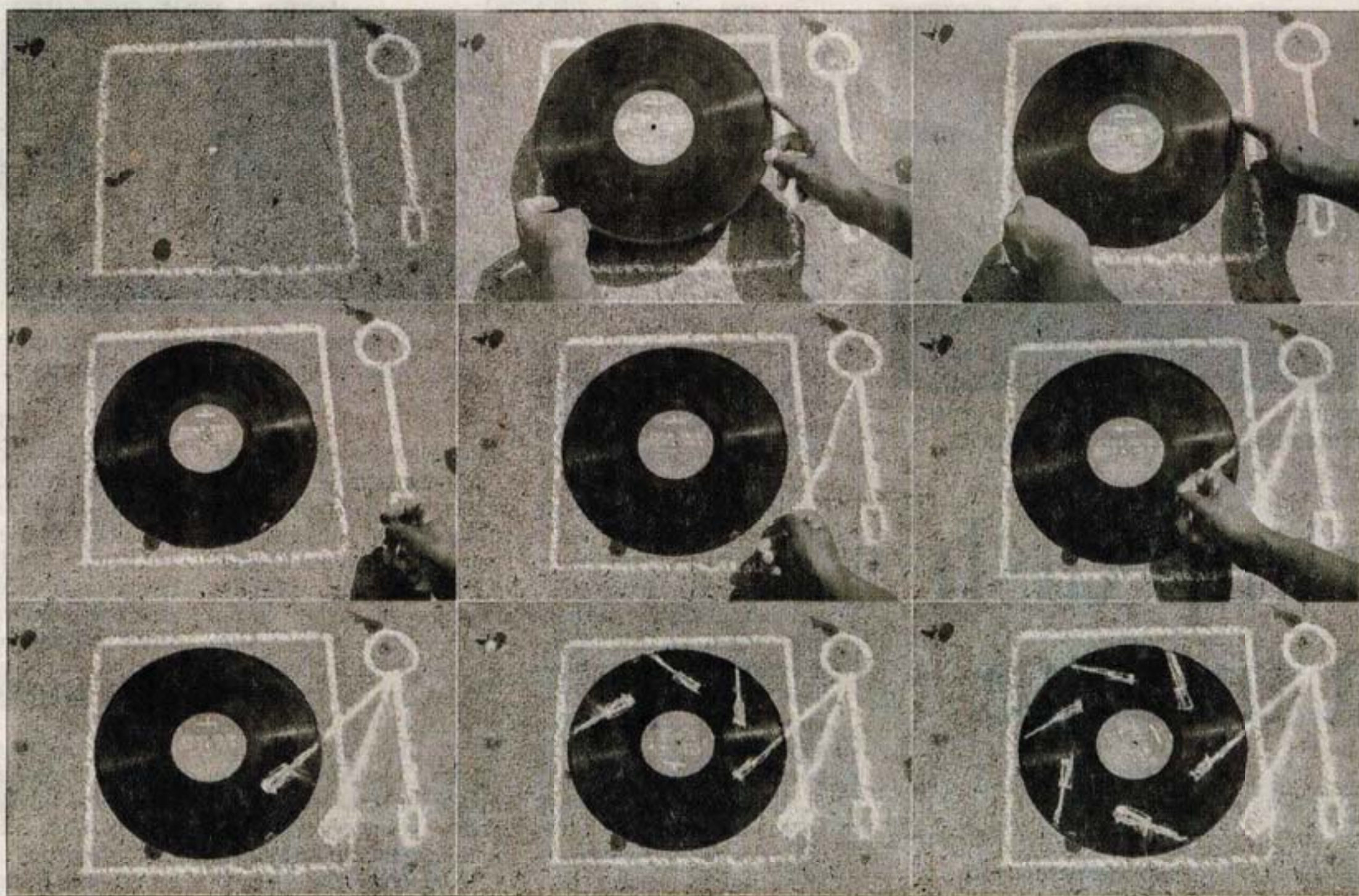


Arts & Living

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Artists have used vinyl records in their works in so many ways, the Nasher Museum saw an opportunity for a new exhibition. 'The Record' includes this work, 'Wheels of Steel,' digital prints mounted on four-ply museum board.

COURTESY OF ROBIN RHODE AND PERRY RUBENSTEIN GALLERY

the vinyl destination

Old-school albums and singles get a different spin in 'The Record,' the Nasher Museum's new exhibition

By DAVID MENCONI
STAFF WRITER

Vinyl records have been a focal point of Trevor Schoonmaker's life for years, especially recently. Schoonmaker, who is curator of contemporary art at Duke University's Nasher Museum of Art, has been busy putting together "The Record: Contemporary Art and Vinyl," an exploration of the culture of the medium.



Trevor Schoonmaker, curator, noticed many artists using vinyl records in their work.

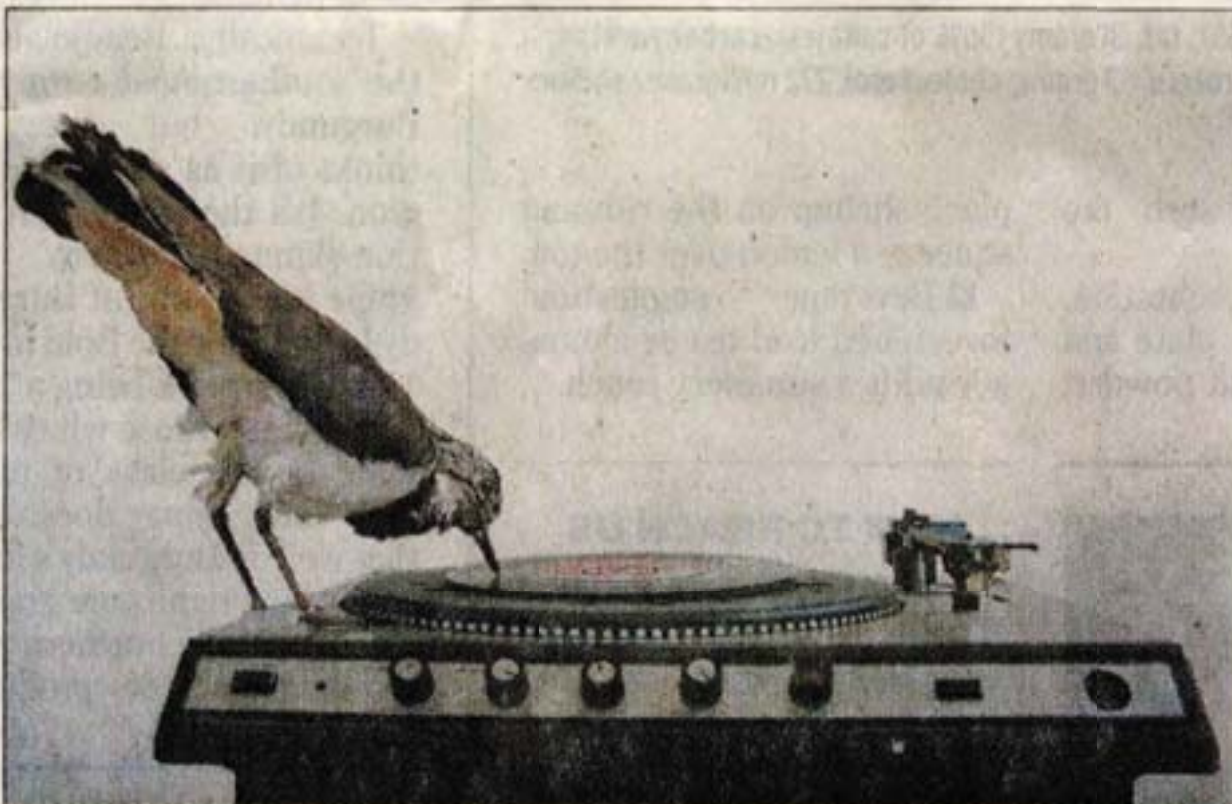
COURTESY OF DR. J CALDWELL

Officially opening this week, "The Record" features 41 artists from around the world and has work spanning a half-century. Vinyl is the raw material, touchstone and inspiration in the exhibit's sculptures, drawings, sound work, photos, paintings and videos in a display that's wide-ranging and immense fun. After its Nasher run concludes in February, "The Record" will show in Boston and one other city to be named.

Given Schoonmaker's role in bringing all this work together, you might expect him to lead a "High Fidelity"-like existence surrounded by crates of vinyl albums. In truth, he owns only about 50 vinyl albums himself, but he's still a fan.

DURHAM

Record players, records, taxidermied birds and sound make up one of the whimsical pieces at the exhibition, which opens Thursday



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COURTESY OF JEROEN DIEPENMAAT

details

What: "The Record: Contemporary Art and Vinyl"

Where: Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, 2001 Campus Drive, Durham

When: Thursday through Feb. 6. Closed Mondays; 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday; 10 a.m.-9 p.m. Thursday; noon-5 p.m. Sunday

Cost: \$5; \$4 for seniors/members of Duke Alumni Association; \$3 for non-Duke students with I.D.; free for children under 16, museum members, Duke students, faculty and staff, and 5-9 p.m. Thursdays

Contact: nasher.duke.edu/therecord or 684-5135

See more from "The Record" at www.newsobserver.com.

SEE RECORD, PAGE 4D

RECORD

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1D

"I've always loved music and records," Schoonmaker says. "The objects and their tangible, tactile quality - I love seeing them on a shelf, the visual aspect of the titles on the spines. I think I love the visual aspect of records as much as the act of listening."

"I've seen a lot of shows about music and visual arts, and I wanted to put my stamp on it because I saw records coming up again and again from artists engaged with culture. So the inspiration for 'The Record' came through looking at work that was out there more than thinking it would be cool to do a show about records."

Something for the geeks

"The Record" features works both iconic and obscure, with a few artifacts that will warm the heart of an old-school music geek.

Probably the most recognizable piece is David Byrne's painstakingly assembled Polaroid photo-montage of himself and his Talking Heads band mates, which served as the cover for Talking Heads' 1978 album "More Songs About Buildings and Food." No matter how well you know the cover, it's startling to see it blown up to life-size.

New York performance artist Laurie Anderson contributed "Viophonograph," a custom-made violin mounted with a turntable. And Sean Duffy's "Burn Out Sun" is a sphere fashioned from landmark Sun Records albums by Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis and others.

The Nasher commissioned two works specifically for this show. "Celestial Vessel" is a 17-foot canoe that artist Satch Hoyt built out of RCA Victor Red Seal 45 rpm singles during a 2009 residency here.

Xavier Simmons' "Thundersnow Road, North Carolina" is a series of landscape photographs with musical responses solicited from Superchunk's Mac McCaughan, Tunde Adebimpe from TV on the Radio and other stars from the alternative-rock orbit.

Several pieces will also remain in the Nasher's permanent collection after "The Record" moves on. Dario Robleto's "Lion or Lamb" is a series of imaginary, richly detailed album covers, while Carrie Mae Weems' "Ode to Affirmative Action" is a faux-gold record certificate.

"The Robleto piece is so ambitious in scale, with painstaking attention to detail and wit," Schoonmaker says. "It's great for the general public, and it has a presence and scale that creates a real impact in a large gallery. 'Ode to Affirmative Action' was from an important period in Carrie Mae Weems' work, 1989, which was a pivotal moment in identity politics in contemporary art. Gender and race were coming to the fore, and it's all right there in that work."

Outsider art has a place

Parallel universes and alternate realities figure prominently in a number of exhibits, especially the work of Minging Mike (real name Mike Stevens). Minging Mike is an out-



David Byrne's painstakingly assembled Polaroid photo-montage of himself and his Talking Heads band, which was the cover of the 1978 album 'More Songs About Buildings and Food,' is blown up to life-size.

COURTESY OF DAVID BYRNE / PHOTO BY TODD JOHNSON



Artist Satch Hoyt checks the fit of red 45 rpm records being test-fitted on the frame of what will be an 18-foot canoe. The Nasher commissioned the work.

JOHN ROTTET - john.rottet@newsobserver.com

sider artist who never recorded, but he did imagine a career as a soul-music superstar. So he made the packaging, scores of incredibly elaborate hand-drawn and painted covers with cardboard discs inside.

Some of "The Record" is about story, such as "Cover to Cover," in which artists and musicians (local hip-hop star 9th Wonder among them) use album covers to tell a tale,



Some works re-imagine the turntable and record, such as this one with a record player, raffia discs and music by Barmani Choge.

COURTESY OF FATIMAH TUGGAR

One of the more intriguing sound pieces comes from David McConnell, an artist/musician best known for producing the late Elliott Smith's final album (2004's posthumously released "From a Basement on the Hill").

McConnell's "Phonosymphonic Sun" is the first exhibit you come to when you enter the gallery, and it's both visual and aural. It consists of a half-dozen 1970s-vintage turntables of the sort used in classrooms, rebuilt as speakers and positioned in an arc. They play a range of sounds including samples from old

records, sound effects and experimental music that McConnell improvised.

"I've been doing this kind of music for the last 10 years or so, and it seems like the record industry doesn't want to have anything to do with it," says McConnell, who lives in Raleigh and Asheville now.

"I was in a band that was dropped from Virgin Records about 10 years ago, and it seemed like the music business was just not my thing. It got to feel like a day job. So I moved into the art world, which became my avenue to experiment and do what I

scheduled events

Included in admission price

Sept. 16 Artist talk with Xavier Simmons, 7 p.m.; Superchunk concert, 8:30 p.m.

Sept. 19 Barbecue and vinyl listening party hosted by Xavier Simmons, 1-4 p.m.

Oct. 7 Curator talk with Trevor Schoonmaker, 7 p.m.

Oct. 10 Art with the Experts, Durham County Library, 3 p.m.

Oct. 16 WXDU Record Fair, 11 a.m.-4 p.m.

Oct. 21 Record collectors panel discussion, 7 p.m.

Nov. 4 Artist talk with Ralph Lemon, 7 p.m.

Nov. 21 Family day with artist Fatimah Tuggar, noon-4 p.m.

Jan. 11 Supporting member event with Trevor Schoonmaker and artists Harrison Haynes and David McConnell, 7 p.m.

Feb. 5 Film marathon

Feb. 6 Family day, noon-4 p.m.

want. There's not the same commercial pressure."

Album, where art thou?

"The Record" comes at a time when physical manifestations of music seem less important than ever, at least on a mass-market scale. Recent years have seen a slight resurgence in the vinyl format, which retains a modicum of hipster cachet. But vinyl sales still represent only a tiny sliver of the market.

Instead, music has gone digital. Sales of compact discs are declining every year, with increasing numbers of people buying (or stealing) songs online. Not unlike McConnell's sound installation for "The Record," vinyl appears to have more of a future in the art world than the music world.

"Records are almost obsolete in terms of their viability as a mass-produced product," Schoonmaker says. "But artists have never abandoned vinyl. It's such a great object to work with - the physicality, the warmth of the cracking sounds. It's such a loaded medium, etched with so much history and culture."

"The show has a number of works that consist of artists defacing records, like melting down Billie Holiday and Patsy Cline records to turn into buttons or the heads of matches. Some audiophiles might think that's sacrilegious."

Schoonmaker pauses to laugh. "This isn't about fetishization," he concludes. "It's about vinyl records' metaphorical power and evocative potential. It's an object with a lot of power, but this obviously isn't about placing them on a pedestal to revere."

"A record is like a mini time capsule. It records a moment in history, then there's a personal history when someone plays it, inscribes their name on the cover or scratches up the album. Those are the markings of history."

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