

In Absentia

Blanden Permanent Collection



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Blanden Art Museum

In Absentia

Blanden Permanent Collection

Curated by Angela Ayala

CURATORS STATAMENT:

In Absentia explores the lasting impact of decisions made without our awareness or consent, highlighting the absence of color, voice, rights, and safety. By drawing from the Blanden Art Museum's permanent collection, this exhibition assembles works that speak to themes of erasure, suppression, and resilience. Through the absence of physical presence, personal agency, or historical recognition, these pieces reveal the forces that shape our world not just through what is seen but through what has been omitted or obscured. Each work that makes up this exhibit approaches this idea differently, yet together, the works form a powerful dialogue about loss, struggle, and perseverance.

Some of the prominent examples from the show are Käthe Kollwitz's *Woman and Death Hugging a Child, 1911*; as part of *In Absentia*, this piece underscores the helplessness imposed by external forces whether war, poverty, or fate itself echoing the exhibition's theme of decisions made beyond our control. Another notable selection is Robert Motherwell's *Cadiz, 1952*, which shifts this concept into abstraction, using bold, gestural forms to explore themes of suppression and resistance. In *Cadiz*, stark contrasts and bold gestures evoke a fragmented city, possibly shattered by the weight of war. In the context of *In Absentia*, his work mediates the unseen scars of history remnants of decisions made by those in power, with consequences that ripple through time. His abstraction denies the viewer a straightforward narrative, mirroring how historical



events often leave behind fractured, incomplete accounts of the truth. Lastly is Henry Moore's *Warrior with Shield*, a striking bronze maquette that embodies the resilience that frequently emerges from absence. *Warrior with Shield*, the wounded yet defiant figure, missing a limb but still standing strong with a shield raised, speaks to survival despite vulnerability. The piece's rough, almost ancient texture suggests endurance through time, reflecting how individuals and cultures persist even when subjected to violence or erasure. In the exhibit, *In Absentia*, Moore's warrior symbolizes those who have been cast aside, forgotten, or wounded yet continue to resist. The work invites viewers to consider what remains after loss and how strength can be forged without security or certainty.

Together, these works, and the rest pulled from the Blanden Art Museum's permanent collection bring *In Absentia* to life, illustrating how absence can be both a void and a force. Each artist engaged deeply with themes of war, poverty, and loss, shaped by the events of their time. All the works in this exhibit remind those excluded, silenced, or erased. In coalition, *In Absentia* asks us to consider what has been lost and what remains and how absence itself can shape the world we inhabit.

In Memory of Kay Baldus