Is art just a pretty picture or can it change the world? Should it make you think? Should it make you act?

Every spring, Team Kenan invites Duke students to submit original artwork to What Is Good Art?—a juried art competition and show. What Is Good Art? solicits pieces that demand change, make viewers laugh, squirm, grimace, cry, or wonder—and confront the question: How ought we live?

What Is Good Art? is a signature project of Team Kenan. Started in 2009, Team Kenan is an initiative of the Kenan Institute for Ethics that seeks to bring attention to ethical issues through student-organized programming. Team Kenan programs are for students, by students. Members have launched a number of new ventures aimed at making ethics available, accessible, and appetizing to students.

Special thanks to our distinguished panel of judges:

Antonio Bogaert
Visiting Assistant Professor of Visual Arts

Wayne Norman
Mike and Ruth Mackowski Professor of Ethics

William Fick
Visiting Assistant Professor of the Practice of Visual Arts

Noah Pickus,
Director, Kenan Institute for Ethics

Wesley Hogan
Director, Center for Documentary Studies

Sarah Schroth
Director, Nasher Museum of Art

Caitlin Margaret Kelly
Kenan Graduate Arts Fellow, MFA|EDA 2014

Suzanne Shanahan
Associate Director, Kenan Institute for Ethics

What Is Good Art?
This year, we asked artists to submit works that centered on the theme “Extraordinary.” What does it mean for something to be outside the borders of the everyday? Are there clear reasons for things to be extraordinary, or does terming things “extraordinary” simply demonstrate the limits of our experience? If art is about seeing the world in new ways, should it re-focus our attention to what we miss in our immediate surroundings, or bring us to places we cannot easily access?

The works selected for inclusion in this year’s What Is Good Art? exhibition offer novel takes on seemingly familiar subjects as well as those geographically and culturally more distant.

We hope this exhibition helps you probe the ethics of boundaries—aided by pieces that explore, challenge, and even reject the ordinary/extraordinary dichotomy.

As you make your way through the gallery, you will find that the pieces have been organized thematically. We hope you will ponder the topics raised by each of these works, as well as the relationships they may have with the works around them. Most importantly, we hope that you will reflect on what each of these pieces means to you.

Take the time to react, question, linger, and draw your own conclusions about the meaning of extraordinary.