

## Ahistoric Occasion (Clark, Williamstown, 23-24 Feb 07)

Mark Ledbury

Clark Symposium: Ahistoric Occasion: The Uses of History in Contemporary Art

February 23, 2007 - February 24, 2007

This two-day symposium, convened by the Clark's Research and Academic Program in association with the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCA), is organized in conjunction with the exhibition Ahistoric Occasion: Artists Making History, on view at MASS MoCA from May 27, 2006, through April 22, 2007. The symposium will bring together scholars and exhibiting artists to discuss the role of history in contemporary art practice, examining the significance of representation in historical and cultural memory.

The role of history has increasingly become a source of heightened public interest and debate. This might best be exemplified by the rise in historical reenactments, ranging from the Battle of Lexington to World War II, which have become a popular form of public ritual. Visual artists have increasingly performed their own reenactments, re-staging a 1984 miner's strike in Northern England, for example, or a 1968 political performance in West Berlin. In considering historical reenactment and its emergence in contemporary art, this symposium will focus on the uses of history within a larger social, political, and cultural context.

Participants will discuss the visual techniques that illuminate repressed, obscured, and dismissed moments in the timelines of global history. How does a society remember? What is worth remembering? And, ultimately, what are the functions of history? All of these questions will be explored in an extended analysis of key exhibited works from Ahistoric Occasion.

Speakers include Martin Jay, Carrie Lambert-Beatty, Steven Nelson, and the artists Jeremy Deller, Greta Pratt and Paul Chan

Program

Friday, February 23  
at Mass MoCA

6:00 pm

Welcome and introductions

Nato Thompson

Curator, Ahistoric Occasion: Artists Making History, MASS MoCA

6:15 - 7:00 pm

Tour of exhibition

Nato Thompson

7:15 - 8:30 pm

Keynote lecture

Martin Jay

Sidney Hellman Ehrman Professor and Chair of the History Department,  
University of California, Berkeley

Aesthetic Experience and Historical Experience in a Twenty-First Century  
Constellation

The lecture will be followed by a question and answer period.

Saturday, February 24

at the Clark

8:30 am

Symposium registration

9:15 am

Conference introductions

Michael Ann Holly

Director, Research and Academic Program, Sterling and Francine Clark Art  
Institute

Nato Thompson

Curator, MASS MoCA

9:30 - 11:30 am

Panel discussion (Session 1)

The Uses of History: Exploring the Role of History at the Beginning of the  
Twenty-First Century

Moderator: James Meyer

Winship Distinguished Associate Professor of Art History, Emory University;  
Contributing Editor of Artforum

Steven Nelson (Assistant Professor of African and African American art  
history, UCLA) and Daniel Rosenberg (Assistant Professor of History in the  
Robert D. Clark Honors College at the University of Oregon and catalogue  
essayist for Ahistoric Occasion) in conversation with exhibiting artists  
Paul Chan and Greta Pratt.

11:30 am

Open discussion

12:30 - 2:00 pm

Lunch

2:00 - 4:00 pm

Panel discussion (Session 2)

Exploring the Rise of Reenactment as a Form of Public Memory

Moderator: Nato Thompson

Curator, MASS MoCA

Carrie Lambert-Beatty (Assistant Professor of Visual and Environmental Studies and of History of Art and Architecture, Harvard University) in discussion with exhibiting artists Jeremy Deller and Allison Smith.

4:00 pm

Open discussion and conclusions

5:00 pm

Closing reception

Tickets are USD 25 (USD 15 for students and members. Free for Williams students and faculty.) To register, please complete and return the registration form via mail or fax.

program on the Clark Website at

[http://www.clarkart.edu/make\\_a\\_visit/event\\_detail.cfm?ID=8492&nav=3](http://www.clarkart.edu/make_a_visit/event_detail.cfm?ID=8492&nav=3)

Reference:

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