



INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ART
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NEWS RELEASE



DOUGLAS BLAU

SEPTEMBER 5–DECEMBER 7, 2008

OPENING RECEPTION: THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 6-8PM

EXHIBITION WALKTHROUGH WITH ARTIST DOUGLAS BLAU AND SENIOR CURATOR
INGRID SCHAFFNER: THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 5PM, *ICA MEMBERS ONLY*



PHILADELPHIA, PA

To open the season, ICA is pleased to present new work by New York artist Douglas Blau. This will be Blau's first exhibition of new work in nearly a decade. The exhibition also features an earlier piece *The Conversation Piece* (1993/1995), which depicts political dialogue in all its variety, from tête-à-têtes to the legislative body, throughout the ages.

Douglas Blau creates picture epics and episodes from uniformly framed collages of printed matter. Postcards, film stills, images of paintings and photographs, pictures of all kinds are cut and pasted into individual collage elements. These are composed into sequences, strips and grids, based on formal and narrative associations that flow from frame-to-frame. The big picture is depiction itself. Centuries of picture making appear distilled through Blau's art into an essential cast of characters and repertoire of plots, periods, styles, locations, and genres. Only the details and degrees of abstraction vary over time and through reproduction, the mechanics of which produce the shifts of tone and color, different inks and papers that Blau orchestrates into each overall composition.

Since the 1980s, Douglas Blau has used words and pictures interchangeably to create a highly regarded and unique body of work. He emerged as a critic and curator in tandem with the Pictures Generation of artists. In 1987, his exhibition "Fictions" was the first in a maverick series to apply curatorial practice to the construction of explicit narratives. These fictions further unfolded through Blau's writings--including influential essays on Troy Brauntuch, Vija Celmins, Mark Tansey and Elizabeth Peyton, among other artists--in which invented characters, travelogues, and indexes constitute an unusually literary account of contemporary art's place in Western art history.

Douglas Blau (b. 1955 Los Angeles, lives New York) attended the graduate program in Cinema Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles, after taking degrees in both Fine Arts and Art History at Washington University, Saint Louis. His past exhibitions include: "Fictions: A Selection of Pictures from the 18th, 19th, and 20th Centuries," at Curt Marcus Gallery and Kent Fine Art, New York, 1987; "The Times, The Chronicle & The Observer," Kent Fine Art, New York, 1991; "The Naturalist Gathers" at SteinGladstone, New York, and Thomas Solomon's Garage, Los Angeles, 1992; and "Stills," Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1994. His writings have appeared in numerous magazines and gallery and museum publications with titles including: "Solid Air" an essay for the 1992 Vija Celmins exhibition at ICA, Philadelphia; "Index [from The Naturalist Gathers]" in *Deep Storage*, 1997;

top: Douglas Blau, *The Conversation Piece* (detail), 1993/1995, 3' x 3' x 15' overall, mixed media assemblage. Photo: John Ehrenclou

bottom: Douglas Blau, *The Annunciation*, 2002, studio view, 3' x 18', mixed media assemblage. Photo: John Ehrenclou

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*checklist and images available upon request.

GENERAL INFORMATION

ICA is located at:
118 South 36th Street at the
University of Pennsylvania

ICA is open to the public, except during
installation, from 12pm to 8pm on
Wednesday through Friday and from
11am to 5pm on Saturday and Sunday.

Admission is FREE everyday.
*Free admission to the Institute of
Contemporary Art at the University of
Pennsylvania for the public is sponsored
by Glenn R. Fuhrman (W87/WG88) Fund.*

For more information,
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INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ART

Founded in 1963, the Institute of
Contemporary Art at the University of
Pennsylvania is a leader in the
presentation and documentation of
contemporary art. Through exhibitions,
commissions, educational programs,
and publications, ICA invites the public to
share in the experience, interpretation
and understanding of the work of
established and emerging artists.

and "The Studio," a picture essay for the 1997 Whitney Biennial exhibition
catalog.

This exhibition is organized by Senior Curator Ingrid Schaffner, and is
accompanied by a fully illustrated catalog

RELATED PUBLIC PROGRAMS:

Whenever Wednesday, December 3, 7pm
Lecture: Douglas Blau

Whenever Wednesday, November 19, 7pm
Talking Pictures

*ICA acknowledges the generous sponsorship of Barbara B. & Theodore R. Aronson for
the exhibition catalog. ICA is also grateful for support from the Susquehanna
Foundation and Mari and Peter Shaw. Additional funding has been provided by: The
Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation; the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Council on the
Arts; The Dietrich Foundation, Inc.; the Overseers Board for the Institute of
Contemporary Art; friends and members of ICA; and the University of Pennsylvania.*

ALL PROGRAMS SUBJECT TO CHANGE. PLEASE VISIT THE ICA WEBSITE,
WWW.ICAPHILA.ORG, FOR MORE INFORMATION ON PROGRAMS IN CONJUNCTION
WITH DOUGLAS BLAU.