



INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ART  
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**NEWS RELEASE**



# MIKE'S WORLD: MICHAEL SMITH & JOSHUA WHITE (AND OTHER COLLABORATORS)

APRIL 25–AUGUST 3, 2008

OPENING RECEPTION: THURSDAY, APRIL 24, 6-8PM

EXHIBITION WALKTHROUGH WITH ARTIST MIKE SMITH, COLLABORATOR JOSHUA WHITE AND ANNETTE DIMEO CARLOZZI, CURATOR OF AMERICAN AND CONTEMPORARY ART AT THE BLANTON MUSEUM OF ART: THURSDAY, APRIL 24, 5PM, *ICA MEMBERS ONLY*



top: Michael Smith, *Mike's House*, 1982, installation with videotape *It Starts at Home*. Courtesy of the artist.  
Photo: Kevin Noble

bottom: Michael Smith and Alan Herman, *Government Approved Home Fallout Shelter/Snack Bar*, 1983.  
Photo: Kevin Noble

## PHILADELPHIA, PA

This spring, the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) will be home to "Mike's World: Michael Smith & Joshua White (and other collaborators)," the first major retrospective of internationally renowned performance/video/installation artist Michael Smith and his New York-based collaborator, director/artist Joshua White. This extraordinary exhibition features some 30 years of videos, installation environments, and other performance-related materials detailing the adventures of "Mike," a sweet but hapless Everyman character created by Smith, and his amusingly ineffectual search for a piece of the American Dream. "Mike's World" will be on view April 25 - August 3, 2008.

Since the 1970s Michael Smith has been a pioneering figure of performance art. Merging the art world with the entertainment world, he has created a body of work that includes video, commercial and cable television shows, puppet shows, stand-up comedy, gallery installations, drawings, and even comic books. Throughout his work, Smith has developed a number of characters and personas, the most emblematic of which "Mike," is the subject of this current exhibition. "Mike" functions metaphorically as a kind of ever-hopeful Candide, adrift in a world of rapid technological advancement that he seems incapable of fully comprehending.

"Mike's World" is organized by the Blanton Museum of Art at The University of Texas at Austin and curated by Annette DiMeo Carlozzi, Director of Curatorial Affairs and Curator of American and Contemporary Art for the Blanton. The exhibition has been designed by Michael Smith and Joshua White as a self-contained theatrical set. Other collaborators include Mark Bingham, Power Boothe, Mark Fischer, Alan Herman, Howard Mandel, Kevin Noble, R. Sikoryak, Doug Skinner and William Wegman.

Two new works serve as the introduction to the exhibition: a five-minute video by Smith and White reprising the story of "Mike," and an installation timeline that introduces "Mike's World" to museum audiences and contextualizes it within recent "real world" historical and cultural events.

Loosely based on the orientation galleries in a presidential library, the space will provide a sharp break from the rest of the museum and a challenging, quasi-theatrical experience for museum visitors.

## CONTACT

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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 \$6 for adults, \$3 for students  
over 12, artists, and senior citizens; and  
free to ICA members, children 12 and  
under, PENN card holders, and on Sundays  
from 11am to 1pm.

For more information,  
call 215-898-7108/5911, or visit  
[www.icaphila.org](http://www.icaphila.org).

## 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.

Subsequent sections of the installation are sequenced along a thematic and  
chronological route. Single channel videos and excerpts from performances are  
shown on monitors throughout the installation. The videos surveyed include *Down in  
the Rec Room*, 1979/81; *Secret Horror*, 1980; *It Starts at Home*, 1982; *Go For It, Mike*,  
1984; *Mike Builds a Shelter*, 1985; *The World of Photography* (a collaboration with  
William Wegman), 1986; *Mike*, 1987; *Outstanding Young Men of America*, 1996;  
*Interstitial*, 1999; *Famous Quotes of Art History*, 2001-03; *How to Curate Your Own  
Group Exhibition*, 2003; and *Portal Excursion*, 2007.

The exhibition includes a number of fragments from early installations, and three key  
recent projects will be reconstructed in their entirety. *MUSCO: 1969-97*, 1997, the  
office, storage area and showroom of a theatrical lighting company forced into  
bankruptcy by "its astounding failure" to keep up with post-disco-ball times. *The  
QuinQuag Arts and Wellness Centre*, 2001, documentation of an invented art  
retirement colony being devoured by corporate patronage. *Take Off Your Pants!*, 2005,  
a revolving six-sided kiosk that offers carnivalesque elaborations of a Mike-designed  
board game. The exhibition also features numerous drawings, notebooks,  
storyboards, and performance ephemera.

## About the Artists

Michael Smith's 30-year artistic career includes live performance, video works,  
commercial and cable television skits, puppet shows, exhibition installations, comic  
publications, and drawings. Smith has an impressive exhibition and performance  
history that began in the late 1970s, with venues as varied as Franklin Furnace, The  
Kitchen, Cinemax, Caroline's Comedy Club, PBS, Dance Theatre Workshop, Henson  
International Puppet Festival, the Whitney, the Corcoran, the New Museum, the  
Pompidou Center, and, in recent years, sites as far-flung as São Paulo, Copenhagen,  
Milan, London and Cambridge. Smith was recently selected for the 2008 Whitney  
Biennial at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. He is on the faculty of  
The University of Texas at Austin.

Joshua White is a director and producer based in New York City. He made his mark as  
the creator and director of the legendary Joshua Light Show at Bill Graham's Fillmore  
East in the late 1960s. White went on to design psychedelic light shows for Janis  
Joplin and Jimi Hendrix, among others. Later, he directed episodes of television  
programs such as *Seinfeld*, *The Max Headroom Show*, and *Inside the Actors' Studio*.  
White's lighting designs were recently included in the exhibition *Summer of Love: Art  
of the Psychedelic Era* at the Whitney Museum of American Art.

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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.*

*"Mike's World: Michael Smith & Joshua White (and other collaborators)" is organized  
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[WWW.ICAPHILA.ORG](http://WWW.ICAPHILA.ORG), FOR MORE INFORMATION ON PROGRAMS IN CONJUNCTION  
WITH "MIKE'S WORLD: MICHAEL SMITH & JOSHUA WHITE (AND OTHER  
COLLABORATORS)."