



INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ART
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NEWS RELEASE



top: Nayland Blake

bottom: Nathalie Djurberg

THE PUPPET SHOW

JANUARY 18–MARCH 30, 2008

OPENING RECEPTION: THURSDAY, JANUARY 17, 6-8PM

EXHIBITION WALKTHROUGH WITH INGRID SCHAFFNER, SENIOR CURATOR AND CARIN KUONI, DIRECTOR, THE VERA LIST CENTER FOR ART AND POLITICS AT THE NEW SCHOOL, NEW YORK: THURSDAY, JANUARY 17, 5PM, *ICA MEMBERS ONLY*

PHILADELPHIA, PA

The Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) is pleased to present “The Puppet Show,” a group exhibition that looks at the imagery of puppets in contemporary art. International in scope, “The Puppet Show” brings together 30 artists and several generations, as reflected by works that range from a 1974 installation by Dennis Oppenheim to a new animation by the Swedish artist Nathalie Djurberg. The exhibition concentrates on sculpture, video and photography. Some of the works involve actual puppets (marionettes, shadow puppets, hand puppets) and artists performing as puppeteers. Other images evoke topics associated with puppetry (manipulation, miniaturization, agency, control). Collectively these works show puppets to be a provocative and relevant imagery—one that moves deep into social, political and psychological terrains.

“The Puppet Show” takes as a historic point of departure one of the first episodes of avant-garde art history: Alfred Jarry’s 1896 play *Ubu Roi* that was conceived as a puppet show. Ubu’s reign continues with the work of the South African artist William Kentridge in collaboration with the Handspring Puppet Company. More recently, puppets have taken hold of pop consciousness by way of films, theater, computer games and animation. On a more political note, current events and national leadership raise questions of agency that cogently relate to puppets. Together with these collective points of reference, “The Puppet Show” poses a larger cultural question: why do puppets matter now?

At ICA the exhibition opens with a discrete structure dubbed “Puppet Storage,” filled with pictures, props and other source material collected from artists studios. It will feature a historic collection of puppets from the collection of the Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry at the University of Connecticut, selected by the Institute’s director, Dr. John Bell, an internationally renowned puppeteer and historian of puppet theater. The structure is designed by the artist Terence Gower, who is staging the entire installation with reference to the uncanny, theatrical displacements of scale, and the backstage world of the theater.

Initiated by Ingrid Schaffner, Senior Curator, the exhibition is co-curated with Carin Kuoni, Director, The Vera List Center for Art and Politics at The New School, New York. The curators received a planning grant for this exhibition from the Philadelphia Exhibition Initiative (PEI).

This exhibition contains adult content. Parents, caregivers and educators are strongly advised to preview exhibition before bringing children.

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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.

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.

Participating artists include: Guy Ben-Ner, Nayland Blake, Louise Bourgeois, Maurizio Cattelan, Anne Chu, Nathalie Djurberg, Terence Gower, Dan Graham and Japanther, Handspring Puppet Company, Pierre Huyghe, Christian Jankowski, Mike Kelley, William Kentridge, Cindy Loehr, Annette Messenger, Paul McCarthy, Matt Mullican, Bruce Nauman, Dennis Oppenheim, Philippe Parreno and Rirkrit Tiravanija, Laurie Simmons, Doug Skinner and Michael Smith, Kiki Smith, Survival Research Laboratory, Kara Walker, Andy Warhol and Charlie White.

Publication: A fully-illustrated catalog accompanies the exhibition with essays by the curators and contributing authors: John Thomas Bell, Director, Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry at the University of Connecticut; Terence Gower, artist and exhibition designer; Jena Osman, Associate Professor of English and Creative Writing, Temple University; John Pemberton, Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, Columbia University; Jane Taylor, Skye Chair of Dramatic Art, Wits School of Arts, University of the Witwatersrand; Michael Taylor, Muriel and Philip Berman Curator of Modern Art, Philadelphia Museum of Art and Allen Weiss, Associate Teacher, Performance Studies and Cinema Studies, Tisch School of the Arts, New York University. There will be an annotated checklist of the works in the exhibition, and a picture record of the contents of "Puppet Storage." The installation will also be documented and the catalog will be printed after the exhibition opens. \$35

Travel Dates: This exhibition premieres at ICA (January 18 - March 30, 2008) and travels to the Santa Monica Museum of Art, California (May 24 - August 9, 2008); The Contemporary Museum, Honolulu, Hawaii (September 5 - November 23, 2008); the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, Texas (January 17 - April 12, 2009) and the Frye Art Museum, Seattle, Washington (May 16 - September 13, 2009).

ICA acknowledges the generous sponsorship of Barbara B. & Theodore R. Aronson for the exhibition catalog. We are grateful to the Philadelphia Exhibitions Initiative (PEI), a program of the Philadelphia Center for Arts and Heritage, funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts, and administered by University of the Arts for research and planning funds; to Etant donnes: The French-American Fund for Contemporary Art; Susquehanna Foundation; The Bandier Family Foundation; Goldberg Foundation; Sotheby's; and to the Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation for promotional marketing support. 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. ICA is also grateful to The Chodorow Exhibition Initiative Fund for support of the exhibition's tour. (Information complete as of 12/21/07.)

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