

# THE MIRACULOUS: RANDOM ENCOUNTERS WITH FIFTY ARTISTS ACROSS ONE UNIVERSITY

*The Miraculous in Houston*, a multimedia public art installation by Heather Bause and Raphael Rubinstein, will debut April 18, 2017, at the University of Houston in conjunction with the 2017 CounterCurrent Festival.

The project is based on Raphael Rubinstein's book *The Miraculous*, published to much acclaim by Paper Monument in 2014, which presents the artistic avant-gardes of the last five decades as a tapestry of incidents as fascinating and unlikely as any collection of myths or legends. Composed as a series of brief texts ranging from a single sentence to two pages, the book celebrates the mystery and ingeniousness of these human activities that, for lack of a better term, we call "contemporary art." Largely focused on conceptual and performance art, the book recounts feats of endurance, acts of absurdist wit, public actions that confront political repression and racist attitudes, and celebrations of the natural world. Several works highlight the loss of historical memory or the contradictions between the spiritual ambition of art and its status as a market commodity. A number of episodes describe the moment of revelation, often seeming to occur by sheer accident, when an artist finds his or her true creative path, and road to success. One key feature of *The Miraculous* is that the artists are never identified by name, which emphasizes the fantastical, hard-to-believe qualities of the stories. *ArtNews* reviewer Michael H. Miller observed, "Distilled to only an idea, the pieces bask in their more intriguing narratives and separate themselves from the heavy baggage of authorship and intention." In 2016, Scottish curator Peter Amoore invited Rubinstein to create, in tandem with U.K. designers Maeve Redmond and Sophie Dyer, an installation based on extracts from his book at the Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop. Writing in *Art in America* in August 2016, Willie Osterweil praised the installation as a "a new work built on and in dialogue with the older works it assembles."

For *The Miraculous in Houston*, Rubinstein will collaborate with artist and designer Heather Bause in translating all 50 texts from the book into site-specific installations throughout the 600-acre University of Houston campus. Using a wide variety of media and materials, including posters, banners, projections, vinyl lettering, murals and sound, Bause will insert the micro-narratives from *The Miraculous* into the architecture (interior and exterior) and landscape of the university, at times matching the content of the texts to specific locations on campus, in other cases launching the texts (printed on tee shirts, flyers or maintenance vehicles, etc.) into unpredictable *dérives*. The audience for this project will encompass the university's 35,000 students, in addition to faculty and staff, attendees of the CounterCurrent17 Festival and visitors from the Houston community who come expressly to experience the work. Maps, both printed and online, will be available.

One of the primary goals of *The Miraculous in Houston* is to bring the ideas and history of contemporary art to an audience that may be unfamiliar with them. By situating the texts in non-art contexts, the potential audience will be expanded beyond the usual museum-going public. Just as

importantly, the unexpectedness of the encounter and its unusual narrative format will potentially connect more deeply with viewers than is often the case with conventional public art. Working collaboratively and across mediums, Bause and Rubinstein will consciously utilize all aspects their materials, from the hybrid nature of the texts (which employ literary devices rather than standard art criticism) to the ambiguous status of the objects. Are they commentaries on artworks, or are they artworks themselves? To whom should they be attributed? The “original” artists? The person who wrote the texts? Or the artist who has designed and created the actual objects in the installation? The consequences of multiple authorship is among the issues that Bause and Rubinstein confront with *The Miraculous in Houston*. Both book and installation also highlight the ease with which conceptual and performance art can circulate as sheer narrative, paraphrased and condensed into description, rumor, myth.

Artists included: Marina Abramović, Laurie Anderson, Bas Jan Ader, Francis Alÿs, William Anastasi, Ben D'Armagnac, Percival Bartlebooth, Joseph Beuys, Henry Bond, Maurizio Cattelan, Tseng Kwong Chi, Janet Cohen, Collection Yoon Ja & Paul Devautour, Noël Dolla, Donald Evans, Pinot Gallizio, Jochen Gerz, Joseph Grigely, HaHa, Raymond Hains, Jane Hammond, David Hammons, Maren Hassinger, Damien Hirst, Rebecca Horn, Alfred Hrdlicka, Tehching Hsieh, Stephen Kaltenbach, Martin Kippenberger, Alison Knowles, Oleg Kulik, John Latham, Lee Lozano, Piero Manzoni, Marta Minujín, Linda Montano, Félix Namque, Hermann Nitsch, Yoko Ono, Roman Opalka, Dennis Oppenheim, R.H. Quaytman, Kerri Scharlin, Cindy Sherman, Daniel Spoerri, Philippe Thomas, Mierle Laderman Ukeles, the Water Painter, William Wegman.