

News Release

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Unorthodox Presents Work by 55 Contemporary Artists

Global, Multigenerational Exhibition Opens November 6 at the Jewish Museum

New York, NY – This November, the Jewish Museum presents *Unorthodox*, a large-scale group exhibition featuring 55 contemporary artists from around the world whose practices mix forms and genres without concern for artistic conventions. Though the artists in *Unorthodox* come from a wide variety of backgrounds and generations, they are united in their spirit of independence and individuality. Through over 200 works, the exhibition highlights the importance of iconoclasm and art's key role in breaking rules and traditions. Organized by Jens Hoffmann, Deputy Director, Exhibitions and Public Programs, Leon Levy Assistant Curator Daniel S. Palmer, and Assistant Curator Kelly Taxter, *Unorthodox* will be on view from November 6, 2015 through March 27, 2016.

"*Unorthodox* does not comment on Jewish religious orthodoxy or critique it, but takes its inspiration from the legacy of progressive Jewish thought, in particular the Jewish tradition of dialogue and debate," said Jens Hoffmann. "*Unorthodox* aims to break with a cultural and artistic uniformity that has developed over the last century among artists and museums, proposing a nonconformist engagement with art as a means to disrupt the status quo."

Numerous works in *Unorthodox* examine social and political values, trauma, religion, and identity. Artists like Margit Anna, whose dreamlike paintings reflect the trauma of the Holocaust, and Xanti Schawinsky, whose *Faces of War* series (1942) was influenced by the destruction and militarism of World War II, draw on transformative personal experiences. Several artists channel political activism through their work, including Boris Lurie, Holocaust survivor and founder of the highly political No! art movement, and Dineo Seshee Bopape, whose multimedia work addresses South Africa's legacy of apartheid.

The human figure is also central to the exhibition, often appearing in distorted, grotesque, anthropomorphic, or hybridized forms. This includes Mrinalini Mukherjee's sinuous and biomorphic sculptural works, Nick Payne's drawings and watercolors featuring grotesque figures, Diane Simpson's human-scale sculptures that seamlessly shift from body to architectural form, and William T. Vollmann's painterly depictions of his female alter ego.

Contrasting with this subjective, representational style are works that revel in pattern and geometry. These objects, often made with natural materials, conflate hierarchical distinctions between high art and craft, while referencing storytelling and folk traditions. Examples include the sewn and woven images of artist and former professional skateboarder Tony Cox, Philippine artist Brenda Fajardo's works using indigenous materials that recall her country's visual and oral storytelling traditions, and Christina Forrer's tapestries blending elements from Swiss folklore and historical European tapestry with contemporary pop and street culture.

Many artists in *Unorthodox* use pop culture, animation, and cartoons to address serious issues around violence, racism, and sexuality. Margaret Harrison tackles gender politics through the use of iconic characters such as Captain America and Playboy pinups, Meriem Bennani's animations explore

Jewish
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The Jewish Museum
1109 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10128
TheJewishMuseum.org

Under the auspices of
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Muslim cultural taboos, and Jamian Juliano-Villani's surreal paintings distort familiar images from pop culture and comics.

Artists included in the *Unorthodox* exhibition and publication:

Margit Anna (1913 – 1991, b. Hungary)
Austé (b. 1950, USA)
Clayton Bailey (b. 1939, USA)
Brian Belott (b. 1973, USA)
Meriem Bennani (b. 1988, Morocco)
Adolfo Bernal (1954 – 2008, b. Colombia)
Dineo Seshee Bopape (b. 1981, South Africa)
Michael Buthe (1944 – 1994, b. Germany)
Tony Cox (b. 1975, USA)
Olga de Amaral (b. 1932, Colombia)
Brian DeGraw (b. 1974, USA)
Marie-Louise Ekman (b. 1944, Sweden)
Brenda Fajardo (b. 1940, Philippines)
Christina Forrer (b. 1978, Switzerland)
Valeska Gert (1892 – 1978, b. Germany)
Stephen Goodfellow (b. 1953, United Kingdom)
Zachary Harris (b. 1976, USA)
Margaret Harrison (b. 1940, UK)
Tommy Hartung (b. 1978, USA)
Nadira Husain (b. 1980, France)
Jamian Juliano-Villani (b. 1987, USA)
Cyrus Kabiru (b. 1984, Kenya)
E'wao Kagoshima (b. 1945, Japan)
Gülsün Karamustafa (b. 1946, Turkey)
Keiichi Tanaami (b. 1936, Japan)
Július Koller (1939 – 2007, b. Slovakia)
Jiri Kovanda (b. 1953, Czech Republic)
Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato (1900 – 1995, b. Brazil)
Boris Lurie (1924 – 2008, b. Russia)
Alice Mackler (b. 1931, USA)
Abu Bakarr Mansaray (b. 1970, Sierra Leone)
f.marquespenteado (b. 1955, Brazil)
Masatoshi Naito (b. 1938, Japan)
Park McArthur (b. 1984, USA)
Birgit Megerle (b. 1975, Germany)
Jeffrey Mitchell (b. 1958, USA)
Mrinalini Mukherjee (1949 – 2015, b. India)
Hylton Nel (b. 1941, Zambia)
Zoë Paul (b. 1987, England)
Nick Payne (b. 1982, USA)
Christina Ramberg (1946 – 1995, b. USA)
Bunny Rogers (b. 1990, USA)
David Rosenak (b. 1957, USA)
Erna Rosenstein (1913 – 2004, b. in today's Ukraine)
Xanti Schawinsky (1904 – 1979, b. Switzerland)
Max Schumann (b. 1965, USA)
Leang Seckon (b. 1970, Cambodia)
Diane Simpson (b. 1935, USA)
Philip Smith (b. 1952, USA)
Hajime Sorayama (b. 1947, Japan)
Jeni Spota (b. 1982, USA)



Miroslav Tichy (1926 – 2011, Czech Republic)
Amikam Toren (b. 1945, Israel)
Endre Tót (b. 1937, Hungary)
William T. Vollmann (b. 1959, USA)

A complementary 200-page publication examines unorthodoxy across such subjects as art, politics, history, religion, and philosophy. Exhibition-related content includes an essay by co-curator Jens Hoffmann, a Q&A with co-curators Daniel S. Palmer and Kelly Taxter, and illustrated biographies of participating artists. The “Unorthodox Museums” section features sixteen short, manifesto-style texts in which some of the most forward-thinking international museum directors and curators discuss the state of museums today and propose concepts for an unorthodox museum. Contributors include Iwona Blazwick, director of Whitechapel Gallery, London; RoseLee Goldberg, founding director and curator of Performa, New York; Hou Hanru, director of the MAXXI National Museum of the 21st Century Arts, Rome; and Defne Ayas, director of Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam. Finally, the “Unorthodox Considerations” section brings together a selection of texts on Jewish culture and history edited by Chelsea Haines. These texts include classic works by Sigmund Freud and Leo Steinberg reprinted with newly commissioned responses by Mark Edmundson and Joshua Decker, respectively; a recent essay on unorthodoxy in Judaism by Alan T. Levenson with a response by Jack Wertheimer; and a previously unpublished essay by the philosopher Georges Didi-Huberman reconsidering the unorthodox methodology of the art historian Aby Warburg—whose family built the mansion that now houses the Jewish Museum. The book will be available for \$25.00 at the Jewish Museum’s Cooper Shop in November and worldwide in February, distributed for the Jewish Museum by Yale University Press.

Unorthodox will be accompanied by a series of public programs developed by the Jewish Museum and presented in collaboration with the 92nd Street Y. **Programs take place at the Jewish Museum unless otherwise noted.** Highlights include:

On Curating

Sunday, November 8, 8:30pm – at 92Y

Renowned exhibition maker Hans Ulrich Obrist, Co-Director of Exhibitions, Serpentine Galleries, London, and *Unorthodox* co-curator Jens Hoffmann, Deputy Director, Exhibitions and Public Programs, at the Jewish Museum, will speak about the highly progressive curatorial strategies they have employed over their respective careers, while also delving into the history of curating and examining examples of radical curatorial practices that have emerged over the last 40 years.

Tickets: \$32 general public; \$22 Jewish Museum Members

On Exhibitions

Tuesday, November 10, 10:00am – at 92Y and Jewish museum

Unorthodox co-curators Kelly Taxter, Assistant Curator, and Daniel S. Palmer, Leon Levy Assistant Curator, at the Jewish Museum discuss artworks featured in *Unorthodox*. This talk at 92Y will be followed by an exhibition walkthrough at the Jewish Museum with co-curator Jens Hoffmann, Deputy Director, Exhibitions and Public Programs.

Tickets: \$34 general public; \$19 Jewish Museum members



On Art History

Thursday, November 12, 6:30pm

Art historians and authors Claire Bishop and Joshua Decker discuss the role and function of art in post-avant-garde times— particularly the notion of the historical avant-garde as challenging orthodoxies across disciplines, with those avant-garde heterodoxies eventually becoming orthodoxies in their own right. Claire Bishop, Professor in the History of Art Department, CUNY Graduate Center. Joshua Decker is the author of *Art Is a Problem: Selected Criticism, Essays, Interviews and Curatorial Projects (1986 – 2012)* and teaches at the Cooper Union and the School of Visual Arts.

Tickets: \$15 general; \$12 students and seniors; \$10 Jewish Museum members

On Art I

Tuesday, November 17, 6:30pm

This book launch celebrates *Erna Rosenstein. I Can Repeat Only Unconsciously*, a new publication on the work of *Unorthodox* participating artist Erna Rosenstein (1913-2004). Authors Dorota Jarecka and Barbara Piwowarska will be in conversation with artist R.H. Quaytman, with an introduction by *Unorthodox* co-curator Daniel S. Palmer.

Free with RSVP

On Art II

Thursday, November 19, 6:00pm

Unorthodox artists Austè, Brian Belott, Meriem Bennani, Brian DeGraw, Tommy Hartung, Nick Payne, Phillip Smith, Jeni Spota, Jamian Juliano-Villani, and others discuss their artistic practices with co-curators Kelly Taxter and Daniel S. Palmer. Presented as part of Performa 15.

Free with Pay-What-You-Wish Admission, RSVP Recommended

On Religion

Thursday, February 18, 2016, 6:30pm

Alan Levenson, Director of the Schusterman Center for Judaic & Israel Studies at the University of Oklahoma, and author of *The Making of the Modern Jewish Bible: How Scholars in Germany, Israel, and America Transformed an Ancient Text*, will speak with Susan Katz Miller, journalist and author of *Being Both: Embracing Two Religions in One Interfaith Family*.

Tickets: \$15 General; \$12 Students and Seniors; \$10 Members

On Museums

Sunday, February 28, 2:00 – 6:30pm

International and local curators, including contributors to the exhibition catalogue, discuss the unconventional and nonconformist approaches to programming at their various institutions in a half-day symposium. Presented in collaboration with the Program in Museum Studies, New York University.

Tickets: \$12 General; \$8 Students, Seniors, and Members

On Philosophy

Tuesday, March 22, 7:00pm – at 92Y

A conversation between Mark Edmundson and Michael Roth on the legacy of Sigmund Freud's *The Future of an Illusion*, the polemical text that cautions against disillusionment derived from putting too much faith in ideals often associated with monotheism. Mark Edmundson is Professor in the Department of English, University of Virginia, and Michael Roth is President of Wesleyan University.

Tickets: \$32 General; \$22 Jewish Museum members



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About the Jewish Museum

Located on Museum Mile at Fifth Avenue and 92nd Street, the Jewish Museum is one of the world's preeminent institutions devoted to exploring art and Jewish culture from ancient to contemporary, offering intellectually engaging, educational, and provocative exhibitions and programs for people of all ages and backgrounds. The Museum was established in 1904, when Judge Mayer Sulzberger donated 26 ceremonial objects to The Jewish Theological Seminary as the core of a museum collection. Today, the Museum maintains a collection of over 30,000 works of art, artifacts, and broadcast media reflecting global Jewish identity, and presents a diverse schedule of internationally acclaimed temporary exhibitions.

The Jewish Museum is located at 1109 Fifth Avenue at 92nd Street, New York City. Museum hours are Saturday, Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday, 11am to 5:45pm; Thursday, 11am to 8pm; and Friday, 11am to 4pm. Museum admission is \$15.00 for adults, \$12.00 for senior citizens, \$7.50 for students, free for visitors 18 and under and Jewish Museum members. Admission is Pay What You Wish on Thursdays from 5pm to 8pm and free on Saturdays. For information on The Jewish Museum, the public may call 212.423.3200 or visit the website at TheJewishMuseum.org

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