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story

THE GOSS-MICHAEL FOUNDATION HOSTS: IT IS WHAT IT IS: CONVERSATIONS ABOUT IRAQ

The Goss-Michael Foundation is pleased to announce that it will host *It Is What It Is: Conversations About Iraq*, a new project by Turner Prize-winning British artist Jeremy Deller commissioned and produced by Creative Time and the New Museum. The project will encourage public discussion of the history, present circumstances, and future of Iraq through unscripted, nonpartisan conversations in cities across the country. These talks will be held in public sites such as shopping malls and parks by guest experts Jonathan Harvey and Esam Pasha, who were selected by Deller. In Dallas, The Goss-Michael Foundation will host the project at Southern Methodist University on Saturday, April 11, from 10:00am to 1:00pm. The public is encouraged to visit the project, and to bring objects related to Iraq to converse about.



This museum show traveling by RV will be on view in Dallas, TX Saturday, April 11.

More information about the project—including daily written and video updates as the project travels—can be found at www.conversationsaboutiraq.org

Jeremy Deller conceived *It Is What It Is* to stimulate unmediated dialogue about Iraq, and our relationship to it as people and as a nation. "I have read a ton of books and articles about the war but short of going to Iraq itself there is no substitute for meeting someone who has actually lived, or been there, hence the core part of this project," said Deller. To this end, over 30 people with a variety of first-hand experiences of the country were available for conversations with thousands of visitors during the project's installation at the New Museum in New York, from February 10 to March 22. A complete list of these experts is available at conversationsaboutiraq.org. On March 25, the project will begin a three-week road trip by RV from New York to Los Angeles, during which time the artist and guest experts Jonathan Harvey (an Iraq war veteran and recently demobilized Psychological Operations platoon sergeant) and Esam Pasha (an Iraqi refugee, artist, and former translator for the Chief Advisor in the British Embassy of Baghdad) will visit at least 10 cities nationally. This road trip will broaden and

deepen the dialog begun in New York, extending the conversation to diverse audiences across the country.

Also traveling with the experts is a car destroyed in a bombing on Al-Mutanabbi Street, Baghdad in March 2007. This tragedy killed over thirty people, and has taken on added significance because the street, named after a well-known Iraqi poet, was the site of numerous book markets and cafés, and was considered the nexus of Baghdadi cultural and intellectual life. The car is meant to ground conversations in the facts, figures, and eyewitness descriptions that have been lacking in most information about the Iraq war, and is intended to serve as a visual aid to prompt open dialogue and civil conversation. It was also one of a sparse selection of objects in the presentation at the New Museum.

When the road trip portion of *It Is What It Is: Conversations About Iraq* arrives in Los Angeles, the project will go on view at the Hammer Museum and will then travel to the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago as part of the Three M Project.

It Is What It Is: Conversations About Iraq is curated for Creative Time by: Nato Thompson, Curator; and for the New Museum by: Laura Hoptman, Kraus Family Senior Curator, and Amy Mackie, Curatorial Assistant. The research team includes: Shane Brennan, Sarah Demeuse, Ozge Ersoy, Jazmin Garcia, and Terri C. Smith.

Road Trip Schedule: DALLAS, TX

(Dates and sites are subject to change. See www.coverversationsaboutiraq.org for complete information.)

April 11: Dallas, TX, hosted by the Goss-Michael Foundation; Site: 10:00am-1:00pm: Southern Methodist University (at the flagpole, at the end of Bishop Blvd)

April 13: Santa Fe, NM, hosted by SITE Santa Fe; Site: The Santa Fe Plaza, bordered by East San Francisco Street, West Palace Avenue, and Lincoln Avenue

April 14-15: Phoenix, AZ, hosted by Future Arts Research of Arizona State University; Site: Arizona State University Art Museum, front entrance lot (51 E10th Street, Tempe, AZ)

April 19: Los Angeles, CA, artist talk at the Billy Wilder Theater, Hammer Museum

April 21: Los Angeles, CA, opening at the Hammer Museum

April 24: New York, NY, artist talk in the Great Hall at Cooper Union, presented by Creative Time, the New Museum, and the Cooper Union

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Over the past ten years, Jeremy Deller has archived, examined, and often staged demonstrations, exhibitions, historical reconstructions, parades, and concerts as a way to both celebrate and critically examine them as forms of social action. His work focuses on cultural history—how it is made, recorded, manipulated, and remembered. One of his most well-known works, a re-creation of a battle between pickets and police during the miner’s strike in the north of England in 1984, was subsequently made into a documentary by Mike Figgis called *The Battle of Orgreave* and was broadcast internationally. A more recent work, a film about Texas entitled *Memory Bucket*, won Deller the prestigious Turner Prize in 2004.

ABOUT THE GUEST EXPERTS

Jonathan Harvey has been a Platoon Sergeant in the United States Army since 1997 and is currently serving in the U.S. Army Reserve. A specialist in psychological operations, Harvey has lived in more than twenty-five countries, assisting in projects that include progressive teaching and leadership and management roles in academic and military environments. He has received many honors during his military career, including the Bronze Star Medal, seven Army Achievement medals, and an Army Commendation Medal. He is also an experienced teacher, including work at Veteran’s Upward Bound where he taught low-income military veterans basic skills to prepare them for college classes. Harvey received his Bachelor of Arts in philosophy, politics, and economics from the University of Pennsylvania, where he is currently pursuing his Master of Liberal Arts.

Born in Iraq, **Esam Pasha** is a translator, artist, and journalist who has worked as an interpreter for the British Embassy in Baghdad and the

Coalition in Iraq, including military groups such as the 101st Airborne and the Florida National Guard. Pasha has also been an interpreter at publications such as *The Boston Globe* and *The Christian Science Monitor*. He was a freelance journalist for the United Nations Integrated Regional Information Network and has written articles on art for international journals such as *The Art Newspaper*. Pasha, who is a well-known artist in Iraq, has also exhibited in the United States and Europe. In 2003, he executed the first post-war mural in Iraq, which is located in Baghdad.

ABOUT CREATIVE TIME

Creative Time is a nonprofit art organization based in New York City. For the past 35 years, Creative Time has presented artists’ dream projects in the public sphere in New York, and now on a national scale. Creative Time works with a belief in the importance of art in society, artists who make work

outside New York City, and the transformative power of the combination of art and social action. *It Is What Is* continues the organization's long history of presenting timely ideas that challenge and provoke the public to think about the times from unusual vantage points, including such projects as Jenny Holzer's *For New York City*, in which the artist's truisms were pulled by airplanes over the skies of New York City; Paul Chan's *Waiting for Godot in New Orleans*, a free, outdoor production of the Beckett play in the Lower Ninth Ward and Gentilly, New Orleans; and *Democracy in America: The National Campaign*, which brought artist commissions to six cities nationally and a major exhibition in the historic Park Avenue Armory in New York. Recent projects include *Tribute in Light*, which served as a gesture of hope and healing after 9/11; *Playing the Building* by David Byrne, a musical installation in a disused building in Lower Manhattan; and Doug Aitken's *sleepwalkers*, a film projected on the exterior of the Museum of Modern Art.

Creative Time is funded through the generous support of corporations, foundations, government agencies, and individuals. We gratefully acknowledge public funding from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs; the New York State Council on the Arts, a State agency; New York City Council Speaker Christine C. Quinn; and New York State Senator Thomas K. Duane.

ABOUT THE NEW MUSEUM

Founded in 1977, the New Museum is Manhattan's only dedicated contemporary art museum and among the most respected internationally, with a curatorial program known for its global scope and adventurousness. The inauguration of its new, state-of-the-art building on the Bowery, has made the New Museum a leading destination for new art and new ideas.

ABOUT THE GOSS-MICHAEL FOUNDATION

The Goss-Michael Foundation was founded by George Michael and Kenny Goss in June 2007 as a means to share their personal collection with the public and enable Dallas to interact with and become aware of the ground-breaking international artists that are responsible for the direction of today's most influential art trends. The multi-million dollar collection is comprised entirely of British Contemporary art and includes approximately 500 works by more than 75 of the most elite British artists working today.

Longtime collectors and advocates of the generation of artists that came to be internationally recognized as the YBAs (Young British Artists), Michael and Goss have assembled a collection of innovative and often provocative pieces that resonate, on a very personal level, with the couple, and also convey the individual experiences of the artists.

The Foundation offers the public a rotating schedule of exhibitions derived from Goss and Michael's private collection as well as other institutions. These exhibitions serve as a challenge to preconceived

art notions and strive to set a new standard in artistic awareness by providing visitors with fresh and fascinating art experiences. Through these experiences, the Foundation hopes to generate new perspectives and conversations on the creative methods of contemporary artists. Locally, the Foundation is dedicated to contributing to Dallas's thriving artistic community and enhancing the public's familiarity and interaction with mid-career and emerging international artists.

SUPPORT

The Goss-Michael Foundation, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) tax-exempt corporation, is a private operating foundation and receives additional support from individual donors, corporate sponsors, and government grants.

ABOUT THE THREE M PROJECT

In 2004, the Three M Project was conceived and developed together with the New Museum in New York, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, and the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, to jointly commission, exhibit, and acquire important works of contemporary art by artists whose work has not yet received significant recognition. All three museums share a collaborative vision and entrepreneurial spirit, and the belief that ambitious projects on a national scale can be produced through efficiency, knowledge, and resource sharing. The partnership, now in its second cycle, involves four new commissions by Jeremy Deller, Daria Martin, Mathias Poledna, and Urban China. The Three M Project is directed by leading curators from each museum: Laura Hoptman, Kraus Family Senior Curator, New Museum; Elizabeth Smith, James W. Alsdorf Chief Curator, with Dominic Molon, Curator, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; and Ali Subotnik, Curator, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles.

SUPPORT

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