



CREATIVETIME

**NEW
235 BOWERY
NEW YORK NY
10002 USA
MUSEUM**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PRESENTED BY CREATIVE TIME AND THE NEW MUSEUM
IT IS WHAT IT IS: CONVERSATIONS ABOUT IRAQ
A NEW COMMISSION BY JEREMY DELLER
FOR THE THREE M PROJECT
HOSTED IN KANSAS CITY BY GRAND ARTS



This museum show traveling by RV will be on view in Kansas City on:

Wednesday, April 1st, 2009

12-2pm at Mill Creek Park, NE Corner of the Plaza on J.C. Nichols Parkway;

2:30-4pm at the Kansas City Art Institute 4415 Warwick Blvd on 44th St between Oak St. and Warwick Blvd;

4-5pm at YJ's Snack Bar, 128 West 18th St between Wyandotte St and Baltimore Ave. At **7pm on April 1st**, Jeremy Deller, Nato Thompson and guest experts will give a public talk about the project at Grand Arts. **All events are free and open to the public. Please feel free to bring items pertaining to Iraq as they might be an interesting place to begin.**

Media contacts:

Nicholas Weist, Creative Time
nickw@creativetime.org
212.206.6674 x 205
www.creativetime.org

Lacey Wozny, Grand Arts
lacey@grandarts.com
816.421.6887
www.grandarts.com

APRIL 1, 2009

Grand Arts is pleased to announce that it will host *It Is What It Is: Conversations About Iraq*, a new exhibition 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 Kansas City on Wednesday, April 1st, 2009, Grand Arts will host the traveling show from 12-2pm at Mill Creek Park; 2:30 - 4pm at the Kansas City Art Institute; 4-5pm at YJ's Snack Shop. The public is encouraged to visit the project.

More information about the project can be found at www.conversationsaboutiraq.org



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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

(Dates are subject to change. See www.conversationsaboutiraq.org for complete information.)

March 26: Washington, DC, host to be announced

March 27: Richmond, VA, hosted by Virginia Commonwealth University

March 28: Philadelphia, PA, hosted by Slought Foundation

March 30: Cincinnati, OH, hosted by the Contemporary Arts Center

March 31: St. Louis, MO, hosted by the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis

April 1: Kansas City, MO, hosted by Grand Arts

April 2: Memphis, TN, hosted by UrbanArt Commission

April 4: Summertown, TN, hosted by The Farm Community

April 7-8: New Orleans, LA, host to be announced

April 9: Houston, TX, hosted by the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts

April 13: Santa Fe, NM, hosted by SITE Santa Fe

April 15-16: Phoenix, AZ, hosted by Future Arts Research of Arizona State University

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



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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.



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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 GRAND ARTS

Grand Arts is a non-profit art project space in downtown Kansas City, Missouri. We commission and assist artists in the production and realization of ambitious contemporary art projects, providing technical, logistical and financial support while encouraging conceptual risk-taking and experimentation at all stages of the creative process. Since 1995, Grand Arts has produced and exhibited more than 65 projects by artists including William Pope.L, Laurel Nakadate, spurse, Sanford Biggers, Isaac Julien, Patricia Cronin and Alfredo Jaar. For a complete archive of past projects, please see our website www.grandarts.com.

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

The Three M Project is sponsored by Deutsche Bank. *It Is What It Is: Conversations About Iraq* was made possible at the New Museum by a gift from Shane Akeroyd. The conversations are made possible by the Charlotte and Bill Ford Artists Talks Fund. Additional support provided by the Toby Devan Lewis Emerging Artists Exhibitions Fund. Special support for Creative Time for *It Is What It Is: Conversations About Iraq* is provided by Jed Valentas and Kate Engelbrecht, Charlotte and Bill Ford, Michael Gruenglas, and Stephen Kramarsky and Elise Mac Adam. Additional support provided by the Harpo Foundation.