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THE RENAISSANCE SOCIETY
FEBRUARY-JUNE 2016



PETER WÄCHTLER

SECRETS OF A TRUMPET

A lounging bronze crocodile, an oversized leather bandage, an animated rat singing Bruce Springsteen: Peter Wächtler's practice oscillates between the prosaic and the outlandish. The artist's fascination with pop culture—"I am attracted to bestsellers, page-turners, tearjerkers, blockbusters," he has written—is grounded in his attention to the casual failings of everyday life. His works are neither ironic nor sentimental: though composed of familiar elements and executed in earnest, they acknowledge a limit to their ability to communicate, often to comedic effect.

Wächtler is a prodigious writer, and these texts inform the rest of his practice, which also includes drawings, sculptures, and film. The tales he spins—

whether embodied in an object or relayed in prose or moving image—feature protagonists mired in various degrees of disquiet, melancholy, and ineptitude. Repetition is a key element, representing ongoing attempts by the characters, narrator, or even the artist himself to overcome the gap between intention and affect. The sympathy of the artist for his subjects and their travails is underscored by a homespun, heartfelt aesthetic.

At the Renaissance Society, Wächtler presents a new body of work, including watercolors and large-scale bronze figures. *Secrets of a Trumpet* is the Brussels-based artist's first solo museum exhibition in the United States.



SAT, FEB 06, 4–7PM
Opening reception
 with artist talk at 5pm

WED, FEB 17, 6PM
Exhibition walk-through
 with curator Solveig Øvstebø

SUN, MAR 06, 2PM
Exhibition walk-through
 with artist Zachary Cahill

Above: Peter Wächtler, *Untitled*, 2014. Courtesy of the artist and dépendance, Brussels. Photo: Sven Laurent.

Opposite: Peter Wächtler, *Get on Board 6*, 2015. Courtesy of the artist and Reena Spaulings, New York.

This exhibition is supported by the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen e.V. Stuttgart and the National Endowment for the Arts. Programming support is provided by Christie's.



Above: Peter Downsborough, *AND*, 2015, installation view. Image copyright of the artist and Artists Rights Society, courtesy of Galerie Thomas Zander, Cologne. Photo: Ulrik Eichentopf.

Below: Falke Pisano, *The value in mathematics (language)*, video still, 2015. Courtesy of the artist and Hollybush Gardens, London.

BETWEEN THE TICKS OF THE WATCH

KEVIN BEASLEY, PETER DOWNSBROUGH,
GOUTAM GHOSH, FALKE PISANO, MARTHA WILSON

What we understand to be true is continually honed by the dialectic between skepticism and certainty. Doubt can be an essential epistemological method for identifying new avenues of inquiry, opening space for the germination of novel forms and concepts. At the same time, doubt also eats away at the foundation of understanding itself, calling into question the very possibility of knowledge.

Between the Ticks of the Watch presents a platform for considering doubt as both a state of mind and pragmatic tool. Rather than defining the concept, the exhibition traces how uncertainty manifests itself. In different ways, the artworks presented and accompanying program of talks and screenings offer glimpses of how the condition of doubt permeates questions of scientific verification, identity, construction of language, and broader philosophical concerns.

Kevin Beasley presents a new installation featuring objects comprised of gas masks and megaphones: these hybrids are poised both to defend against and to facilitate expressions of power. Here, they lay on the floor, ready to be activated in situations of conflict.

Peter Downsborough's works are marked by an investigation into the spatial possibilities of language and the linguistic possibilities of space. His spare installations use lines to structure and divide and treat words as objects

which are frequently split, mirrored, or otherwise manipulated.

The collaged drawings of Goutam Ghosh appear to have been paused mid-execution; often structured by an underlying grid, the remaining empty space lingers uncertainly between inception and completion.

The value in mathematics (language), a recent video by Falke Pisano, centers on a conversation between the artist and two ethnomathematicians as they discuss how qualitative interpretations can undermine what are otherwise considered to be objective truths.

With a biting playfulness, Martha Wilson combines photography and text to stage acts of self-questioning, using her own shifting appearance to explore the fluidity of identity and its representations.

SUN, APR 24, 4–7PM

Opening reception

Kevin Beasley performs a new work at 5pm in the gallery

WED, MAY 11, 6PM

Exhibition walk-through

with curator Solveig Øvstebø

This exhibition is supported by the National Endowment for the Arts and Harper Court Arts Council.

TALKS

SOCIAL SCIENCES 122, 1126 E 59TH ST

RICHARD SHIFF

THU, APR 28, 7PM

Art historian Richard Shiff's 2008 book *Doubt* (Routledge) considers the tensions that arise between practicing art and practicing criticism, which he identifies as the difference between intuition and reason. He cites uncertainty not as a retreat to relativism, but as a critical tool for thinking clearly about art and art history. Criticism is enhanced when it borrows some of art's intuitive doubt. In this talk, he expands his argument to consider the work in the Renaissance Society's exhibition.

ON DOUBT

THU, MAY 05, 7PM

JAMES CONANT

James Conant is a philosopher who has written extensively on the philosophy of language, ethics, and metaphilosophy. He recently co-edited *Varieties of Skepticism: Essays after Kant, Wittgenstein, and Cavell* (Walter de Gruyter, Berlin, 2014), and in this talk he discusses the different ways in which doubt has been understood historically and in contemporary philosophy.

SHADI BARTSCH-ZIMMER
AND ROBERT J. RICHARDS

Shadi Bartsch-Zimmer, Professor of Classics and Gender Studies and Director of the Stevanovich Institute on the Formation of Knowledge at the University of Chicago, and Robert J. Richards, Professor of the History of Science and Medicine at the University of Chicago, discuss the value of doubting our assumptions about sex, science, and democracy.

Presented in partnership with the Stevanovich Institute on the Formation of Knowledge.



SCREENINGS

MAX PALEVSKY CINEMA,
IDA NOYES HALL, 1212 E 59TH ST



12 O'CLOCK BOYS

SAT, MAY 07, 2PM

This documentary follows Pug, a 13-year-old boy from Baltimore's Westside who yearns to join the urban dirt bike riders known as the 12 O'Clock Boys: young African American men who tear around the city, popping wheelies and weaving through traffic. As his fascination grows, it begins to eclipse everything else in his life.

SHORTS PROGRAM

SAT, MAY 14, 2PM

These artist works explore how uncertainty affects the personal, the political, and the social. Phil Collins' *marxism today (prologue)* follows the fortunes of former teachers of Marxism-Leninism in Communist East Germany; *The Role of a Lifetime* by Deimantas Narkevičius considers the ethical responsibilities of the artist and the impossibility of objectivity; and in *The Amateurist* Miranda July portrays a woman on the brink of a technologically-driven madness.

Above: Lotfy Nathan, *12 O'Clock Boys*, 2013.
HD digital video; color, sound; 76min. Image courtesy of Oscilloscope Pictures. Photo: Noah Rabinowitz.



FLAT IS BEAUTIFUL

SAT, MAY 21, 2PM

Artist Sadie Benning's experimental live-action cartoon uses masks, animation, subtitles, drawings, and dramatic scenes to investigate the psychic life of an androgynous eleven-year-old. Growing up in a working class neighborhood with her single mother and gay roommate, the protagonist confronts the loneliness of living between masculine and feminine in a culture obsessed with defining gender difference.



Presented in partnership with Doc Films.

Above, clockwise from top left:

Miranda July, *The Amateurist*, 1998. Color, stereo; 14 min. Image copyright of the artist, courtesy of Video Data Bank, www.vdb.org.

Deimantas Narkevičius, *The Role of a Lifetime*, 2003. 16 mm film transferred onto DVD; color and black & white, sound; English spoken; 16 min 50 sec. Image courtesy of Maureen Paley, London.

Phil Collins, *marxism today (prologue)*, 2010. HD digital video; color and black & white, sound; 35 min. Image courtesy of Shady Lane Productions and Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York.

Sadie Benning, *Flat Is Beautiful*, 1998. Black & white; 50 min. Image copyright of the artist, courtesy of Video Data Bank, www.vdb.org.



CONCERT

SOUTH/NORTH, FEATURING MESIAS MAIGUASHCA

WED, FEB 24, 8PM
BOND CHAPEL, 1050 E 59TH ST

Ecuadorian native Mesias Maiguashca has been established in Germany as a composer and teacher for more than five decades. Born to indigenous parents and a former student of Stockhausen, his musical language reflects the profound impact that the Andean folklore of his youth and the rigor of the European avant-garde have had on his perception of sound. This concert features the premiere of a composition by Maiguashca along with works by Mauricio Kagel, Helmut Lachenmann, and Chicago-based Ecuadorian composer Juan Campoverde.

Presented in partnership with the Frequency Series and Fonema Consort with support from Goethe-Institut.



Opposite, above and below:

Martha Wilson, *Mirror Mirror*, 2014, left photo by Richards Jarden (1973), right photo by Michael Katchen (2014). Courtesy of the artist and P.P.O.W, New York.

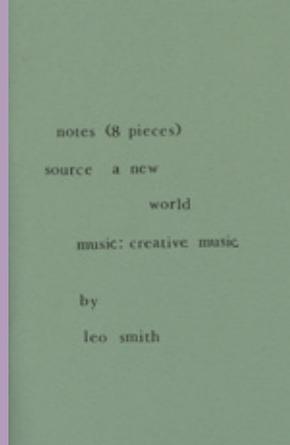
Kevin Beasley, *Movement I: DEF//ACHE//CRYSTALLINE//SLEEVE*, performance view, May 16, 2014, Whitney Biennial 2014, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Courtesy of the artist and the Whitney Museum of American Art. Photo: Paula Cort.

Above: Mesias Maiguashca. Courtesy of the artist.



CENTENNIAL: A HISTORY OF THE RENAISSANCE SOCIETY 1915-2015

Considering the institution's first hundred years from a number of social, cultural, and historical vantage points, this volume features contributions from Davarian L. Baldwin, R.H. Quaytman, Anne Rorimer, and more. It also includes an interview between Susanne Ghez, Solveig Øvstebø, and Hamza Walker, and a comprehensive timeline of the institution's programming to date.



WADADA LEO SMITH, NOTES (8 PIECES)

This new, limited edition of Smith's 1973 publication is accompanied by three recent essays by the trumpeter, composer, educator, and visual artist. It also features a new afterward by John Corbett, co-curator of Smith's recent Renaissance Society exhibition, *Ankhrasmation: The Language Scores, 1967-2015*.



VARDA CAIVANO, THE DENSITY OF THE ACTIONS

Full color illustrations of the artist's spring 2015 exhibition sit alongside new essays by Paula van den Bosch, Terry R. Myers, and Barry Schwabsky, plus texts by Georges Perec and Peter St John, and an introduction from Solveig Øvstebø.



Coming soon:

MATHIAS POLEDNA
with Solveig Øvstebø, Amy Knight
Powell, Bennett Simpson,
Andrew Weiner

GABRIEL SIERRA (above)
with Douglas Fogle and Irene V. Small

SEDUCTIVE EXACTING REALISM
BY MARCEL PROUST 12
with Ivo Andrić, Carolyn Christov-
Bakargiev, Hannah Feldman,
Irena Haiduk, Solveig Øvstebø,
Monika Szewczyk, Marina Vishmidt

MEMBERSHIP

Members of the Renaissance Society share our commitment to art as an essential way to illuminate and address key questions of our times.



Your generosity enables artists to undertake bold, ambitious projects, and it sustains our rich program of exhibitions, talks, concerts, readings, and screenings, all of which are free and open to the public. **Join us: renaissancesociety.org/support.**

FRIEND

\$60/year

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- Invitation to annual members event
- Renaissance Society tote bag
- Recognition in our Annual Report

BOOK CLUB

from \$300/year

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- 10% discount on most Renaissance Society editions
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CHICAGO COMMITTEE

\$1,000/year
(\$500 for those 35 and under)

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- Invitations to the Renaissance Society's annual meeting and dinner
- Plus all Book Club benefits

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE

\$2,500/year

- Invitations to opening reception dinners and exclusive International Committee events
- Opportunities for art-related travel
- Plus all Chicago Committee benefits

VISITING INFORMATION

All exhibitions and events take place at the Renaissance Society unless otherwise noted.

All are free, open to the public, and require no booking unless otherwise noted.

Please visit our website for a full calendar of events.

Opening hours

Tue-Fri: 10am-5pm

Sat and Sun: 12-5pm

Closed Mondays and between exhibitions

We are pleased to accommodate visits from schools, universities, and other groups, and our library and archives are open to researchers by appointment. Please contact us to arrange a visit.

SUPPORTERS

Major support for the Renaissance Society is generously provided by Alphawood Foundation; Andy Warhol Foundation; Chauncey and Marion D. McCormick Family Foundation; Edlis Neeson Foundation; The MacArthur Fund for Arts and Culture at Prince Charitable Trust; Office of the Provost at the University of Chicago; and the Pritzker Traubert Family Foundation.

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FEB 7-APR 3, 2016

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Contemporary art
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and publishing