

THE RENAISSANCE SOCIETY ANNUAL REPORT 2016–17

2016–17 SEASON LETTER FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT



The Renaissance Society's 2016-17 season was an extraordinary one. From an immersive video installation to a single, monumental sculpture, the breadth and power of the Ren's programming makes this a truly singular institution. Though modest in size, its work is far-reaching and made possible only by the significant effort of many.

On behalf of the entire Board and staff, I extend the deepest gratitude to everyone who has made a contribution to the Next Century Fund for the creation of new work, and especially to the Edlis Neeson Foundation, the Pritzker Traubert Family Foundation, and the Zell Family Foundation for providing lead gifts. Their exemplary support of this initiative has inspired contributions of all sizes.

Each fall we convene the Ren's most generous donors and supporters for the RenBen, a night of art, friends, and celebration that raises vital funds for the Ren's program. This year Mirja Spooner Haffner and Naomi Mori Reese led the charge in creating a beautiful evening at Mana Contemporary. Thanks to the leadership of the Chairs, the generosity of the host committee, the artists who donated work, and everyone who attended or followed the auction from afar, we succeeded in raising over \$400,000 to benefit the Ren's exhibitions, events, and publications.

I am incredibly thankful to work with a talented and dedicated Board of Directors at the Ren who bring expertise and passion to their leadership of this institution. This year we were delighted to add three new Board members: Raven Thomas Abdul-Aleem, Nancy Lerner Frej, and Glen Saltzberg. I'd also like to extend our warmest thanks to Jennifer Levine, who departed the Board this year. Her service on the Ren's Board of Directors was invaluable, and we wish her well.

It is impossible to talk about the work of the Ren without giving credit to the amazing staff. This year the Ren has continued to thrive thanks to the vision and leadership of Solveig Øvstebø, the Ren's Executive Director and Chief Curator, and the small, but high-performing and mighty team that she has built and inspired. I know I am joined by many in applauding the work of Robert Bain, Jessica Cochran, Julia DeRose, Max Guy, Michael Harrison, Colleen Kelly, Maria Lubliner, Karsten Lund, Olivia McManus, Karen Reimer, Nicole Schonitzer, Anna Searle Jones, Pierre Sondeijker, and Hamza Walker.

The thanks in the pages that follow are just the beginning of the appreciation that we wish to express to our entire community. Whether you are a member, a visitor, a follower, a reader, a colleague, or a donor, please accept my gratitude on behalf of the entire Board and staff for making the 2016-17 season at the Renaissance Society so memorable.

With gratitude, Jorge Cauz





B. Ingrid Olson, Felt Angle, box for standing, 2017 Courtesy of the artist and Simone Subal Gallery

2016-17 SEASON DIRECTOR'S REPORT

In the first full season following our Centennial celebration, the power of the Renaissance Society's commitment to supporting bold artistic expression was on full view. We commissioned the production of significant new works of art; we introduced audiences to an artist who had never had a solo presentation in the United States; and we revisited established practices that have renewed urgency in our present moment.

During this year we also developed our public programs, offering an increased range and frequency of events that complemented and expanded on our exhibitions. Organized by assistant curator Karsten Lund, these screenings, concerts, talks, readings, and more presented opportunities to dig deeper into the ideas and expressions of a compelling range of practitioners.

The Ren's student committee— University of Chicago students who act as ambassadors of and advisors to the institution—completed its first full year of activity after its launch in Spring 2016. Under the guidance of Jessica Cochran and Anna Searle Jones, the committee launched a free student membership, open to all Chicago-area students and offering a dedicated monthly e-newsletter and special student events.

This year saw the departure of long-time Associate Curator and Director of Education, Hamza Walker, who was appointed Executive Director of LAXART in Los Angeles. Over 22 incredible years, Hamza's writing and curating made an immeasurable impact on the institution, on the Chicago art scene, and on the broader field of contemporary art. He is dearly missed here at the Ren, but I am thrilled to congratulate him and LAXART, which I know will be greatly enriched by his intellect and wit. I would like to also acknowledge here the dedicated service of former Chief Preparator Rob Bain who was a key member of our team for more than 10 years.

As I reflect on this incredible season, I would like to reiterate the immense gratitude that Jorge articulated in his letter to all of our extraordinarily generous supporters, our dedicated Board members, and our talented staff. In particular, the Next Century Fund has provided a financial grounding that is essential to grow our ambitious work. This is especially evident in the way we have been able to strengthen our focus on the production of new art and publications since the Centennial, including this year new commissions from Ben Rivers, Sadie Benning, and B. Ingrid Olson.

Finally, I would like to express my greatest thanks to all of the artists, writers, musicians, scholars, filmmakers, and others who contributed to our program in many ways over the year: it is because of you that the Ren is here, and it is because of your work that we continue to be engaged, delighted, and challenged.

Solveig Øvstebø Executive Director and Chief Curator

BEN RIVERS URTH

Urth was British artist and filmmaker Ben Rivers's first solo exhibition in the United States and featured a newly commissioned moving image work of the same name. Filmed inside Biosphere 2 in Arizona, it forms a cinematic meditation on ambitious experiments, constructed environments, and visions of the future. The exhibition also included two recent film installations: Slow Action (2010) and Things (2014).

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As part of our public program, we were thrilled to screen two of Rivers's feature-length films and to host a lecture by author and philosopher Timothy Morton, on whose writing Rivers frequently draws. Musician Robert Aiki Aubrey Lowe, who has previously collaborated with Rivers, performed in Bond Chapel.

SEP 10, 2016

Opening reception and artist talk with Solveig Øvstebø

SEP 30, 2016

Screening: A Spell to Ward off the Darkness (2013)

Directed by Ben Rivers and Ben Russell Presented in partnership with the Film Studies Center, the University of Chicago

OCT 7, 2016

Screening: The Sky Trembles and the Earth Is Afraid and the Two Eyes Are Not Brothers (2015)

Directed by Ben Rivers

Presented in partnership with the Film Studies Center, the University of Chicago

OCT 23, 2016

Lecture: Timothy Morton, "Things Just Got Weird"

Presented in partnership with the Arts, Science & Culture Initiative, the Stevanovich Institute on the Formation of Knowledge, and the Open Practice Committee of the Department of Visual Arts, all at the University of Chicago, and the Seminary Co-op Bookstores

NOV 4, 2016

Concert: Robert Aiki Aubrey Lowe

SADIE BENNING SHARED EYE

For their presentation Shared Eve, organized in partnership with Kunsthalle Basel, artist Sadie Benning took as inspiration the format of Blinky Palermo's 1976 work *To the People* of New York City. To this sequence of 40 variously sized panels, Benning brings a unique mixed-media technique, cutting apart and reassembling the supports and adding various found images, digital snapshots, objects, and painted surfaces.

Events presented in conjunction with *Shared Eye* included a walk-through by University of Chicago art history professor Christine Mehring, the "Ambiguity Forum"—a performative reading by over 15 participants of original and found texts on the subject of indeterminacy—and a lecture by curator Lynne Cooke on Blinky Palermo's work.

NOV 19, 2016 **Opening reception and artist talk** with Solveig Øvstebø

NOV 29, 2016 Exhibition walk-through Christine Mehring

DEC 10, 2016 Exhibition walk-through Karsten Lund

JAN 14, 2017

Reading: Ambiguity Forum
Contributors: Alex Chitty, Mashinka
Firunts, David Getsy, Matthew Goulish,
Sara Magenheimer, Jesse Malmed, Jennifer
Reeder, Steve Reinke; additional readers:
Elizabeth Allen-Cannon, Brit Barton,
Jessica Cochran, Max Guy, Michael
Harrison, Karsten Lund, Karen Reimer,
Angela Zhang, and Zsofia Valyi-Nagy

JAN 19, 2017 Lecture: Lynne Cooke









ROBERT GROSVENOR

Robert Grosvenor is a significant figure in American sculpture, and the centerpiece of his Renaissance Society exhibition was a single, imposing sculpture from 1989-90. Recontextualized within a spare architectural installation and accompanied by a new "adjunct" work, it invited visitors to consider how our sense of this sculpture, from its formal language to its frank materiality, has evolved or expanded since its creation.

Events with John Yau, Virginia Overton, and Geof Oppenheimer illuminated aspects of Grosvenor's practice, while a screening of the film Remainder, adapted from the novel by Tom McCarthy, traced one man's attempt to confront the materiality of his world. FEB 11, 2017 Opening reception and talk with John Yau

MAR 1, 2017 **Exhibition walk-through** Solveig Øvstebø

MAR 9, 2017 Discussion: "Meaning and Material" with Geof Oppenheimer and Virgina Overton

MAR 30, 2017 Screening: Remainder Directed by Omer Fast

KLEIN/OLSON

Klein/Olson brought together the work of German artist Astrid Klein and Chicagobased artist B. Ingrid Olson. Their practices share a tendency to manipulate or to call attention to space: Klein through the way her collages collapse text, photographs, and found images; Olson in her layered, performative photographs and intimate, abstract sculptures.

Extending the exhibition's consideration of language, gender, and space, the related program featured a lecture by architectural historian Beatriz Colomina, a presentation by writer Kate Zambreno of a newly commissioned essay, and a reading by poet and novelist Renee Gladman.

APR 22, 2017 Opening reception and artist talk with Solveig Øvstebø

MAY 11, 2017 Reading: Kate Zambreno

MAY 13, 2017 Exhibition walk-through Karsten Lund

MAY 24, 2017 Lecture: Beatriz Colomina, "The Perversions of Modern Architecture: Everything you wanted to know about it but were afraid to ask"

MAY 25, 2017 Reading: Renee Gladman



JAN 28, 2017

Intermissions: Xavier Cha, *In the News* Supported by the Efroymson Family Fund

FEB 15, 2017

Concert: R. Andrew Lee

Presented as part of the Frequency Series Festival of Chicago New Music

APR 21, 2017

Concert: Olivia Block, 132 Ranks

Co-presented with Lampo in partnership with Rockefeller Chapel

JUN 18, 2017

Concert: *Dreamlives of Debris*

Composed by Gene Coleman; conducted by Rei Hotoda; with performances by Nicholas Isherwood, members of Ensemble N_JP and Ensemble Dal Niente, and vocalists from The Crossing After the exhibitions come down, it is our publications that keep the artists' presentations alive, extending their impact beyond the institutional walls and offering ongoing opportunities for critical reflection. During this season we published three incredible books, each of which not only documented but also richly expanded on their projects at the Renaissance Society: Irena Haiduk, Seductive Exacting Realism by Marcel Proust 12; Ben Rivers, Ways of Worldmaking; and Mathias Poledna, Substance. Catalogues are forthcoming in 2018 for Sadie Benning, Shared Eye and Robert Grosvenor.

Irena Haiduk, Seductive Exacting Realism by Marcel Proust 12

Contributors: Ivo Andrić, Hannah Feldman, Irena Haiduk, Monika Szewczyk, Marina Vishmidt, and Solveig Øvstebø Hardcover, 168pp. Co-published with Sternberg Press

Ben Rivers, Ways of Worldmaking

Contributors: Melissa Gronlund, Ed Halter, Andrea Picard, Ben Rivers, Robert Pinget, Mark von Schlegell, Herbert Read, Renee Gladman, Jan Zalasiewicz, and Henri Michaux Hardcover, 224pp. Co-published with Kunstverein in Hamburg, Camden Arts Centre, and La Triennale di Milano

Mathias Poledna, Substance

Contributors: Amy Knight Powell, Bennett Simpson, Andrew Weiner, and Solveig Øvstebø Softcover with case, 132pp. Sadie Benning Paula Cooper Gallery, New York Eva Felten Robert Grosvenor Astrid Klein Kate MacGarry, London B. Ingrid Olson Ben Rivers
Sprüth Magers (Berlin, London,
Los Angeles)
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The Renaissance Society is grateful to everyone who has made a gift to the Next Century Fund for the creation of new work, launched in 2015 to mark our Centennial year. This campaign aims to secure the driving institutional commitment to giving artists the space, time, and resources to realize ambitious new projects. All funds make possible the artistic experimentation and new production that artists might not otherwise have the opportunity to undertake. Led by extraordinary gifts from the Edlis Neeson Foundation, the Pritzker Traubert Family Foundation, and the Zell Family Foundation, the Ren is indebted to the many friends and supporters who have contributed to the campaign.

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THE RENAISSANCE SOCIETY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO STATEMENTS OF ACTIVITIES AND CHANGES IN NET ASSETS YEARS ENDED JUNE 30, 2017 AND 2016

ASSETS	2017	2016	
Current assets Cash Accounts receivable Contributions and grants receivable – current portion Inventory Prepaid expenses and other current assets Total current assets	\$ 224,845 110,645 468,523 51,477 15,660 871,150	\$ 702,092 8,933 735,528 56,887 44,494 1,547,934	
Property and equipment, net	18,702	29,616	
Other assets Investments, at fair value Contributions and grants receivable, net -noncurrent portion	5,983,933 497,339 6,481,272	4,421,270 864,833 5,286,103	
Total assets	7,371,124	6,863,653	
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS Current liabilities Accounts payable and accrued expenses Deferred revenue Total current liabilities	\$ 78,569 5,300 83,869	\$ 36,650 7,000 43,650	
Net assets Unrestricted Temporarily unrestricted Total net assets	6,345,105 942,150 7,287,255	5,324,556 1,495,447 6,820,003	
Total liabilities and net assets	\$ 7,371,124	\$ 6,863,653	

	2017			2016		
	UNRESTRICTED	TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED	TOTAL	UNRESTRICTED	TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED	TOTAL
Revenues						
Grants	\$ 75,471	\$ 130,000		\$ 186,313	\$ 140,000	
Contributions	222,994	13,000	235,994	416,761	1,626,998	2,043,759
In-kind contributions Benefit revenues, net of expenses of \$144,133 in 2017 and \$133,049	350,548	-	350,548	495,000	-	495,000
in 2016	282,524	-	282,524	209,602	-	209,602
Art	320,548	-	320,548	465,000	-	465,000
Editions	140,257	-	140,257	61,980	-	61,980
Education	34,385	-	34,385	-	-	-
Exhibit touring fees	5,000	-	5,000	849	-	849
Publications Interest and dividend	19,717	-	19,717	23,578	-	23,578
income	367,018	-	367,018	182,466	-	182,466
Net realized and unrealized gain (loss) on investments Net assets released from	314,490	-	314,490	(98,359)	-	(98,359)
restriction	696,297	(696,297)		461,551	(461,551)	
Total revenues	2,829,249	(553,297)	2,275,952	2,404,741	1,305,447	3,710,188
Expenses						
Program services	1,309,450	_	1,309,450	1,624,555	-	1,624,555
Management and general	262,082	-	262,082	238,460	-	238,460
Fundraising	237,168		237,168	216,858		216,858
Total expenses	1,808,700		1,808,700	2,079,873		2,079,873
Change in net assets	1,020,549	(553,297)	467,252	324,868	1,305,447	1,630,315
Net assets, beginning of year	5,324,556	1,495,447	6,820,003	4,999,688	190,000	5,189,688
Net assets, end of year	\$6,345,105	\$ 942,150	\$7,287,255	\$5,324,556	\$1,495,447	\$6,820,003

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