

NEWS RELEASE

**THE
CLARK
ART
INSTITUTE**

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THE CLARK ART INSTITUTE STAGES ITS FIRST OUTDOOR EXHIBITION FEATURING NEWLY COMMISSIONED WORKS BY SIX CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

*Ground/work presents site-responsive projects created by leading artists
Kelly Akashi, Nairy Baghramian, Jennie C. Jones, Eva LeWitt,
Analia Saban, and Haegue Yang*



Eva LeWitt, Resin Towers A, B, and C, 2020. Resin, PVC.
Courtesy of the artist and VI, VII, Oslo. Photo: Thomas Clark.

Williamstown, Massachusetts—The Clark Art Institute has unveiled newly commissioned site-responsive installations by six leading contemporary artists in its first outdoor exhibition set throughout the woodland trails and open meadows of the Clark’s distinctive 140-acre campus.

Organized by the Clark under the leadership of guest curators Molly Epstein and Abigail Ross Goodman, *Ground/work* features a dynamic range of outdoor presentations by international artists Kelly Akashi, Nairy Baghramian, Jennie C. Jones, Eva LeWitt, Analia Saban, and Haegue Yang, that respond to the Clark’s unique setting while expressing ideas core to each artist’s individual practice. The installations are on view through October 2021, allowing visitors to encounter the works day or night and throughout the seasons, experiencing them anew as the landscape and weather conditions change.

“The Clark has always been deeply connected to our unique natural setting in the Berkshires, where one lives with—and treasures—the seasonal fluctuations that are such a part of life here. For *Ground/work*, our meadows and woodlands serve as a kind of natural ‘gallery,’ offering visitors the opportunity to venture beyond our institutional walls and contemplate vibrant and inspiring contemporary works set amid the remarkable natural beauty that surrounds them,” said Olivier Meslay, Hardymon Director of the Clark. “We are excited to build upon our history of collaborating with living artists and art historians in the most ambitious program of new commissions the Clark has staged to date.”

Originally slated to open in June 2020, logistical challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic caused unavoidable delays for the project. Visitors to the Clark have been able to watch the individual projects being installed on the grounds over the last several months. “Watching *Ground/work* grow over several months is certainly not what we originally envisioned,” said Meslay, “but we have happily adapted to the current circumstances with resilience. I know many of our visitors have found this to be a fascinating glimpse into how exhibitions are made.”

“We could never have foreseen it when we first conceived *Ground/work* more than three years ago, but the significance and benefit of being able to offer our visitors the opportunity to visit the Clark and enjoy an outdoor exhibition at this moment feels particularly welcome,” Meslay said.

Guest curators Epstein and Ross Goodman said: “The Clark’s magnificent landscape, with its varied terrain and opportunities for wandering, served as an open invitation to the participating artists in *Ground/work*, each of whom recognized the context as an exciting prompt for innovation in their work. It has been a privilege to work on this project that further extends the Clark’s interest in presenting global contemporary art and which honors the visitor, the artists, and the environment. As each project has been installed, the significance of the artists’ consideration of nature as participant and raw material is further revealed. By re-orienting the viewer to the possibilities presented by both art and nature, these works engage features of the Clark’s landscape to blur the boundaries between the familiar and the unknown.”

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

The six artists’ installations are sited across the vast and varied campus, thereby providing visitors with a rich experience of moving through the landscape to reexamine nature through their encounters with each work. The projects on view combine the individual investigations of these artists with their responses to the environment, the Clark’s lands, and the museum’s permanent collection and architecture.

Haegue Yang's three-part project, *Migratory DMZ Birds on Asymmetric Lens*, brings bird species native to the Korean Demilitarized Zone to the unfamiliar setting of New England. Part presence, part absence, these portraits of birds create both an image and a vessel that their local counterparts can perch on, or bathe in when rainwater collects. Made of 3-D printed transparent ecological resin set atop robotically milled stone pedestals, these sculptures combine synthetic and natural materials and demonstrate the artist's interest in new technologies. The works are sited at three distinct locations on the campus.

Analia Saban's *Teaching a Cow How to Draw* modifies a length of split-rail fence that wryly invites the cows that pasture in the Clark's fields to consider the rules of artistic perspective. Illustrating several of the theories of composition and perspective that have informed the history of art—from the Rule of Thirds to the Golden Ratio—Saban translates the ordinary structure of this boundary line into a new form that is simultaneously sculpture, drawing, and functional object. Saban, who was a student of the late conceptual artist John Baldessari and pays homage to his 1972 video work *Teaching a Plant the Alphabet* with her project and title, subverts expectations of what a drawing can be by scaling it to 620 feet of running fence line.

Jennie C. Jones, working outdoors for the first time, uses both sonic and visual abstraction in a sculptural form that is both site-responsive to the landscape and acts as a physical extension of the Tadao Ando–designed Clark Center building. Her sculpture, *These (Mournful) Shores*, is a contemporary take on an Aeolian harp, whose strings are activated by the shifting winds and weather patterns on the Clark's site. Influenced by two Winslow Homer paintings from the Clark's permanent collection—*Eastern Point* and *West Point, Prout's Neck* (both 1900)—Jones interprets these turbulent seascapes of the Atlantic Ocean to be also considered as portraits of the Middle Passage.

Eva LeWitt debuts her first outdoor project, consisting of three totems that play with transparency and opacity, installed in a transitional site between the woodland trails and the open meadow of Stone Hill. Titled *Resin Tower A (Orange)*, *Resin Tower B (Yellow)*, *Resin Tower C (Blue)*, and measuring nearly eleven feet tall, the works are made of clear resin and high-color film that, together, reflect and refract the changing light and surrounding landscape throughout the four seasons. Embedded in each layer of resin, PVC material shaped and cut by the artist's own hand recurs and repeats, referencing and multiplying the artist's labor and personal production. At once a study of positive and negative space and an exploration of color and contrast, the sculptures generate varied experiences of the vibrant seasonal palette set within the Clark's landscape.

Nairy Baghramian's *Knee and Elbow* is a highly abstracted portrait of two primary joints in the body. Working in traditional sculptural materials of marble and steel for the first time, the artist challenges their typical connotations of durability and monumentality and instead highlights the vulnerability of the human form. The two blocks of marble are heavily veined and pitted on their surface, suggesting fragility,

sensitivity, and, in the artist's words, "possible collapse." Here, the artist gives these joints a respite from centuries of upright poses and postures. Set towards the back corner of the Stone Hill pasture, Baghramian's sculpture is sited to encourage visitors to pause—releasing pressure on these parts of the human body—and to survey the wide vista that surrounds it.

Kelly Akashi draws upon her training as an analog photographer, installing a large double-concave lens, titled *A Device to See the World Twice*, along a woodland trail near the farthest edge of the Clark's campus. The lens reframes and distorts the surrounding natural setting, and creates an upright image that optically scales the environment within its field, simultaneously shrinking and expanding what is seen. The lens is held in an armature of branches cast in bronze, a reference to the artist's long-standing interest in living materials, entropy, and decay. With *A Device to See the World Twice*, Akashi slows time and allows the landscape to reveal its lively and ever-changing ecosystem.

The exhibition is supplemented by additional online content available on the Clark's website and app, including interviews with the artists talking about their projects, a trail guide, an image gallery, and more. Visit clarkart.edu/groundwork or download the Clark's app through the Apple and Samsung stores. Trail guides are also available at the Clark's information desks.

Ground/work builds upon the Clark's long history of collaborating with contemporary artists and art historians, inviting them to engage with the museum and its campus, both through exhibitions and as resident scholars, researchers, and lecturers. It also represents a deepening of the Clark's commitment to contemporary art, championed by Olivier Meslay since joining the Institute as Hardymon Director in August 2016. In addition to *Ground/work*, visitors this year will have the opportunity to enjoy a year-long installation in the museum's public spaces, *Velo Revelo*, by contemporary artist Pia Camil (Mexican, b. 1980) and *Lin May Saeed: Arrival of the Animals*—the first institutional solo show in North America of works by the German-Iraqi artist—at the Clark's Lunder Center at Stone Hill. The exhibition, organized by the Clark and curated by Robert Wiesenberger, associate curator of contemporary projects, is open from July 21 to October 25. Wiesenberger is also working in collaboration with Epstein and Ross Goodman on *Ground/work*.

Major support for *Ground/work* is provided by Karen and Robert Scott, Denise Littlefield Sobel, and Paul Neely. Additional funding is generously provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art; the National Endowment for the Humanities: Exploring the human endeavor; Maureen Fennessy Bousa and Edward P. Bousa; Amy and Charlie Scharf; Elizabeth Lee; Chrystina and James Parks; Howard M. Shapiro and Shirley Brandman; Joan and Jim Hunter; and James and Barbara Moltz.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Kelly Akashi (b. 1983, Los Angeles) trained as an analog photographer and brings a documentarian's instincts and curiosity to a practice that embraces a range of diverse materials and age-old processes. Her work is included in the permanent collections of the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art; the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; and the Sifang Museum, Nanjing, China, among others. New and recent solo exhibitions include presentations at the Aspen Art Museum (2020), Tanya Bonakdar Gallery (2020), Headlands Center for the Arts (2019), Carolyn Glasoe Bailey Foundation (2019), ARCH Athens (2019); François Ghebaly Gallery, Los Angeles (2019 and 2016); and SculptureCenter, New York (2017). Akashi lives and works in Los Angeles.

Nairy Baghramian (b. 1971, Isfahan, Iran) grapples with issues of vulnerability and authority as she deconstructs and reassembles the human form, ever mindful of the forces of history, material, and context. Baghramian's work is held in the permanent collections of the Centre Pompidou, Paris; The Art Institute of Chicago; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; the S.M.A.K. Museum of Contemporary Art, Ghent, Belgium; the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Tate Modern, London; and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, among others. Baghramian's most recent solo presentations include projects at PERFORMA-19, New York (2019), Palacio de Cristal del Retiro, Madrid (2018); the Walker Art Center, (2017); and the S.M.A.K. Museum of Contemporary Art, (2016). Forthcoming solo projects include an exhibition at the Musée d'art contemporain de Nîmes in France, and a show at the Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Milan. Baghramian lives and works in Berlin, Germany.

Jennie C. Jones (b. 1968, Cincinnati) employs strategies of collage and assemblage in her ongoing project of translating sound into physical matter, reframing the contributions of African Americans to include a modernist, minimalist vernacular. Her work is included in the permanent collections of The Museum of Modern Art; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum; and the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C., among others. Recent solo presentations include projects at The Arts Club of Chicago (2020), The Philip Johnson Glass House, New Canaan, Connecticut (2018); CAM Houston (2015); the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden (2013); The Kitchen, New York (2011); Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco (2011); and Atlanta Contemporary Art Center (2009). Jones lives and works in Hudson, New York.

Eva LeWitt (b. 1985, Spoleto, Italy) leverages forces of color, gravity, suspension, and volume with a sensitivity to space, an interest in repetition and variation, and a reconsideration of materials and their inherent properties. Her work is held in the permanent collections of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C., Kistefos Museum, Jevnaker, Norway, and M Woods, Beijing. LeWitt's current and recent solo exhibitions include presentations at The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, Connecticut (2019); The Jewish Museum, New York (2018);

and VI, VII Gallery, Oslo (2018). A site-specific commission by the artist at the Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston will be unveiled in January 2021. LeWitt lives and works in New York.

Analia Saban (b. 1980, Buenos Aires) explores the intersections and overlap between traditional media and new technologies, disrupting conventional techniques of drawing, painting, weaving, and sculpture to probe the capacity of an object and the myriad meanings found within its form. Her work is in the collections of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; the Centre Pompidou; The Israel Museum, Jerusalem; the Hessel Museum of Art at Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York; Fonds regional d'Art contemporain (FRAC) d'Auvergne, France; Fundación Proa, Buenos Aires; the Hammer Museum and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, among others. The Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth (2019) and the Blaffer Art Museum, Austin, Texas (2016) have both presented solo exhibitions of Saban's work. Saban lives and works in Los Angeles.

Haegue Yang (b. 1971, Seoul) explores themes of social and political histories in her work, extricating familiar objects and materials from their primary functions and environments and repurposing them in a new framework of abstraction. Yang's work is held in the collections of The Museum of Modern Art; Tate Modern; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum; M+, Hong Kong; National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul; and the Walker Art Center, among others. Recent solo exhibitions include projects at the Bass Museum of Art, Miami Beach (2019); South London Gallery (2019); Museum Ludwig, Cologne (2018); KINDL - Centre for Contemporary Art, Berlin (2018); Centre Pompidou (2016); and the Serralves Museum, Porto, Portugal (2016). A new commission by the artist was recently on view at the Marron Atrium of the renovated Museum of Modern Art, New York. Forthcoming solo projects in 2020 include exhibitions at the Art Gallery of Ontario, MMCA Seoul, MCAD Manila, and Tate St. Ives. Yang lives and works between Berlin and Seoul.

ABOUT THE CLARK

The Clark Art Institute, located in the Berkshires of western Massachusetts, is one of a small number of institutions globally that is both an art museum and a center for research, critical discussion, and higher education in the visual arts. Opened in 1955, the Clark houses exceptional European and American paintings and sculpture, extensive collections of master prints and drawings, English silver, and early photography. Acting as convener through its Research and Academic Program, the Clark gathers an international community of scholars to participate in a lively program of conferences, colloquia, and workshops on topics of vital importance to the visual arts. The Clark library, consisting of more than 275,000 volumes, is one of the nation's premier art history libraries. The Clark also houses and co-sponsors the Williams College Graduate Program in the History of Art.

The Clark, which has a three-star rating in the Michelin Green Guide, is located at 225 South Street in Williamstown, Massachusetts. Galleries are open Tuesday through Sunday, 10 am to 5 pm. Grounds are always open for walkers. Admission is \$20; free year-round for Clark members, children 18 and younger, and students with valid ID. Free admission is available through several programs, including First Sundays Free; a local library pass program and the EBT Card to Culture. For further information on these programs and more, visit clarkart.edu or call 413 458 2303.

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