

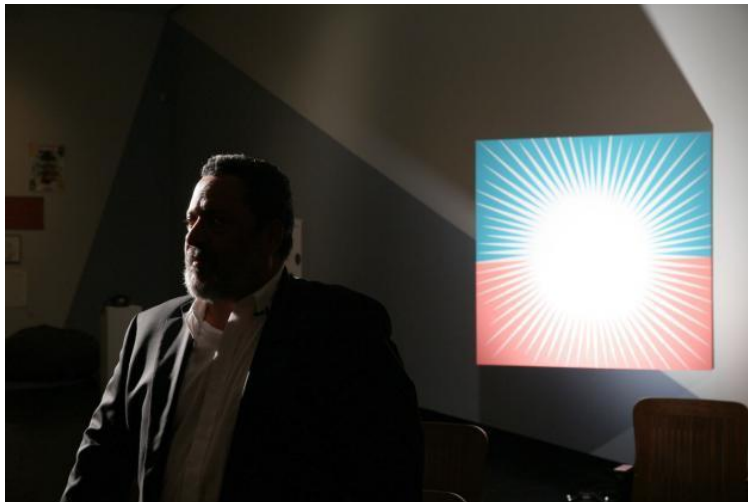


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BAMPFA to Present Performance Artwork by Asher Hartman and Cliff Hengst

Exclusive Bay Area Engagement April 13-15, 2017

Mr. Akita is Latest Installment in BAMPFA's
MATRIX Program for Contemporary Art



(Berkeley, CA) March 20, 2017—The University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive ([BAMPFA](#)) will mount the exclusive Bay Area presentation of a performance featuring the acclaimed San Francisco-based artist Cliff Hengst. Written and directed by Asher Hartman, [Mr. Akita](#) centers on an abstract monologue performed by Hengst that offers a satirical take on the intersection of art, sexuality, and masculine ego. The work marks the latest installment in BAMPFA's [MATRIX Program](#), which is dedicated to introducing Bay Area audiences to exceptional and experimental work by contemporary artists.

Presented at BAMPFA in a three-day engagement from April 13 through 15, *Mr. Akita* is a collaboration between Hartman and Hengst, initially produced by Los Angeles' Machine Project in 2015. The performance takes place using the beguiling Op Art painting *Sun Burn (Split) 1* by the Los Angeles-based artist Emily Joyce as Hengst's interlocutor. Hengst embodies multiple characters throughout a discursive 45-minute monologue, which explores the relationship between a painter and his former art school professor Mr. Akita—a venerable Modernist painter who also happens to be a dog. The work's absurdist premise serves as the foundation for a satire of artistic mentorship and the creative process.

A celebrated artist, playwright, and psychic based in Los Angeles, Hartman wrote *Mr. Akita* specifically for Hengst, an artist whose work has been exhibited throughout the Bay Area and internationally. The work alludes to Hengst's own history as a former student at the San Francisco Art Institute, and embodies the distinctive blend of dark humor and emotional vulnerability that characterizes his performance art practice. Commissioned by the Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery, *Mr. Akita* marks the 264th installment of BAMPFA's MATRIX Program, and is organized by the institution's former curatorial associate Lauren R. O'Connell.

"*Mr. Akita* unites the distinctive artistic sensibilities of two of the most exciting voices in California's contemporary performance art scene, who have come together to create this ambitious work," said O'Connell. "Their collaboration offers an intimate and deeply personal reflection on the often-destructive power of creative practice, framed as a sly satire that will engage and challenge audiences in equal measure."

"As a series dedicated to providing Bay Area audiences with access to groundbreaking work from today's contemporary art world, the MATRIX program is a natural fit for a performance like *Mr. Akita* that showcases the multidisciplinary talents of these two formidable artists," said Apsara DiQuinzio, BAMPFA's curator of modern and contemporary art and Phyllis C. Wattis MATRIX curator. "We're especially pleased to welcome back to BAMPFA Cliff Hengst, a luminary of the Bay Area arts community whose work is represented in our collection and many others."

BAMPFA will present in-gallery performances of *Mr. Akita* on Thursday, April 13 at 7 p.m.; Friday, April 14 at 6 p.m.; and Saturday, April 15 at 3 p.m. Admission is \$10 for general audiences and \$8 for BAMPFA members, students, seniors, UC Berkeley faculty and staff, disabled persons, and visitors 18 and under. Tickets will go on sale on April 1 and will be available to purchase in person at BAMPFA and [online](#). The painting by Emily Joyce that accompanies the performance will remain on view at BAMPFA from April 12 through 16.

Support

Asher Hartman and Cliff Hengst / MATRIX 264 is organized by Lauren R. O'Connell, former curatorial associate. *Mr. Akita* was originally produced by Machine Project and commissioned by the Tang Museum, Saratoga Springs, NY. The MATRIX Program is made possible by a generous endowment gift from Phyllis C. Wattis and the continued support of the BAMPFA trustees. Additional support provided by Connect Art International.

Above

Cliff Hengst in *Mr. Akita* by Asher Hartman. *Emily Joyce: Sun Burn (Split) 1*, 2012; acrylic screenprint on Fabriano paper mounted on panel; 54 × 54 in.; courtesy of the artist and Inman Gallery, Houston. Photo: Ian Byers-Gamber.

Visitor Information

Address

2155 Center Street Berkeley, CA 94704

Hours

Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Fridays and Saturdays, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Information

bampfa.org

(510) 642-0808

Gallery Admission

\$12 general admission

\$10 Non-Berkeley students, disabled, 65+

Free for BAMPFA members; UC Berkeley students, faculty, staff, and retirees; 18 & under + one adult

Free First Thursdays: Free gallery admission on the first Thursday of each month

Social Media

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About BAMPFA

Internationally recognized for its art and film programming, the University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA) is a platform for cultural experiences that transform individuals, engage communities, and advance the local, national, and global discourse on art and film. BAMPFA is UC Berkeley's primary visual arts venue with screenings of some 450 films and presentations of up to twenty exhibitions annually. BAMPFA's mission is to inspire the imagination and ignite critical dialogue through art and film.

The institution's collection of more than 19,000 works of art dates from 3,000 BCE to the present day and includes important holdings of Neolithic Chinese ceramics, Ming and Qing Dynasty Chinese painting, Old Master works on paper, Italian Baroque painting, early American painting, Abstract Expressionist painting, contemporary photography, and Conceptual art. BAMPFA's collection also includes more than 17,500 films and videos, including the largest collection of Japanese cinema outside of Japan, impressive holdings of Soviet cinema, West Coast avant-garde film, seminal video art, as well as hundreds of thousands of articles, reviews, posters, and other ephemera related to the history of film.