Performance Schedule

Mr. Akita
Thursday, April 13 7 p.m.
Friday, April 14 6 p.m.
Saturday, April 15 3 p.m.
Performances run 45 minutes.
Tickets available at bampfa.org.
$10 General admission
$8 BAMPFA members, UC Berkeley students, UC Berkeley faculty/staff, non-UC Berkeley students, 65+, disabled persons, 18 & under
Online service fees apply. Seating is limited.

Biographies

Asher Hartman lives and works in Los Angeles. He received a bachelor of arts in theater from the University of California, Los Angeles, and a master of fine arts in studio art from the California Institute of the Arts. Hartman’s work has been exhibited and performed at institutions in Los Angeles including Machine Project, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), Hammer Museum, Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE), and Hauser Wirth & Schimmel; and at Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery, Saratoga Springs, New York; Southern Exposure, San Francisco; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; and Hayward Gallery, London.

Cliff Hengst lives and works in San Francisco. He received a bachelor of arts from the San Francisco Art Institute. Hengst’s drawings, paintings, and performances have been exhibited at institutions in San Francisco including San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA), Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, Ratio 3, Jack Hanley Gallery, and Gallery 16; at Machine Project and Hauser Wirth & Schimmel, both in Los Angeles, and at Marella Arte, Milan, Italy.

ASHER HARTMAN AND CLIFF HENGST / MATRIX 264 IS
ORGANIZED BY LAUREN R. O’CONNELL, FORMER CURATORIAL ASSOCIATE AT BAMPFA. MR. AKITA WAS ORIGINALLY PRODUCED BY MACHINE PROJECT AND COMMISSIONED BY TANG TEACHING MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY IN SARATOGA SPRINGS, NEW YORK. 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 IS PROVIDED BY CONNECT ART INTERNATIONAL.

Asker Hartman and Cliff Hengst

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As the name suggests, Mr. Akita's physical attributes are those of a dog (Akita is a Japanese dog breed), while his attitude and voice evoke the great Modernist painters—in particular Willem de Kooning, with his Dutch-American accent. In one scene, Hengst, embodying Mr. Akita, runs back and forth panting like a dog and rants about leaving art behind—an act of surrendering to the pressures and fear of failure. The protagonist moves between his own story and that of Mr. Akita as he recounts his quest for approval as an artist and affirmation of his masculinity. In the erratic narrative, teacher and student metaphorically devour each other—the teacher using the student to promote his own interests and the student exhausting the teacher with the expectation of inheriting all of his knowledge. In the end, neither completely receives what he desires. With one last plea for validation and answers to his existential reverie, the artist turns to the painting and says, “I adore you, painting! You're better than life. You're an imitation of it!” The painting elusively retorts, “Viewer, you can never know,” leaving the protagonist with his need and desire set adrift in the interpretations of his own memories.

—Lauren R. O'Connell

Asher Hartman, email message to the author, February 1, 2017.