



December 8, 2011

British Artists John Wood and Paul Harrison Combine Physics and Humor in Video Installations

Work by British artistic duo John Wood and Paul Harrison, whose humorously dynamic video installations speak to the triumphs and trials of creating art and living life, will be on view in the Frist Center's Gordon Contemporary Artists Project Gallery February 3–May 6, 2012. The exhibition, entitled *Answers to Questions: John Wood and Paul Harrison*, is part of the creative team's first United States museum tour of their work and features 10 video installations and a selection of the artists' print posters.

Presenting works from their collaborative inception in 1993 up until 2011, *Answers to Questions* provides insight into the way the pair's work has developed throughout their career. Their work is, in its essence, an artistic exploration of a problem; their videos reflect the exercise and outcome of their inquiries. Basic physics and gravity act as the protagonists in these videos, and the artists frequently employ their own bodies as raw materials in addition to using simple props and everyday objects. Considering themselves to be sculptors who use video as a medium to document their work, the artists characteristically use uncomplicated staging and filming techniques. The straightforwardness of their videos helps highlight their physical activities, as well as other kinetic elements at play in their sequences.

Wood and Harrison are recognized for their dry, deadpan delivery, which serves to create a sense of silliness that is only heightened by their apparent self-awareness in the videos. "Wood and Harrison bring a wry sense of humor to their work, which can be very conceptual and is steeped in minimalism," says Frist Center Associate Curator, Trinita Kennedy. "They create a unique blend of the philosophical and funny, intellectual and inane. These juxtapositions reveal the inventive play behind all art, even in its most esoteric forms."

The sense of experimental play informs the duo's work, as seen in *Three-Legged* (1996), which features the artists—one of Wood's legs tied to one of Harrison's—as they attempt to dodge tennis balls being fired at them from a high-speed serving machine. There is a palpable slapstick quality to the scene as the "three-legged" pair stumbles and fumbles in an effort to escape the speeding tennis balls, only to be beamed a moment later. Additionally, *Three-Legged* recalls the work of New York artist Vito Acconci, specifically his *Blindfold Catching* (1970), a work in which a blindfolded Acconci attempts to catch balls being thrown at him. This subtle reference demonstrates Wood and Harrison's firm grasp of the conceptual strains of art that have shaped the pair's projects.

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Answers to Questions also includes a series of print posters produced by the artists since 2009. Entitled *Some Words, Some More Words*, the posters present witticisms that play on the ideas of both time and space. These stark statements, regarding anything from one's physical location to an abstract state of mind, cleverly invite subconscious reflection on one's own position in the story-line of reality.

Exhibition Catalogue

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue featuring an essay by organizing curator Toby Kamps, as well as color reproductions of featured work, and a biography and bibliography of the artists.

About the Artists

John Wood and Paul Harrison met in the late 1980s while attending art school at the Bath College of Higher Education in England. Wood, born in 1969, lives in Bristol, England, while Harrison, born in 1966, resides in Birmingham, England. During the history of their collaboration, the artists have never lived in the same city; instead, they convene for a few weeks at a time in a studio they have set up in Bristol. The duo is well-known in the United Kingdom, and their work is widely shown in Europe. The artists are represented in permanent collections of the Centre Pompidou in Paris, Tate Modern in London, and Museum of Modern Art in New York City.

Exhibition Credit

Answers to Questions: John Wood and Paul Harrison was organized by the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston and has been made possible by the Houston Endowment, Inc., the City of Houston through the Houston Museum District Association, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Texas Commission on the Arts, and the patrons, benefactors and donors to the CAMH's Major Exhibition Fund.

The exhibition was curated by Toby Kamps, Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, The Menil Collection, Houston; former Senior Curator, Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston.

Sponsors

The Frist Center for the Visual Arts is supported in part by the Metropolitan Nashville Arts Commission, the Tennessee Arts Commission, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Related Public Programs

Artist's Perspective: *Answers to Questions: John Wood and Paul Harrison*

Presented by John Wood

Friday, February 3

6:30 p.m.

Auditorium

Free; first come, first served

Join artist John Wood as he discusses the exhibition *Answers to Questions: John Wood and Paul Harrison*, on view in the Gordon Contemporary Artists Project Gallery from February 3 through May 6, 2012.

ARTini: *Answers to Questions: John Wood and Paul Harrison*

Friday, February 10 at 7:00 p.m.

AND

Tuesday, February 14 at 12:00 p.m.

Meet at exhibition entrance.

Free with purchase of gallery admission

Join Trinita Kennedy, associate curator at the Frist Center, as she leads an informal conversation about some of the works included in the exhibition *Answers to Questions: John Wood and Paul Harrison*.

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ARTinis (a teeny bit about art) are designed for everyone—from the novice to the connoisseur—and include informal and insightful conversations that offer a deeper understanding of one or two works of art in an exhibition.

Kids Club: Follow the Bouncing Ball...

Saturday, March 10

10:30 a.m., 1:00 p.m., 3:00 p.m.

Meet in the upper level foyer of the Frist Center

Registration is required: Call 615.744.3357 to make your reservation.

Make a zoetrope to explore movement and create simple animation. Inspired by the exhibition *Answers to Questions: John Wood and Paul Harrison*, participants will draw simple objects and craft quirky stories influenced by the everyday.

About the Frist Center

Accredited by the American Association of Museums, the Frist Center for the Visual Arts, located at 919 Broadway in downtown Nashville, Tenn., is an art exhibition center dedicated to presenting the finest visual art from local, regional, U.S. and international sources in a program of changing exhibitions. The Frist Center's Martin ArtQuest Gallery features interactive stations relating to Frist Center exhibitions. Gallery admission to the Frist Center is free for visitors 18 and younger and to Frist Center members. Frist Center admission is \$10.00 for adults and \$7.00 for seniors, military and college students with ID. College students are admitted free Thursday and Friday evenings (with the exception of Frist Fridays), 5–9 p.m. Discounts are offered for groups of 10 or more with advance reservation by calling (615) 744-3247. The Frist Center is open seven days a week: Mondays through Wednesdays, and Saturdays, 10 a.m.–5:30 p.m.; Thursdays and Fridays, 10 a.m.–9 p.m. and Sundays, 1–5:30 p.m., with the Frist Center Café opening at noon. Additional information is available by calling (615) 244-3340 or by visiting our website at <http://www.fristcenter.org>.