



# ***Dada South?***

**Exploring Dada legacies in South African art**

**1960 – the present**

***Dada South?* Symposium | Iziko Rust en Vreugd | February 18 & 19, 2010**

The critically acclaimed exhibition *Dada South?* is one of the first locally-produced museum exhibitions that places focus on a major international art movement of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but from the perspective of recent South African art. In order to present and debate key questions raised by the exhibition, curators Roger van Wyk and Kathryn Smith present a two-day public symposium featuring internationally recognised guest speakers, alongside key South African scholars and practitioners.

Keynote speakers include renowned Dada scholar **Marc Dachy** (Paris, FR); curator **Susan Hapgood** (New York, USA); performance theorist **Jean Johnson-Jones** (Surrey, UK) and artist and political activist **Nina Romm** (Johannesburg, ZA). Other speakers include **Willem Boshoff**, **Fred de Vries**, **Kendell Geers**, **Thembinkosi Goniwe**, **the Gugulective**, **Stacy Hardy** and **Ashraf Jamal**, among many others.

The last five years have seen a major revision of the Dada movement internationally, which confirms its continuing impact and relevance. As a diverse collection of practices and strategies, Dada contributed to a radical rethinking of the nature and function of art and it is, in many ways, a starting point to consider the origins of many forms of contemporary artistic practice.

Drawing together the first collection of historical Dada works ever seen in South Africa, as well as an eclectic range of works by South African artists representing an assortment of experimental and underground positions, the exhibition proposes a review of the ambivalent relationship between cultural creation and political resistance, as well as how art historical ideas are received and interpreted in response to specific, local conditions.

*Dada South?* also invites consideration of another set of questions: What significance did African art hold for Dada and how do we understand their ideas about Africa? How are their counter-rational, collaborative and interdisciplinary strategies, dating back nearly 100 years now, still so resonant in contemporary art today? In particular, what does a Dada attitude to the political and spiritual reveal about individualism, collectivism and ethics in art today? As Marcel Duchamp said, “When you tap something, you don’t always recognize the sound. That’s apt to come later.” Could Dada be the only 20<sup>th</sup> century movement that still exists?

As a movement founded by exiles and migrants, Dada challenged notions of territoriality, nationality, ownership and prescribed identity. Dada’s lack of allegiance to any style or ideology, as well as its political and aesthetic contrariness offers an alternative lens through which to view creative tactics and tendencies in contexts which have experienced radical political change.

Whether we ask ‘What is Dada?’ or ‘What is not-Dada?’ (which is a rather Dada question), some of the key ideas the symposium will consider include the relationship between Dada and Africa; the cultural underground and related periodicals; art practice as a tactics of action; relationships between forms of art and political agency; the tensions between institutions and experimentation; and counter-rational strategies (absurdism, chaos and chance) as methods for innovation.

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**DRAFT PROGRAMME: PLEASE NOTE THAT TITLES OF INDIVIDUAL PAPERS ARE PROVISIONAL**

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 18		FRIDAY FEBRUARY 19	
08h30 – 09h00	REGISTRATION   TEA	08h30 – 09h00	REGISTRATION   TEA
09h00 – 09h30	WELCOME <i>introduction of programme and key speakers</i> Roger van Wyk & Kathryn Smith	09h00 – 09h20	The Trustees <i>Dry Run</i>
09h30 – 10h00	Thembinkosi Goniwe (ZA) <i>When was Dada in South Africa?</i>	09h20 – 09h30	WELCOME <i>introductory remarks and brief summary of discussions</i> Roger van Wyk & Kathryn Smith
10h00 – 11h00	KEYNOTE Marc Dachy (FR) <i>Dada's Africa</i>	09h30 – 10h30	KEYNOTE Susan Hapgood (US) <i>Neo-Dada: Redefining Art 1958-1962</i>
11h00 – 11h30	TEA	10h30 – 11h00	TEA
11h30 – 12h00	Kendell Geers <i>Much ado about nothing, the secret history of Fuck (bc issue 7, 2009)</i>	11h00 – 11h30	Wilhelm van Rensburg <i>"No island to conquer or seize, Mr Battiss!" New realist proximations between Daniel Spoerri and Walter Battiss</i>
12h00 – 13h00	CONVERSATION PIT <i>The Cultural Underground and Other Invisible Histories</i>  Stacy Hardy, Belinda Bignaut and Fred de Vries	11h30 – 12h00	Stephen Croeser <i>Kevin Atkinson: an archive of a plural practice</i> TBC
		12h00 – 12h30	Tim Liebbrandt <i>Waiting Room: The Art of Neil Goedhals</i>
		12h30 – 13h00	Andrew Lamprecht <i>Wayne Barker's 1980s</i>
13h00 – 13h50	LUNCH	13h00 – 13h50	LUNCH
14h00 – 14h45	KEYNOTE Jean Johnson-Jones (US/UK) <i>Laban, Dada, Dancers</i>	14h00 – 14h30	Ashraf Jamal <i>Dada-ZA</i>
14h45 – 15h10	Gugulective <i>Collective Practice as a Tactics of Action</i>		
15h10 – 16h00	CONVERSATION PIT <i>The Body of the Voice</i>  Kemang wa Lehulere, Anthea Moys and Jay Pather with Jean Johnson-Jones and Marc Dachy	14h30 – 15h30	CONVERSATION PIT <i>Chance Encounters and Psychostrategies: rethinking/repositioning experimental practices</i>  Kendell Geers, James Sey, Nina Romm, Thembinkosi Goniwe, Rose Shakinovsky
16h00 – 16h30	TEA	15h30 – 16h00	TEA
16h30 – 17h30	<i>Utopias, Vampires, Flagellators and Other Day to Day Happenings in the history of Dada South?: Disentangling myth and meaning in cultural memory. Outsider/insider fabrications by critic and social provocateur Nina Romm</i>	16h00 – 16h45	CONVERSATION PIT <i>Chaos, chance and the future</i> Willem Boshoff and André Zaaiman
		16h45 – 17h30	SYMPOSIUM SUMMARY: <i>WHAT INSISTS?</i>
EVENING	Rosenclaire opening at Goodman Gallery Cape 18h00 – 19h30 Symposium dinner with special guests	EVENING	SUNDOWNERS with a video performance by Josh Ginsburg

**Discussion frameworks**

- Art practice as a tactics of action
- Dada's Africa
- The cultural underground and other invisible histories
- The institutionalisation of the radical
- Rethinking and positioning the experimental
- Experimentation as Resistance: the poetics of political positions
- Learning from the Absurd

## Keynote Speakers

**Marc Dachy** is an art historian, author, editor and curator based in Paris. He has devoted himself to increasing public awareness of the Dada movement for the last forty years. He has published and translated into French key works by Dada writers including Kurt Schwitters, Clément Pansaers, Francis Picabia and Louis Aragon. He has been responsible for a number of seminal books about Dada, including the major historical survey, *Archives Dada / Chronique* (Editions Hazan, 2005), *Dada the revolt of art* (Abrams/Thames & Hudson, 2007) and *The Dada Movement* (Skira & Rizzoli, 1990). In the 1970S he published the literary review *Luna-Park*, a platform for artistic experimentation past and present, which was re-launched in 2003. He is currently writing a biographical work and curating an exhibition on Tristan Tzara.

**Susan Hapgood** is director of exhibitions at iCI (Independent Curators International) and a fellow of the Vera List Center for Art and Politics, The New School, New York. Exhibitions and Web projects she has organized include *Extension*, *FluxAttitudes*, *Neo-Dada: Redefining Art 1958–62*, and *Video Divertimento*, and she has written for journals including *Frieze* and *Art in America*.

**Jean Johnson-Jones** Is a lecturer in the Department of Dance, Film and Theatre at the University of Surrey. Her research examines Laban Movement Analysis, Labanotation and anthropological methods as effective tools for understanding and documenting movement as cultural code, particularly in reference to African Peoples' Dance. She has applied these methods to Khoisan/Nama movement practices and Bata, a dance tradition of the Yoruba people of Nigeria. Her research raises key questions concerning the limitation(s) of Laban Analysis to the documentation of non-theatre dance forms, and the question of what is 'African' Dance in the 21st century.

## How to Book

Space is extremely limited, so reservation is essential

R300.00 for two days, including lunches and teas

R200.00 for one day, including lunches and teas

Artists exhibiting on *Dada South?*, students & pensioners R150 for two days/R100 per day. A limited number of bursaries are available to deserving applicants.

RSVP: Kathryn Smith [kathryn@serialworks.info](mailto:kathryn@serialworks.info)/[kathryns@sun.ac.za](mailto:kathryns@sun.ac.za)

Iziko Rust-en-Vreugd, 78 Buitenkant Street, Cape Town.

Parking is available, regret disabled access is currently still under construction.

## Exhibition Information

*Dada South?* is presented by the Goethe-Institut, the National Arts Council of South Africa, Pro Helvetia, Mondriaan Foundation, Embassy of France in South Africa, Institut Française d'Afrique du Sud, University of Stellenbosch, Iziko Museums of Cape Town, Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen, BHP Billiton, and the generous support of private donors. The *Dada South?* symposium is made possible through the additional generous support of Vivien Cohen, Culturesfrance, the Goodman Gallery and Iziko Museums of Cape Town. *Dada South?* is curated by Roger van Wyk and Kathryn Smith and hosted by the Iziko South African National Gallery. The exhibition runs until February 28, 2010.

Lenders to the exhibition include the Institute For Foreign Cultural Relations, Stuttgart; Berlin Gallery, Landes Museum Berlin; John Heartfield Archive of the Academy of Arts, Berlin; Goethe-Institut Collection, Munich; Kunsthaus Zürich; Bellerive Museum, Zürich Museum of Design; Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne collections, Paris; De Stijl Archives, Netherlands Institute for Art History, Den Haag; Johannesburg Art Gallery; Iziko South African National Gallery; Gauteng Legislature; Sasol Museum, University of Stellenbosch; BHP Billiton; Wits Art Galleries and private lenders.