

THE MENIL COLLECTION

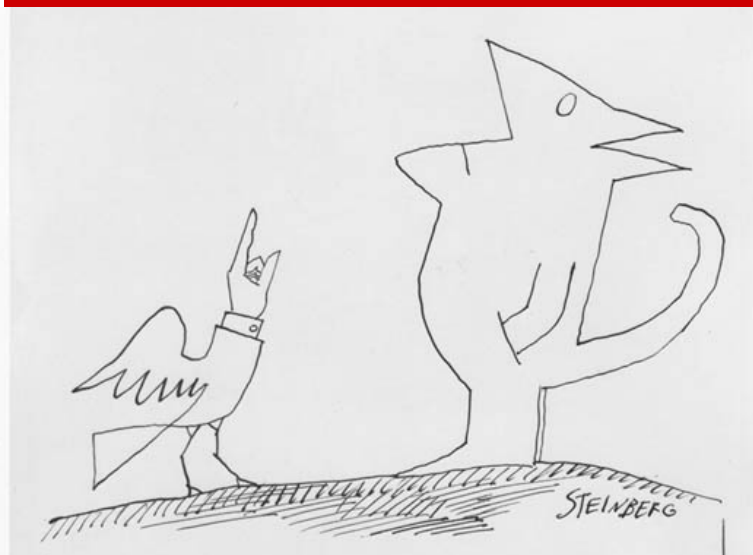
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News

**The Menil Collection
and the Department of Art History
at Rice University
Present**

**The Risible Visual
Humor & Art**



Third Biennial Rice/Menil Lecture Series Brings
John R. Clark and **Simon Critchley** to Rice,
Michael Leja and **Kara Walker** to the Menil

Houston, October 11, 2010 – A museum and a university's art-history halls may not be the first places you would look to engage in an exploration of humor. But the Menil Collection and the Art History department of Rice University are embarking on just such an adventure, with the third Rice/Menil Biennial Lecture Series.

Humor in art can take forms light or dark, obvious or subversive, satirical or straightforward, serious or silly. Or, to the eye of the viewer, it might be a mad jumble of all these things. As for its role in society, laughter – as it is evoked or prompted by art – can safeguard mores or challenge them.

“The Risible Visual: Humor & Art” brings to Houston four distinguished speakers whose work – sometimes directly, sometimes not – addresses the “risible visual”: the topic of humor and art. Like writers, artists have long used humor to make serious points.

Menil exhibitions often demonstrate the various ends to which artists have employed – or deployed – humor. To wit: Robert Gober’s deadpan wit, Maurizio Cattelan’s prankish museum interventions, Pop Art’s commentaries on the commercial world, and the Surrealists’ irreverence and ribaldry.

A collaborative program between the two institutions, the Rice/Menil Biennial Lecture Series was established in 2005 to present in Houston every other year a roster of distinguished speakers to lecture on a single art-related topic. The inaugural series, “Architecture and Museums,” was followed by “Museums and the Medical Humanities”. This year’s program, with two talks presented in the fall and two in the spring, follows in that provocative tradition with “The Risible Visual: Humor & Art.”

THE RICE/MENIL THIRD BIENNIAL LECTURE SERIES,
FALL 2010-SPRING 2011:

"The Places of Humor in Roman Visual Culture: Context and Theories"

by John R. Clarke

Tuesday, October 19, 2010, 7:00 p.m.
Rice Humanities Building, Room 117

Classics scholar John R Clarke joined the art history faculty at The University of Texas at Austin in 1980. He is the author of seven books including “Looking at Lovemaking: Constructions of Sexuality in Roman Art, 100 B.C. – A.D. 250” and “Looking at Laughter: Humor, Power, and Transgression in Roman Visual Culture, 100 B.C.-A.D. 250”.

"Comic Modernism"

by Michael Leja

Monday, December 6, 2010, 7:00 p.m.
Menil Foyer, 1515 Sul Ross

Guggenheim Fellow Michael Leja studies the visual arts in various media. The author of “Reframing Abstract Expressionism: Subjectivity and Painting in the 1940s” and “Looking Askance: American Art from Eakins to Duchamp”, he has taught American Art at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia since 2005.

**"The Really Funny Thing About Tragedy"
by Simon Critchley**

Tuesday, March 8, 2011, 7:00 p.m.
Rice Humanities Building, Room 117

Author of "The Book of Dead Philosophers," "On Humor," and other books, English-born Simon Critchley is chair of philosophy at New York's New School for Social Research. He also serves as series editor and moderator of the New York Times Opinionator philosophy blog, "The Stone."

"Kara Walker Speaks About Her Art"

Monday, March 14, 2011, 7:00 p.m.

Menil Foyer, 1515 Sul Ross

MacArthur award recipient Kara Walker, a professor of visual arts in the MFA program at Columbia University, received an MFA in painting and printmaking from Rhode Island School of Design. Her 2007 exhibition, "Kara Walker: My Complement, My Enemy, My Oppressor, My Love," featuring her signature silhouette figures and cut-outs, originated at the Walker Art Center and traveled to museums in Paris, New York, Los Angeles, and Fort Worth.

Directions to Rice University can be found here:

http://futureowls.rice.edu/futureowls/Driving_Directions.asp

Visitors are encouraged to park in the Central Campus garage - also called McNair Hall.

PARKING WILL BE VALIDATED FOR THIS EVENT.

From Sunset Blvd. take entrance 20. At the 2nd stop sign, turn right, the garage entrance will be on your left. The lecture will be in the Humanities Building, #31 on the attached map.

For more information visit www.menil.org or call 713-525-9400

or contact

Department of Art History, Rice University, 713-348-4815

www.arthistory.rice.edu/RiceMenilLectureSeries.html

Caption: Saul Steinberg, "Pointing Bird," 1964 © 2010 Saul Steinberg Foundation/ Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York