



SPOTLIGHT

# An Open Field

NEW CCA DIRECTOR ANTHONY HUBERMAN UNVEILS HIS INAUGURAL PROGRAM

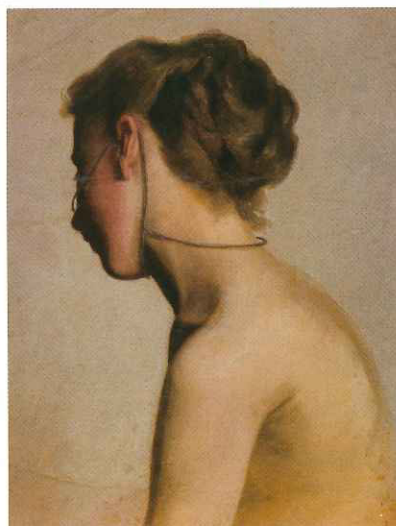
Not much is more daunting than the infamous blank canvas, and new CCA Wattis Institute Director and Chief Curator Anthony Huberman had quite a large one to stare down: a pristine new 5,000-square-foot exhibition space and programmatic clean slate at one of the country's leading venues for contemporary art. After a year of focused engagement with the San Francisco art and academic community, however,

last month Huberman debuted his inaugural program, a three-part initiative that establishes an exploratory and international platform for his directorship: the first U.S. exhibition by Viennese artist Markus Schinwald, a yearlong study of pioneering performance and media artist Joan Jonas, and a residency for emerging Iranian-born, Berlin-based artist Nairy Baghramian.

"The Wattis has a rather extraordinary reputation of being one of the few places in the United States that has been able to embrace a level of risk-taking and experimentation with artists who have not yet been legitimized, and that's a tradition that I want to build on," says Huberman, previously founding director of the Artist's Institute, an incubator for new art at New York's Hunter College, and curator of the Palais de Tokyo, Paris. "Our job is to create a meaningful place for all of those in the Bay Area who care about art, whether they're students, musicians, writers, professors, or someone who's involved in an experimental culture. This is a place committed to bringing that conversation forward in a meaningful and committed way."

The Schinwald exhibition begins that dialogue with a site-specific installation employing prostheses to explore the interaction—and blurring of boundaries—between technology and the body. Though Schinwald represented Austria at the 2011 Venice Biennale, the Wattis exhibition is his first major commission for a U.S. institution. "This is someone who has had very little exposure in the United States, but actually has already received a significant amount of acclaim abroad," says Huberman. "It's an opportunity to properly introduce an important figure to an American audience."

With Schinwald front-of-house, behind the scenes Huberman and a collaborative research group of CCA faculty are dedicating a yearlong



**Forward Thinking** (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) The Schinwald exhibition; Director Anthony Huberman; *Lavinia*, an oil on canvas by Schinwald. See Resources.

investigation to artist Joan Jonas (who will represent the U.S. at the Venice Biennale in 2015). The effort speaks to Huberman's commitment to academic engagement: "I was drawn to an exhibition space under the umbrella of an educational institution, because everything that we do inscribes itself within a reflective and critical process." At the conclusion of the year, Huberman's goal is to present a *festschrift* of sorts to Jonas, a compilation of their year of work devoted to her art.

Rounding out the program, artist Nairy Baghramian began her residency project, *Off Broadway*, in September, which will culminate with an exhibition in January 2015.

About his approach to his new role at the Wattis, Huberman says, "I didn't want to come with too many preconceived ideas. I was interested in working in the context of a city that has been so committed for so many years to outside-the-box thinking, to experimental tendencies across all kinds of activity."

—Alisa Carroll

PHOTOGRAPH BY DREW ALTZER (TOP LEFT); COURTESY OF CCA, WATTIS INSTITUTE