

ISABELLA STEWART GARDNER MUSEUM

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Joan Jonas, 2017 Artist-in-Residence, exhibits new drawings in Gardner Museum galleries and façade this month

On View: January 23 – October 2019



Seated Sculpture, Istrian stone, 2018 © Joan Jonas

BOSTON, MA (January 2019) – Joan Jonas, a 2017 Artist-In-Residence at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, opens two installations of new drawings in the Museum's Fenway Gallery and on the Anne H. Fitzpatrick Façade on Jan. 23, highlighting her keen interest in the fragility and beauty of nature, animals, and the environment.

"Over the years, Ms. Jonas has developed a strong visual language to embrace these concerns. With these two exhibitions, she reminds us of how closely connected humans are to the animal world as well as the perils many creatures face today," said Pieranna Cavalchini, the Museum's Tom and Lisa Blumenthal Curator of Contemporary Art.

Joan Jonas: I Know Why They Left is an exhibition of 55 new drawings in the Fenway Gallery, and *Blue to Blue*, a site-specific installation of her drawings outside on the Museum's façade.

As an Artist-in-Residence, Jonas explored the Museum's collections, archives, and conservation lab, searching out the animals represented in furnishings, textiles, sculptures, and other decorative art works. A celebrated multi-disciplinary artist, Jonas spent her time at the Museum developing *I Know Why They Left*, a series of drawings based on photographs she took of the vast array of mythical and archetypal animals she encountered there.

"Finding all those animals was amazing," Jonas says. "There were many more that I didn't draw. But what I learned in the process was how important animals were, not just to humans, but also to artists representing the human scenes in everyday life. Animals have always been part of our lives and that was interesting to see. I knew that, but at the Gardner it was very evident at every level."

Inspired by lace, stone, metal, wood, porcelain, tapestries, and paintings in the Museum's collection, animal figures in Jonas's new series allude to the importance of nature's life force and our disruptive human presence. She also studied and photographed laces and needlepoint embroideries of unicorns and other fantastical animals. She also photographed the various lions depicted throughout the Museum and captured their spirit with humor and irony in her drawings.

"I'm just interpreting what somebody else has interpreted. And who knows what sources those artists used," says Jonas. "When I make my drawings, I don't really have any control over the spirit that comes through, if there is any. Like the way some of the lions look—they do look a certain way. That's unconscious on my part."

While in Boston, Jonas also spent time at the New England Aquarium to study the sharks, rays, penguins, jellyfish, octopus, and other fish in the Giant Ocean Tank. This research informed, in part, her piece for the façade, *Blue to Blue*, an energetic drawing of a fish rendered in vivid blue ink.

At 82, Jonas has had a long career filled with numerous fellowships, honors, and awards. Her multi-disciplinary art is inspired by fairy tales and myths, and how these stories intersect with global issues such as climate change. She has a wide-ranging artistic practice involving props, scripts, sets, costumes, sound, music, choreography, drawing, and installation, and creates immersive visual and emotional landscapes using performance, video, and other media. In 2018, her work was the subject of a critically acclaimed solo exhibition at the Tate Modern in London, which is now touring. She also represented the US in the 2015 Venice Biennale.

She earned her bachelor's degree in art history from Mount Holyoke College, studied sculpture at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, and received her master's degree in sculpture from Columbia University. In 1998, Jonas began teaching at MIT, where she is now a Professor Emerita in the MIT Program in Art, Culture, and Technology with the School of Architecture and Planning.

Jonas's career was shaped in the 1960s and 1970s when she was active in the New York art scene and spent time with dancers, choreographers, musicians, composers and visual artists, influencing her multi-disciplinary approach to art. Video became a predominant part of her work after she traveled to Japan in 1970 with her first portable video camera.

In 2008, Jonas came to the Gardner Museum to work on *Reading Dante*, a performance and installation based on sections of Dante's *Inferno* and *Paradiso*, which she had started in 2007 for the Sydney Biennial and later developed further for the 2008 Venice Biennale. The performance included footage from Canada, New York, Mexico City, and London and music by Jason Moran and David Lang. In 2002, Jonas also performed excerpts from *Lines in the Sand*, a lecture/video demonstration based on Hilda Doolittle's *Helen in Egypt* and *Tribute to Freud* with her MIT students in the Gardner Museum's Tapestry Room.

Jonas lives and works in New York and Nova Scotia, Canada.

DROPBOX LINK TO HIGH RES IMAGES:

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/tevdjoyr4z6rar8/AADmrGk28bN7-XUHnLRE_DEZa?dl=0

The Artist-in-Residence Program is directed by Pieranna Cavalchini, Tom and Lisa Blumenthal Curator of Contemporary Art, and is supported, in part, by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Barbara Lee Program Fund. Funding is also provided for site-specific installations of new work on the Anne H. Fitzpatrick Façade on Evans Way.



The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum - a magical creation of one woman's daring vision - invites you to awaken your senses and be transported. Modeled after a Venetian palazzo, unforgettable galleries surround a luminous courtyard and are home to masters such as Rembrandt, Raphael, Titian, Michelangelo, Whistler, and Sargent. The Renzo Piano wing provides a platform for contemporary artists, musicians, and scholars, and serves as an innovative venue where creativity is celebrated in all of its forms.

Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum • 25 Evans Way Boston MA 02215 • Hours: Open Daily from 11a.m. to 5 p.m. and Thursdays until 9 p.m. Closed Tuesdays. • Admission: Adults \$15; Seniors \$12; Students \$10; Free for members, children under 18, everyone on his/her birthday, and all named "Isabella" • \$2 off admission with a same-day Museum of Fine Arts, Boston ticket • For information 617 566 1401 • Box Office 617 278 5156 • www.gardnermuseum.org

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