

Press Release

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Museum of Biblical Art
1865 Broadway at 61st Street
New York, NY 10023
www.mobia.org

MUSEUM OF BIBLICAL ART
MOBIA

**MOBIA COMMISSIONS SIX NEW WORKS BY CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS, INCLUDING
MARK DION AND DANA SHERWOOD FOR
*BACK TO EDEN: CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS WANDER THE GARDEN***

**Exhibition Features Sculptures, Paintings, Works on Paper, and Installations
Created in the Past 15 Years by Jim Dine, Barnaby Furnas, Adam Fuss, Pipilotti Rist,
Alexis Rockman, Fred Tomaselli, and Others**

***Back to Eden* on View June 27 through September 28, 2014**

New York, NY, May 15, 2014—The Museum of Biblical Art (MOBIA) is organizing *Back to Eden: Contemporary Artists Wander the Garden*, an exhibition that explores the direct and indirect influence of the Genesis story of the Garden of Eden on artists working today. *Back to Eden* includes six new works commissioned by MOBIA—the first commissions in the museum’s history—as well as 13 pieces created in the past 15 years. Ranging from intimate paintings to large-scale installations, the works explore themes evoked by the story of Eden: loss, desire, the relationship between humans and the natural world, and the longing for an inaccessible paradise. The new commissions are by Anonda Bell, Sean Capone, Mark Dion, Dana Sherwood, Mary Temple, and Marina Zurkow; other works in the exhibition include pieces by Lynn Aldrich, Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons, Mat Collishaw, Jim Dine, Barnaby Furnas, Adam Fuss, Rona Pondick, Naomi Reis, Lina Puerta, Pipilotti Rist, Alexis Rockman, and Fred Tomaselli. A number of the featured artists will visit MOBIA during the course of the exhibition to participate in a series of public programs. *Back to Eden* is curated by scholar and independent curator Jennifer Scanlan and will be on view at MOBIA from June 27 through September 28, 2014.

The works MOBIA has commissioned for *Back to Eden* are:

- **Sean Capone** — a projected video installation that suggests a continuous cycle of growth, death, and rebirth by immersing the viewer in a morphing virtual garden.
- **Dana Sherwood** — a video installation that examines the seemingly futile human desire for control in the face of natural forces by documenting the artist’s practice of creating elaborate confections, leaving them outside, and letting animals and nature overtake them.
- **Marina Zurkow** — an animation depicting a dystopian future in which Times Square is taken over by nature, with the built world crumbling around powerless humans.
- **Mary Temple** — a trompe-l’oeil wall painting depicting light streaming through an imagined window and illusory trees and foliage outside casting shadows.
- **Anonda Bell** — a cut-paper installation depicting Lilith and Eve, exploring the construction of enduring, problematic archetypes through biblical narratives.
- **Mark Dion** — a diorama of the Garden’s serpent, presenting the snake as he may have looked before he was condemned to spend eternity on his belly.

“*Back to Eden* represents a tremendous opportunity for MOBIA to work with contemporary artists to reveal the influence of biblical narratives in today’s culture and society,” said MOBIA’s director Richard P. Townsend. “The story of Eden is a framework that gives contemporary artists access to universal themes, speaking to age-old human desires and potential. We are thrilled to commission works for the first time in the museum’s history, opening up new avenues for the museum’s exploration of the Bible’s enduring influence on the visual and cultural landscape today.”

Additional works featured in *Back to Eden* include:

- **Barnaby Furnas** — *The Fruit Eaters* (2013), a large-scale painting that evokes the classic subject of Adam and Eve biting the apple through a moment of temptation, loss, and menacing malevolence in a dreamlike landscape.
- **Jim Dine** — *Garden of Eden* (2003), a free-standing sculptural gate constructed from brightly painted objects from the artist's childhood that celebrate the memory of an unsullied paradise.
- **Alexis Rockman** — *Gowanus* (2013), an intricate, large-scale painting that depicts the Gowanus Canal, the notorious Brooklyn Superfund site, as a toxic wasteland, reflecting the disastrous potential for the destruction of nature by man.
- **Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons** — a mixed-media work, *The One That Carries Fire* (2011), exploring the tree and the female figure as archetypes that reach across cultures.
- **Naomi Reis** — *Vertical Garden (Weeds)* and *Vertical Garden (Falling Water)* (2007-8), drawings of imaginary Modernist buildings overlaid with lush plants and fountains that show the attempt to recreate an exotic paradise within a completely foreign environment.
- **Pipilotti Rist** — *Sparkling of the Domesticated Synapses (Funkenbildung der domestizierten Synapsen)* (2010), an installation that explores the desire to control the natural world and the potential to destroy it. A shelf with a vase, flowers, and projected video demonstrates the elements of pleasure and control that are inherent in the act of flower arranging.
- **Fred Tomaselli** — *Study for Expulsion* (2000), a mixed-media painting that depicts Adam and Eve, referencing Masaccio's *Expulsion* (early 15th century), dwarfed by a constellation of psychotropic drugs, flowers, plants, bugs, birds, and snakes.

PROGRAMS

In conjunction with *Back to Eden*, MOBIA has organized a series of free public programs involving several of the participating artists.

- **July 10** — Sean Capone will discuss his commission for MOBIA.
- **July 27** — Mary Temple will discuss her commission for MOBIA.
- **August 5** — Naomi Reis and Lina Puerta will join *Back to Eden* curator Jennifer Scanlan for a special tour of the exhibition and discussion on the symbolic meanings that gardens have held across cultures throughout history, in the exhibition, and in the artists' work.
- **August 21** — Alexis Rockman and Marina Zurkow will participate in a panel discussion moderated by *Back to Eden* curator Jennifer Scanlan. The artists will discuss how their practices connect to activism and environmentalism, addressing their interest in the story of Eden as way to explore the relationship between human beings and nature.
- **September 17** — Mark Dion and Dana Sherwood will speak together about their commissions for MOBIA as well as their collaborative garden and outdoor endeavors.

SUPPORT

Back to Eden is organized by the Museum of Biblical Art and made possible by the generous support of Case Systems, the Sister Fund, and The Bowden Family Fund. Support for educational programs is provided, in part, by TD Charitable Foundation. Additional support provided by the Atrium Café by Gabriel's.

Major support for MOBIA's exhibitions and programs is provided by American Bible Society and by Howard and Roberta Ahmanson. Support for this program is provided, in part, by the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council. Support for educational programming is provided, in part, by TD Charitable Foundation.

CATALOGUE

Back to Eden: Contemporary Artists Wander the Garden will be accompanied by a 50-page illustrated catalogue, which will include essays by the exhibition's curator, Jennifer Scanlan; Robert Alter, Professor of Hebrew and Comparative Literature at the University of California, Berkeley; and Dr. Sean McDonough, Professor of New Testament at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Boston, Massachusetts.

ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF BIBLICAL ART

The Museum of Biblical Art (MOBIA), which opened in May 2005, is an independent museum committed to engaging diverse audiences in the exploration of historical to contemporary art that has been influenced

or inspired by the Bible. MOBIA is an inclusive cultural institution bound by no creed or era that celebrates and interprets art related to the Bible and its cultural legacy in Jewish and Christian traditions through exhibitions, education, and scholarship. Its exhibitions have featured works by artists as varied as Bartolo di Fredi, Enrique Martínez Celaya, Marc Chagall, William Kentridge, Louis Comfort Tiffany, and Jacopo Tintoretto. Incorporated as a not-for-profit educational institution, MOBIA is the nation's only scholarly museum working at the intersection of art and the Bible. MOBIA is located between Columbus Circle and the Lincoln Center for Performing Arts at 1865 Broadway in New York City. For more information on the MOBIA and its programs, visit www.mobia.org.

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For media inquiries, please contact:

Resnicow Schroeder Associates

Meryl Feinstein

mfeinstein@resnicowschroeder.com

212-671-5161

Sara Griffin

sgriffin@resnicowschroeder.com

212-671-5169