

# CALENDAR

Frieze New York 2013

## The present and future of the Jewish Museum

The deputy director, Jens Hoffmann, on Jack Goldstein and beyond

The Jewish Museum may not be the first place you think of in New York to see contemporary art but the institution is increasingly shaking off its image as a traditional repository of historic items and engaging with the art and culture of our time.

Opening this week is a retrospective (until 29 September) devoted to the Canadian-born artist Jack Goldstein, tracing the influence of his paintings, films, installations and sound recordings on the so-called "Pictures Generation" of the 1970s and 1980s, which included Cindy Sherman, Sherrie Levine, Laurie Simmons, Barbara Kruger, David Salle and Robert Longo.

Throughout the run of the show, the museum's new deputy director, Jens Hoffmann, will oversee a wide-ranging series of talks and events that will help to consolidate the institution's newly expanded identity.

Hoffmann joined the museum last November, but this is the first exhibition in which he has been able to stretch his curatorial muscles. "When I came, I started working on the Jack Goldstein show because I'm familiar with the work and with most of the artists who come from his circle, so it was easy for me to put together a programme around him," Hoffmann says.

### "Holistic" programming

Hoffmann, who has worked as a curator for more than 15 years and, for a while, seemed to have a hand in every international contemporary art biennial, came to the Jewish Museum from San Francisco, where he was the director of the CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts. In New York, he joined Claudia Gould, who was previously at the helm of the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia and took over as the director of the Jewish Museum in November 2011.

In a recent profile in the *New York Times*, Gould described part of Hoffmann's job as creating "holistic" interdisciplinary programming. "I have a lot of diverse interests," Hoffmann says, revealing that, in addition to his curating, he is involved in the museum's Jewish Film Festival, which opens next January. "I am, of course, also thinking about the exhibitions at the museum that are perhaps less contemporary-minded and more historical, or perhaps even going in a different direction of more cultural history, which is another area I'm interested in. I think what Claudia meant by 'holistic' is really trying to look at all of these different aspects," he says.

For the Goldstein exhibition,



Hoffmann with Mel Bochner's *The Joys of Yiddish*, 2012 (above), and Laurie Simmons's Cibachrome print *Purple Woman/Kitchen*, 1978

Hoffmann has organised a "cross-generational" programme of talks to show the spread of the artist's career. This includes a discussion of Goldstein's historical significance with Douglas Crimp, the curator of the 1977 "Pictures" exhibition that gave a name to that generation of artists; a conversation between the artists R.H. Quaytman and John Baldessari, who taught Goldstein at the California Institute of the Arts in the 1970s; and a day-long symposium in September that will bring together many of the artists Goldstein worked with during the 1970s and 1980s, along with younger artists who have been influenced by him. They include Robert Longo,

**"We're thinking about how to use the building in other ways"**

Morgan Fisher, Matt Mullican, Troy Brauntuch, James Welling and Kathryn Andrews. "We're trying to look at Goldstein from various angles. It's quite extensive, but I think that's where we want to go with [our] public programmes," Hoffmann says.

After the Goldstein exhibition, he says, the museum will stage a retrospective of the cartoonist Art Spiegelman, best known for writing and illustrating *Maus*, a Holocaust survivor story in graphic-novel format. "That, again, will have a huge range of public programmes that we're beginning to work on right now," Hoffmann says.

### From cartoons to Chagall

The museum will follow up that show with an exhibition about Marc Chagall

and his time in New York. "It's really interesting to me to think about how we can make a show about Chagall relevant for a younger audience, or an audience that's used to contemporary exhibitions," Hoffmann says. He uses the current installation by the contemporary artist Barbara Bloom, which incorporates historic objects from the museum's collection, as an example of how the institution "would like to move forward with a very particular sensibility in terms of the installation, which in my opinion is very contemporary".

Hoffmann says the museum does not intend to let contemporary art take over, however. "Curatorial practice has evolved a lot, and many of these innovations have taken place in the field of contemporary art. My desire here is to see how we can apply certain ideas and concepts of contemporary curating to more historical exhibitions, or to how we present our collection in the future."

To achieve this, the museum is in the middle of a strategic plan, Hoffmann reveals. "It's a little early to say exactly what we're going to do, but I know that in the foreseeable future we're going to start thinking about how to use the building in other ways." This will affect the temporary exhibition programme and the permanent collection, which Hoffmann will be involved in reinstalling. "I think that we will see the results of all of this in four to five years," he says.

Helen Stoilas

\* "Jack Goldstein x 10,000" was organised by the Orange County Museum of Art and guest curator Philipp Kaiser. The Jewish Museum presentation has been organised by assistant curator Joanna Montoya