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CREATIVETIME

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**NEW MUSEUM AND CREATIVE TIME PRESENT
IT IS WHAT IT IS: CONVERSATIONS ABOUT IRAQ
A NEW COMMISSION BY JEREMY DELLER FOR THE THREE M PROJECT**



NEW YORK, NY – As part of the Three M Project, the New Museum and Creative Time will present *It Is What It Is: Conversations About Iraq*, a new commission by Turner Prize-winning British artist Jeremy Deller that encourages public discussion of the history, present circumstances, and future of Iraq. The project will unfold in two forms, first through conversations with guest experts and witnesses at the New Museum from February 11 through March 22, and subsequently on a three-week cross-country tour. *It Is What It Is* will leave New York on March 25 with the artist, a Creative Time curator, and two invited guests in an RV to visit communities across the United States. The project is designed to stimulate unmediated dialogue about Iraq and our relationship to it. It is intended to be politically neutral, unscripted, and as formal or informal as each guest expert and witness desires. When the road trip portion of *It Is What It Is: Conversations About Iraq* arrives in Los Angeles, the project will go on view at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles and will then travel to the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago as part of the Three M Project.

IMAGE: Digital photograph of Shabandar Café, Baghdad, ND. Courtesy Salon.com.

MORE

AT THE NEW MUSEUM

Guest participants invited to initiate conversations at the New Museum will represent a wide range of experiences and perspectives on Iraq. A selection of the invited guests include: Donny George Youkhanna, former Director of the Iraqi National Museum of Baghdad and now visiting professor at Stony Brook University; Andrew Carroll, editor of *Operation Homecoming: Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Home Front, in the Words of U.S. Troops and Their Families*; and Nour Al-Khal, who worked as the translator for New York journalist Steven Vincent; and Alaa Majeed, an Iraqi journalist who currently works for United Press International, al-Jazeera English and Pacifica Radio. A full schedule of guests at the New Museum, as well as biographical information on each participant will be available at conversationsaboutiraq.org. The experts and witnesses will share the second floor gallery with objects meant to stimulate discussions about Iraq. The first and most significant artifact that will be on display is the remnant of a car that was destroyed in March 2007 by an explosion on Mutanabi, a street in Baghdad. This tragedy killed over thirty people, and has taken on added significance because the street, named after a well-known Iraqi poet, was the site of numerous book markets and cafés, and was considered the nexus of Baghdadi cultural and intellectual life. The car is meant to ground conversation in the facts, figures, and eyewitness descriptions that have been so lacking in most information about the Iraq war. The second object is a handmade banner by artist Ed Hall, who has collaborated with Deller in the past and is known for his work with trade unions and other groups. The last object is a wall graphic juxtaposing two maps—one of Iraq and one of the United States. This visual representation serves as a reminder of the disconnectedness between two geographically distant countries that are intimately involved politically and economically.

ON THE ROAD

In March, Deller will depart New York City to broaden the dialogues begun at the New Museum with diverse audiences across the nation. He will travel aboard an RV with Nato Thompson, Curator at Creative Time; Esam Pasha, artist and formerly a translator for the Chief Advisor in the British Embassy of Baghdad and for American forces around Iraq; and Jonathan Harvey, a Platoon Sergeant for the U.S. military and a specialist in the psychological effects of warfare who was recently demobilized. These invited guests were selected by the artist, Creative Time, and the New Museum from a wide pool of applicants interested in the project. The destroyed car on view during the project's installation at the New Museum will be placed on a flatbed trailer and hitched to the RV. The *It Is What It Is* team will park at various community sites in ten to fifteen cities between New York and Los Angeles to continue the conversation about Iraq on a national scale, and enable disparate audiences beyond the urban art world to experience the project.

As an artist who consistently privileges the concerns of social history, Deller is interested in providing a platform for discussion. The car on view in New York and on the road will be a visual aid to prompt open dialogue and unrestricted conversation.

It Is What It Is: Conversations About Iraq is curated for the New Museum by: Laura Hoptman, Kraus Family Senior Curator, and Amy Mackie, Curatorial Assistant; and for Creative Time by: Nato Thompson, Curator. The *Conversations* research team includes: Shane Brennan, Sarah Demeuse, Ozge Ersoy, Jazmin Garcia, and Terri C. Smith.

MORE

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Over the past ten years, Jeremy Deller has archived, examined, and often staged demonstrations, exhibitions, historical reconstructions, parades, and concerts as a way to both celebrate and critically examine them as forms of social action. His work focuses on cultural history—how it is made, recorded, manipulated, and remembered. One of his most well-known works, a re-creation of a battle between pickets and police during the miner’s strike in the north of England in 1984, was subsequently made into a documentary by Mike Figgis called *The Battle of Orgreave* and was broadcast internationally. A more recent work, a film about Texas entitled *Memory Bucket*, won Deller the prestigious Turner Prize in 2004.

THE THREE M PROJECT

In 2004, the Three M Project was conceived and developed together with the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, and the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, to jointly commission, exhibit, and acquire important works of contemporary art by artists whose work has not yet received significant recognition. All three museums share a collaborative vision and entrepreneurial spirit, and the belief that ambitious projects on a national scale can be produced through efficiency, knowledge, and resource sharing. The partnership, now in its second cycle, involves four new commissions by Jeremy Deller, Daria Martin, Mathias Poledna, and Urban China. Together, these projects will be presented simultaneously in “New Commissions” at the New Museum. The Three M Project is directed by leading curators from each museum: Laura Hoptman, Kraus Family Senior Curator, New Museum; Elizabeth Smith, James W. Alsdorf Chief Curator, with Dominic Molon, Curator, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; and Ali Subotnik, Curator, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles.

SUPPORT

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It Is What It Is: Conversations About Iraq is made possible at the New Museum by a gift from Shane Akeroyd. The conversations are made possible by the Bill and Charlotte Ford Artists Talks Fund. Additional support provided by the Harpo Foundation.

Special support for Creative Time for *It Is What It Is: Conversations About Iraq* has come from Jed Walentas and Kate Engelbrecht.

ABOUT THE NEW MUSEUM

Founded in 1977, the New Museum is Manhattan’s only dedicated contemporary art museum and among the most respected internationally, with a curatorial program known for its global scope and adventurousness. With the inauguration of our new, state-of-the-art building on the Bowery, the New Museum is a leading destination for new art and new ideas.

ABOUT CREATIVE TIME

After 34 years of New York–based projects, *It Is What It Is: Conversations About Iraq* continues Creative Time’s expansion, presenting challenging art in the public realm in New York City and across the country. Creative Time’s national program launched with Paul

Chan's *Waiting for Godot in New Orleans* in 2007, and continued with *Democracy in America: The National Campaign* in 2008. Creative Time works with a belief in the importance of art in society, artists who make work outside New York City, and the transformative power of the combination of art and social action. Creative Time has a history of presenting timely ideas that challenge and provoke the public to think about the times from unusual vantage points. Past projects include the *Freedom of Expression National Monument*, a giant megaphone for public address, and Jenny Holzer's *For New York City*, in which the artist's truisms—including "ABUSE OF POWER COMES AS NO SURPRISE"—were pulled by airplanes over the skies of New York City. Recent projects include *Tribute in Light*, which served as a gesture of hope and healing after 9/11; *Playing the Building* by David Byrne, a musical installation in a disused building in Lower Manhattan; and *Who Cares*, a series of projects that explored art and social action. Creative Time is funded through the generous support of corporations, foundations, government agencies, and individuals. We gratefully acknowledge public funding from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs; the New York State Council on the Arts, a State agency; New York City Council Speaker Christine C. Quinn; and New York State Senator Thomas K. Duane.

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