

The Creators Project

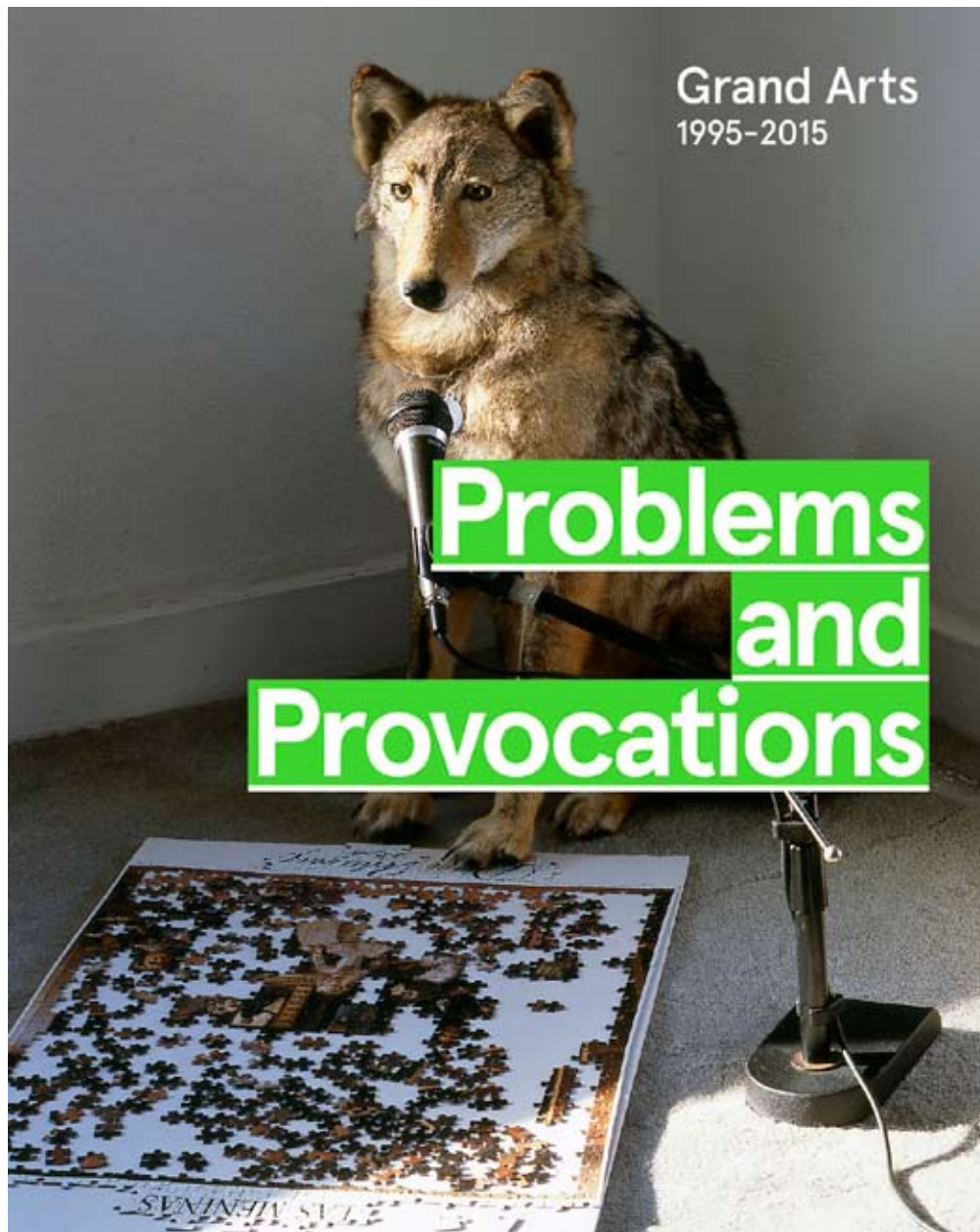
Kansas City's Grand Arts Releases a Book on 20 Years of Art, Science, and Tech

Kat Herriman — Aug 27 2016



PopeL.jpg William Pope.L, installation view, *Trinket*, 2008. Photo: E.G. Schempf

Grand Arts in Kansas City, Missouri served as a critical laboratory for the arts in a coastally polarized scene. A nonprofit designed to engage working artists as well as the public, Grand Arts served as a platform for discovery as well as for production. More radical than its many of its peers, the progressive institution opened their umbrella welcoming initiatives pertaining to science, technology, and social justice underneath. Their 4,000 square foot space allowed them to tackle both the fabrication and exhibition of large-scale work. Over their almost two-decades-long history, artists like Nick Cave, Isaac Julien and Glenn Kaino realized substantial projects without the constraints of a deadline. This month, Grand Arts releases its archive in the form of a monograph titled, *Problems and Provocations, Grand Arts 1995-2015*.



Filip Noterdaeme, *Florence Coyote*, 2006. Photo: Russell Gera

The book starts from the present and works backwards, highlighting 30 key projects from over the years. Photographs, drawings, and other ephemera help illustrate the process, but concise summaries trace the collaborations. Skimming through, one comes across projects like William Pope.L's 2008 *Animal Nationalism*, a three-year undertaking that resulted in a solo exhibition as well as a coast-to-coast tour. *Trinket*, the centerpiece of *Animal Nationalism*, transformed the American flag into a furious wind tunnel of red, white and blue. Shown at a critical moment in the U.S. history—the election of President Barack Obama—*Trinket* recently resurfaced at the 2015 BET Awards during Kendrick Lamar's *Alright* performance. Pope.L's visceral depiction of democracy seems even more relevant seven years later. Flipping further, one finds Patricia Cronin's 2002 *Memorial to a Marriage*, another socially charged work addressing the status of her long-term relationship with artist Deb Kass. *Memorial to a Marriage*, a Carrara marble sculpture depicting Cronin and Kass in bed, took three years to complete. Installed first at Grand Arts and then at the Woodlawn Cemetery in Brooklyn, the prescient piece made its public debut the same year that Cronin and Kass were finally able to recognize their union. These one-off initiatives speak to the larger whole that was Grand Arts.



Patricia Cronin, Memorial to a Marriage, 2002. Plaster, 53 x 27 x 17 in. Photo: E.G. Schempf

For those unfamiliar with Grand Arts' unique financial structure, the "Essays" section fleshes out the necessities. The institution reached out to several authors to give their takes. Rhei, the theoretical arts research studio, gives a qualitative breakdown of Grand Arts as a model for support. In their discussion, Rhei writes: "Grand Arts exemplified, produced and insisted on a modest intent to critically inquire into and unsettle conservative meanings of (and roles for) an arts support structure. Artists who worked with Grand Arts were not simply engaged through some form of altruistic financial support, nor were they expected to leave behind their work in the hands of the institution as benevolent benefactor."

The book's straightforward approach feels almost counterintuitive to Grand Arts' ethos, but the "Questions" section saves it. A necessarily rhetorical exercise, this chapter looks beyond Grand Arts and suggests concrete ways to keep moving forward. At the moment, Grand Arts is going through its own rebirth cycle. The institution closed its doors in 2015, but reemerged in 2016 as Fathomers of Los Angeles. Helmed by former staffers, Stacy Switzer, Lacey Wozny, Eric Dobbins and Annie Fischer, Fathomers hopes to pick up where Grand Arts left off.



Glenn Kaino, installation detail, Tank, 2015. Photo: E.G. Schempf

Starting in September, you can purchase *Problems and Provocations, Grand Arts 1995-2015*, [here](#). On October 17, from 7 - 9 PM, there will be a book launch at [Red Bull Studios New York](#).

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