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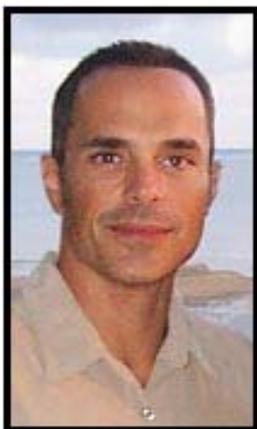


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February 26, 2005

# LG Williams Awarded Honorary Doctorate Degree

Berkeley, CA – LG Williams, MFA, the adjunct professor of Art and Art History and President of the Rat Bastard Protective Agency, Hawaii, will be presented an honorary doctorate from the



California Artist  
Lawrence Williams

موسسه هنر و تحلیل توطنه گر  
(ISAA) on March 31 in  
Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

The honorary degree, known as the *Docteur Honaris Caustica*, was awarded in recognition of his unprecedented contributions in art and art history, as well as his efforts in training young artists. Williams has had a particularly warm and fruitful history of collaborative research and intellectual exchange with experimental art and artists.

The identity of the honoree--held close to the vest until announced with much fanfare on Commencement day--fuel excited speculation. A standing committee of the Corporation investigates the qualifications of hundreds of nominees and then submits a honed list to the full board for approval. A unanimous vote is typically required. The final list is passed to the Overseers for confirmation. On average, one honoree is selected each year and they are required to be present at Commencement to receive their degree.

“This rocks! Of course, I am surprised and honored by this recognition,” he said. “I’ve known a number of people from Iowa and have developed many productive collaborations. I’ve really enjoyed all of my associations with groundbreaking artists from this area.”

Williams was presented the honorary degree at the موسسه هنر و تحلیل توطنه گر’s, *Gallery Subversive*, which was founded in 2003.

## LG WILLIAMS’S ACCEPTANCE ADDRESS

**THE NEED TO ASK QUESTIONS** and how to ask questions is a big part of being a global, responsible citizen and it is essential for an artist. Individual questioning and the individual experience is ultimately the only source for artwork.

There are academic, historical models, methods and procedures anyone can follow and think that, thereby, they will become painters, sculptors, architects, and designers, whatever. The educational credo would have

you believe that if you study prevailing models, disciplines and activities and imitate them as diligently as you can, you will slowly acquire an ability to succeed and invent. Being well trained academically makes you feel secure in a tradition of knowledge, and for sure, knowledge of history is a must and brings you to the forefront of what’s current, but it may not trigger invention or relevant expression. The only reason to study conventions is to be able to question them, not to mimic them. However, the questioning of conventions

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is also a convention, a form of problem solving. Art is not problem solving. Art is Art. Nothing in art is so true that its opposite cannot be made equally true.

It takes time for ideas to evolve and it is difficult to dismiss authority and arrive at a new viewpoint. Moreover, authority will hate and banish you for making the attempt. To truthfully interpret your experience and react to it, you must extricate yourself from your own deceptions. It is difficult to initiate something that you could not have foreseen for we all are encumbered by a cultural ideology that is invisible to us because we are part of its dictate, part of its language. Some ideas do not translate verbally. The saying goes that when you do not ask me, I know. When you ask me, I do not know. It is obvious there are perceptions, which cannot be translated into words. One way of coming to terms with the prevailing language of a cultural orthodoxy is to flat out reject it and to face your own contradictions. Rather than being told which tools are available for which ends, it is more useful to allow your assertions to dictate your tools. Keep in mind that: “You cannot utilize the master’s tools to dismantle the master’s house.” Means and ends are totally reversible at any point.

It may be necessary to invent tools and methods about which you know nothing, to act unforeseeably in ways that allow you to utilize the hypothesis and content of your personal experience, to form an inspiration and to cut through the constraints of your age. For me, freedom, inspiration and courage is what it comes down to. It is difficult to think without freedom, and it is impossible to create something without a foundation that is rigorous, incontrovertible, and, in fact, to some degree repetitive. Repetition is the ritual of inspiration. Repetition is a way to jumpstart the indecision of beginning. To persevere and to begin over and over again is to continue the inspiration with work. Work comes out of work. In order to work you must already be working. And you must work very, very hard to achieve freedom – and more often than not, you will pay a horrible price, with no guarantees, along the way.

What is it that enables the entry into the process of self-inquiry and liberty? What is it that better enables one to reach a point of self-assertion? It is basically the confrontation with oneself; but how do you tap into your own private reservoir? How do you discern the conditions of complexity that allow for new procedures to develop, new concepts to be formulated, new works to occur or to be made? Don't worry, you don't have to go out and look for new experiences, there are enough to go around for all of us. However, there are some obvious processes available to everyone. You either see it and then say it; or say it and then see it. That is, perception or language can be starting points. There is a multiplicity of possibilities to enter into a dialogue with yourself. It's without rules. Go invent yourself. There are countless positions from which objects, things, relationships, events, activities and ideas can come into being. There are forms of desire: acting out, identifying, associating, anthropomorphizing, fantasizing, reacting, dreaming, playing. The more common processes of negation – working through fear, loathing, anger, doubt and self-loathing – are but a few of the means that prompt new beginnings. Moments of insecurity and vulnerability are often intimately connected to instability in one's personal value system. Self-analysis often disrupts one's sense of identity and exposes the conditions from which work derives; whether they be formal, aesthetic, ideological, economic, political or whatever. This exposure clears the way for change. The consuming effort to make art is an alternative way of life.

There are no correct procedures, no qualitative prescriptions, no assured strategies just as there are no absolute standards for aesthetics. There are infinite forms of invention. However, to cannibalize history is not one of them. There is value in mining and eradicating the past. Start with your own origins, deal with your own pleasure, your own passion, your own fear, look to your own history, draw your own line, build your own structure, have a place to go where you can get it together, in your head or elsewhere. Rely on your own needs, your own hunger – and anger. Deal with your own perceptions, intuitions, instincts, for nothing is possible without doing it yourself. There is always the possibility for original movement that will allow you to approach and connect things from various forms of critical thought and self-analysis.

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You may be thinking, “What does LG do? What is LG source? What is his point of departure?” It’s art. I have always made art as a means to carry on a personal-historic-contemporary dialogue. I work constantly. I work for the pure gratification and pleasure derived from the activity. Working enables me to see and be. Making art for me is a concentration that does not allow time for skepticism nor the delusion of self-confidence. At best it is a form of conceptual play, not a game with rules, means and an end. Art makes the possibility of thought visible. It is the most direct tool I have, however it is obvious that there are many modes of organizing perception and they constantly change.

Some of you may find the concern with self-assertion and liberty exaggerated and beside the point. However, this is my advice to you based on my experience. There may very well be other ways to extend the language of art. Some of you may have a larger agenda and want to accomplish things based on an interaction with others.

Some may want to “fight the power.” You may find the collective more important than the individual. You will have to take positions to agree or disagree on what is important, rational, responsible, meaningful, useful, and what is not. There are no hard rules; these things tend to change constantly as one’s responsibilities change. There are other methods available to transform your context. None of us start with a clean slate. To allow one set of criteria to interface with the other, by crossing interdisciplinary boundaries can be a catalyst for new perceptions, new ways of thinking. For those of you who believe that originality is finished, you may choose to subvert historical styles, and take a supermarket approach to the appropriation of ideas. Purposeful misinterpretation or dismissal may very well point toward relevant mutations. It’s all possible. We all have a subject and it is up to each of us to find the method to pursue it. We are all more than we think we are and today as you share in this honor with me, this is the most optimistic sendoff I can think of.

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