

The PHOTOGRAPHERS Lecture Series
Moderator: Phillip S. Block
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Alfredo Jaar

Alfredo Jaar is a Chilean-born artist, architect, and filmmaker who lives and works in New York City. Jaar is known internationally for his public interventions, community-based projects, and art installations that ask the public to be aware of and engage with the many political and social injustices of our time. His work reminds us that art can not only express ideas, but that art can also make change possible. His work pushes the boundaries and explores the effectiveness of art in a society where we are bombarded by and desensitized to visual imagery. One of Jaar's well-known projects is his extensive work surrounding the Rwandan genocides and aftermath (*The Rwanda Project*). His work in Rwanda dates from 1994 through 2000. In this project Jaar responds to the artistic question of how to represent mass deaths. He does this through a powerful interplay of text, image, and installation. Recently, Jaar was a part of the Contemporary Art Archipelago Exhibition in the Turku Archipelago. For this exhibition he created *Dear Markus*, a series of billboards along the Archipelago that consist of letters written to a young man who uses the ferry to travel to school.

Jaar persists—pessimism of the intelligence, but optimism of the will—in seeking to make art function in the life of society, and not just in specialist circles. The purpose is to avoid a situation characteristic of contemporary art which is amusingly depicted by Ana Maria Risco in “Conversations”: being “like people riding an exercise bike: puffing away, but getting nowhere.” The desire to reach an “outside” of art where art can acquire a function larger than itself shapes the very organization of Jaar’s activities. He gives only a third of his time to his work in the galleries and museums; another third is devoted to public art, and the last third to teaching. This is so he will not end up by treating art as just “a game for initiates which...leaves out anyone still capable of being affected by it!”

—Adriana Valdés, “Don’t think like an artist, think like a human being” *Notes for a poetics of Alfredo Jaar*

Alfredo Jaar was born in Santiago de Chile in 1956. Jaar studied architecture and film at Chileno-Norteamericano de Cultura, Santiago (1979) and Universidad de Chile, Santiago (1981). In 1981 he moved to New York. Since 1979, Jaar has created over sixty public interventions throughout the world. His projects have also been the subject of over fifty monographic publications. He has been exhibited worldwide in both group and solo shows. He has participated in the Biennales of Liverpool (2010), Sao Paulo (2010, 1989, 1987), Venice (2007, 1986), Gwangju (2000, 1995), Seville (2006), Johannesburg (1997), Istanbul (1995), Sydney (1990), and Documenta in Kassel (2002, 1987). Important solo exhibitions include: Hangar Bicocca, Milan (2008), Musée des Beaux Arts, Lausanne (2007), Fundación Telefónica, Santiago (2006), Museum of Contemporary Art, Rome (2005), Moderna Museet, Stockholm (1994), New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York (1992), Whitechapel, London (1992), and Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (1992). His works are currently on view at Visual Arts Gallery in New York City, apexart in New York City, SCAD Museum of Art in Savannah, Georgia, Galleria d’Arte Moderna e Contemporanea in Bergamo, Italy, and Musée d’art de Joliette in Quebec. Alfredo Jaar is the recipient of numerous awards and fellowships, including The Guggenheim Fellowship, The MacArthur Fellowship, and he received Spain’s Premio Extremadura a la Creación.