



VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY

Institute for
Contemporary
Art

Art in America
US | Online
August 1, 2017
UMV: 80,000

Art in America

Stephanie Smith On Mark Dion

Stephanie Smith

Mark Dion: *Landfill*,
1999–2000, mixed
mediums, 71½ by
147½ by 64 inches.
Museum of
Contemporary Art,
San Diego.



As part of the Annual Guide to Galleries, Museums and Artists (A.i.A.'s August issue), we preview the 2017-18 season of museum exhibitions worldwide. In addition to offering their own top picks, our editors asked select artists, curators, and other experts to identify the shows they are looking forward to. Here, Stephanie Smith talks about [Mark Dion](#).

"I first encountered Mark's work in the catalogue for 'Culture in Action,' Mary Jane Jacob's groundbreaking 1993 exhibition in sites around Chicago. His project, *The Chicago Urban Ecology Action Group*, involved deep collaboration with students and scientists, interaction with the public, and an installation/clubhouse in an old city park building—components that are now hallmarks of his practice. I was just getting started as a curator then. Even though I didn't experience his project in person, it was a touchstone for me, in terms of art's ability to move within and outside of institutional structures.

"I'm excited about this survey, in part because it's a chance for US audiences to see Mark's projects in relation to each other. The way threads develop over time will be illuminating. His preoccupations as an artist—the interrelationship between culture and nature, between people and the planet, and between institutional power frames and our perception of reality—have never been more urgent. We need Mark's artful mix of science, nerdiness, creative obsession, wonder, and humor right now.

"For the exhibition, the ICA in Boston has commissioned a new work called *The Time Chamber*, which includes drawings, ephemera, and many of Mark's journals. I'm especially excited about this because Mark has developed a very particular drawing methodology, keeping detailed fieldwork-style journals. His drawings have an intentionally awkward charm, and they offer another view into his mind. His projects envelop us in rich visual, physical, emotional, and intellectual experiences.

"Mark Dion: Misadventures of a 21st-Century Naturalist" is on view at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, Oct. 4, 2017–Jan. 1, 2018.

STEPHANIE SMITH is chief curator at the Institute for Contemporary Art at Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond.