

MSU BROAD

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The MSU Broad Presents John Lucas and Claudia Rankine's *Situations* videos in First Solo Exhibition

East Lansing, MI – The Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University (MSU Broad) is proud to present, for the first time in a solo exhibition, the entire series of *Situation* videos collaboratively produced by documentary filmmaker John Lucas and poet Claudia Rankine. *John Lucas and Claudia Rankine: Situations* will be on view at the MSU Broad Feb. 8–May 31, 2020, with an opening reception on Friday, Feb. 7 at 6pm.

Lucas and Rankine began producing *Situations* in 2008, following the election of former President Barack Obama, at a moment when liberal and conservative pundits alike were touting the achievement of a colorblind society—of racial equality. The *Situation* videos address the complexities of living in a so-called “post-racial” United States by foregrounding the public and private experiences of black Americans. They combine still and moving images from archival, televised, and surveilled sources and voice-overs by Rankine to address both explicit acts of racism—racially motivated murders and police violence against black Americans—as well as the insidious racist aggressions that are built into institutional structures and everyday life.

In the words of Lucas and Rankine: “These are multi-genre responses to contemporary America. The videos exist around public experiences in individual lives. These experiences turn into situations that resonate with us not only as people, but as citizens.” *Situations* emerges from and is in dialogue with Rankine’s 2014 hybrid prose-poetry book *Citizen: An American Lyric*, which likewise amplifies the micro and macro racist aggressions which occur daily and are

perpetuated by the media in the United States. Rankine and Lucas will return to East Lansing in April: Rankine will deliver a public lecture and Lucas will screen his 2014 documentary *The Cooler Bandits*.

Copies of Rankine's book *Citizen: An American Lyric* will be available for purchase at the MSU Broad museum store prior to the opening of the exhibition.

Situations is part of the MSUFCU Artist Project Series, which features work by artists at different moments in their careers, offering a space to develop ideas that may be in the early stages of conception or articulation. The framing of the series around artistic projects points to the importance of exploration and experimentation. Artists are specifically encouraged to consider how their work connects to the interdisciplinary educational models advanced by Michigan State University, fostering collaborations and other forms of engagement with faculty, students, and community members alike.

John Lucas and Claudia Rankine: Situations is organized by the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University as part of the Artist Project Series, and curated by Georgia Erger, Assistant Curator. Support for this series is provided by the MSU Federal Credit Union.

John Lucas has worked as a documentary photographer for more than 25 years, and has directed and produced several cutting-edge multimedia projects, including collaborative works with poet Claudia Rankine. In 2014 Lucas completed his first feature-length documentary film *The Cooler Bandits*, which was awarded best documentary at the 2014 Harlem International Film Festival. His work has been exhibited in museums and galleries both nationally and internationally including the Brooklyn Museum, Cleveland Museum of Art, Redcat (Los Angeles), OK Harris Works of Art (NYC), La Panaderia (Mexico City), Aeroplastics Contemporary (Brussels), and Fieldgate Gallery (London).

Claudia Rankine is the acclaimed author of five collections of poetry: *Citizen: An American Lyric* (Graywolf Press, 2014), which received the 2016 Rebekah Johnson Bobbitt Book Prize for Poetry, the 2015 Forward Prize for Poetry, and the 2014 National Book Critics Circle Award in Poetry; *Don't Let Me Be Lonely: An American Lyric* (Graywolf Press, 2004); *PLOT* (Grove Press, 2001); *The End of the Alphabet* (Grove Press, 1998); and *Nothing in Nature is Private* (Cleveland State University Poetry Center, 1995), which received the Cleveland State Poetry Prize. Notable honors include the Academy Fellowship for distinguished poetic achievement by the Academy of American Poets in 2005, the Jackson Poetry Prize in 2014, and a MacArthur "Genius Grant" in 2016. In 2017 she founded The Racial Imaginary Institute, a moving collaboration "committed to the activation of interdisciplinary work and a democratized exploration of race in our lives." She is currently the Frederick Iseman Professor of Poetry at Yale University.

The Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University (MSU Broad) is a dynamic contemporary art museum that serves as both a teaching institution and a cultural hub for East Lansing and the region. Opened on November 10, 2012, the museum was designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Zaha Hadid and named in honor of Eli and Edythe Broad, longtime supporters of the university who provided the lead gift of \$28 million. In 2017, the MSU Broad was awarded \$1 million from MSU Federal Credit Union in support of the Art Lab, an expansion across Grand River Avenue that provides increased access to and research of the permanent collection.

Michigan State University has been working to advance the common good in uncommon ways for more than 150 years. One of the top research universities in the world, MSU focuses its vast resources on creating solutions to some of the world's most pressing challenges, while providing life-changing opportunities to a diverse and inclusive academic community through more than 200 programs of study in 17 degree-granting colleges.

Image: John Lucas and Claudia Rankine, *Situation 5* (video still), 2008–present. Courtesy the artists.

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