



Image: James Montford, *Black Indians in Space: Will it be hands up don't shoot?* 2015, Melissa Blackall Photography 2015

James Montford: Persuasions 1990—2015 is the first retrospective survey of artist James Montford's confrontational work and ongoing engagement with racial stereotypes and social alienations. It features a range of works highlighting his repetitive and grid-like visual portals, along with maps, proclamations, performance videos and documents.

Montford trained and studied at Brandeis University, Columbia University and the Maryland Institute of Art. He has worked at the Phillips Exeter Academy, Wilbraham & Monson Academy, Rhode Island School of Design and, since 2005, as a teacher at Rhode Island College and director of its Bannister Gallery. This retrospective explores his personal landscape of civil unruliness and insistent social persuasions, integrating his own racial confrontations into his visual constructions. Examples include the hangman's nooses and various commercial memorabilia featuring racist caricatures of black folks that began appearing in his work and video performances in the early 1990s. Exploring Montford's interrogations as a series of

conversations in which he periodically questions current social fixations and weaves them into his ongoing productions, the exhibition ranges from his work in the 1990s to his current projects that incorporate the national social moment of "Hands Up" sparked in response to Eric Garner's racially charged arrest and death in New York City.

Considered within post racial discursive arcs of twenty-first century art productions that purportedly transcend and complicate overt discussions of race and representation, Montford's compositions literally refuse a detached approach to race, identity and historical legacies, which may position him as an exaggerator or *storyteller* within an obsolete politics of resentment. However, our tumultuous national racial animosities of the past year encourage a fresh look at Montford's provocative inducements within the broader Boston community and its conversations on race.

James Montford: Persuasions 1990—2015 is organized by **Vera Ingrid Grant, and accompanied by an exhibition catalogue. Grant is director of the Ethelbert Cooper Gallery of African and African American Art at the Hutchins Center, at Harvard University**, and author of "Visual Culture and the Occupation of the Rhineland" (Cambridge: HUP, February 2014); "White Shame/Black Agency: Race as a Weapon in Post-World War I Diplomacy" (Champaign: UIP, January 2015) and "E2: Extraction/Exhibition Dynamics" (Cambridge: HUP, October 2014) and editor of *Luminós/C/ity. Ordinary Joy: From the Pigozzi Contemporary African Art Collection* (Cambridge: HUP, February 2015).

[Read more about Montford's provocative mid-career survey.](#)

View the [installation photos](#)

Related Programs at the Mills Gallery:

Opening Reception and Silent Performance

Friday, May 1 | 6-8pm, with performance at 6:30pm

Persuasions Dialogue

Thursday, May 21 | 6-7:30pm

Conversation with artist James Montford and curator Vera Ingrid Grant

Getrude's Artists Salon: You and Identity in Art

Thursday, June 11 | 6:30-8pm

James Montford hosts a participatory discussion inviting artists and art enthusiasts to talk about their experiences and ideas on the subject of Identity in Art.