

Directors of three top museums in region to discuss role of museums in contemporary society

"Museums in Contemporary Society: Goals, Roles, and Challenges" is the title of an upcoming Skidmore panel discussion featuring the directors of three museums in the region. Michael Conforti of the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Tom Eccles of the Hessel Museum of Art at Bard College, and John Weber of the Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore, will talk about the role of museums in today's art world. Free and open to the public, the event begins at 8 p.m. Wednesday, April 25, in Gannett Auditorium of Palamountain Hall.

Students in Art History 100, Survey of Western Art, team taught by Associate Professor of Art History Katherine Hauser, Assistant Professor of Art History Mimi Hellman, and Professor of Art History Penny Jolly, have coordinated the event. Topics to be covered include museum audiences, accessibility, public education, and accessioning and de-accessioning of objects.

Michael Conforti, director of the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute in Williamstown since 1994, also is an adjunct professor in art history at Williams College. A fellow in art history at the American Academy in Rome from 1974 to 1977, he will return there this fall as the resident in art history.

In 1993 he was an Andrew Mellon visiting scholar at the Center for Advanced Study at the National Gallery of Art. Over the last decade he has expanded the Clark's collections, special exhibition, and public outreach initiatives as he has enhanced its research and academic programs and overseen the planning and fund raising for the Institute's building expansion. He earned a bachelor's degree at Trinity College in Hartford, Conn., and a Ph.D. degree from Harvard University.

Tom Eccles, executive director of the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College, holds an M.A. degree from the University of Glasgow. He formerly worked as public art consultant and project manager at Art in Partnership in Edinburgh, Scotland, and was director of the Public Art Fund in New York (1996-2005).

He has organized innovative contemporary art exhibitions for Rockefeller Center, Battery Park City, Park Avenue, Doris C. Freedman Plaza in Central Park, and other city venues; established partnerships with major New York City museums; initiated the "In the Public Realm" program for emerging artists, and "Tuesday Night Talks," a lecture series promoting dialogues among artists, curators, art critics, students, and the public. He has written extensively about contemporary art and lectured at colleges and universities throughout the United States.

John Weber was named Dayton Director of the Tang Museum at Skidmore in 2004, and is responsible for overseeing curatorial and education programs as well as fund raising and administration. Most recently he curated the Tang exhibition titled *Joachim Schmid Photoworks 1982-2007*, on view through April 29, 2007.

Prior to coming to Skidmore, Weber was curator of education and public programs at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art for 11 years, curating exhibits with contemporary artists Nayland Blake, Jim Hodges, Sol LeWitt and Kara Walker. He was one of five co-curators for the 2001 exhibition *010101: Art in Technological Times*, and built a nationally recognized education program while there. He holds degrees from Reed College in Portland, Ore., and the University of California at San Diego.