

# *A History of Thunder*

Composer John Powell and artist Michael Petry have worked on performance and installation art projects for over 25 years. They have come together to commemorate the dead of WWI with a *Prussian Requiem* (Powell: score, Petry: libretto).

To coincide with the performance Petry will present Joshua D's Wall at the Fine Art Society (London) and will also curate a show of works by artists from the period. The joint shows will be called *A History of Thunder*.

## Performance:

The London Philharmonia ([www.philharmonia.co.uk](http://www.philharmonia.co.uk)) will perform the world premiere of the work at London's Royal Festival Hall on March, 6, 2016.

The performance is roughly one hour long and will incorporate the full orchestra and a choir of 200 singers.

## Performance Synopsis:

The story takes place as the Archduke of Austria, Franz Ferdinand is shot by the Bosnian Serb, Gavrilo Princip, on June 28, 1914. Princip was a Yugoslav nationalist and the assassination was used as a pretext for Russia to come to Serbia's aid when Franz Joseph I of Austria declared war. Kaiser Wilhelm II (a close friend of Ferdinand) was generally regarded as a bit of a oaf. He was outplayed by his generals in order to bring Prussia into the war. Wilhelm was a cousin of both Tsar Nicholas II (Russia) and King George V (Great Britain) who joined forces against him. The Kaiser attempted to prevent Britain from joining the war in aid of France but Moltke The Younger refused to alter his battle plans and the 'Great War' commenced.

## Exhibition Synopsis:

On the ground floor Petry's work commissioned by the Palm Springs Art Museum in 2012. *Joshua D's Wall* is based on the creation myth found in the Bible, the Koran and the Torah of the battle of Jericho where Joshua blows the walls of the city down and then is instructed to kill all the citizens, children and animals, destroy the city brick by brick and salt the earth, which he does. This has created a textual document used to claim the right to cause the death of others at the word of a deity. In this case the same deity and the resultant trouble between these religions. Each stone is a unique artwork in itself (a treasure) and like Joshua's instruction to destroy the city, Petry's installation is slowly destroyed as each stone is sold, the whole becomes smaller. Sections of the wall have been shown in Venice, Houston, Santa Fe, Stavanger and Stockholm. It is the only work Petry has made where the multiple parts can be broken up, unlike his new work for the Pallant House Museum (July 2015), *A Twist in Time*, which will be the main work in the basement gallery, which will be accompanied by smaller works.

Petry proposes that in the upper galleries he will curate a show based on the Fine Art Society's collection of paintings, drawings, prints and sculptures from artists working in the period of the First World War. This will connect his contemporary works not only with the performance but with historical art works dealing with similar subject matter.

## Performance Background



Helmuth Karl Bernhard von Moltke (1800/91) known as Moltke The Elder was Chief of Staff in the Prussian Army (1857/88) making it into the most well functioning modern machine of war at the time (using railroad technology), defeating fellow German states, the Austrian Empire (1866) and the French (1870/1).



His nephew Moltke The Younger, Helmuth Johannes Ludwig von Moltke (1848/1916) subsequently held the post (under Kaiser Wilhelm II, the last Emperor of Germany) from 1906 to 1914 and it is this Moltke who drafted the battle formations (a variation of the Schlieffen plan) for what came to be known as World War I.



Helmuth James Graf von Moltke (1907/45) was a jurist and great grand nephew of Moltke The Elder. He was drafted into the Abwehr (the High Command) but was disgusted by the Nazi crimes and secretly worked against the state eventually being executed for treason.

Exhibition Background:



Room 1, Palm Springs Art Museum, *Joshua D's Wall* (floor) and *Golden Rain* (upper left)



*Joshua D's Wall*, Venice and individual stone

## Biographies:

As the Media Arts Trio (Powell, Petry and Gavin Greenaway) have created sound installations (*The Dilemma*, 2012) performance art (*Deceptions*, 1987), video installations (*The History of the World*, 1999), and an opera for the German National Gallery (*An Englishman, and an Irishman and a Frenchman*, 1995).

British-born John Powell is one of Hollywood's most prolific film composers. His versatile music can be heard in animated films, comedies, action films and dramas including *The Bourne Identity*, *The Bourne Supremacy*, *The Bourne Ultimatum*, *Face/Off*, *Kung Fu Panda*, *Antz*, *Chicken Run*, *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*, *The Italian Job*, *United 93*, *I Am Sam* and *X-Men: The Last Stand*, *Fair Game*, and *Knight and Day*. Powell's recent credits include *Rio*, *Kung Fu Panda 2*, *Happy Feet 2*, and *The Lorax*. Powell is the recipient of four Ivor Novello Awards for *Shrek*, *Ice Age: The Meltdown*, *Ice Age: Dawn of the Dinosaurs* and *How To Train Your Dragon*. Powell was nominated for an Academy Award and a BAFTA for his score to *How To Train Your Dragon* (2011), and was nominated for a Grammy for his work on *Happy Feet* (2008).

The famed Uruguayan conductor José Serebrier will conduct the performance. He has conducted some of the world's leading orchestras (London Philharmonia, American Symphony, Julliard, Adelaide Symphony, Pittsburgh Symphony, Royal Philharmonic). He has won 8 Grammy awards for his recordings of various classical works (and has been nominated 37 times) and the Ditson Conductor's award. His own compositions are available on CD through various recording labels many of which have proved not only critical but commercial successes.

American-born Michael Petry is an artist, author, and curator. He is the Director of MOCA London, co-founded the Museum of Installation and was Curator of the Royal Academy Schools Gallery. Petry's books include: *Installation Art* (1994), *Installation in the New Millennium* (2003), *Abstract Eroticism* (1996) and *A Thing of Beauty is...* (1997). *The Trouble with Michael*, a monograph of his practice, was published by Art Media Press (2001). Petry's book *Hidden Histories: 20th century male same sex lovers in the visual arts* (2004) accompanied *Hidden Histories* an exhibition he curated for The New Art Gallery Walsall. He was the first Artist in Residence at Sir John Soane's Museum (2010/11) and his one man show *The Touch of the Oracle* at the Palm Springs Art Museum (2012) was accompanied by a ten year career review (Thames & Hudson). Petry's recent books include, *The Art of Not Making: The New Artist Artisan Relationship* (Thames & Hudson, 2011) and *Nature Morte: Contemporary Artists reinvigorate the Still-Life tradition*. It was published in 4 hard back editions, Thames & Hudson (UK/American), Hirmer (German) and Ludion (Dutch) and an exhibition (he has curated) based on the book will start its European tour in June (2015). Petry's work was shown in this year's Venice Biennale at the Palazzo Grimani in the *Frontiers Reimagined* exhibition.