



# Siting Jefferson: Contemporary Artists Interpret Thomas Jefferson's Legacy

*Jill Hartz*

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In the summer of 2000, the University of Virginia Art Museum mounted an unusual site-specific exhibition called "Hindsight/Fore-site: Art for the New Millennium," for which twenty-four artists created artworks inspired by Thomas Jefferson's legacy. Artists included Agnes Denes, Ann Hamilton, Martha Jackson-Jarvis, Michael Mercil, the Monacan Indian Council, Todd Murphy, Dennis Oppenheim, Lincoln Perry, and Lucio Pozzi; among the sites featured were Montpelier, Ash Lawn-Highland, the Monticello Visitors' Center, area parks and schools, and the University of Virginia. Charlottesville, longtime home of Jefferson and site of the university he founded, served as an ideal location for the exhibition.

New essays by the art historian and curator John Beardsley and the exhibition's curator, Lyn Bolen Rushton, explore the art-historical significance of the exhibition and the works' connection to Jefferson's life complemented by essays of noted Jefferson scholars, illuminating arenas of particular concern to the artists. The historian Peter S. Onuf writes on slavery and Sally Hemings, University of Virginia's president John T. Casteen III considers education and democracy, and the Monticello senior historian Lucia Stanton examines agrarian theory and practice.

The projects in "Hindsight/Fore-site" were conceptually ambitious and visually compelling, yet most were ephemeral, making the eighty illustrations and accompanying essays in *Siting Jefferson* a particularly valuable documentation of a remarkable and largely unreplicable exhibition.

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