

Liberty in the Library: Playwright, HSP Join Together

PHILADELPHIA, PA - The Historical Society of Pennsylvania will collaborate with playwright and artist Ain Gordon to explore the intersections of history and contemporary life. Titled *An Artist Embedded*, Gordon will take the traditional “artist in residence” to the next level by becoming part of HSP’s programs development team over the next two years. Major support for *An Artist Embedded* has been provided by The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, with additional support from HSP.

Using HSP’s collections as source material and inspiration, Gordon will develop a play driven by the thematic focus of “individual liberty versus national acceptance,” which will explore the historical relevance of these subjects to contemporary issues such as race relations, marriage equality, voter disenfranchisement, and immigration reform.

“My plays find their launch in the overlooked,” Gordon says, adding, “With this project my research process will have more informed guidance... and a continuous sense of collaboration with scholars, educators, curators, and librarians, which is exciting and daunting.”

Throughout the research/creation process, HSP and Gordon will also co-develop a series of public programs to engage audiences and incorporate their feedback into the act of historical interpretation. From the very beginning, the public will serve as an integral element of the project. Social media and other web technologies will share the project with the public during its development and actively seeking their input, in an innovative approach to public history. In spring 2016, the play will be directed by Gordon and performed at the Painted Bride Art Center.

For more information about Ain Gordon, HSP, or the PCAH Embedded Artist project, please contact Vincent Fraley, Communications Manager, at 215-732-6200 ext. 233.

About Ain Gordon

Ain Gordon is an American playwright, director and actor based in New York City. His work frequently deals with the interstices of history, focusing on people and events which are often overlooked or marginalized in "official" histories. His style combines elements of traditional playwrighting with aspects of performance art.

About the Historical Society of Pennsylvania

Founded in 1824, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania is one of the oldest historical societies and one of the largest family history libraries in the nation. Following a complete merger with the Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies in 2002, HSP is also a leading repository of immigrant and ethnic history. It is second only to the Library of Congress for material on the nation’s founding and is one of the country’s most comprehensive centers for genealogical study. With approximately 21 million records including manuscripts, graphics, and books that span over 350 years of history, HSP is an invaluable resource for historical research.

HSP serves thousands of on-site visitors each year. It also offers a research-by-mail service

and extensive online resources, including finding aids, digital collections, and curricular materials. HSP hosts educator workshops and public programs, and publishes a quarterly scholarly journal.

About the Pew Center for Arts & Heritage

The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage (the Center), established in 2005, is dedicated to stimulating a vibrant cultural community in the greater Philadelphia region. The Center makes project grants in two areas, Performance and Exhibitions & Public Interpretation, as well as awarding grants to individual artists through our Pew Fellowships.

The Center also makes Advancement grants, substantial awards to high-performing organizations seeking to make lasting improvements to their programming, audience engagement, and financial health. Each year, Center funding makes possible numerous performing arts events, as well as history and visual arts exhibitions and other public programs for audiences in Philadelphia and its surrounding counties. The Center is also a hub for research and knowledge-sharing on issues critical to cultural practice.
