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Jane Blocker

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Jane Blocker : Becoming Past: History in Contemporary Art before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Becoming Past: History in Contemporary Art:

Is there such a thing as contemporary art history? The contemporary, after all— as much as we may want to consider it otherwise— is being made history as it happens. By what means do we examine this moving target? These questions lie at the center of Jane Blocker's Becoming Past. The important point is not whether there

is—;or should be—;contemporary art history, Blocker argues, but how. Focusing on a significant aspect of current art practice—in which artists have engaged with historical subject matter, methods, and inquiry? Blocker asks how the creation of the artist implicates and interrogates that of the art historian. She moves from art history to theater, to performance, and to literature as she investigates a series of works, including performances by the collaborative group Goat Island, the film *Deadpan* by Steve McQueen, the philosophies of science fiction writer Samuel Delany and documentary filmmaker Ross McElwee, the film *Amos Fortune Road* by Matthew Buckingham, and sculptures by Dario Robleto. Many books have sought to understand the key directions of contemporary art. In contrast, *Becoming Past* is concerned with the application of art history in the pursuit of such trends. Setting the idea of temporality decisively in the realm of art, Blocker's work is crucial for artists, art historians, curators, critics, and scholars of performance and cultural studies interested in the role of history in the practice of art.

"A timely intervention into ongoing debates about temporal dimension of performance and art, *Becoming Past* is an engaged critical work that takes historiography as an innovative way of approaching contemporary art."—Branislav Jakovljevic, Stanford University
"*Becoming Past* is about contemporary art's engagement in a special kind of history making—one that unsettles the linearity of the historical narrative, as well as history's apparent mastery and neat conclusions over what it seeks to document. In this intelligent, deeply insightful and elegantly written book, Jane Blocker pushes this engagement even further by asking: What would it mean to take contemporary artistic practices seriously as history rather than simply as art?"—Christine Ross, author of *The Past Is the Present; It's the Future Too: The Temporal Turn in Contemporary Art*