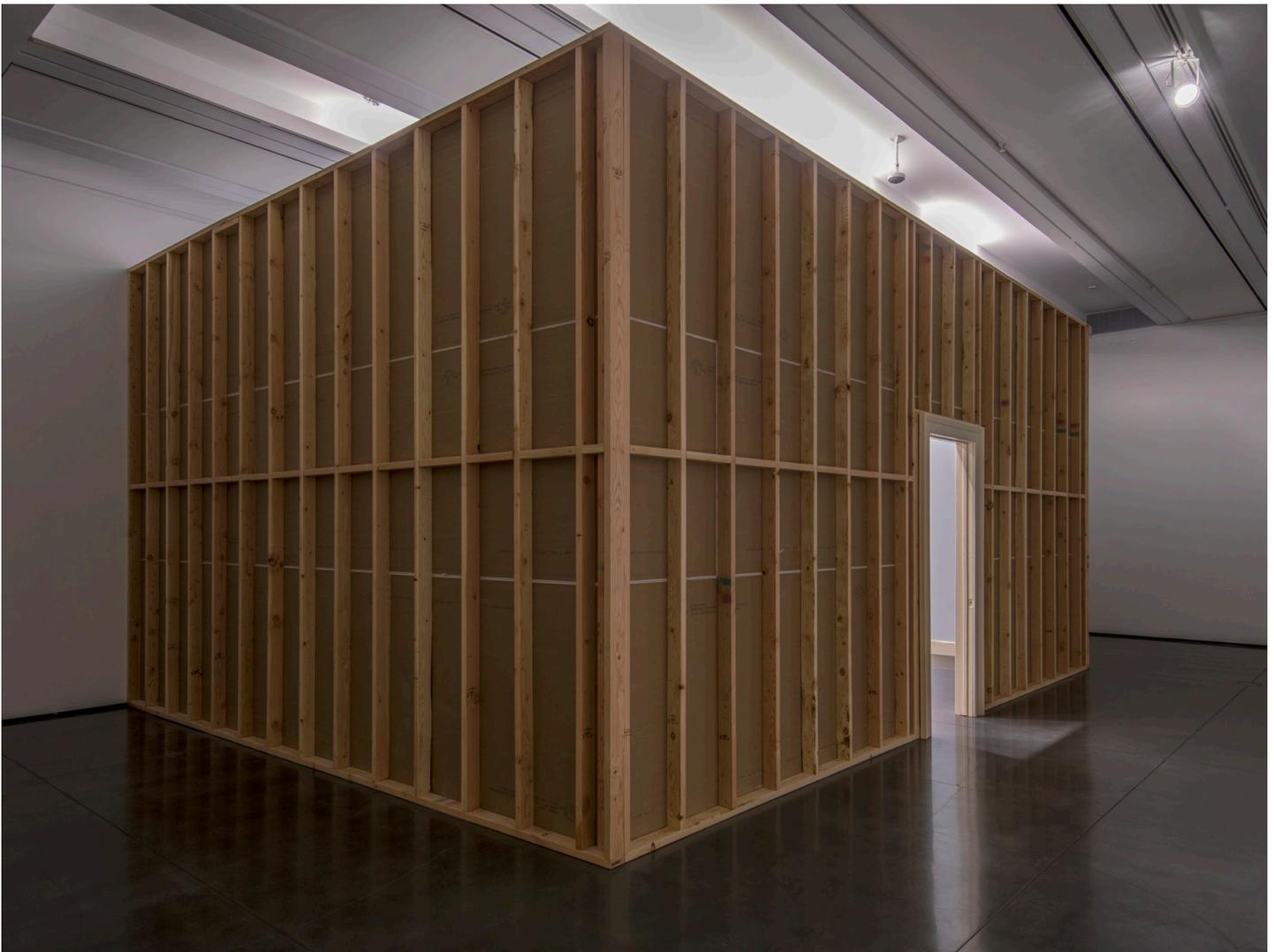


# Educator Notes

## An Untitled Installation Conceived by Robert Gober

December 15, 2017–May 13, 2018



## About the Artists & Artworks

Albert Bierstadt was born in New York, in 1830, and died in 1902. He was an American painter associated with the Hudson River School. The painting *Lake Tahoe, California* (1867) included in this exhibition is an example of this school's style. He studied at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf and his work is in the collections of: the Art Institute of Chicago; Brooklyn Museum, New York; Denver Art Museum, Colorado; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; and the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC.

Robert Gober was born in Wallingford, CT, in 1954, and lives and works in New York. In addition to curating the installation, he also contributed *Untitled Wooden Door and Door Frame* (1987–88). He studied at Middlebury College, Vermont, and Tyler School of Art, Rome. Recent exhibitions have taken place at: the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Met Breuer, New York, Dallas Museum of Art, Texas, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Pennsylvania (all 2016); Fondazione Prada, Milan, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (both 2015); and the Museum of Modern Art, New York (2014).

Richard Prince was born in the Panama Canal Zone in 1949, and lives and works in Upstate New York. His *Untitled (Joke)* (1988) is a rare example of using handwriting to share his biting sense of humor. Recent exhibitions have taken place at: Expo 2015, Modena, Italy (2015); Kunsthaus Bregenz, Austria, Brant Foundation Art Study Center, Greenwich, Museum Folkwang, Essen, Germany (all 2014); Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, Texas (2013); Museo Picasso Málaga, Spain, Hessel Museum, Annandale-on-Hudson (both 2012); and Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris (2011).

Meg Webster was born in San Francisco in 1944, and lives and works in New York. *Moss Bed, Queen* (1986–88) is a living bed of moss, in the dimensions of a queen-sized bed. She studied at Yale University, New Haven, and Old Dominion University, Norfolk. Recent exhibitions have taken place at: FRAC Bourgogne, Dijon, France (2016); Villa e Collezione Panza, Varese, Italy, Museum Tinguely, Basel, Switzerland (both 2015); Pulitzer Arts Foundation, St. Louis (2014); MoMA PS1, New York, and Dojima River Biennial, Osaka, Japan (both 2013).

## About the Exhibition

Three decades ago, *An Untitled Installation conceived by Robert Gober* (1988) was included in the exhibition *Utopia Post Utopia* at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston. Curated by then ICA Chief Curator, Elisabeth Sussman, the show addressed the relationship between nature and culture, as well as representation and interpretation. This is the first time all of the works have been reunited.

Together, these disparate works create a real and imagined space in which viewers can contemplate the enduring notion of utopia—now from the vantage point of the twenty-first century. Robert Gober's installation is an example of his curatorial practice, which is part of his larger creative practice that takes an interest in American folk vernacular and the connections and contradictions that make up our perception of reality. Viewed thirty years later, these works raise questions of the ideal, especially in nature, and its interaction with human culture.

## Questions for Discussion

- | How would you describe your vision of utopia?
- | Can utopia ever exist?
- | This grouping of artwork was originally shown together in 1988. What does bringing these artworks together again thirty years later reveal about utopia today?

## Suggested Activities

### In a Perfect World

Ask students to envision their own versions of utopia, and to create a list of objects and conditions that would exist there. Have students group into partners and share their lists with one another, noticing what is similar and what is different. Next, ask students to create a collaborative drawing that incorporates one element from each of their lists. Once groups have finished, share their collaborative drawing with the group. Look for common themes, and discuss how utopia changes from individual to group needs. Discuss what might happen if we were to live in a utopian society, and why we have not yet created such a place.

Following page: Installation view: *An Untitled Installation Conceived by Robert Gober*, 2017. Photo: Tony Prikryl

