

THE CLERMONT FOUNDATION

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Outdoor Sculpture Introduces Clermont Forum II April 12-May 31

What is the strange structure of hay bales and wood standing out on Rt. 7 at Clermont Farm at Berryville? Badly stored hay, a temporary cattle feeding station, or art? These and more have been suggested.

It turns out to be an introduction to a major up-coming interpretive event at 265-year old Clermont Farm, the “Clermont Forum II: Interpreting Clermont’s History Through Art”, at which a dozen contemporary artists will create site-specific pieces and performances interpreting the history of the site.



“Gateway”, Clermont Forum II, in process

The Forum II will run from April 12-May 31, 2014. It will be a way of seeing Clermont’s history in an alternative fashion to Forum I (June 25-26, 2011), in which nine Virginia historians presented academic research on seven defined topics about the site.

The monumental sculpture on Rt. 7 is still in the process of being created by two artists, Andrew Shenker and Michael Benevento. Shenker’s installations and films have been exhibited in the mid-Atlantic area, including at the historic Carroll Mansion in Baltimore. Benevento is an artist and curator who is co-director of Current Space, an artist-run gallery in Baltimore.

In the same manner that The Clermont Foundation had Dr. Warren Hofstra, Professor of History at Shenandoah University, organize the academic presentations at Forum I in 2011, Clermont Forum II is being organized and curated by professionals at The Rotating History Project. Founded in 2010 by Baltimore-based artists Teddy Johnson and Heather Rounds, the Rotating History Project utilizes a variety of artistic media as a means of drawing attention to those threads running through our history, culture and environment which remain relevant to our ever-evolving society today.

The sculpture is intended to suggest a gateway, a ruin from the past, possibly a portal through time, like Clermont itself. It was inspired in part by the ruins of Old Panama City, a witness to early times and other people, buttressed but still standing in the present and offering a reminder and a connection to the past.



Ruins of Entry in Old Panama City, buttressed

The “Gateway” sculpture is made of soft and impermanent materials (round hay bales and wood), echoing the transience of life and of all man’s structures. From Rt. 7, the opening in the sculpture is on a direct axis with the farm’s 18th century cemetery to the east of the Main House, possibly interring both owners and slaves. The sculpture will disappear with the end of the Clermont Forum II.

The Forum will be opened to the public on Saturday, April 12, at a time to be announced. There will be another public event and presentation in May, and a final one at the closing on May 31. The show will be available to the public at other scheduled intervals during the seven week run, to be announced.

The 360-acre Clermont Farm at Berryville, surveyed out from the Northern Neck Fairfax Proprietary in 1750 by an 18-year old George Washington, is listed on the National Register for its 18th and 19th century buildings (where the Forum art will be displayed) and for its agricultural history as a champion wheat-producing farm. It continues to be a working cattle and sheep farm.

Elizabeth Williams, local lawyer and judge, the last direct descendant of the family which had owned Clermont for 185 years, bequeathed the farm at her death in 2004, with permanent protective easements, to the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR) and the people of Virginia.

It is managed in partnership with VDHR by The Clermont Foundation, also established by Elizabeth Williams, as a research and training site in history, historic preservation, and agriculture. The Foundation has training relationships with universities in Virginia and Maryland, and a Community Agricultural Partnership with the Clarke County Public Schools and Clarke County Farm Bureau. The farm is open to teachers and students by appointment, and to the public for specific scheduled events.