

RIVER REVERE:

Jimmie Durham's Enigmatic Serpent
The Banks of the Ohio

Tuesday, April 18, 2017

3 – 5 PM

6275 Bunche Hall



Presented by Dr. Chadwick Allen,
Associate Vice Provost for Faculty Advancement and
Professor of English and American Indian Studies
at the University of Washington

During the 1992 Columbus Quincentenary, controversial Cherokee artist Jimmie Durham created a serpent-inspired installation titled *The Banks of the Ohio*, part of the *will/power* exhibit staged at the Wexner Center for the Arts in Columbus, Ohio. The body of Durham's serpent is assembled from green PVC pipes used in modern plumbing, while the serpent's head is fashioned from mud. Additional mud is smeared across the white walls of the gallery, creating swirling "tracks" of movement. Critics have read Durham's installation as a profane reference to the sacred Serpent Mound located in southwestern Ohio, asserting that Durham's use of sewage pipes offers a critical commentary on US settler colonialism's profane soiling of North American landscapes and histories. In this paper, Allen locates Durham's serpent more firmly in its multiple (sacred and profane) Indigenous and colonial contexts and considers not only the serpent's PVC body and the gallery's sullied walls, but also the series of drawings and collages Durham created to accompany the installation. These pieces include schematics of the Wexner Center and excerpts from provocative historical texts, and they were pinned to the gallery's walls to provide crucial context for interpretation. They help re-place and re-animate Durham's enigmatic serpent within multiple structures of agency and meaning.

Light refreshments will be provided.



UCLA is a tobacco-free campus. All-day parking (\$12) and short-term parking (payable at pay stations) are available in Lots 2, 3 and 4 (enter the campus at Hilgard and Westholme avenues). For more information, call 310-825-7315.