

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 06/16/2016

Art + Practice and the Hammer Museum Present *Alex Da Corte: A Season in He'll*

Alex Da Corte: A Season in He'll

Art + Practice

July 9 - September 17, 2016

Opening: July 9, 2016 4 - 6 pm



(Los Angeles, CA) - Art + Practice and the Hammer Museum are pleased to present a solo exhibition by Philadelphia-based interdisciplinary artist **Alex Da Corte** (b. 1980, Camden, NJ). *Alex Da Corte: A Season in He'll* will be on view July 9–September 17, 2016 at Art + Practice in Leimert Park. Organized by Hammer Museum assistant curator Jamillah James, the exhibition marks Da Corte's first solo exhibition in Los Angeles.

Da Corte is known for his Pop-informed sensibility and embrace of theatricality. In his elaborate set pieces, banal objects and consumer goods serve as both actors and props in a dreamy, yet simultaneously nightmarish, landscape. Da Corte's videos, sculptures, paintings, and installations ruminate on personal and cultural politics, alienation, and the complexities of the human experience. An active scavenger of high and low culture, his recent material explorations have involved creating immersive, fantastical environments that showcase the artist's maximal, surrealist impulses. For Art + Practice, Da Corte is producing an ambitious three-part, site specific installation and several new works, in addition to showing four recent videos, which have never been presented together in the United States.

A Season in He'll continues the artist's meditation on Arthur Rimbaud's "A Season in Hell" (1873), a long form poem that depicts the author's imagined descent into purgatory and his wrestling with alienation and emotional turmoil. Rimbaud wrote the text shortly after his tumultuous affair with fellow Symbolist poet Paul Verlaine ended. Replete with dense imagery and linguistic flourishes, yet scathing in its allegorical depiction of romance in decline, the text can be taken as a metaphor for embattled queer identity and the path to self actualization.

The exhibition includes a number of new works by Da Corte, inspired by a variety of sources, such as the Walt Disney films *Fantasia* (1940) and *Beauty and the Beast* (1991) and the films of Italian horror director Dario Argento in which fantasy, magic, and the supernatural play significant roles in existential battles of good versus evil. The evil in these films is often represented by witches, who employ tricks and spells to best the story's hero. Yet, these characters generally have a foil that is their mirror opposite, or double, in the service of good. The historical, literary, and cinematic depictions of witches fascinate Da Corte. He suggests that they are an inherently "queer" archetype representing human duality, alienation, misunderstanding, and societal pressures about impulse and decorum.

The centerpiece of the exhibition is Da Corte's 2012 trilogy of videos, named after chapters of Rimbaud's poem. *A Season in He'll*, *Bad Blood*, and *The Impossible* each feature an actor, who bears a striking resemblance to the artist himself, performing a series of ritualistic, mysterious, occasionally violent gestures with a tableau of props. Set against a bright monochromatic background, and distinctive soundtracks performed by LE1F with Big Freedia and Boys Noize and Nate Donmoyer. The videos become the space for Da Corte to trouble the performance of masculinity by testing the actor's physical limitations in adhering to increasingly dangerous and challenging direction. This dynamic culminates in the 2014 *A Night in Hell, Part II*, a hypnotic, slow motion video for which Da Corte hired a Hollywood stunt double to perform dressed as a mummy, falling from an unknown height while on fire.

A Season in He'll, in all its playfulness, also manifests a particular sense of unease. The reality that Da Corte constructs within his installations allows for a multiplicity of responses and interpretations. The artist eschews neat binaries in favor of other possibilities—an archival family photograph from a joyous occasion takes on a sinister feel out of context, the pattern of the exhibition's flooring forms a dizzying optical illusion that tests the surety of what lies underfoot, the speed of the videos on view defy an ordinary sense of time. The exhibition is a symbolic rebus that places seemingly disparate objects in relation to each other; scale, texture, sensation, and humor heighten the experience. Fusing together influences and images, Da Corte uses the space of his work to perform a form of visual alchemy that encapsulates his propensity for the absurd and uncanny.

Alex Da Corte: *A Season in He'll* is the last exhibition organized under Art + Practice and the Hammer's formal two-year partnership, generously supported by the James Irvine Foundation. Art + Practice, after two successful years of collaboration with the Hammer Museum, will begin organizing its exhibitions program independently in Fall 2016 at a new exhibition space located at 3401 W. 43rd Place, Los Angeles, CA 90008.

Opening reception: July 9, 2016, 4 - 6 p.m. at Art + Practice, 4339 Leimert Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90008. Street parking is available. Free admission.

ABOUT ALEX DA CORTE

Alex Da Corte was born in Camden, New Jersey, in 1980. He received a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Printmaking/Fine Arts from the University of the Arts, Philadelphia, and a Master of Fine Arts from the Yale University School of Art, New Haven. Da Corte's first museum survey, *Free Roses* opened in April 2016 at MASS MoCA, North Adams, and continues through early 2017. Recent

solo exhibitions include Giò Marconi, Milan (2015); a site-specific commission for Luxembourg & Dayan Gallery, New York (2015); the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia (2014, together with Jayson Musson); Carl Kostyál, Stockholm (2014); White Cube, London (2014); David Risley Gallery, Copenhagen (2014); the Institute of Contemporary Art, Maine College of Art, Portland (2013); Oko, New York (2013, together with Borna Sammak); and the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia (2012). Da Corte's work has been included in numerous group exhibitions in venues that include the Museum of Modern Art, New York; MoMA PS1, New York; the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum, Lincoln, MA; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Musée des beaux-arts Montréal; Contemporary Art Museum, St. Louis; Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York; Team Gallery, New York; and Yvon Lambert, New York. In 2012, Da Corte was awarded a Pew Fellowship in the Arts from the Pew Center for Arts & Heritage. He lives and works in Philadelphia.

CREDIT

Alex Da Corte: A Season in He'll is organized by Hammer Museum assistant curator Jamillah James.

The Hammer Museum at Art + Practice is a Public Engagement Partnership supported by The James Irvine Foundation.

Special thanks to Maccarone, New York/Los Angeles.

ABOUT ART + PRACTICE

Conceived and founded by artist Mark Bradford, philanthropist and collector Eileen Harris Norton and social activist Allan DiCastro, Art + Practice (A+P) is an arts and education private operating foundation based in Leimert Park, Los Angeles. A+P's mandate is to create a developmental platform that, on one hand, supports the acquisition of practical skills for foster youth, and, on the other, stresses the importance of creative activity within a larger social context.

A+P INFORMATION

Admission to all exhibitions and public programs are free and available to the public.

To learn more visit www.artandpractice.org.

Hours: Tuesday-Saturday 12 PM - 6 PM. A+P is located at 4339 Leimert Boulevard Los Angeles, CA 90008. Street parking is available.

ABOUT THE HAMMER MUSEUM

The Hammer Museum at UCLA offers collections, exhibitions, and programs that span the classic to the contemporary in art, architecture, and design. The Hammer's international exhibition program focuses on wide-ranging thematic and monographic exhibitions, highlighting contemporary art since the 1960s and the work of emerging artists through Hammer Projects and the Hammer's biennial, Made in L.A. As a cultural center, the Hammer Museum offers nearly 300 free public programs a year, including lectures, readings, symposia, film screenings, and music performances at the Billy Wilder Theater which also houses the UCLA Film & Television Archive. The Hammer is home of the Armand Hammer Collection of American and European paintings, as well as the Armand Hammer Daumier and Contemporaries Collection and the

Hammer Contemporary Collection. The Hammer Contemporary Collection focuses on art of all media since 1960 with an emphasis on works of the last ten years, works on paper, and art made in Los Angeles. The museum also houses the Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts—comprising more than 45,000 prints, drawings, photographs, and artists' books from the Renaissance to the present—and oversees the Franklin D. Murphy Sculpture Garden at UCLA. Free admission to the Hammer Museum is made possible through the generosity of benefactors Erika J. Glazer and Brenda R. Potter.

HAMMER MUSEUM INFORMATION

Admission to all exhibitions and programs at the Hammer Museum is free and open to the public. Visit www.hammer.ucla.edu for current exhibition and program information and call (310) 443-7041 for tours.

Hours: Tuesday–Friday 11 AM – 8 PM., Saturday & Sunday 11 AM – 5 PM Closed Mondays and national holidays. The Hammer is located at 10899 Wilshire Boulevard in Westwood, Los Angeles. Parking is available onsite for \$3 (maximum 3 hours) or for a \$3 flat rate after 6 PM

PRESS CONTACTS

Natalie Hon
natalie@artandpractice.org
+1.323.337.6887

Nancy Lee
nlee@hammer.ucla.edu
+1.310.443.7016

ART + PRACTICE

4339 Leimert Blvd
Los Angeles CA 90008
+1.323.337.6887

Tuesday to Saturday, 12 - 6pm
artandpractice.org

PHOTO CREDITS

Alex Da Corte, *A Night in He'll, Part II* (video still), 2014. Standard digital video, TRT 10:16. Courtesy of the artist.

Alex Da Corte, *The Impossible* (video still), 2012. Standard digital video, TRT 11:01. Courtesy of the artist.

Alex Da Corte: *Free Roses*, installation view, Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCA), March 26, 2016–January 2017. Image courtesy of the artist.