

MIT List Visual Arts Center

For Immediate Release:

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MIT List Visual Arts Center

presents

Villa Design Group: Tragedy Machine
May 20–July 17, 2016

Opening Reception: May 19, 2016, 6–8 PM

May 2, 2016–Cambridge, MA Villa Design Group creates sculptures, videos, and scripted performances inspired by the formal languages of architecture, theater, and the decorative arts. The London-based collective—comprised of Than Hussein Clark, James Connick, and William Joys—seeks to create a “theater of design” inhabited by “queer objects.” These objects are embedded in speculative narratives that ask what it might mean for a thing, not a person, to be queer today.

Tragedy Machine, Villa Design Group’s new body of work realized for the List Visual Arts Center, comprises sculptures and a four-act theatrical production imagining the potential of an automated machine or software with the ability to compose tragic and dramatic scripts. The exhibition is centered around three large-scale architectural installations that consider this potential and also reflect the group’s interest in theatrical structures and staging. *Miriam Ruth as Architect (Exterior Façade: Deltress Holding)* (2016) is a 25-foot wall with drawings of nineteenth-century actresses. *Theater or Cruelty (Cometh, Cometh, Cometh)* (2016) presents a modular stage that is, in part, imagined to be the workers’ cantina at a fictional factory that produces the tragedy machine. On the opposite side of the gallery, the hand-painted screen *Bait and Glitch (Cancancancancancan Smash)* (2016) features a scene from Roland Emmerich’s 2015 film *Stonewall*, in which a white male protagonist replaces the historical Marsha P. Johnson in throwing the first brick of the eponymous 1969 riots.

Two sculptural costumes of tubular metal and millinery felt, *Invalid Suit (The Danish Girl Ascending)* (2016) and *Invalid Suit (The Savage Theory of Grace)* (2016), flank either side of the stage. Video screens displaying selections from British actor Eddie



Redmayne's films are integrated into these structures, turning them into a kind of tragedy machine. The installation's capstone is *For all Mediocre Students the Olive Tree Bears the Fruits of Competition* (2016), a chandelier of steel and blown glass which hangs from the ceiling above the stage.

The exhibition also serves as the premiere of *This Is It or Dawn at Bar Bazuhka* (2016), the group's most recent theatrical production, an adaptation of Eugene O'Neill's play *The Iceman Cometh* (1939), by transposing the story from New York's Greenwich Village to a gay nightclub on the Greek Island of Skiathos.

ABOUT VILLA DESIGN GROUP

Villa Design Group is Than Hussein Clark, James Connick, and William Joys, who met at Goldsmiths, University of London in 2011. Recent and upcoming performances and exhibitions include Edinburgh Art Festival; Blue Moon at Mathew Gallery, Berlin; KUB Arena; Kunsthaus Bregenz; Bundeskunsthalle Bonn; Mathew Gallery, New York; and mumok, Vienna.

Villa Design Group: Tragedy Machine is curated by Alise Upitis, Assistant Curator, Public Art and Exhibitions, MIT List Visual Arts Center.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Public Reception

Thursday, May 19, 6-8 PM

Performance

This Is It or Dawn at Bar Bazuhka (2016)

Saturday, May 21, 4-8 PM

Premiere performance of the group's most recent theatrical production, featuring Laura Schuller, Ruth Connick, Josef Mohadmed, Valerie Mccann, Markus Bernhard, Mo Faraji, Catherine Luedtke, and Luis Odrizola. Advanced registration is required for this performance and tickets are limited. For more information and to register visit: listart.mit.edu/events-programs

SUPPORT

Exhibitions at the List Center are made possible with the support of Cynthia & John Reed and Rick & Terry Stone.



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About the MIT List Visual Arts Center

Located in Cambridge, Massachusetts, the List Visual Arts Center is a creative laboratory that provides artists with a space to freely experiment and push existing boundaries. As the contemporary art museum at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), the List presents a dynamic program of six to nine special exhibitions in its galleries annually, a program of exhibitions by emerging artists known as the List Projects, as well as a broad range of educational programs, events, and publications. The List also maintains and adds to MIT's permanent art collection; commissions new works through the MIT Percent-for-Art program, a collection of more than 50 site-specific artworks throughout the campus; and oversees the Student Loan Art Program, which lends more than 600 works of art annually to MIT undergraduate and graduate students.

Originally named the Hayden Gallery, MIT established this center for the visual arts in 1950 to provide a dedicated structure upon which to build the Institute's existing relationship to the arts. It was renamed the List Visual Arts Center in 1985 in recognition of a gift from Vera and Albert List, and relocated to its current expanded location in the Wiesner Building on the campus of MIT, which was designed by MIT alumnus I.M. Pei (B.S. Architecture, 1940) and Partners Architects. In 2015 the List Visual Arts Center celebrated 30 years as MIT's contemporary art museum.

Open hours are Tues-Wed: 12-6 PM; Thurs: 12-8 PM; Fri-Sun: 12-6 PM
Closed Mondays and major holidays

Admission to the galleries is free.

For more information: listart.mit.edu

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