

Press Release

Hauser & Wirth presents two exhibitions by Paul McCarthy this July

An online exhibition of new works by the celebrated artist coincides with a presentation of historical works in Gstaad

14 July 2020 Online Exhibition: Paul McCarthy. 'A&E Drawing Session, Santa Anita' hauserwirth.com

18 July – 15 August 2020 Paul McCarthy. 'Alpine Stories and other Dystopias' Tarmak 22, Gstaad

This month, Hauser & Wirth is pleased to debut two simultaneous exhibitions with celebrated American artist Paul McCarthy that are united by the artist's focus upon intractable myths, fantasies, and delusions coursing through contemporary society and consumer culture. On view 14 July, the online exhibition 'A&E Drawing Session, Santa Anita' unveils a new series of twelve large scale drawings from McCarthy's latest multidisciplinary project 'A&E' (2019 -). On 18 July, the exhibition 'Alpine Stories and other Dystopias' will open at Tarmak 22, an exhibition space in Gstaad where visitors will find a selection of the artist's drawings, photographs, sculptures, and video work from his acclaimed series Heidi, White Snow, Caribbean Pirates, and PROPO.



About the online exhibition

Created during a series of freely improvised performances between Paul McCarthy and the German actress Lilith Stangenberg, 'A&E Drawing Session, Santa Anita' comprises a group of twelve important new works on paper in which themes of violence and power coalesce. In keeping with McCarthy's multidisciplinary oeuvre, the drawings have evolved out of the artist's current film project 'NV Night Vader' (2019 -), based on Liliana Cavani's sadomasochistic erotic drama 'The Night Porter' (1974). This epic film project features a deranged cast of characters, including McCarthy as 'Max', a mafioso-like Hollywood executive, and Stangenberg in the role of Lucia, the central character of the 1974 movie, who here plays a young German Actress.

Forming the narrative basis for these new drawings, 'NV Night Vader' is a sharp critique of violence and exploitation, offering a powerful commentary on fascism, Hollywood, the contemporary art world, and the current

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political climate. The title acronym 'A&E' – which refers to Adolf Hitler and Eva Braun, Adam and Eve, and Arts & Entertainment – signals that this work carries the layered and multivalent force for which McCarthy is known. 'A&E' finds the artist and the actress transformed into Hitler and Braun, with the former embodying predatory toxic masculinity and buffoonery, while Eva is at once lover, mother, daughter, and victim.

McCarthy once said, 'Drawing has always been a part of forming the so-called script, and these scripts can take different forms.' In the works on view in Hauser & Wirth's online exhibition, crude, expressionistic marks made during unrehearsed performative sessions have been captured on paper, conveying the motion and energy of a deeply consuming improvised event. The works exemplify McCarthy's practice of drawing while in character, an approach that has become central to his large-scale video performance projects, including 'WS White Snow' (2012–13) and 'CSSC Coach Stage Stage Coach' (2017). As McCarthy has said, '... it's always been about the process of improvisation, the creation of the unexpected action and dialogue.'

Supporting COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund for the World Health Organization

Hauser & Wirth will donate 10% of the proceeds of the sale of works from this exhibition to the COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund for the World Health Organization as part of the gallery's ongoing #artforbetter initiative.

To learn more about the COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund for WHO please visit: covid19responsefund.org



About the exhibition at Tarmak 22, Gstaad

Artist Paul McCarthy is perhaps most closely associated with his hometown of Los Angeles, a place whose Hollywood's illusions have fed his prodigious five-decade practice. But McCarthy is also something of an honorary citizen of Switzerland, an enthusiast of all things Swiss who can trace unlikely connections between the sublime landscape and stories of the alpine nation, and the magical kingdom of LA's Disneyland. 'I was really into the Matterhorn at Disneyland because I was also into the real Matterhorn and mountains and climbing,' he has said. 'The whole alpine aesthetic – chalets, cuckoo clocks, knotty pine, boots, parkas and all that. Making a piece that references Disneyland directly didn't happen until I moved to LA. My interest in Disneyland spins out of my interest in Hollywood.'

Beginning 18 July, Hauser & Wirth will present 'Alpine Stories and other Dystopias' at Tarmak 22 in Gstaad, bringing together a selection of works by McCarthy that span two decades and various mediums to reveal the provocative ways in which both worlds – the storied Swiss Alps and the ersatz magic of Hollywood's Disney fantasies – overlap, intertwine, and refract in startlingly powerful ways. Themes of innocence and utopia, and their inverses of depravity and dystopia, course through the drawings, photographs, sculptures, and video work on view. These have been selected from the artist's celebrated large-scale projects and series Heidi, White Snow, and Caribbean Pirates, as well as his PROPO photographs.

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McCarthy looks beneath the endearing façades of classic Disney productions and the sanitized versions of European fables, to excavate the untamed urges and pathologies of their real world parallels. Deploying humor and irony in such series as *White Snow* and *Caribbean Pirates*, he fleshes out familiar characters as avatars of the libidinousness, violence, conflict, and chaos of human society. The walnut sculpture 'WS, White Snow Dopey Dopey Head, Five Feet' (2014), for example, conjures perverse visions of Snow White's relationship with the dwarf Dopey from Disney's beloved 1937 animated classic film 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs'. This sculpture is among five White Snow works in the exhibition that take the famous fairytale as a springboard for exploring the Oedipal complexities of family, the institutionalization of history, and the urges of pop culture consumption. Among these works is the large scale sculpture 'White Snow Head' (2012), a flesh-colored silicone rendering of the princess with the aspect of a toppled idol from antiquity. Taking on another beloved icon, McCarthy's 'Santa (with Butt Plug) Bronze' (2004) embraces debauchery and desire as part of the territory where our fundamental impulses collide with our most cherished myths and hypocritical societal norms.

These works acquire additional layers of meaning in the setting of Tarmak 22, with its monumental windows offering views of the Alpine landscape outside, and in juxtaposition with key works from McCarthy's Heidi series. The artist has stated that 'the purity of Alpine culture is not pure.' He explored this notion in his landmark 1992 video work 'Heidi', made with fellow artist Mike Kelley. The opus, on view here, was inspired by the eponymous 1881 children's book by Swiss author Johanna Spyri, a story not coincidentally made into a Disney television spectacular in 1993. 'Heidi File' (2000), a collection of photographs taken from found images, finds McCarthy returning to the iconic Swiss character as subject matter. Using material drawn from posters, maps, magazines, and other ephemera, he explores the many possible incarnations of the innocent mountain girl. By displaying the different representations of the heroine and her Alpine environment, McCarthy juxtaposes the banality of advertisements and found objects, with their insidious manipulation of 'innocence', to awaken viewers to the darker dystopian truths of mass consumer culture.

About the artist

McCarthy is considered one of the most influential and groundbreaking contemporary American artists. Born in 1945, and raised in Salt Lake City, Utah, he initially established a multi-faceted artistic practice, which sought to break the limitations of painting by using unorthodox materials such as bodily fluids and food. He has since become known for visceral, often hauntingly humorous work in a variety of mediums – from performance, photography, film and video, to sculpture, drawing and painting. Playing on popular illusions and cultural myths, fantasy and reality often collide in a delirious yet poignant exploration of the subconscious in works that challenge the viewer's expectations.

McCarthy's works on paper were recently the subject of a major survey entitled 'Head Space: Drawings 1963-2019' at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, and he has an upcoming exhibition planned at Musée d'Orsay in Paris in 2021.

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Paul McCarthy

A&E, EVA, Santa Anita session

2020

Charcoal and pastel on paper

121.9 x 91.4 cm / 48 x 36 in

Photo: Damon McCarthy

Paul McCarthy

A&E, DEAD EVA, Santa Anita session

2020

Pencil on paper

121.9 x 91.4 cm / 48 x 36 in

Photo: Damon McCarthy

Paul McCarthy

White Snow Head

2012

Silicone (flesh), fibreglass, steel

Unique in a series of 5

140 x 160 x 185 cm / 55 1/8 x 63 x 72 7/8 in

Photo: Genevieve Hanson

Paul McCarthy

White Snow Dwarf (Sleepy)

2010

Brown silicone

173.4 x 157.5 x 156.2 cm / 68 1/4 x 62 x 61 1/2 in

Photo: Fredrik Nilsen

Paul McCarthy

HEIDI FILE

Interlaken, Grindelwald, Eiger, Jungfrau 2000

Cibachrome on cintra

122 x 178 cm / 48 x 70 1/8 in