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Nathan Carter: *The DRAMASTICS & The Fascinators*  
June 23 – July 29, 2017

Opening Reception: Friday, June 23, 6-8PM  
Film Screening of *The DRAMASTICS Are Loud* at 7:30PM  
Thursday, July 27, 6:30PM film screening and punk show

Casey Kaplan is pleased to announce Nathan Carter: *The DRAMASTICS & The Fascinators*.

In a fantastical cornucopia of color, form and gesture, Nathan Carter (b. 1970, Dallas, TX) presents an alternate realm that combines the story of a fictional punk rock band with his own studio productions and activities. Together with the introduction of figuration, the artist presents his first film titled "The DRAMASTICS Are Loud", debuted at the MCA Denver in the fall of 2016. The video chronicles the adventures of The DRAMASTICS, a punk band made out of paper and wire cutout figures set in dioramas. For his sixth solo show with the gallery, Carter merges the dioramic environs created for the film with wall-based aluminum geometric relief abstractions in the form of Fascinators and an amalgam of textiles, collages, works on paper, and a full-size sound stage.

In his own words the artist explains:

In the spring of 2014, a surprise first-time occurrence unfolded in my studio: I made a series of drawings depicting human figures. The characters looked like pirates in theatrical scenes. They were wearing long dresses and capes and they had very long wavy hair and carried weapons. I put myself in the drawings; I wore a blue mini dress with red lining, light blue thigh-high tights, and red Pope shoes. I had a handlebar mustache and carried a torch.

I wanted to activate these figures by giving them a story, so I decided to write and direct a video about a punk rock band who call themselves The DRAMASTICS. The story begins on the roof of the Booker T. Washington High School in Dallas, Texas, where lead vocalist Molly Blowout and her electric guitar-playing friend Crimson Ivy make big plans to start a band, write songs, make posters and costumes, and go on a world tour along with Melancholly (their terminally anxious bass player) and Calamity (a seven-foot tall, foul-mouthed street tough drummer from Detroit Rock City).

I made sure to listen to voices closer to the ages of the women in the band. I tried to pick up their coded language and made careful notes when I heard someone say something exciting. I spent days walking around the city, listening to music, and occasionally stopping to write down all of the stories and humorous vignettes I could remember about my own experiences trying to make music in a high school band. With the help of a close friend who is an actor and a playwright, my notes on language and anecdotes began to take the form of a script.

I developed the four band members by constructing ten-inch tall, hand-made figures out of paper, glue, aluminum wire, and paint. I gave each band member a distinct look and personality. Next, I made dioramas using found plywood, plastic, and painted paper background scenes for the characters to inhabit. The dioramas look like places a touring band might visit: a steamy, malodorous rehearsal space, an intimidating recording studio, and various exotic locations to perform live music including the Saigon City Roller Discotek, a High Desert generator party and a full-scale model of Paris, France for the film's final scene.

The DRAMASTICS rival band, the Creamin' Demons, drive around in a white Ford Econoline creeper van. But the DRAMASTICS hurtle through turbulent outer space onboard a precariously refurbished flying machine. The activity of world-building felt like inventing and playing with punk dolls in their punk dollhouse. The entire process, of improvising and building and recording and filming, was like making a DIY basement recording. All of it looked and sounded immediate, fast, loose, and loud. Meticulous craft took a backseat to enthusiasm.

As the production came together, my studio started to fill up with a different, but related group of new objects I call *Always Good Looks*. These include: life-size paper party dress collages, hand-painted skirts, giant flowing crepe de Chine silk scarves dyed with soft watery wandering colorful forms, squad jackets, piñatas, paper hands with long painted fingernails and brazed brass finger rings, hats, capes, sunshades and most importantly, the Fascinators – enlarged versions of festive headwear, part-hat, part-collage,

part-sculpture. The Fascinators are meant to be eye catching, full-color, signal-beacons, flamboyant dancers trying to capture the attention of the types of people who charge me up. I made all the apparel, rings, scarves, paper sunshades and Fascinators with the idea that they are gifts for myself and for my friends.

By the winter of 2016, the accumulation of sculptures, drawings, sets, lights, party dresses, scarves and Fascinators made it physically hard to move around my studio. I was writing and recording the music in one corner and recording the characters' voices in another. A small group of friends became the film crew. They operated the figures in the dioramas while I moved the camera around. In an unspoken exchange my studio became their dance hall fueled by a steady supply of fresh guacamole, quesadillas, handles of Titos, Parliaments, weed and 50,000 watts of sound system bangers and anthems. It was like a gang of rabid peacocks invaded my studio and started a weekly party leaving their colorful feathers behind and cigarette burns everywhere. The feathers were eventually repurposed for part of the final scene in Paris.

There is a part of me in each DRAMASTICS band member. They are like my alter egos, and I invented the DRAMASTICS because for as long as I can remember, I've wanted to be in a band with amped-up, angry, dirty, cursing punk rockers made up with bat-wing eyeliner.

*Nathan Carter (B. 1970, Dallas, TX) received his BFA from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston in 1995 and MFA from Yale University School of Art, New Haven in 1999. Carter has exhibited internationally, at institutions such as the MCA Denver, CO (solo) (2016); the Bristol Museum & Art Gallery, Bristol, UK (2016); Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, Middlesbrough, UK (2015); Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow, UK (2014); Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO (2013); Blaffer Art Museum, University of Houston, TX (solo) (2012); Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL (2012); Bass Museum of Art, Miami Beach, FL (2011); Museo de Arte Raul Anguiano, Guadalajara, Mexico (solo) (2010); Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas, TX (2010); and ArtPace, San Antonio, TX (solo) (2008). The artist's work is included in the public collections of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL; Art Gallery of Toronto, Ontario; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY; Miami Art Museum, FL; Tate Modern, London; DA2 Centre of Contemporary Art, Salamanca; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid; and CU Art Museum, Boulder, CO. In September, Carter is participating in "Sonic Rebellion: Music as Resistance," a group exhibition curated by Jens Hoffmann and Carleton Goltz at the MCA Detroit, in collaboration with the Detroit Institute of Art and the Detroit Sound Conservancy. He lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.*