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Contemporary Art
Museum St. Louis

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CAM presents major survey of artist Paul Chan's work with *Breathers*, on view March 8–August 11, 2024



Paul Chan, *2chained or Genesisia and Nemesia*, 2019. Nylon, fan, screenprint, tarp, synthetic woven fabric, 87 x 113 x 82 inches. © Paul Chan. Courtesy the artist and Greene Naftali, New York. Photo: Zeshan Ahmed.

November 16, 2023 (St. Louis, MO)—The Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis (CAM) announces a major exhibition of new and recent works by the New York-based artist, writer, publisher, and activist Paul Chan. Chan, who was recently awarded the prestigious 2022 MacArthur Fellowship, came to prominence in the early 2000s with vibrant moving image works that touched upon aspects of war, religion, pleasure, and politics. Around 2009, following a decade of artmaking, Chan embarked on a self-imposed break, turning his attention to experimental publishing and the economics of information by founding the press Badlands Unlimited. This museum-wide exhibition, organized by Pavel Pyš for the Walker Art Center, traces the artist's return to artmaking. ***Paul Chan: Breathers will be on view at CAM from March 8–August 11, 2024.***

Taking the notion of a “breather” as its organizing principle, this exhibition surveys Chan's activities since his voluntary break from the art world in the late 2000s. The exhibition brings together multiple bodies of work, centering on a new series of kinetic sculptures titled *Breathers*. These fan-powered billowing fabric bodies, which move in free-form

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choreographies in the gallery are described by Chan as “animated by breath.” The title of these works—and the exhibition more broadly—offers an opportunity to reflect on the ripple effects of the pandemic and the pervasive sense of burnout in contemporary society. Language, design, and networks of circulation are examined through the radical publications produced by the artist’s press, Badlands Unlimited, which offered paperbacks, e-books, zines, GIFs, and even books on stone tablets in genres such as erotic fiction, artists’ writings, and poetry.

“We are thrilled to present the first major US-based exhibition of Paul Chan’s work in 15 years,” says Executive Director Lisa Melandri. “Paul is an artist who is deeply unafraid to push his work in entirely new directions in the pursuit of expressing humanity’s complexities and contradictions. As a space that encourages artists to experiment and expand their creative practices, we are excited to bring one of contemporary art’s most exciting innovators to CAM.”

Much of Chan’s practice has engaged with current political and social issues. As part of CAM’s presentation, *Breathers* offers opportunities for local audiences to directly participate in political processes. Expanding upon CAM’s voter registration initiative begun in 2020, one aspect of exhibition programming focuses on registering 18-year-olds and other first-time voters in the St. Louis region. As part of an incentive conceived of by Chan, voters who register at CAM will be offered a free print made by the artist.

“Paul actively strives to bring visibility to the injustices and fractures in our political system,” said Associate Curator Misa Jeffereis. “To bring his exhibition to the city of St. Louis during a presidential election year offers vital opportunities for civic engagement at a time when it is needed the most.”

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalog created in collaboration with the artist, designed and published by the Walker Art Center. Visit camstl.org for exhibition and program updates.

Paul Chan: Breathers is organized by the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis and curated by Pavel Pyš, Curator of Visual Arts and Collections Strategy; with Matthew Villar Miranda, Curatorial Associate, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, and former Curatorial Fellow, Visual Arts. The Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis exhibition is organized by Misa Jeffereis, Associate Curator.

Paul Chan: Breathers is made possible by Teiger Foundation. This exhibition is generously supported in part by Emily Rauh Pulitzer and the Whitaker Foundation.

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Paul Chan (b. 1973, Hong Kong; lives and works in New York) was recently named a 2022 MacArthur Fellow by the MacArthur Foundation. He was the 2014 recipient of the Hugo Boss Prize, which coincided with his solo exhibition *Nonprojections for New Lovers* at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2015). In 2019, Chan was one of six artists to co-curate the group exhibition *Artistic License: Six Takes on the Guggenheim Collection*. Solo exhibitions include *Odysseus and the Bathers*, Museum of Cycladic Art, Athens (2018); *Bathers at Night*, Remai Modern, Saskatoon (2018); *Rhi Anima*, Greene Naftali, New York (2017); *Pillowsophia*, Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia (2017); *Hippias Minor*, Deste Foundation Project Space, *Slaughterhouse*, Hydra (2015); *Selected Works*,

Schaulager, Basel (2014); *My laws are my whores*, The Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago, Chicago (2009); *The 7 Lights*, New Museum, New York (2008); and *The 7 Lights*, Serpentine Gallery, London (2007). Chan's work is in the collections of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; Art Institute of Chicago; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, among others.
Image: Paul Chan. Courtesy the artist. Photo: Eric Boman.

About the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis

The Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis creates meaningful engagement with the most relevant and innovative art being made today. Founded by civic and cultural leaders in 1980, the Museum transformed from a small gallery into an internationally recognized arts institution, now permanently housed in a flexible, open, and inviting building designed by renowned American architect Brad Cloepfil. CAM's distinct architecture reflects the organization's values and supports a dynamic range of exhibitions, public programs, educational initiatives, and community collaborations. The only museum in the region solely dedicated to contemporary art, CAM is one of the preeminent non-collecting institutions of its kind in the United States. We are a site for discovery, a welcoming space, free and open to all. For more information, visit camstl.org.

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