

21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa

PRESS RELEASE

2023.4.18



Alex Da Corte Fresh Hell

2023.4.29 (Sat/holiday) -
9.18 (Mon/holiday)

Exhibition Title	Alex Da Corte Fresh Hell
Period	Saturday/holiday, April 29 – Monday/holiday, September 18, 2023
Hours	10:00-18:00 (until 20:00 on Fridays and Saturdays) *Ticket sales end 30 minutes before closing
Venue	21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, Gallery 7 to 12 and 14
Closed	Mondays (except July 17 and September 18), May 14 and July 18
Number of exhibits	12
Admission	Adults: ¥1,200 (¥1,000) / Students: ¥800 (¥600) / 18 and under: ¥400 (¥300) / 65 and over: ¥1,000 *Fees in parentheses are for groups of 20 or more and web tickets *Tickets for this exhibition include admission (same day only) to "Collection Exhibition 1 It knows : When Forms Become Mind (April 29 – September 18)
Timed-entry tickets	Web tickets for specific days/times are available on museum website (https://www.kanazawa21.jp)
Organized by	21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa (Kanazawa Art Promotion and Development Foundation)
Supported by	U.S. Consulate General Osaka-Kobe, THE HOKKOKU SHIMBUN
In Corporation with	Tama Art University (Information Design, Art and Media Course), Kawasaki City Museum, Hyatt Centric Kanazawa, MODERNIS & COMPANY, Inc.
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About the Exhibition

Today, life's every nook and cranny is saturated with visually appealing images. Creators and inventors are constantly thinking about what kinds of images operate on the human psyche and how to visualize the things that normally go unseen: emotions, time, and space. Alex Da Corte is an artist known for works that play with objects and icons that feel familiar to him, deconstructing and reconstructing their original meanings. He draws inspiration from a variety of sources, including popular and consumer culture, art history and design, sampling the visual culture of America through a variety of media including video, sculpture, painting, and installation. In all of his methods, Da Corte's attention to vivid color and form is evident, and familiar motifs become dense, graceful assemblages thanks to his extensive knowledge of art history and his subtle and distinctive sensibility. While these works have an allure that draws people in, they also appeal to inexpressible human emotions such as loneliness and anxiety, making people dance in a strange, delusional world outside of the realm of rational organization. This is the first exhibition for Alex Da Corte at an art museum in Asia, and will feature a total of 11 video installations and other works, including recent and never-before-seen pieces. The varied images projected on an overwhelmingly large box-shaped screen frequently appear light, coquettish, and funny, but they also possess a consistently mysterious appeal that plays havoc with one's mind the more deeply one engages with them. "Fresh Hell" also ventures into the relationship between desire, memory, and perception that has come to define consumer culture in a contemporary society faced with an onslaught of visual information, confronting us with the question of what this inundation of images brings about.

Chief Curator, KUROSAWA Hiromi



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Alex Da Corte, *Rubber Pencil Devil*, 2019
© Alex Da Corte studio

Exhibition Features

First solo exhibition of Alex Da Corte at an art museum in Asia

Alex Da Corte is an American artist born in 1980 in New Jersey. He is perhaps best known for his work in which he portrays himself as a popular or historical character from the world of art and popular entertainment, asking us to question the nature of the image as conveyed through the media. Da Corte participated in the Venice Biennale in 2019 and was selected for the annual commission for the Metropolitan Museum of Art Rooftop Garden in New York City in 2021. In 2022, he had a retrospective solo exhibition at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Denmark, and his reputation has been growing internationally in recent years. This is Da Corte's first solo exhibition to be introduced at a museum in Asia.

What are these “images” conveyed through the media? The coexistence of the pop culture of American consumer society with the gloom of reality. 11 large video installations will be exhibited.

Da Corte’s video works, with their uniquely American pop colors and images of familiar characters from television and comic books, appear joyful at first glance, but as you watch them, you begin to feel the anxiety, solitude, and loneliness of human beings in the real world. He also delves into the relationship between human desire, memory, and perception in consumer culture, asking us where this flood of images comes from, and what they bring about. Most of the 11 works, including recent pieces, will be exhibited as installations housed in a box that resembles a large television set. The video production is also a highlight in terms of how Da Corte himself plays most of the characters in the art set, including costumes made with a high degree of craftsmanship.

A must for art fans: Video works inspired by art history and its figures.

This exhibition will feature a video work in which Da Corte, portraying Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968), appears in a setting that mimics the Constantin Brancusi (1876-1957) gallery at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. In this omnibus video, Da Corte also plays Rose Sélavy, Duchamp’s alter ego, as well as a clay animation of Brancusi’s sculpture *The Kiss*, as he switches between these roles and plays out human existence, time, and most importantly love and separation with a lover.

What is at the Heart of “Fresh Hell”?

With recent groundbreaking evolution in terms of the environments where videos and moving images are now received, people everywhere are now exposed to a wide variety of videos. Rather than sharing images with their immediate peers, people are shifting towards forming memories within a diverse range of communities. Conversely, communication breakdowns and isolation are accelerating in the real world, in inverse proportion to the expansion of data networking. The question that keeps coming up is, “what fresh hell is this?” — the title of this exhibition.

The Mouse Museum, a testament to Da Corte’s life, is now on display.

Da Corte’s installation *Mouse Museum (Van Gogh Ear)* will be on display in the museum’s distinctive round exhibition hall. The Mouse Museum was created by Claes Oldenburg (1929-2022) in the shape of Mickey Mouse to display his own work, and was presented at documenta 5 in 1972. Da Corte took Oldenburg’s attitude and spirit and added a further homage to Van Gogh to create this work, in which the left ear of a mouse has been cut out. Inside the museum, Da Corte will display a collection of precious markers of his work and creative sensibilities, a kind of testament to his life in props, souvenirs, maquettes, gifts, references, and totems. Viewers of the exhibition will recognize many of the objects, in physical form, from the videos that they have just witnessed.

Artist profile

Alex Da Corte

Born in Camden, New Jersey in 1980 and lives and works in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA. Da Corte is a Venezuelan-American artist. His work was included in the 2022 Whitney Biennial in New York, the 2019 Venice Biennale and the 2018 Carnegie International in Pittsburgh. Past one-person exhibitions include the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam, the Secession in Vienna, MASS MoCA in North Adams, Massachusetts, and the Kölnischer Kunstverein in Cologne. Da Corte was selected for the 2021 Roof Garden Commission at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. "Mr. Remember," a solo survey exhibition spanning 20 years of work, opened at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Humlebæk, Denmark in 2022.



photo by Hedi Slimane
© Alex Da Corte studio

Main works in the exhibition

ROY G BIV, 2022

Video: 60 min

The title of this work is a mnemonic phrase consisting of the first letters of each of the words for the seven colors of the rainbow: Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo, and Violet. In an omnibus style, Alex Da Corte, portraying Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968), performs the themes of human existence, time, love and separation from lovers, in a place that resembles the famous gallery of Constantin Brancusi (1876-1957) at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The color of the cube will change seven times over the course of the exhibition.



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Alex Da Corte, *ROY G BIV*, 2022
© Alex Da Corte studio

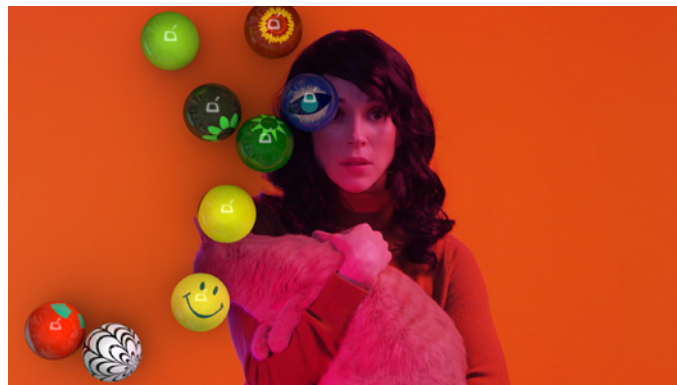
Gallery 7

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Gallery 9

The Open Window, 2018**Video: 11 min**

The images on the pool balls bouncing around the screen come from a novelty contact lens catalog. Musician Annie Clark, aka St. Vincent, creates an endurance performance that represents a slow, drawn-out scream — the horrified reaction that a young woman in a horror movie might have when she sees the killer. This image was adapted from the book *Cat from Fear Street*, a series of horror novels for young adults. The vivid, pop colors contrast beautifully with the icons, and the banal physics of play, the bonk of balls, becomes amplified and tense as it is overlaid over the glacial terror of the lead.



Alex Da Corte, *The Open Window*, 2018
© Alex Da Corte studio

Gallery 11

Rubber Pencil Devil, 2019**Video: 2 h 40 min**

This video work, consisting of 57 chapters and a prologue, is presented in a site-specific exhibition format, projected on a square box by four large rear-projection projectors. The two-hour, forty-minute film is divided into five sections, each inspired by the cultural context of the television era of the 20th century, the memories of those who lived through it, or the icons newly inscribed by the revival, as well as each of their cultural backgrounds. Viewers are prompted to immerse themselves in the oversized and oversaturated compositions of everyday objects, household symbols, and familiar codes. One of the performers is Da Corte himself, who performs the “essence” of these figures, attempting to harness the 20th century by taking on iconic characters such as the Pink Panther, Sylvester the Cat, Mister Rogers, and the Devil.



Alex Da Corte, *Rubber Pencil Devil*, 2019
© Alex Da Corte studio

Mouse Museum (Van Gogh Ear), 2022

The *Mouse Museum* was created by Claes Oldenburg (1929–2022) between 1965 and the late 1970s as a museum for his own small artworks and collected objects in the form of a casual representation of Mickey Mouse, the most famous icon in the world, created by Walt Disney. The work was presented at documenta 5 in 1972 (Kassel/Hesse, former West Germany, now the Federal Republic of Germany). Da Corte's version, comprising props from his films, small sculptures, maquettes, studies, gifts, and ephemera, are a testament to Da Corte's eye, life, and practice.



Reference Image:
Claes Oldenburg, Exterior of *Mouse Museum*,
1972-77



Alex Da Corte, *Mouse Museum (Van Gogh Ear)*, 2022
© Alex Da Corte studio

THE SUPERMAN, 2018

A few years ago, a friend sent Alex Da Corte an image of him in front of Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* in the Louvre Museum in Paris; which was actually a depiction of the American rapper Eminem. Based on the similarities in appearance recognized in the two different figures, this work asks the question: what constitutes the public perception of a world-famous musician, what kind of mass psychology is at work, and how does he behave in his private environment?



Alex Da Corte, *THE SUPERMAN*, 2018
© Alex Da Corte studio

Related Programs**Curator-led Gallery Tour**

Dates: June 10 (Sat), July 8 (Sat), and September 9 (Sat), 2023

Time: 13:00-13:30

Venue: 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa galleries

Reception: In front of the Lecture Hall

Capacity: 20 persons

Language: Japanese only

*Tickets available on the day on a first-come first-served basis

*Please purchase an exhibition ticket in advance.

*Other programs will be posted on the museum website after April 1.

Images for Publicity

Images 1–10 are available to the press from the Museum's Public Relations Office (press@kanazawa21.jp) based agreement to the following conditions.

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