

WHITNEY

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Press Release

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WHITNEY TO PRESENT *PAUL McCARTHY: CENTRAL SYMMETRICAL ROTATION MOVEMENT - THREE INSTALLATIONS, TWO FILMS* June 26–October 12, 2008

NEW YORK – March 27, 2008 – Paul McCarthy: Central Symmetrical Rotation Movement—Three Installations, Two Films, opening June 26 at the Whitney Museum of American Art, brings together a group of new and rarely seen works by Paul McCarthy (b. 1945), one of the most influential American artists of his generation. Curated by Chrissie Iles, the Whitney's Anne & Joel Ehrenkranz Curator, the show addresses a core element of McCarthy's work: the disorientation of the viewer's sense of perception through reflective surfaces, mirrors, rotating walls, live feed projections, and altered space. The exhibition opens on the same day as the Whitney's retrospective *Buckminster Fuller: Starting with the Universe*.

Two of the three installations are being made specifically by McCarthy for the exhibition, including the realization of a 1971 proposal for a projective installation. The show also includes two recently rediscovered early 16mm films from 1966 and 1971, shown on loops in the gallery, both of which draw attention to the camera's voyeuristic engagement with physical space and the body. The exhibition remains on view in the third-floor Peter Norton Family Galleries through October 12, 2008.

As Chrissie Iles notes in her essay for the exhibition catalog, "Of all the artists who emerged out of the transformative period of the 1960s in America, Paul McCarthy arguably expresses the existential neurosis released by that moment in its most extreme form...In McCarthy's disorientating environments we become unsure of where the boundary between authority and freedom lies, and where the real world ends and fantasy begins. In McCarthy's work, the body is symbolized by architectural forms that function as both the container and producer of internal anxiety. Unlike the preoccupation with volume that characterized the approach of other West Coast artists emerging in the 1960s, such as James Turrell, Larry

Bell, and Robert Irwin, McCarthy's spaces explore not open-ness but a sense of being physically and psychologically trapped inside a void."

In *Spinning Room* (2008), first conceived in 1971, and being realized for the first time for this show, live images of viewers are rotated and projected onto double-sided screens that appear infinitely reflected on all four surrounding walls of a large mirrored room, enclosing the viewer in a wildly disorienting space. In *Mad House* (2008), a new work also being made especially for this show, a room spins disconcertingly on its axis. Inside the room, a separate revolving platform contains a single chair that also revolves, in which the viewer can sit and participate. In *Bang Bang Room* (1992), shown most recently at the 2006 Berlin Biennial but never before in the United States, the space almost seems to come alive as the walls of a free-standing domestic room move slowly in and out, the doors in each wall wildly slamming open and shut.

In addition to the three installations, two recently rediscovered early films by McCarthy will be shown, projected in loops on the gallery walls. Both films reveal the artist's interest in film and perceptual ideas from the beginning of his career. In *Couple*, (1966) McCarthy pans a camera around a semi-darkened room containing a naked couple. Close-up shots reveal unexpected details, such as the woman's profile, or the contents of a shelf in the adjacent bathroom. In the second film, *Spinning Camera, Walking (Onion Film, Version 1)*, made in 1971, a man (Mike Cram) walks in a circle around the edge of a room with windows on three sides. The camera moves in a circle in the middle of the room, so that two circles are being described, one made by the man, the other by the camera. Whenever the camera comes across the window, light comes flooding in, evoking the idea of the room as the interior of a camera.

McCarthy Film Series

In conjunction with the exhibition, Paul McCarthy is curating a film series, to be presented in the Whitney's second-floor Kaufman Astoria Studios Film & Video Gallery, which includes a wide range of films that are important to the artist's own work and reveal the significance of film to his thinking. The series features films by Stan VanDerBeek, Francis Picabia, Alfred Hitchcock, Yves Klein, Andy Warhol, Bruce Conner, and Stan Brakhage, among others.

About the Artist

Paul McCarthy was born in Salt Lake City, Utah, in 1945. He attended the University of Utah, from 1966-68, and received his BFA from the San Francisco Art Institute in 1969 and his MFA from the University of Southern California in 1973. He lives and works in Los Angeles. Since 1984 he has taught at UCLA. McCarthy was the subject of a mid-career survey exhibition at the New Museum in 2000 (also presented at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Villa Arson, Nice; and Tate Liverpool). *Paul McCarthy: Head Shop/Shop Head*, the largest exhibition of the artist's work to date, opened at Stockholm's Moderna Museet in 2006, and traveled to ARoS Aarhus Kunstmuseum, Denmark, and Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, Ghent. McCarthy has exhibited at the Whitney numerous times, most recently in the 2004 Whitney Biennial and in *Full House: Views of the Whitney's Collection at 75*.

About the Catalog

In conjunction with the exhibition, the Whitney is publishing a catalog that includes a text by Chrissie Iles and an interview with Paul McCarthy. The catalog situates McCarthy's work within an art historical context, discussing the relationship of the work in the exhibition to that of artists such as Francis Picabia, Francis Bacon, and Yves Klein. The significance of McCarthy's earlier ideas in connection to the Destruction in Art Symposium of 1966 and experiments with spinning and performative architectural forms that were prevalent in the 1970s is also explored. The catalog is distributed by Yale University Press.

About the Whitney

The Whitney Museum of American Art is the leading advocate of 20th- and 21st-century American art. Founded in 1930, the Museum is regarded as the preeminent collection of American art and includes major works and materials from the estate of Edward Hopper, the largest public collection of works by Alexander Calder, Louise Nevelson, and Lucas Samaras, as well as significant works by Jasper Johns, Donald Judd, Agnes Martin, Bruce Nauman, Georgia O'Keeffe, Claes Oldenburg, Kiki Smith, and Andy Warhol, among other artists. With its history of exhibiting the most promising and influential American artists and provoking intense critical and public debate, the Whitney's signature show, the Biennial, has become the most important survey of the state of contemporary art in America today.

Current and Upcoming Exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art:

Demuth's Late Paintings of Lancaster
2008 Whitney Biennial

Through April 27, 2008
Through June 1, 2008

Polaroids: Mapplethorpe
Buckminster Fuller: Starting with the Universe
Paul McCarthy: Three Installations, Two Films
Alexander Calder: The Paris Years
William Eggleston

May 3-September 7, 2008
June 26-September 21, 2008
June 26-October 12, 2008
October 16, 2008-February 15, 2009
November 7, 2008-January 25, 2009

The Whitney Museum is located at 945 Madison Avenue, New York City. Museum hours are: Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Friday from 1 p.m. to 9 p.m., closed Monday and Tuesday. Admission is \$15 for adults; Members, children (ages 11 and under), and New York City public high school students are admitted free. Senior citizens (62 and over) and students with valid ID: \$10. There is a \$6 admission fee for a pass to the Kaufman Astoria Studios Film & Video Gallery only. Admission is pay-what-you-wish on Fridays, 6-9 pm. For information, please call 1-800 WHITNEY or visit www.whitney.org.