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**NEGROGOTHIC, A Manifesto**  
**The Aesthetics of M. Lamar**  
**September 7 - October 12, 2014**  
**Opening, Sunday, September 7, 7-9pm**

Special Event  
**Tuesday, September 9, 2014, 8pm**  
**Laverne Cox and M. Lamar,**  
**in conversation**

As part of the *GenderFluid* festival  
 Baruch Performing Arts Center,  
 Mason Hall  
 55 Lexington Ave. New York NY 10010  
 tickets \$20 at [www.baruch.cuny.edu/bpac](http://www.baruch.cuny.edu/bpac)

Premiere Performance  
**Sunday, October 5, 7pm**  
**M. Lamar, *The Tree of Blood, A Requiem***  
 Participant Inc, free

From September 7 through October 12, 2014, PARTICIPANT INC is pleased to open its thirteenth season with **NEGROGOTHIC, A Manifesto, The Aesthetics of M. Lamar**. This is the first New York solo exhibition by artist, countertenor, and composer, M. Lamar, and features video, still photographs, and sculptural props used in Lamar's films. Most known for his music and performance-based work, this physical installation cross-references romanticism, surrealism, horror, pornography, gospel, metal, and early silent film to propose radical potentialities of blackness.

Eleven new, large-scale archival pigment prints on canvas from Lamar's video works *Badass Nigga*, *the Charlie Looker of Psalm Zero Remix* (also on view), and *Surveillance Punishment and the Black Psyche, Part Two, Overseer*, were produced for the exhibition. The centerpiece of the installation is a projection of one chapter of a feature film-in-progress, adapted from Lamar's music theater piece *Surveillance Punishment and the Black Psyche*. This work proposes a fictional narrative loosely based on Willie Francis, a sixteen-year-old black boy who was sentenced to death (and executed twice) in Louisiana in 1947 for killing Andrew Thomas, his pharmacist boss, rumored to be Francis' lover. Lamar imagines a character like Thomas to be a KKK member who lynches Francis' father, castrating him. Filmed at Participant this past spring, *Surveillance Punishment and the Black Psyche, Part Two, Overseer*, furthers Lamar's overall project by repositioning the ghostly figure of the black male "Overseer."

*In my solitude... solitary. Introspection, retrospection.... Solitary... confinement, how did I get here.... This is my story, this is my song.... The watchtower inside me... (M. Lamar, *The Watchtower*, lyric)*

In a moment in which prevailing cinematic depictions offer only narrow historical accounts of subjugation, Lamar remembers well bell hooks, and shares her fascination with "images of black males in popular culture that represent them as not only eager

to 'do it for daddy' but, even more, as individuals tortured by [...] 'unrequited longing for white male love.'" "For every person who wants to be free," Lamar has noted, "an exorcism (or process of decolonialization) is necessary." Longing is a part of this process.

Lamar's work mixes romanticism with horror - the horror is American white supremacy. At the center of *NEGROGOTHICISM* is the Negro Antichrist: rock star, blues man, like Screamin' Jay Hawkins, with a big, operatic voice, and a deep connection to the supernatural. Born in Mobile, Alabama, Lamar draws inspiration from Southern gothic traditions, as well as underground, goth, and post punk music. Lamar continues, "From the slave ship to the pillory... on plantations and lynching trees... within and beyond the prison and the grave... *NEGROGOTHIC* binds archive to myth, merging bodily properties with supernatural possession."

An accompanying publication will be produced this fall, featuring artwork, librettos, and lyrics for Lamar's major works, and essays by Tucker Culbertson, Sabin Calvert, T. L. Cowan, Ron Gregg, and Brandon Peter Masterman; and interviews with Lamar's twin sister, transgender activist and actress Laverne Cox. Designed by Klaus Kempnaars of xSITE, the design is strongly influenced by pamphlets used for slave auctions and anti-slavery meetings during the Antebellum period.

**M. Lamar** writes songs that are a product of his African American heritage, drawing heavily from the Negro spiritual. He is at once interested in western classical music and dissonant black metal. Lamar's work has been presented internationally, most recently at Södra Teatern, Stockholm; The New Museum, New York; Warehouse9, Copenhagen; WWDIS Fest, Gothenburg and Stockholm; La MaMa ETC, New York; Queer-Feminist Anti-Racist Performance Festival, Stockholm; Dixon Place, New York; Performatorium, Regina, Canada; The International Theater Festival, Donzdorf, Germany; Cathedral of St. John the Divine, New York; P.S. 122, New York; and The African American Arts and Culture Complex, San Francisco; among others. Lamar holds a B.F.A. from San Francisco Art Institute and attended the Yale School of Art, sculpture program, before dropping out to pursue music. Lamar has had many years of classical vocal study with Ira Siff, among others; and is a recipient of the Franklin Furnace Fund Grant 2013-14.

Citation from bell hooks, "Doing it for Daddy: Black Masculinity and the Mainstream," *Reel to Real: Race, Class and Sex at the Movies* (New York and London, Routledge, 1996): 105.

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Common Practice New York is an advocacy group that fosters research and discussions on the role of small-scale arts institutions in New York City. Common Practice New York aims to collectively embody the question, *What is our common practice and why do we value it?* [commonpracticenyc.org](http://commonpracticenyc.org)

PARTICIPANT INC is located at 253 East Houston Street, between Norfolk and Suffolk Streets on the LES, ground floor, wheelchair accessible. Subway: F to Second Avenue, Allen Street exit; or JMJ to Essex/Delancey. [participantinc.org](http://participantinc.org)

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