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ISAIAH DAVIS

I HAVE NO MOUTH AND I MUST SCREAM

November 14 - December 19, 2021

Opening reception, Sunday, November 14, 5-9pm

Appointments are required. Make one [here](#).

PARTICIPANT INC presents Isaiah Davis, *I HAVE NO MOUTH AND I MUST SCREAM*, the artist's first solo exhibition, including recent paintings, sculpture, and video projections on leather, metal, and through other unconventional surfaces. *I HAVE NO MOUTH AND I MUST SCREAM* takes its title from the 1967 science fiction short story by Harlan Ellison, subsequently produced into a video game. Ellison's plot centers around a computer program that has gained undefeatable knowledge and autonomous function and has terminated populations, except for a small group who is tormented for eternity by the program. For Davis, the immediate tortured subject group manifests in impoverished communities and adolescents under capitalism, who turn to heterotopic imagery as a form of resistance.

Davis deploys leather, metal, and reclaimed wood as generative raw materials toward themes of visceral masculinity and power, charged with eroticism. Within a series of videos projected, for example, on a sewn leather flag (*White American Flag*, 2021) or through a duffle bag (*Cavity Sleuth*, 2021), as well as works that Davis refers to as *Blood Paintings*, the artist takes a step toward deconstruction of the psychic terror enacted upon marginalized youth. The history of materials is present even in absentia of a body, participating belatedly in the narrative of urban leather usage, symbology, and the vestments of outsiders and diverse corporal punishers (*Redacted Savage Nomads' Colors*, 2021). Leather is seen as substrate in Davis' construction of flags and banners; the leather itself is also operating as its own inherent form, skin. Skin that protects, skin that excites, and an aperture from which to fuck and be fucked, a multi-layered medium transfigured by Davis' manifestations of perverse power.

PARTICIPANT INC
253 East Houston Street NY NY 10002
Hours: Wednesday-Sunday, 12-7pm

Davis' video works confront the viewer with their obsessive focus on hyper-masculine leather fetishism and rapid bursts of pornography, their nihilistic mood often driven by horror-core and satanic panic metal. Cruising through sub-genres of the Reagan era, Davis' new video works are paired with experimental mixed recordings of industrial rhythm and flashes of dread-inducing synth that pay homage to '70s and '80s horror films. In *Yesterday by Boyz II Men, Performed by C.L.I.T.*, Davis and three friends in matching leather LAPD jackets lip-synch the popular a cappella version mixed with manipulated avant-garde post punk. These musical genres, created with the intent to disturb audiences on aesthetic principle, provide one framework for understanding Davis' work, leaving political statements and cultural values in ambiguity.

Isaiah Davis (b. 1992, Bronx, New York) is an artist living and working in New York City. He received a BFA from Cooper Union School of Art in 2018, and has participated in group exhibitions at 128 Avenue C, New York and Love Gallery, New York.

Safety protocols: Appointments are required and are limited to 4 people. Visitors and staff must wear a mask and practice social distancing. NYC requires visitors to be vaccinated against COVID-19 to enter.

Image: **Isaiah Davis**, video still from *Sex Machine*, 2021 [A color video still, close-cropped on two feet wearing lace-up, peep-toe platform stiletto heels, one in focus, one blurry due to its action of stomping on a pink, crumbly substance.]



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PARTICIPANT INC is located at 253 East Houston Street between Norfolk and Suffolk Streets. Closest trains are the F (2nd Ave) and the J/M/Z (Essex/Delancey); closest wheelchair accessible stop is the 4/6 (Bleecker/Lafayette). Entry is on grade and the gallery is barrier free throughout with an all gender, wheelchair accessible bathroom. Service animals are welcome.