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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Thomas Lawson *NEW WORLD*
Curated by Lauri Firstenberg

An LA><ART off-site initiative
Part of L.A.P.D. - LA Public Domain -
Artistic and Curatorial Interventions
in Experimental Contexts

June 14 - July 26, 2009

Opening reception:
Sunday, June 14, 7-9pm

Monday, June 22, 8pm
Thomas Lawson in conversation with
London-based painter Gerard Hemsworth,
moderated by New York art historian
Rachel Baum



LA><ART off-site initiatives and PARTICIPANT INC are pleased to debut, *New World*, a body of new paintings and drawings by Los Angeles-based artist, **Thomas Lawson**. These large-scale works feature an array of life-size figures turning their backs to the viewer. Apparently looking into the distance, these figures leave us to confront a hyper-carnavalesque palette, eccentric patterning, and experimental compositional and iconographic tactics. Beginning with photographs of mostly young people in Los Angeles and New York – some staged, some captured on the street – Lawson translates these images into complex paintings that play with different possibilities of perception and representation. Perverse, yet hopeful, these works feature singular ‘portraits,’ embedded in a painted space that is illusionistically ambiguous.

Initially inspired by Giandomenico Tiepolo’s 18th Century fresco, *The New World*, Lawson reworks the scene of a crowd lining up to view a spectacular attraction, restaged here with contemporary subjects rendered with experimental hues and facture, inclusive of fuchsia flesh, royal blue boots, and lime green limbs. The density and excess of these canvases complicate the artist’s interest in ‘passive confrontation’ with his subjects. Lawson frames his figures with decorative details, which he reveals are forms taken from his studio, including abstractions inspired by a faux marble medium, stripes gesturing to Cubist lozenges, and circles adapted from coffee cans.

A large canvas entitled *Twins* depicts two women against a crimson background, one donning a white mask. Lawson paints an ominous noir specter across the bodies of the figures. The most recent painting features two male figures taken from an image captured in a local mall on Lawson’s iPhone. Also on view is a series of new drawings from photographs taken while the artist was last in New York.

On **Monday, June 22 at 8pm**, PARTICIPANT INC will host a conversation between Thomas Lawson and London-based painter Gerard Hemsworth, to be moderated by New York art historian Rachel Baum. Hemsworth's solo exhibition of paintings, *Hidden Agenda*, is concurrently on view at the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield CT.

Thomas Lawson is the Dean of the School of Art at CalArts. He has shown paintings at Metro Pictures in New York, Anthony Reynolds in London, and the Richard Kuhlenschmidt and Rosamund Felsen galleries in Los Angeles. More recently he has staged solo exhibitions at LA><ART and David Kordansky in Los Angeles. His work is currently featured in *The Pictures Generation, 1974-1984* at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Lawson is a recipient of a 2009 Guggenheim Fellowship.

Responding to Los Angeles' cultural climate, LA><ART questions given contexts for the exhibition of contemporary art, architecture and design. With a renewed vision for the potential of independent art spaces, LA><ART provides a center for interdisciplinary discussion and interaction and for the production and exhibition of new exploratory work. LA><ART offers a space for provocation, dialogue, and confrontation by practices on the ground in Los Angeles and abroad. LA><ART is a hub for artists based on flexibility, transition, spontaneity, and change. The space responds to an urgency and obligation to provide an accessible exhibition space for contemporary artists, architects, and designers.

Thomas Lawson *NEW WORLD* is made possible by the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, The Standard Hotel, Jenny Chase and Andrew Bernstein, and Foryourart.



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PARTICIPANT INC is located at 253 East Houston Street, between Norfolk and Suffolk Streets on the LES. Subway: F/V to Second Avenue, Allen Street exit. JMZ to Essex/Delancey.

Gallery Hours: Wednesday-Sunday, noon-7pm