

The Brooklyn Rail

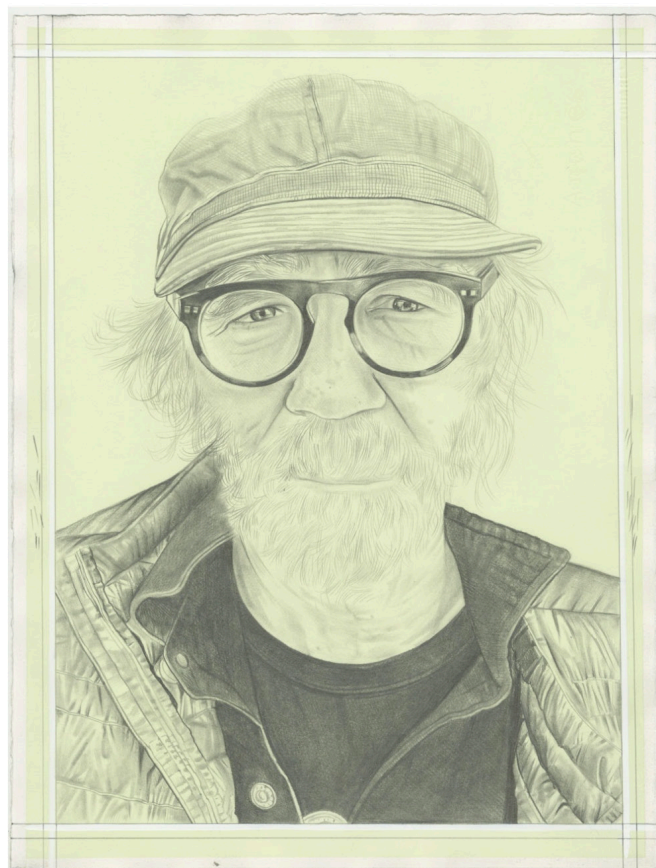
Cameron, Dan: *Interview*

April 2021

BROOKLYN RAIL

Paul McCarthy with Dan Cameron

“When we were making the piece, I saw myself as this aging mafia character, a kind of godfather.”



Portrait of Paul McCarthy, pencil on paper by Phong H. Bui.

Ever since the public debut of *The Garden* shocked visitors to Paul Schimmel's watershed 1992 MoCA exhibition *Helter Skelter*, Paul McCarthy's career has cut a bold, jagged path across the international art world. Drawn from his early decades working in performance art and experimental video, McCarthy's art explores patterns of authority and conditioning in human behavior, often using skewed interpretations of iconic characters drawn from mass entertainment to emphasize his point. His protean output includes film, video, painting, sculpture, drawing, installation and sound art, but McCarthy's current Hauser & Wirth exhibition focuses almost exclusively on painting, drawing, and assemblage.

Rail Editor-at-Large, Dan Cameron, has known McCarthy since the early 1990s, and co-organized his 2001 retrospective at the New Museum, which opened at LA MoCA the previous year. In this conversation (their first in years) the pair discuss certain through lines in McCarthy's work that are as evident in his earliest performance and video works as they are in his current paintings and drawings—in particular McCarthy's strategy of appropriating Hollywood methods to produce artworks that function as fun-house-mirror distortions of mainstream American life.

The current exhibition emerged from the shooting of an as-yet-unedited film called *A&E*, in which the male character manifests as the alter-egos Adam and Adolf, while the female character swings between Eve and Eva. That project, loosely tied to a freewheeling remake of the 1974 film *The Night Porter*, provides an offstage frame of reference to the works on view, including audio tapes of the extensive drawing sessions that involved both performers fully immersed in their fictitious roles.

Dan Cameron (Rail): Having just seen your show, I was hoping that we could start by making some connections between your earliest work in the 1970s and where you are now. I began hearing about you around 1990 from Mike Kelley, who was a mutual friend. How did you and Mike begin to work together?

Paul McCarthy: I had been given a small grant to make a video in a cable television studio in LA. I had three days to use the studio and two days to edit. Mike and I knew each other and had talked about doing a collaboration, we had never done anything together. I called Mike and said, “Do you want to be in a video?” And he said, “Sure I’ll do it. What should I do?” I said, “Well, what if I’m the dad and you’re the son, and you’re going to go to school?”

At the time, I was making drawings of Alpine characters, Bavarian fathers/fascists. So I dressed in lederhosen and a little Alpine hat. I made a two-wall set that had an elevated floor and a window. Mike and I improvised for one or two days in this little set, and then I edited the video. There’s actually two: one’s called *Family Tyranny*, and the other one’s *Cultural Soup* (both 1987). Mike was only in *Family Tyranny*. We shot a lot of video, and we’d always talked about going back and editing more, but we never did. Mike wanted to make an edit.

Rail: Why a TV show?

McCarthy: TV is ugly, but I’m interested in it. It produces repressed consumers. There is some aspect of *Family Tyranny* and *Cultural Soup* that resembles community produced television or a low budget children’s program. I grew up with television in the ’50s and ’60s. I am more interested in films. When Karen and I moved to Los Angeles in 1970, we were living in Echo Park and we spent a lot of time on Hollywood Boulevard. Before LA in the late ’60s, we were at the San Francisco Art Institute and the University of

Utah. At the time in both schools, experimental film was a part of the curriculum, regular 8mm, Super 8mm, 16 mm film and cameras. We saw and were interested in Stan Brakhage, Bruce Conner, Yoko Ono, and all the Warhol films.

In 1970, I applied to go to USC. I wanted to be in the film department, and I had this idea about the future of film. *Easy Rider* had come out and independent films and experimental films were being shown in art house theaters. There was money from Hollywood going into independent films at that moment, also the European scene, Godard and Bergman, were part of the '60s. I wanted to go to film school and find myself in what I thought would be this new film world, an alternative to the traditional Hollywood films.

I was accepted at USC in multimedia, but I soon realized that my ideas had nothing to do with the film school. At that time the film school was about scriptwriting. You couldn't touch the camera until they approved a script. I was interested in video. I was interested in experimental film. The film school was conservative. It didn't work out for me, the art department was more interesting. But there was something about the sky and its relationship to the city sprawl, the smog, La La Land. In the early '70s I was fascinated with Hollywood Boulevard and what was going on there as a culture. It was part of the LA underbelly.

There were stores on Hollywood boulevard where you could buy press and PR photographs from movies, boxes full of them. When I made *Sailor's Meat (Sailor's Delight)* (1975), the image of the woman I pretend to be comes from one of these black and white photographs bought on Hollywood Boulevard.

Hollywood was at the time a dangerous, vile, and interesting place at night—a subject. Independent films, experimental films, expanded film, performance, and Conceptualism were all critical to me. I also become interested in Disneyland, in the mascot-like characters running around the park, and also the Matterhorn ride. My interest in Disneyland was about sculpture, its mechanisms, the rides, and the animatronics, but I think at the time I was more interested in film and in Hollywood, in its underbelly.



Paul McCarthy (with Mike Kelley), *Family Tyranny*, 1987. Video still. Single channel video, 8:18 min, color, sound.
© Paul McCarthy. Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth.

Rail: The Hollywood Boulevard underside of it.

McCarthy: Yeah, Kenneth Anger, in the '70s. All the masks that I was using in performances I would buy on Hollywood Boulevard at the Halloween novelty stores. There were also stores that sold scripts. I had the idea of appropriating scripts—like why write a script when you can buy them, right? And just use that as the structure for the film, the piece. I had this idea of just appropriating Hollywood scripts and then abstracting them into something else to see where it goes, right? Use the script but take it somewhere else.

In the late '70s, when I was still doing performances, I got an National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) grant, and I was going to be part of an exchange program with an artist from France. I would go to France and they would come to LA. The French government was going to give me a studio in Paris, but I said I would like to make the story of Heidi in the French Alps. At that point Popeye and Heidi were really becoming interesting to me. I wanted to make a film of Popeye and a film of Heidi, but in the end the French balked at my idea to make a film in the Alps. They wanted me to use a studio in Paris, whether that was the reason or not, the exchange never happened.

And then years later, there was a show, an exhibition of LA artists in Vienna, Austria that Mike Kelly and I were both part of at Galerie Krinzinger. I had proposed to the gallery that I make a video of Heidi in the Austrian Alps. Mike, at that point, was interested in Adolf Loos and the subjects of ornamentation, modernism, and fascism. Mike and I had already done *Family Tyranny* and had been talking about a bigger collaboration. We decided to collaborate on the project. We made a model in LA of a set to be built in Vienna. The set is split in half, down the middle—half is a simple little mountain hut. The other half is from a photograph of a bedroom that had been designed by Adolf Loos, and on the front of that half, we made the

façade of the front of the American Bar that Loos had designed. It's a schizophrenic building: a chalet or mountain hut on one half and the other half, Adolf Loos and modernism. It was quickly made and also poorly made. It sat in the middle of the gallery. We made the video in the gallery. I think we shot for a week or so.

During the entire time in Los Angeles when we were preparing for *Heidi* (1992), we were making image collections. I had quite a collection of images, mostly postcards from wax museums and Disneyland, of human figuration, a collection that started in the period before *The Garden* in 1992.

Rail: Let's talk about *The Garden*, which was the first work I saw of yours in person. The context is Paul Schimmel's historic *Helter Skelter* exhibition at MOCA in 1992. It wasn't until I walked into LA MOCA in early 1992 and saw it that I felt like my world was jolted. I remember I actually had to take a time-out and recover from what I'd seen.

McCarthy: What Paul Schimmel was doing with the title *Helter Skelter* was, to a degree, a promotional gimmick to get attention for the exhibition, but also to draw attention to artists working in LA. I had fabricated the two figures and the mechanisms, and I made the platform and put up the garden in the museum.

Rail: The guy standing up seems a little older and the guy lying down seems younger. Are they a pair in your mind? Is there a relationship between the two?

McCarthy: Yeah, I think of them as businessmen out in the woods, and the older man—the senior executive—is teaching the younger man. A lesson is going on. I was interested in trying to make animatronic figures. My interest in Disneyland and sculpture, the animatronic figures in Disneyland, Abraham



Paul McCarthy, *The Garden*, 1991-1992. Wood, fiberglass, steel, electric motors, latex rubber, foam rubber, wigs, clothing, artificial turf, leaves, pine needles, rocks, and trees. 30 x 20 x 22 ft. Photo: Fredrik Nilsen. © Paul McCarthy. Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth.

Lincoln, the mechanized talking bears. I was trying to go in that direction, but there was no money, so there's a crudeness to the fabrication of the characters. *The Garden* was about America. I realized America does not look out, and the rest of the world was always looking in on America. America was only watching itself and constantly in a state of isolated self-congratulation.

Rail: An island, in a way.

McCarthy: An island of some sort. The characters, these businessmen, are alone in the middle of a platform, a stage, in the middle of an artificial forest. The viewer can walk around this island. I think that my performances in the '70s were often in part about male conditioning, looking at who I am as a male, a male conditioned by older men, being schooled. In *The Garden*, the older man stands up and the younger man lays down. You, as the viewer coming to the piece, would look in, but the two figures don't look out. The older man standing looks straight at the tree and the younger man stares at the ground, and you, the viewer, are a voyeur. You have to look through the trees and branches to see them.

The figures are interesting as crude assemblages. I could only cast the bottom in rubber from the upper waist to just below the knees, and the rubber wasn't so good, it was latex. The rest of the bodies are cut up mannequins. The two heads are from an effects house, they're castings of Hollywood actors. The mechanisms were under the platform and inside the tree. It's surprising how long they ran. I think they probably ran almost a year in various exhibitions without breaking down. Eventually the faces wore down against the tree and the ground. The noses and checks wore off. The figures have been replaced several times now. The face and the fingers wear down, the crotch area wears out, and the knees wear out. I've kept the worn figures, they become the "Dead Men." I lay them on tables.

The first time the piece was shown, I rented the big trees. These trees had been used in the TV series *Bonanza*, they're the trees around the ranch house. The trees were molded in the '30s or '40s from redwood trees in California and cast in fiberglass. I tried to buy them, but they weren't for sale, so we rented them, molding them ourselves and casting them in fiberglass—copy of a copy. *Bonanza* is about three sons and their father. There is no mother, the women only come and go. There are only men in *The Garden*, a coincidence.

Rail: I'm thinking about Mike's interest at this time in the uncanny. As you know, he would characterize the uncanny as defined by our inability to tell if something is alive or dead. And this piece triggers that irrational fear that the uncanny represents.

McCarthy: Mike was really interested in the same kind of representations in sculpture, and in artists like Paul Thek. When we were making *Heidi*, we made three bulletin boards. One was images of human figuration and the uncanny, one was images of mountain huts and chalets in the Alps, and one was images of modernist architecture, cities, and utopias, the three themes in *Heidi*. I had started collecting images of figuration from the wax museum and Disneyland. Mike, at that point begins to write about the uncanny, a text which really became influential and important in art. In the photograph from *Heidi* of the rubber ass that is between grandfather Paul and Heidi, which is shitting a sausage and who we refer to as "our neighbor" in the *Heidi* video, the mold to make that rubber ass in the *Heidi* image came from the mold to make the ass for the men in the *The Garden*. The mold I kept as a piece called the "Body Cave."

Rail: I want to move ahead a little and talk about our first collaboration together, which was *Pinocchio Pipenose Household Dilemma* in Madrid in 1994 for *Cocido y Crudo* at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia. At the time I sought you out because I'd never worked with you before, and this was one of those rare opportunities I had to get to know an artist by collaborating. How did this piece develop for you?

McCarthy: Paul Schimmel's show changed the LA art scene. I mean, not that New York came knocking at studio doors in LA, but the European galleries came to LA and a number of artists in LA began showing in Europe. I was asked to do a project in Nice, France with the gallery Air de Paris. They gave me a big room at Villa Arson up in the hills of Nice.

I'd made a piece before, years ago, called *A Skull with a Tail* (1978), that was about Minimalism, primarily Tony Smith's *Die* (1962). I had the thought that the essence of *Die*, of Minimalism, wasn't the cube form itself, but that when he made *Die*, he made a skin that encloses a void. Once he makes the piece, you can never enter that space, the interior of the cube. So I made a piece that was a black metal cube that had a tail. A small rectangular tube came out from the larger cube and made two 90-degree turns, like the leg of a swastika. It's open at the end. And what the tail did was that you could look into it, but you couldn't actually see into the space of the cube—the 90-degree turns blocked your vision of the inside. The tail was telling you there's a void in there, but you couldn't enter it.

The *Pinocchio* house was essentially that. It's a cube-like structure as a house with a tail-tube coming off of it. The difference is the house is not standing correctly. It's tipped onto its back. So, the vertical standing house becomes a horizontally tipped house with the tail going off to the side or bottom of the house. When the video is shown, the monitors are placed on the tail. The *Pinocchio* piece is related to *Skull with a Tail* and *Die* is related to *Heidi*. We shot the video for several days and then edited it in Nice.

Rail: This drama that goes on between the two *Pinocchios* based on the one alive and the other not, steps into this unnerving psychological territory, where it's like killing or trying to erase one's doppelganger.

McCarthy: Well, it's a puppet of himself. In the 1970s I wanted to perform with others—but in almost all of my performances I perform by myself, which was common for that period in performance art. But I'd started using stuffed toys, stuffed bears, stuffed lions, so they became the other, and sometimes it would go right to an object like a pan, a bottle, or a telephone. I would assign characters, like the pan or the telephone might be my uncle. The green bear could be my grandfather. There's a part in *Heidi* where I'm wearing a mask and I put the same mask on my hand and have a conversation, so this thing of



Paul McCarthy, *Pinocchio Pipenose Household Dilemma*, 1994. Performance, video, installation, photographs. Installation at Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía. © Paul McCarthy. Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth.

the double and the double of myself as the other character already had a lineage in *Heidi* and action in the '70s and then finds itself in *Pinocchio*. Also fabrication, I fabricated the rubber mask. I was trying to move into rubber sculptures, rubber being closer to flesh, rubber instead of bronze or wood or plaster, so I was interested in rubber, to make sculpture in rubber.

Rail: We're looking now at *Bossy Burger* (1991), which is a turning point in your work, or at the very least it radically reshaped how people in New York were opining about your work at the time. There were followers of your work before then, but even for us, *Bossy Burger* seemed to come out of nowhere.

McCarthy: Well, I made *Family Tyranny* and *Cultural Soup*, that happened in 1987, and I had also made the mechanized piece, *Bavarian Kick* in 1987. There were a couple of years when I was thinking about things I wanted to make. In 1991 I was asked to do a piece for the Rosamund Felsen Gallery in LA, the plan was that I would make *The Garden* for the gallery. But then Paul Schimmel came to the studio and asked me what I was doing. I said, “Well, this is a piece I’m working on,” and he said, “I’d like it for my show.” He gave me a small budget of a few thousand dollars, essentially to do *The Garden* at MOCA. I made the figures as cheap as I could and just went to a Hollywood prop house and rented all the greenery I needed. The forest was essentially rented for two months, but when *The Garden* went to MOCA, I had to come up with a piece for the gallery.

I was interested in Hollywood sets and wanted to make a piece with an existing used set. Rosamund helped me find this set from the sitcom *Family Affair*. It was a fast food restaurant in the TV series, that was called Bossy Burger, so the name of the piece came from a set used in a television show. I saw myself as a chef. I went to Hollywood to find a mask, and chose, on the spot, Alfred E. Neuman. The *Bossy Burger* set was put up in the gallery and I rented a video truck from a cable station. We parked the truck in back of the gallery, ran the cables for the cameras into the gallery, and shot the video in one night.

I had some ideas of what I would do, but it was 90 percent improvised. Normally sets for TV are set up in a U shape, but I put the Bossy Burger set up as an enclosed space with a front door.

There was a camera on the outside and on the inside, there were two cameras as I remember. We recorded it in one night, then edited in the production truck in the parking lot in back of the gallery, and then showed the video in the gallery all within several days. There wasn’t a script. I knew I would go

from room to room. I had gotten whatever food and objects I thought I would need—ketchup, a bag of flour, milk, some utensils, and a smoked turkey leg.

Rail: I think it's really one of the first of your characters who are completely detached from the world. They're lost in their own space, and their behavior, which is bizarre enough, seems even more heightened by the fact that they're completely oblivious to any possible repercussions or any possible bad side. They just keep doing what they're doing, as if it's a kind of an anarchy or entropy just being unleashed within this social space.

McCarthy: Yeah, maybe a view of humanity. We're trapped on a planet, and we've constructed this day to day reality without even knowing we're alive. We're all self-absorbed. This constructed reality, it's hard to see your way out of it, hard to see that we exist and that we're on a planet, it's hard to see that, because we're so caught up. The set is put up as a trap. The character can't leave. Alfred E. Newman, he never goes outside of Bossy Burger, the set. He is an existential character in a dream.

Rail: Exactly. *WS*, which stands for "White Snow" and which you created at the Park Avenue Armory in 2013, carries on the idea of Disney animatronics and nature, only in this case, it's a flesh and blood actor and not an animatronic.

McCarthy: I get closer to Disney when Snow White becomes White Snow. I started working on *WS* in 2010 but had interruptions. I don't get to it until 2012–13. I decided to make an artificial forest as a set, up on a platform, a pedestal. At some point the dwarf house became the house I grew up in and I would be Walt Disney or Walt Paul. Elyse Poppers was White Snow. We auditioned for dwarves. The set took a year to do and I put furniture that was similar to the furniture in the house that I grew up in. There also was a connection to my parents, my father looked like Walt Disney; same hair combed back, same period of dress. My mother resembled White Snow: black



Paul McCarthy, *WS White Snow*, 2013. Performance, video, installation, photographs. Directed by Paul McCarthy and Damon McCarthy. Photo: Jeremiah McCarthy. © Paul McCarthy. Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth.

hair, pale skin. This connected the piece to my childhood. I think I was being a combination of Walt Disney, my father, myself, and then something else.

Before we filmed in this artificial forest and in the house, we recorded up in the Sierras, deep in the woods. It was just the two of us, Elyse and myself. I play Walt Disney and Elyse plays White Snow. While we were in the forest, we found a tree that had “Walt” carved into its bark. Unbelievable, we’re wandering deep in the snowy woods, we look up and it’s Walt. It was too perfect and too much of a coincidence, so a series of photos were made with the tree.

In Disney’s *Snow White*, the Dwarfs have a party for Snow White. In my work there is often a party, the state of delirium, intoxication, being drunk. There is a party in White Snow that the dwarfs have for Walt and White Snow.

White Snow dies in the forest from alcohol poisoning while Walt is killed in the basement by the dwarfs.

Rail: It seems like the party becomes the impetus for making drawings and paintings, almost as if the action spills off the set, rolls into the studio, and onto the canvas that's on the floor. Is that a direct process for you? Or did drawing re-enter your working process in a different way?

McCarthy: In the '80s when I quit performing in front of an audience, the art world suddenly changed. The galleries and paintings were back. Mary Boone happens and painting comes back with the discovery of Gerhard Richter, Sigmar Polke, Julian Schnabel, and David Salle. And at that moment also, the performance art world changed and became closer to cabaret. Theater and alternative spaces began to make stages with painted black walls and theater lights and seating. During that period of the '80s, I started painting and drawing again. The drawing process would be like the drawing/paintings I made in the '60s, which were done flat on the ground. The drawing becomes an arena, a performance space, and like the '60s paintings, a type of private performance was going on. Being on top of the drawing and talking while I draw has been going on since the '60s.

The party has been an image in a lot of pieces, the party is really just about entering another world. I think that in performance, theater, or film, there is the language of art. For me, there was an interest in the subject of art and life, making a work in life, and life affecting you as an artist. I enter an arena, the drawing and the room or platform. It's where you go to make the language. I think in part it's about freeing the voice, freeing the brain, the arena of art—letting it go, the belief in that, a belief in the party, the party is not all fun and games.



Paul McCarthy, *NV, Night Vater*, 2019. Performance, video, installation, photographs. Directed by Paul McCarthy and Damon McCarthy. Photos: Alex Stevens. © Paul McCarthy. Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth.

Rail: In the most recent work you've got Eva and Adolf. You're working with a new prototype, but they're not Disney characters anymore—they're real figures from history. And yet their meaning has been distorted and their roles twisted in a very particular way, both in the script that you created, but also in the paintings themselves. I was wondering if you could talk about that.

McCarthy: I started making a piece in the late '90s called *A Straight Line from Adolf Hitler's Berlin to Walt Disney's Anaheim*. I collected images of Hitler's Berlin moving through Germany, to Paris, to Las Vegas, to Anaheim, California and Disneyland. It was a straight line. I collected hundreds of images, like the Eiffel Tower in Las Vegas, the Eiffel Tower in Paris with the Nazis goose stepping under it, Eiffel Towers in Anaheim, Bavarian chalets, Hitler's chalet, Walt Disney with children and dogs and little trains, Hitler

with children and dogs, parades in Bavaria, and the parade in Disneyland. I was connecting these cities. This interest in fascism began, I think, in the '70s with reading Marcuse and Wilhelm Reich. The mass psychology of fascism, the psychology of fascism and repression, fascism, paranoia, the blame of the other and the male tyrant.

I'd wanted to make a Western for a long time. In 2017 I made a piece called *CSSC: Coach Stage Stage Coach*. That piece is of a stagecoach travelling through the West with six characters inside, including Ronald Raygun who looks like JP Morgan, and he's not called Reagan, but Raygun, a reference to Hannah Wilke and Claes Oldenburg. In the coach are Nancy Raygun, Jesus Chryst, Mary Magdalene, and two other characters, the innocents, Eve and Adam. Ronald, Nancy, Jesus, and Mary are libertines—they're the fascists, and they go after the innocents, Adam and Eve. We shot this film for 60 days, in the lower Sierras, and in our studio in LA. A year later we shoot again for another 45 days, only now the characters have switched. Ronald became Donald Duck or Donald Trump and Mary became Daisy Duck or Melania. Eve became Bonkers, Adam became Andy WarHole, and Nancy Raygun became Nancy Reagan. These two pieces are *CSSC: Coach Stage Stage Coach* and *DADDA: Donald And Daisy Duck Adventure* (2019).

During the making of *CSSC*, I did a performance with Lilith Stangenberg in Berlin. Out of that performance came the idea of redoing the film *The Night Porter*, the 1974 film with Charlotte Rampling and Dirk Bogarde, directed by Liliana Cavani. There was money in Austria to do it but after working on it for a year the money was pulled. We were so far into it we didn't want to back out. We decided to continue. We shot it in LA. I play the character Max, a Hollywood film producer. He's really not interested in making films. He's interested in manipulation and he's fascinated with fascism. I play the asshole. Lilith plays the character of Lucia and we shoot *NV, Night Vater* with

Damon for 30 days in 2019. Several months later, Lilith and I did a drawing session where we would draw in character on a large platform which was pushed against the set that had been built for *Night Vater* called “the Maze.”

We have started editing the material of *NV* or *Night Vater*, but it’s 100 terabytes and 100,000 still photographs. I think it will be edited in episodes. In *NV* we wore similar clothes to the Lucia and Max characters in *Night Porter*. And the structure is similar in *NV* to *Night Porter*, but the content is darker. In the end of *NV*, they commit suicide. Lucia puts the gun up Max’s ass and shoots him. He asks her to do it, and then she shoots herself. She commits suicide. When we were making the piece, I saw myself as this aging mafia character, a kind of godfather. I started thinking about global politics as organized crime. We were going to commit suicide in the woods, but we ended up doing it in the set in Max’s apartment in the Maze. At that point both Lilith and I came to this point of asking ourselves, “Do we take on Adolf and Eva?” as a continuation of Max and Lucia, a crazy idea.



Paul McCarthy, *A&E Drawing Session, Santa Anita*, 2020. Drawings, performance, video, photographs. Photo: Alex Stevens. © Paul McCarthy. Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth.

Last year as drunk buffoons, Lilith and I did drawings and a series of 20 virtual realities as Adolf and Eva. We are not trying to be accurate representations of Adolf and Eva, that's not the point. We're amalgamations of a number of characters. I'm not German. I'm not a German Adolf Hitler, I'm an American Hitler, the character's a buffoon American. Lilith is not trying to be Eva Braun, she's being something else. On the other side of that is that we both spent time in the past couple years reading about Adolf Hitler, Eva Braun, and fascism—mass paranoia and the forming of psychosis on a mass level. What comes out of the thinking and reading who knows? I'm writing a script. *A&E* (2019–) is the male and the female in nature, and the give and takes, and the drop in the hole. This might be what it actually is about.

In the drawing session, we're some version of Eva Braun and Adolf Hitler, but it's something else. We are on that table, making the drawing, and Lilith is free to do whatever she wants. I might draw and she's free to draw or sit on me or whatever. These sessions go on for days.

In the exhibition, the stack in the middle of the room is the tables we drew on and the chairs Lilith and I sat on during the action. The platform piece is called *Eva Eve Throne, Santa Anita* (2020). We video recorded every drawing session. I don't know how many hours there are. On the shelf of one of the tables of the throne, there are eight speakers playing eight channels of audio from the recordings of making 16 of the drawings.



Paul McCarthy, *NV HOLLYWOOD*, 2019. charcoal, oil stick, pencil, peanut butter, tape on paper. 97.75 x 73.25 x 1.25 inches. © Paul McCarthy. Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth.

Rail: These renderings of language and cartoon faces, almost like a Murakami Hitler, are coming from these sessions, right, where you're literally acting out, on the canvas, these characters and their roles?

McCarthy: In a way, the image of Hitler becomes like an emoji or a cartoon character. In the drawings there are references to Adolf and Adam and Eva and Eve. *A&E*, *Adolf and Eva* is about the relationship of male and female desire and violence. All these drawings are connected to the actions—the performance and the actions. The performances and the drawings are layered. I made multiple audio recordings so that when you go in the room you hear eight channels. These are the sounds of eight different drawings going on at the same time, mixing together. I'm in the process of editing the videos. I think there are 17 of them, each a few hours long. I want to show them all in one room, a layered audio/video mix. The monitors against the wall, like the drawings on the wall. We did one *NV* drawing session and two *A&E* drawing sessions. Day after day. The *A&E* video performance project is the work, it may not be about the ending. It's about being in it, muddling in the shit. The drawings are spin-offs, taken out of their house, and are deeply related.