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**For Immediate Release**

**Death Is Irrelevant: Selections from the Marc and Livia Straus Collection**

Opening Celebration: Saturday, October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2018 12-7 PM

On view October 13, 2018—August 2, 2019

“Death is a mirror in which the entire meaning of life is reflected.”

— Sogyal Rinpoche, *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*

**Peekskill, NY (August 31, 2018)** - Through a selection of figurative sculptures curated from the Marc and Livia Straus Collection, *Death Is Irrelevant* looks at how artists consider their existence and how they express their present socio-political and personal situation. The exhibition questions if making art is a method of self-preservation, a road to immortality. Like Prometheus, who shaped man out of mud, and Athena who breathed life into his clay figure, does the act of creation suggest a material obduracy to exist? Whether figurative sculpture is a form of self-reflection or outward projection of ideas of the surrounding world, the featured artworks in *Death Is Irrelevant* open the dialogue to acknowledge one’s fragility and mortality as revealed in the works by artists from 17 countries.

**Expressive Simulacras**

This exhibition spans over 40 years (1975–2018), suggesting a historical investigation into the concept of ‘now.’ Indeed, in Pawel Althamer’s (Poland, 2017) “The Power of Now,” a full-size figure slumps in the corner of a park bench fully clothed as a miner replete with mask. The figure is on a break, perhaps from exhausting work. In the background we hear a man speaking, the philosopher Eckhart Tolle, saying that with acceptance one frees one’s mind. Entang Wiharso’s (Indonesia, 2014) “Inheritance,” is a large tableau of him and his family around the dining room table, a commentary on the challenge of his children growing up in both Western and Indonesian cultures. Folkert DeJong’s (Netherlands, 2004) “Dust” is an elegiac commentary on war and, the title work by Damien Hirst (UK, 2000) *Death is Irrelevant*, slyly touches on religion, death and immortality.

Here the object is a bookmark of its time and place that persists after its creator’s passing. The strength of a work is in its universality. While it speaks of the moment it also speaks for all times and across all cultures. Thus Adrian Villar Rojas’s (Argentina, 2016) *The Theater of Disappearance*, powerfully suggests that mankind faces the same issues of oppression over centuries and across cultures.



Sam Jinks, *Standing Pieta*, 2014



## **The State of Now**

History is sparse in quietude. The 40 years encompassed by this exhibition reflects this fact. The featured artists see their works as engagement to their times, playing with the irony of the polity, wealth and status bookended by anti-gay sentiment, feminism, drugs, crime, the devastation of the AIDS epidemic, anti-war demonstrations. These issues now come full circle: a new cold war, gun violence, far-right hatermongering, minorities and children as targets, dissension as rhetoric while political leadership stands impotent. *Death Is Irrelevant* looks somewhat obliquely at the zeitgeist through the lens of the various epochs in which the works were created, and presses to the forefront the urgencies of understanding our own times.

Since its founding in 2004, the theme oriented, non-collection-based exhibitions featured at the Hudson Valley Museum of Contemporary Art (Hudson Valley MOCA), spawned educational programs that have taught history and addressed cross cultural tensions, hopefully leading to a more humanitarian understanding by its students. The vision for Hudson Valley MOCA is deeply connected to the collecting practices of its founders, that art, society and social issues are inextricably linked and that excellence of artistic execution universalizes its themes.

Unlike previous Hudson Valley MOCA exhibitions that borrowed works connected to the titled theme, this exhibition will draw from the founder's private collection to reflect on the history of their half century of collecting, their passion and support for the arts and the way they have used the arts to educate and to support each emerging artistic generation.

*Death Is Irrelevant: Selections from the Marc and Livia Straus Collection, 1968–2018* is co-curated by Ken Tan, Tim Hawkinson, MARC STRAUS Gallery, in collaboration with the Marc and Livia Straus Family.

## **Featured Artists:**

Pawel Althamer (Poland), Huma Bhabha (Pakistan), Berlinde DeBruyckere (Belgium), Folkert de Jong (Netherlands), Keith Edmier (USA), Nicole Eisenman (USA), Red Grooms (USA), Damien Hirst (UK), Sam Jinks (Australia), Matt Johnson (USA), Chris Jones (UK), Mark Manders (Netherlands), Tony Matelli (USA), Maria Nepomuceno (Brazil), Evan Penny (Canada), Patricia Piccinini (Australia), Rona Pondick (USA), Adrián Villar Rojas (Argentina), Italo Scanga (Italy), Claudette Schreuders (South Africa), Abdi Setiawan (Indonesia), Kiki Smith, (USA), Rebecca Warren (UK), Paloma Varga Weisz (Germany), Olav Westphalen (Germany), and Entang Wiharso (Indonesia).

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Hudson Valley MOCA, formerly known as Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art, and located in Peekskill, NY, is a 501(c)(3) non-profit arts and education center dedicated to the enrichment of the Hudson Valley and Peekskill, New York, a multicultural community and emerging arts destination.

## **Public Information:**

Hudson Valley MOCA, 1701 Main Street, PO Box 209, Peekskill, NY 10566, (914) 788-0100, [hudsonvalleymoca.org](http://hudsonvalleymoca.org). Hours, beginning October 13: Friday, 11:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.; Saturday & Sunday, 12:00-6:00 p.m. Museum Admission: \$10 adults; \$5 Peekskill residents, seniors, students, children over 8; free for members and children 8 and under.

HUDSON VALLEY MOCA

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