Alex Da Corteâ€™s Enchanting Commission for The Metâ€™s Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Roof Garden to Open April 16

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New York City, NY - For The Met’s 2021 Roof Garden Commission, Philadelphia-based artist Alex Da Corte (born 1980) has created a 26-foot-tall kinetic sculpture featuring the beloved Sesame Street character Big Bird and the modern aesthetic of Alexander Calder’s standing mobiles. The Roof Garden Commission: Alex Da Corte, As Long as the Sun Lasts will be on view April 16 through October 31, 2021.

The exhibition is supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies.

Additional support is provided by Cynthia Hazen Polsky and Leon B. Polsky.

Max Hollein, Marina Kellen French Director of The Met, commented, “Alex Da Corte’s bold work for the Cantor Roof Garden oscillates between joy and melancholy, and brings a playful message of optimism and reflection. The installation, which the artist initiated just as the pandemic was taking hold, invites us to look through a familiar, popular, modern lens at our own condition in a transformed emotional landscape. As the sculpture gently rotates in the wind, it calls us in an assuring way to pause and reflect: We are reminded that stability is an illusion, but ultimately what we see is a statement of belief in the potential of transformation.”

Sheena Wagstaff, Leonard A. Lauder Chairman of Modern and Contemporary Art, added, “By tapping icons of art and popular culture from our collective consciousness, Alex Da Corte has created a new type of monument with this commission. Played out between earth and sky via the benign intercessor of a big, anthropomorphic bird, we are offered the divine possibility of innocence and play as a redemptive power that is spirited, absurd, and deadly serious.”

The work is comprised of a base with three interlocking pieces and a mobile component that sways and rotates gently with passing air currents. With his design, Da Corte evokes the liveliness and unpredictability of Calder’s practice, while also emphasizing a do-it-yourself inventiveness by fashioning the base of the work in the modular language of an outdoor activity set by Little Tikes, which requires no tools for assembly and can be easily reconfigured. Suspended from near the top of the sculpture, covered in roughly 7,000 individually placed laser-cut aluminum feathers, Big Bird is found perched on a crescent moon with a ladder in hand—suggesting the possibility of passage back to Earth or to other galaxies. Sitting alone, gazing out at the New York skyline, Big Bird has an introspective, melancholic disposition that is amplified by Da Corte’s decision to render the character in blue instead of yellow. This choice of color also gestures to the artist’s personal associations with Big Bird: growing up partially in Venezuela, he watched the Brazilian version of Sesame Street, in which Big Bird’s counterpart, Garibaldo, was blue. The color also alludes to the 1985 film Sesame Street Presents: Follow That Bird , in which the character, while out on a road trip, is captured and painted blue by two carnival operators.

The title for the commission comes from a collection of whimsical short stories by the Italian author Italo Calvino about the potential of new explorations.

The Roof Garden Commission: Alex Da Corte, As Long as the Sun Lasts was conceived by the artist in consultation with Sheena Wagstaff, Leonard A. Lauder Chairman of Modern and Contemporary Art, and Shanay Jhaveri, Assistant Curator of International Modern and Contemporary Art, both of The Met’s Department of Modern and Contemporary Art. It is the ninth in a series of site-specific commissions for the outdoor space.

The exhibition is accompanied by a publication featuring an interview with the artist along with essays by Jhaveri and Jack Halberstam, Professor of Gender Studies and English at Columbia University. It is richly illustrated with images that document Da Corte’s creative process from inspiration to fabrication.

The publication is made possible by the Mary and Louis S. Myers Foundation Endowment Fund.

About the Artist

Alex Da Corte was born in 1980 in Camden, New Jersey, and lives and works in Philadelphia. After training as an animator at the School of Visual Arts in New York City, he received a BFA in Printmaking/Fine Arts from the University of the Arts in Philadelphia and an MFA from Yale University. Da Corte works across a range of media, including film, performance, painting, installation, and sculpture, and his practice is invested in deconstructing and reinventing those objects and cultural icons that are not only familiar and beloved but also contested. His work was included in the 2019 Venice Biennale and the 2018 Carnegie International in Pittsburgh. Museums that have mounted solo exhibitions include the Prada Rong Zhai in Shanghai (2020), Kölnischer Kunstverein in Cologne (2018), Secession in Vienna (2017), MASS MoCA in North Adams, Massachusetts (2016), and the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam (2015). In March 2020, Da Corte reinvented Allan Kaprow's performance Chicken (1962) as part of Invisible City: Philadelphia and the Vernacular Avant-Garde .

About The Roof Garden Commission

The Roof Garden Commission series was established in 2013 by The Met’s Department of Modern and Contemporary Art. The series of site-specific commissions on The Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Roof Garden has featured work by Imran Qureshi (2013), Dan Graham (2014), Pierre Huyghe (2015), Cornelia Parker (2016), Adrián Villar Rojas (2017), Huma Bhabha (2018), Alicja Kwade (2019), and, most recently, Héctor Zamora (2020).

The Roof Garden Commission: Alex Da Corte, As Long as the Sun Lasts is featured on The Met’s website , as well as on Facebook , Instagram , and Twitter via the hashtag #CantorRoof.

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