

**For Immediate Release:** January 28, 2009

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**NINE LIVES: VISIONARY ARTISTS FROM L.A.**

**Lisa Anne Auerbach, Julie Becker, Llyn Foulkes, Charles Irvin, Hirsch Perlman, Victoria Reynolds, Kaari Upson, Jeffrey Vallance, and Charlie White**

The Hammer Museum presents its next invitational exhibition

celebrating Los Angeles-based artists

On view March 8 – May 31, 2009



**Los Angeles, CA - *Nine Lives: Visionary Artists from L.A.*** is the fifth in the Hammer Museum's biannual invitational exhibition series highlighting work created in greater Los Angeles. ***Nine Lives*** features over 125 works, much of it new, by nine artists spanning four generations — **Lisa Anne Auerbach, Julie Becker, Llyn Foulkes, Charles Irvin, Hirsch Perlman, Victoria Reynolds, Kaari Upson, Jeffrey Vallance, and Charlie White.** The works include video, paintings, drawings, photography, textiles, and two new sculptural installations. As all of the artists live and work in L.A., ***Nine Lives*** embodies many of the psychic complexities and paradoxes of the city – it is at once beautiful and frightening, refined and unruly.

The reinvention of oneself is central to several of these nine artists' practices. They create characters and tell stories of fantasy and science fiction, building alternate worlds grounded on their obsessions. Popular culture, folk and urban mythology are common themes, as are alternative lifestyles, conspiracy theories, forgotten rites and subcultures. The exhibition is curated by Ali Subotnick and it is her first large-scale project since she joined the curatorial team at the Hammer in 2006.

"In approaching this exhibition, I chose to concentrate on nine idiosyncratic artists who struck me as being especially hard to define or categorize," said curator Ali Subotnick. "The artists

**Images L to R:** Hirsch Perlman. *An Animus Cat Amok & Asunder*, 2008. Chromogenic print, (182.9 x 246.4 cm).

Courtesy the artist and Blum & Poe, Los Angeles. Llyn Foulkes. *Dali and Me*, 2006. Mixed media, (83.8 x 66 cm). The Collection of Patrick and Soo Jin Jeong-Painter. Victoria Reynolds. *Flight of the Reindeer*, 2003. Oil on panel, (81.3 x 111.1 cm, framed). Collection of Barry Sloane. Photo: Tony Cuñha.

are intriguing because they dive so deeply into their own fabricated worlds that a kind of myopic vision occurs, which very viscerally communicates their fears, dreams, anxieties, fantasies, curiosities, and moral concerns.”

These nine artists play make believe, perform mad science experiments, conduct intense research projects, and lead treasure hunts. They are amateur anthropologists, biographers , behavioral profilers, passionate collectors and documentarians. The luxury of space and privacy that Los Angeles affords allows them the freedom to tinker, research, and explore their obsessions which often parallel Hollywood’s dream factory.

“The Hammer’s biannual invitational exhibitions are terrific opportunities to explore the unlimited modes of artistic expression in this city,” says Ann Philbin Director of the Hammer Museum. “Each of these exhibitions – *Eden’s Edge*, *Thing*, *International Paper*, and *Snapshot* – has brought a wholly unique perspective and surprising look at artists working in L.A. and beyond. *Nine Lives* continues this tradition beautifully.”

The show is comprised of nine distinct sections, each one presenting a single artist’s work. Llyn Foulkes, the senior artist in the group, sets the pace in the first gallery with a work of haunting intensity. Foulkes holds a special place in the history of Los Angeles art, and his influence on younger generations is pervasive.

**Lisa Anne Auerbach’s** artistic practice is multi-faceted -- she is a writer, a passionate advocate of bicycling, a knitter, a photographer, and a political activist. Auerbach has co-opted the traditional female craft of knitting and transformed it into a tool for wry, pointed political messages. Her contribution to the exhibition includes sweaters with hand-knit political jokes and riddles, as well as ‘cover girl’ self-portrait photographs featuring the artist in deadpan poses revealing the her sly sense of humor.

**Julie Becker’s** work is often based on the obsessive imagined intimate details of fictional characters. For this exhibition Becker shows video, photographs, collages, drawings, and sculptures from the ongoing *(w)hole* project which is based on the life of the deceased former tenant of her last apartment. She weaves connections between the mysterious man’s life and her own.

**Llyn Foulkes’s** career can be traced from his First Award for Painting at the Fifth Paris Biennale in 1967, through his participation in the legendary *Helter Skelter* (1992) exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. This exhibition will include ten works spanning four decades that use both humor and horror to expose the hypocrisies and the absurdities of American culture.

**Charles Irvin** presents, in addition to drawings and paintings, a new video in the style of conspiracy theory documentaries, exploring the origins and agenda of the False Memory Syndrome Foundation, a support group for individuals who claim to have been falsely accused of perpetrating child sexual abuse.

**Hirsch Perlman** makes photographs and videos that capture mysterious landscapes, strange experiments, enigmatic characters, and unexplained phenomena. For this exhibition Perlman made a new body of photographs—portraits of a cat shot with a 4 x 5 camera – which are studies of movement and stillness, both beautiful and haunting at the same time.

**Victoria Reynolds** creates rich, highly detailed paintings of raw meat. She paints pictures of venison, bacon strips, tripe, and reindeer meat in bold strokes, often encasing the paintings in elaborate rococo frames, which give the meat an almost regal portraiture quality. The sinewy tissues and tendrils resemble gems, pearls, and blossoms both seductive and repulsive.

**Kaari Upson** has created a new installation which re-imagines the grotto at the Playboy mansion with several video projections and a bubbling pond. It is a continuation of the ongoing *Larry Project*, which investigates the life and identity of a stranger whose personal items Upson discovered in an abandoned burned out home in 2005. First shown as a *Hammer Project* in 2007, this body of work confronts ideas about identity and privacy as Upson explores a bizarre fantasy life with this stranger whose biography she has become absorbed with.

**Jeffrey Vallance** is a collector of objects from all over the world and is often described as an amateur anthropologist. However, unlike most anthropological studies, Vallance's work zeros in on the overlooked treasures of everyday life. He takes kitschy and seemingly banal objects and ideas and transforms them into humorous works of art. For this exhibition, Vallance presents one of his many object collections which is displayed on a replica of a wall from his home.

**Charlie White's** work reflects his fascination with mainstream American popular culture and his interest in subcultures. In this show, White presents a new video, *American Minor* (2008) which explores the angst and boredom of a pre-teen girl, and a new photo series pairing teenage girls and pre-op transwomen, both on the verge of womanhood.

The exhibition is accompanied by a full-color catalog designed by the Purtill Family Business. The catalog includes an introductory essay by curator Ali Subotnick and the short story *Golden Land*, written by William Faulkner in 1935, during his brief time as a Los Angeles transplant. Related public programs include live music, films, lectures, artists' talks, and panel discussions.

*Hammer Invitationals*, inaugurated in 2001 with *Snapshot: New Art from Los Angeles*, is a series of biennial exhibitions dedicated to offering critical, museum-based consideration of recent art. *International Paper* (2003), *THING: New Sculpture from Los Angeles* (2005), winner of the International Association of Art Critic's "Best Thematic Show Nationally," *Eden's Edge: Fifteen LA Artists* (2007), followed, and *Nine Lives: Visionary Artists from L.A.* opens in March 2009.

This exhibition has received major support from The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. Additional support has been generously provided by Linda and Jerry Janger, Barbara and Peter Benedek, David Teiger, the Pasadena Art Alliance, Joel Portnoy, John Rubeli, and Alisa and Kevin Ratner.

The catalog is published with the assistance of The Getty Foundation.

### **ABOUT THE HAMMER MUSEUM**

The Hammer Museum, a public arts unit of the University of California, Los Angeles, is dedicated to exploring the diversity of artistic expression through the ages. Its collections, exhibitions, and programs span the classic to the cutting-edge in art, architecture, and design, recognizing that artists play a crucial role in all aspects of culture and society.

Founded by Dr. Armand Hammer in 1990, the museum houses the Armand Hammer Collection of Old Master, Impressionist, and Post-Impressionist paintings and the Armand Hammer Daumier and Contemporaries Collection. Associated UCLA collections include the Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts, comprising more than 45,000 prints, drawings, photographs, and artists' books from the Renaissance to the present; and the Franklin D. Murphy Sculpture Garden on the UCLA campus. The Hammer's newest collection, the Hammer Contemporary Collection, is led by works on paper, particularly drawings and photographs from 1960 to the present.

The Hammer presents major single-artist and thematic exhibitions of historical and contemporary art. It also presents approximately ten Hammer Projects exhibitions each year, providing international and local artists with a laboratory-like environment to create new work or to present existing work in a new context.

As a cultural center, the Hammer offers a diverse range of free public programs throughout the year, including lectures, readings, symposia, film screenings, and music performances. The Hammer's Billy Wilder Theater houses these widely acclaimed public programs and is the new home of the UCLA Film & Television Archive's renowned cinematheque.