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**Hammer Museum Presents *Jimmie Durham: At the Center of the World*
First North American retrospective, nearly 200 works from 1970 to present
On View January 29 – May 7, 2017**



(Los Angeles, CA)— The Hammer Museum presents [*Jimmie Durham: At the Center of the World*](#), the **first North American retrospective** of artist, performer, poet, essayist, and activist **Jimmie Durham** (b. 1940, Washington, Arkansas) who is one of the most compelling and inventive artists working internationally today. After studying art in Geneva and then returning to the United States and working for the American Indian Movement for several years, Durham became part of the vibrant New York downtown art scene in the 1980s. In 1987 he moved to Cuernavaca, Mexico, and then to Europe in 1994. While his work has been widely shown and critically embraced in Europe and elsewhere, he has rarely exhibited in the U.S. during the last two decades. Nonetheless, Durham’s work is meaningfully connected to important activities, movements, and genres of American art since the 1980s—including assemblage using found objects, appropriation of text and image, institutional critique, the politics of representation, performance art—and, moreover, to the colonial history and political struggles of the country.

At the Center of the World, the artist’s **first major U.S. exhibition since 1995**, features **nearly 200 works** from Durham’s expansive practice including **sculpture, drawing, collage, printmaking, photography, and video**, dating from 1970 to present. With strategic wit and humor, his works tackle important issues like the vital role of art in critical thinking, modes of representation, genocide, and statehood. Boundlessly curious, Durham takes on subject matter ranging from specific historical events or figures—such as Malinche and Cortez—to classical architecture, religious martyrdom, quantum physics, and literary sources from Shakespeare to Jose Saramago. Durham’s work offers a vital perspective on present-day discussions about the relationship between the local and the global; the interface between art and activism; and the history of sculpture as a medium tactically and conceptually entwined with everyday life. *Jimmie Durham: At the Center of the World* is on view at the Hammer from **January 29 – May 7, 2017**.

“We’re thrilled that one of the first exhibitions in our newly renovated galleries will be *Jimmie Durham: At the Center of the World*,” said **Hammer Director Ann Philbin**. “Durham is an important American artist whose work is crucial to a full understanding of the history of American art. He provides a singular and vital perspective on America’s colonial history, while also approaching his work from a distinctly

Image captions: (Left): Jimmie Durham, *Choose Any Three*, 1989. Carved ash, magnolia, pine, metal, glass, acrylic paint. 99 ¼ × 49 ¼ × 48 in. (252 × 125 × 122 cm). Hammer Museum, Los Angeles. Purchased with partial funds provided by Susan Bay Nimoy and Leonard Nimoy. Image courtesy of kurimanzutto, Mexico City. (Middle): Jimmie Durham, *Something...Perhaps a Fugue or an Elegy*, 2005. Cameras, television, VHS player, amplifier, tripod, steel pipes, hardware, PVC pipes, plas-tic, rope, acrylic paint, pine, seashell, brass heads, cast marble-dust head, oak box, glass bottle, wood furniture parts, tree branches, tire, mirrors, metal lock, metal chains, lights, wires, plywood pallets, armadillo shell, cow skull and bones, ink on paper. 71 × 275 ½ × 63 in. (180 × 700 × 160 cm). Fondazione Morra Greco, Naples, Italy. Image courtesy of kurimanzutto, Mexico City. (Right): Jimmie Durham, *Malinche*, 1988-1992. Guava, pine branches, oak, snakeskin, rope, polyester bra soaked in acrylic resin and painted gold, watercolor, cactus leaf, canvas, cotton cloth, metal, feathers, plastic jewelry, glass eye. 70 × 23 5/8 × 35 in. (177 × 60 × 89 cm). Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (SMAK), Ghent, Belgium. Image ©S.M.A.K. / Dirk Pauwels.

international position, believing that artists should be citizens of the world.”

“Durham’s interests are broad—history, science, architecture are recurring subjects, for example—and his wide-ranging work as an artist, essayist, poet, and activist cannot easily be defined. His distinctive wit, attentiveness to materials, and interest in language are central to his practice,” **said exhibition curator Anne Ellegood**. “Durham’s works represent what art does at its best: interrogate, complicate, implicate, remind, lament, satirize, and savor, giving us hope that intelligence today might outweigh the stupidity of yesterday.”

The retrospective is organized in roughly chronological order, elucidating various aspects of Durham’s practice:

- At the core of Durham’s practice is **process-driven sculptural assemblage**, which can take the form of a small wall relief, a human-scale freestanding sculpture, or a room-size installation. Combining natural elements with manufactured objects, much of it discarded or found and reanimated by the artist, the works question ingrained hierarchies of materials and mediums as well as the modernist preoccupation with originality and artistic heroicism.
- The exhibition traces Durham’s ongoing use of **materials such as wood, stone, and animal parts (skin, fur, bone)**, and his deep knowledge of not only the physical properties of his chosen materials, but their geographic, economic, and cultural histories.
- Durham is committed to **philosophical and critical inquiry** and positions his art in opposition to categorization, monumentality, and what he sees as corrupt systems of belief. He is committed to shedding light on the complexities and limitations of historical narratives, notions of authenticity, and the borders and boundaries that try to contain us.
- An accomplished writer, Durham’s works often **combine texts with objects**, putting language and materials into energetic interplay. The combinations suggest possible meanings while also elucidating the playfulness of language, how it can be wielded to mislead or oppress, and its limited capacity to truly describe our experiences.

TOUR

Jimmie Durham: At the Center of the World will travel to the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis from June 22 – October 8, 2017; the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York from November 3, 2017 – January 28, 2018; and the Remai Modern in Saskatoon, Canada in Spring 2018.

CATALOGUE

Jimmie Durham: At the Center of the World is accompanied by a beautifully illustrated catalogue comprising several scholarly essays, an interview with the artist, a chronology, and a selection of Durham’s poetry and essays dating from 1974 and including a new essay written for this volume. With a major essay by exhibition curator **Anne Ellegood** and contributions by the renowned scholars and writers **Jennifer A. González, Jessica L. Horton, Fred Moten, Paul Chaat Smith, MacKenzie Stevens, Elisabeth Sussman, and Jessica Berlanga Taylor**, the catalogue examines the impact and importance of Durham’s work in the context of American art; recounts his participation in New York’s downtown art scene in the 1980s and his time living in Cuernavaca, Mexico; explores his attentiveness to materials and inventive use of humor and language; and highlights his ongoing emphasis on acts of resistance, ambiguity, and art as a critical and social discourse. An interview with Durham explores his philosophy and ethics, and a detailed

chronology covers the early years of his career and subsequent practice in Europe, where he has lived since 1994. The catalogue is designed by Purtill Family Business and co-published by the Hammer Museum and DelMonico Books•Prestel.

PROGRAMS

The Hammer Museum is offering a rich slate of public programs to accompany and expand upon the exhibition, including screenings, poetry readings, exhibition walkthroughs, performances, workshops, panels and lectures. Visit hammer.ucla.edu for a full list of related programs.

Exhibition Tours

Sunday, January 29, 2017, 2–3 p.m. and 2:30–3:30 p.m.

Anne Ellegood, senior curator, and **MacKenzie Stevens**, curatorial assistant, lead walkthroughs of the exhibition.

Interrogate, Complicate, Implicate: The Work of Jimmie Durham

Tuesday, February 21, 7:30 p.m.

Throughout his 45-year career, Jimmie Durham has resisted hierarchies, systems of categorization, and monumentality in a practice that embraces materiality, humor, and the play of language. Exhibition curator **Anne Ellegood** provides an overview of Durham's work and its distinct position within art history and vital perspective on colonization, statehood, and the politics of representation. **Abraham Cruzvillegas** and **Jeffrey Gibson**—artists and friends of Durham—then join Ellegood to discuss Durham's work and influence.

The Politics and Problematics of Representation

Thursday, March 9, 7:30 p.m.

Jimmie Durham was active in the 1980s New York City downtown art scene during a period of politically urgent exhibitions and calls for increased visibility for artists of color. This climate of "multiculturalism" created opportunities for artists but also reinforced existing racial and cultural divides. Moderated by exhibition curator **Anne Ellegood**, art historians **Richard Hill** and **Miwon Kwon** and curator **Elisabeth Sussman** discuss representation in Durham's work and how current art practices grapple with identity, difference, and marginalization.

Evening of Poetry Readings

Wednesday, April 5, 7:30 p.m.

Organized by the highly acclaimed Acoma Pueblo poet and writer Simon J. Ortiz, this event features Ortiz alongside a number of prominent writers whose writing actively engage with indigenous life and culture. Invited participants will read from Jimmie Durham's poetry, fiction, and essays, as well as their own writing.

Artist Walkthroughs

Litia Perta, February 9, 6 p.m.

James Luna, February 21, 6 p.m.

Sam Durant, March 1, 6 p.m.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Jimmie Durham was born in Washington, Arkansas, in 1940. He is a Native American of Cherokee descent.

In 1968 he enrolled at L'École des Beaux-Arts in Geneva, where he worked primarily in performance and sculpture. At this time, he formed an organization with indigenous friends from South America called Incomindios, which attempted to coordinate and encourage support for the struggle of Indians of the Americas. A lifelong activist, in 1973 he returned to the United States to participate in the occupation at Wounded Knee, in South Dakota, and became a full-time organizer for the American Indian Movement (AIM); he would become a member of their Central Council in 1975. That same year he became the executive director of the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC) in New York City and was made the representative of American Indians to the United Nations, the first minority group to have official representation within the organization. In 1980 he quit AIM and returned to a focus on art making. Throughout this decade his work addressed questions of identity, modes of representation, and colonial violence and genocide, specifically related to the experiences of indigenous peoples in the Americas. He was the director of

the Foundation for the Community of Artists in New York City from 1981 to 1983, and from 1982 to 1985 edited their monthly *Art and Artists Newspaper* (formerly *Artworkers News*). In 1987 Durham moved to Cuernavaca, Mexico, and in 1994 immigrated to Europe. He has lived in Dublin, Brussels, Marseille, and Rome, and currently splits his time between Berlin and Naples. Since moving to Europe, his work has been less explicitly about his personal experiences or background and has addressed cultural politics more broadly, returning to subjects such as language and translation, monumentality, history, and ideology. Durham has professed a desire to remain “homeless,” living everywhere and nowhere simultaneously.

Durham’s exhibition history spans several decades and continents. Recent solo exhibitions include *Here at the Center*, Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, Berlin (2015); *Venice: Objects, Work and Tourism*, Fondazione Querini Stampalia, Venice (2015); and *Various Items and Complaints*, Serpentine Gallery, London (2015). Group shows include *Take It or Leave It: Institution, Image, Ideology* at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2014); the Whitney Biennial (2014); and Documenta (2012), among many others. A retrospective of his work—*A Matter of Life and Death and Singing*—was organized by the Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst, Antwerp (2012), and a survey of his work from 1994 forward, *Pierres rejetées... (Rejected stones...)*, took place at the Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (2009). Durham’s works are included in major public collections around the world, including the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Museum of Modern Art and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Art Institute of Chicago and Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Tate Modern, London; Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst, Antwerp; Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, Ghent; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin; and Museo Jumex, Mexico City, among others.

An essayist and poet, Durham has published many texts in journals such as *Artforum*, *Art Journal*, and *Third Text*. His book of poems, *Columbus Day*, was published in 1983 by West End Press, Minneapolis. His collected essays, *A Certain Lack of Coherence*, was published in 1993 by Kala Press. In 2013 *Jimmie Durham: Waiting to Be Interrupted, Selected Writings 1993–2012* was published by Mousse Publishing and Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst, Antwerp (with a Spanish translation forthcoming), and his book of poetry *Poems That Do Not Go Together* was published by Edition Hansjörg Maye.

CREDIT

Jimmie Durham: At the Center of the World is organized by Anne Ellegood, senior curator, with MacKenzie Stevens, curatorial assistant.

Jimmie Durham: At the Center of the World is presented by Beverly Center and its owner Taubman.

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ABOUT THE HAMMER MUSEUM

The Hammer Museum at UCLA offers exhibitions and collections that span classic to contemporary art, as well as programs that spark meaningful encounters with art and ideas. Through a wide-ranging, international exhibition program and the biennial, *Made in L.A.*, the Hammer highlights contemporary art since the 1960s, especially the work of emerging and under recognized artists. The exhibitions, permanent collections, and nearly 300 public programs annually—including film screenings, lectures, symposia, readings, music performances, and workshops for families—are all free to the public.

HAMMER MUSEUM INFORMATION

Admission to all exhibitions and programs at the Hammer Museum is free, made possible through the generosity of benefactors Erika J. Glazer and Brenda R. Potter. Hours: Tuesday–Friday 11 a.m.–8 p.m., Saturday & Sunday 11 a.m.–5 p.m. Closed Mondays and national holidays. Hammer Museum, 10899 Wilshire Boulevard at Westwood, Los Angeles. Onsite parking \$6 (maximum 3 hours) or \$6 flat rate after 6 p.m. Visit hammer.ucla.edu for details or call 310-443-7000.