

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HAMMER MUSEUM ORGANIZES FIRST LARGE-SCALE MUSEUM EXHIBITION IN THE UNITED STATES TO EXPLORE THE CAREER OF MEXICO CITY-BASED ARTIST FRANCIS ALÿS

Los Angeles, CA – *Francis Alÿs: Politics of Rehearsal*, the first large-scale museum exhibition in the United States devoted to the career of Mexico City-based artist Francis Alÿs will be on view at the Hammer Museum September 30, 2007 through February 10, 2008. Alÿs is widely considered to be among the most important artists working today. He works in a wide range of media, including painting, drawing, performance, film, video installation, animation, and photography. No matter the medium he chooses to employ, all his work has a simplicity that makes it instantly accessible and a complexity that continues to resonate long after the work has first been seen. Alÿs is a teller of visual stories, potent myths that can be told and re-told. From the beginning of his career as an artist, Alÿs has adopted a way of working that tends to reject conclusions in favor of repetition and recalibration. He has, that is, put the idea of rehearsal at the heart of his practice.

About the Exhibition

To date, exhibitions of Alÿs's work have emphasized issues of place, particularly connections to Mexico City, his adopted home. In contrast, this thematic retrospective will focus on concepts of rehearsal and repetition, failure and success, storytelling and performance, exploring how these ideas inform Alÿs's varied practice. *Francis Alÿs: Politics of Rehearsal* is organized by Russell Ferguson, Chair, Department of Art, University of California, Los Angeles, and Adjunct Curator, Hammer Museum, and the exhibition's conceptual framework of rehearsal and related themes arose from conversations between Ferguson and Alÿs over several years. Alÿs has described the work as "a sort of discursive argument composed of episodes, metaphors or parables, staging the experience of time in Latin America."

In the late nineties Alÿs began specifically to examine the mechanisms of rehearsal as such. His film *Rehearsal 1*, (1999) shows a red Volkswagen attempting to reach the top of a steep hill in Tijuana. At the same time we hear a soundtrack that consists of a *danzon* band attempting to learn a new song. The two elements are in fact synchronized. Each time the band break down and abandon the attempt to play through the song, the car's driver (Alÿs) also gives up, and the car rolls backwards down the hill again. As Alÿs has described this work: "The stubborn repetition effect hints at a story which is constantly delayed, and where the attempt to formulate the story takes the lead over the story itself. It is a story of struggle rather than one of achievement, an allegory in process rather than a quest for synthesis."

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Similarly pairing music and incomplete activity, *Rehearsal 2*, (2001) features a woman rehearsing an old-fashioned strip-tease against a bare stage curtain. The exhibition will also feature other works that engage with the idea of rehearsal, among them some of Alÿs's most acclaimed pieces. One such work, *Song for Lupita* (1998), is an animated film loop of a woman pouring water back and forth between two glasses. The animation is accompanied by the endless repetition of a specially recorded musical soundtrack. *R.e.h.e.a.r.s.a.l.* (2000) shows an animator working on the word "rehearsal" itself. It is a pyramid structure that slowly advances letter by letter to the whole word, then steps down again. Another piece, *When Faith Moves Mountains* (2002), is a video projection documenting a performance in which several thousand volunteers equipped with shovels moved a giant sand-dune on the outskirts of Lima. The dune moved only a few inches, but it did move, thanks to the coordinated efforts of a huge number of people.

All of the work in the exhibition will be accompanied by the beautiful and fragile preparatory drawings for which Alÿs is renowned, as well as by paintings, documents, and further video work.

***Francis Alÿs: Politics of Rehearsal* has been generously supported by Fundación/Colección Jumex and Heidi and Erik Murkoff. Additional support has been provided by the Peter Norton Family Foundation, the Flemish Community, and the David Teiger Curatorial Travel Fund.**

Public Programs and Catalogue

A full series of public programs are currently being planned to accompany the Hammer's presentation. In addition to a conversation between Ferguson and Alÿs, events may include a lecture on Alÿs's work by a specialist in contemporary art and culture, a panel discussion on modernity in Latin America, and screenings, exhibition tours, and gallery talks.

Francis Alÿs: Politics of Rehearsal will be accompanied by a full-color, hardcover catalogue written by the exhibition's curator, Russell Ferguson. Approximately 150 pages in length, it will provide an in-depth exploration of Alÿs's oeuvre, and investigate the artistic and intellectual contexts for his contributions to contemporary artistic discourse. The catalogue will feature full photographic and textual documentation of works in the exhibition, as well as comparative imagery from other works in Alÿs's oeuvre, and will be designed by the award-winning graphic designer Lorraine Wild of Green Dragon Office.

About Francis Alÿs

Francis Alÿs was born in Antwerp, Belgium, in 1959, and trained as an architect, studying both in his native country and in Venice, Italy. In 1986, he moved to Mexico City, and within a few years he had left the field of architecture for a broader-based visual arts practice. Along with Gabriel Orozco and Damien Ortega, Alÿs is one of the key members of a generation of Mexico City-based artists who emerged in the 1990s and have won world-wide acclaim.

Alÿs was first known primarily for paintings, made in collaboration with local sign painters from his neighborhood that questioned ideas of authenticity and replication. Since then he has become a highly regarded video artist, photographer, and orchestrator of performative events. He also continues to paint and draw extensively.

Alÿs's work has been the subject of numerous one-man exhibitions in Europe and Latin America, but in the United States his work has been shown only in group exhibitions and in a handful of projects,

most notably *The Modern Procession* (2002) at The Museum of Modern Art, New York. In *Francis Alÿs: Politics of Rehearsal*, the Hammer will for the first time bring works from across Alÿs's career and in a range of mediums to a broad audience.

Additional images available on request

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, recognizing that artists play a crucial role in all aspects of culture and society. The Hammer's collections, exhibitions, and programs span the classic to the cutting-edge, presenting historical and contemporary art, architecture, and design alongside selections from its permanent collections.

Founded by Dr. Armand Hammer in 1990, the Hammer's collections include 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 over 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 generated by its curators or organized in collaboration with other institutions. The Hammer also presents approximately ten Hammer Projects 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.

The Hammer is a lively cultural center offering a diverse range of free public programs throughout the year, including lectures, readings, symposia, film screenings, music performances, and other events. The Billy Wilder Theater opened at the Hammer Museum in late 2006. This state-of-the-art venue houses the Hammer's widely acclaimed public programs and is also the new home of the UCLA Film & Television Archive's renowned cinemathèque.

HAMMER MUSEUM INFORMATION

For current program and exhibition information call **310-443-7000** or visit **www.hammer.ucla.edu**.

Hours: Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, 11am – 7pm; Thursday, 11am – 9 pm; Sunday, 11am – 5 pm; closed Mondays, July 4, Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day.

Admission: \$5 for adults; \$3 for seniors (65+) and UCLA Alumni Association members; free for Museum members, students with identification, UCLA faculty/staff and visitors 17 and under. The Museum is free for everyone on Thursdays.

Location/Parking: The Hammer is located at 10899 Wilshire Boulevard, at Westwood Boulevard. Parking is available under the Museum. Rate is \$3 for three hours with Museum validation.

Hammer Museum Tours: For group tour reservations and information, call 310-443-7041.

The Hammer Museum is operated by the University of California, Los Angeles. Occidental Petroleum Corporation has partially endowed the Museum and constructed the Occidental Petroleum Cultural Center Building, which houses the Museum.

Image Credits (left to right): Still from *Rehearsal 1*, 1999-2004. In collaboration with Rafael Ortega. Video projection. *When Faith Moves Mountains*, 2002. In collaboration with Cuauhtémoc Medina and Rafael Ortega. Still from 16mm film transferred to DVD. 34 min. *Rehearsal 2*, 2001. In collaboration with Rafael Ortega. Still from projected video. Images courtesy of David Zwirner, New York.