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**Hammer Museum Presents *Lari Pittman: Declaration of Independence*
Most Comprehensive Retrospective of the Artist's Career
September 29, 2019–January 5, 2020**



(Los Angeles, CA)— The Hammer Museum presents *Lari Pittman: Declaration of Independence*, the most comprehensive retrospective to date of the work of American artist Lari Pittman (b. 1952, Los Angeles). A prolific painter and sharp social critic, Pittman has been a strong presence in both the international sphere and the L.A. art community. From his earliest experiments with collage and decoration, to the iconic paintings he produced in response to the AIDS crisis and culture wars of the 1990s, to his more recent mural-scale paintings and symbolic, stylized paintings of textiles paired with portraits, Pittman's works have remained prescient, incisive, and exquisitely rendered. This exhibition will include approximately 80 paintings and 50 works on paper drawn from the Hammer's own holdings as well as from many public and private collections throughout the world. On view September 29, 2019 – January 5, 2020, *Lari Pittman: Declaration of Independence* marks the first time the Hammer Museum has ever devoted all of its major exhibition spaces to a single living artist. Following its presentation at the Hammer, the exhibition will travel to Kistefos Museet in Jevnaker, Norway May 24 – October 5, 2020.

"In addition to being an extraordinary painter, Lari has been an important figure in the Los Angeles art community for the past four decades as both artist and teacher. He has influenced generations of artists as a professor in UCLA's art department, and is part of a generation of artists who emerged internationally in the 1990s." said **Hammer Director Ann Philbin**. "His paintings confront history, politics, violence, and sexuality in a highly aestheticized manner that is both exquisitely painted and deeply responsive to the issues of our time."

Pittman's highly detailed works on panel and paper—grand tales about love, sex, death, art, and citizenship—feature a rich visual language that he has developed over the course of his career, replete with owls, Victorian silhouettes, flying text, and exaggerated and sexualized bodies. These meticulously crafted works have become emblematic of a generation of queer artists who reclaimed ornamentation and lush detail during the 1980s, employing them as part of their political and personal iconography. At the same time Pittman shared the noirish sensibilities of many of his Los Angeles-based, artist peers whose influences included that era's thriving punk rock scene and the legendary Feminist Art Program

Images (L-R): Lari Pittman, *The Senseless Cycles*, *Tender and Benign*, *Bring Great Comfort*, 1988. Acrylic and spray paint on wood. 96 x 64 in. (243.8 x 162.6 cm). Art Institute of Chicago. Gift of Cari and Michael Sacks; Lari Pittman, *Transfigurative and Needy*, 1991. Acrylic and enamel on mahogany. 82 x 66 in. (208.3 x 167.6 cm). Collection of Gary and Tracy Mezzatesta; Lari Pittman, *Untitled #5*, 2010. Acrylic, Cel-Vinyl, and spray paint on gessoed canvas over wood. 102 x 88 in. (259.1 x 223.5 cm). Hammer Museum, Los Angeles. Purchase. All images © Lari Pittman, courtesy of Regen Projects, Los Angeles.

at CalArts. In 1992 his work was featured in the critically acclaimed MOCA exhibition *Helter Skelter: L.A. Art in the 1990s*, along with that of Mike Kelley, Liz Larner, Raymond Pettibon, Jim Shaw, and others. Pittman's blend of densely painted surfaces and codified references to sexuality and other charged topics, such as the history of racial violence in the United States, aligned his works with the discourse surrounding the contested body in the early 1990s.

In recent years Pittman has moved inward, depicting memories, subjects related to his own extensive history as a collector of Mexican craft and artifacts, and a diverse range of artistic influences. These paintings function as rich dreamscapes and provide insight into the artist's psyche. Key figures from art history are juxtaposed with references to the artist's own studio production—represented as birds, babies, vulvas, thought bubbles, and other points of origin. His painted surfaces have become smoother, accentuating the synthetic quality of the works and showcasing the artist's mastery of the medium. Among these recent works on view will be Pittman's cycle of mural-scale paintings titled *Flying Carpets* (2013).

Pittman generally works alone in the studio and has described painting as a physical activity that involves his entire body. His paintings are created without preliminary sketches, and their large scale mirrors the outsized, complex, and even mythic ideas that inform them. In contrast, his works on paper are more intimate and graphic, featuring fewer objects and a more pronounced flattening of illusionistic space. The drawings offer a quieter counterbalance to his paintings. Also on view are the artist's recent books, with feature unique paintings on paper.

A selection of drawings spanning Pittman's career will comprise *Orangerie*, a stand-alone installation that provides an intimate space for viewing his works on paper. Updated to include new drawings up to the present, *Orangerie* showcases his lushly colored and decorated drawings on walls covered in painted trellis designs.

This exhibition surveys more than thirty years of work and is organized chronologically, highlighting several bodies of work in depth as well as featuring the artist's monumental, mural-size paintings.

Lari Pittman: Declaration of Independence is organized by Connie Butler, chief curator, with Vanessa Arizmendi, curatorial assistant.

EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue following Lari Pittman's trajectory as one of the most prolific and exuberant painters of the past three decades. Published by Delmonico Books, this exhibition catalogue features over 80 paintings and 50 drawings, including Pittman's mural-scale series *Flying Carpets*. Alongside these illustrations are essays by Connie Butler, with contributions by George Baker, Helen Molesworth, Donatien Grau, and Duro Olowu, as well as a selected chronology by Vanessa Arizmendi. The catalogue places Pittman's imagery within both Modernism and recent histories of Los Angeles, and examine the works' political commentary as well as their many literary references. The volume will be available in the Hammer Store and online at store.hammer.ucla.edu

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Lari Pittman (b. 1952) was born in Los Angeles and spent part of his childhood in Colombia, where his mother was born. He attended University of California, Los Angeles, and received both his BFA (1974) and MFA (1976) from California Institute of the Arts in Valencia, CA. Pittman is a professor in the Department of Art at UCLA. He has received numerous awards and honors, including those from the International Association of Art Critics, the Rhode Island School of Design, the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, the Flintridge Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the California Arts Council, and the J. Paul Getty Trust Fund for the Visual Arts. His work has been featured in important exhibitions such as Documenta (1997), the Venice Biennale (2003), and the Whitney Biennial (1987, 1993, 1995, 1997), as well as in major survey exhibitions of Los Angeles and American art in both the United States and Europe.

CREDIT LINE

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ABOUT THE HAMMER MUSEUM

The Hammer Museum is part of the School of the Arts and Architecture at UCLA, and offers exhibitions and collections that span classic to contemporary art. It holds more than 50,000 works in its collection, including one of the finest collections of works on paper in the nation, the Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts. 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 \$7 (maximum 3 hours) or \$7 flat rate after 6 p.m. Visit hammer.ucla.edu for details or call 310-443-7000.