

Exhibition
15 May – 2 August 2009
Wednesday – Sunday
12:00 – 19:00

Guided tours / Childrens' visits

An hour in the museum

› Thursday, 12:30

Alan Vega focus visit

› Thursday 18 June, 12:30

Childrens' visits

› Saturday, 15:30

At the same time as the adults' visit

Adults' visits

› Saturday, 15:30

› Sunday, 15:00

Family visits

› Sunday, 15:30

Reservation advisable

Groups

Guided visits are available for one or more exhibitions, for adults or young people.

Exceptional visit

A visit accompanied by the curator Mathieu Copeland.

› Friday 12 June, 19:00

By reservation, with a valid ticket

Projections

- *Alan Vega: 2007*, a documentary by Christian Eudeline, broadcast on Arte in "Tracks". With the authorisation of Program 33.

› Every day

In the Salle des Conférences, admission free

- As part of the Philippe Grandrieux retrospective, 5 – 7 June 2009, at the CNP Odéon and L'Elysée: Showing of Philippe Grandrieux's film *Sombre*, soundtrack by Alan Vega.

› Sunday 7 June, 16:30, at the CNP Odéon

Proposed by *Les Inattendus*, with mac^{LYON}.

Information and reservations

T 04 72 69 17 17

publics@mac-lyon.com

Catalogue

In press.

With texts and contributions by Alan Vega, Mathieu Copeland, Henry Rollins, Julian Schnabel, Susan Stenger and Ric Ocasek... Numerous illustrations.

Next exhibition

10th Lyon Biennial



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of Contemporary Art
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ALAN VEGA

INFINITE MERCY

15.05
02.08.09



Iron Man (detail), 1983
Collection Ric Ocasek, NY

Alan Vega
Credit: Earl Grey

Untitled, 1969
Credit: Anne E. Hubbard
Courtesy Alan Vega



ALAN VEGA

INFINITE MERCY

ALAN VEGA, KNOWN TO BE ONE OF THE PIONEERS OF MINIMALIST ELECTRONIC ROCK AS THE CO-FOUNDER WITH MARTIN REV OF THE MYTHICAL BAND “SUICIDE”, IS FIRST AND FOREMOST A VISUAL ARTIST ACTIVE ON THE NEW YORK SCENE SINCE THE END OF THE 1960S.

In 1969, Alan Vega (born in 1938 in NY, where he still lives & works) was one of the founding members of the “Project of Living Artists”, one of the first alternative artist-run spaces in NY open 24/7. Dedicated to all forms of art, music and cinema, it quickly became a showcase for groups such as the *New York Dolls*, *Television* and *Blondie*. In this saturated universe, Vega found an ideal environment for his work, and pursued his musical and artistic careers in parallel. He studied with Ad Reinhardt at Brooklyn College, initially focusing on painting. Toward the end of the 1960s, his interests shifted toward light as he created his first “light pieces” — assemblages of diverse objects including bulbs, wires, televisions and neon tubes of every shape and colour.

/THE FIRST TIME I DID A LIGHT PIECE WAS WHEN I WAS WORKING ON A VERY BIG PURPLE PAINTING. THERE WAS ONE LIGHT BULB IN THE ROOM, AND AS I WALKED AROUND I NOTICED HOW THE PAINTING ACQUIRED DIFFERENT ASPECTS. I WANTED IT TO BE ONE COLOUR, SO [...] I TOOK THE LIGHT OUT OF THE CEILING AND REALLY STUCK IT ON THE PAINTING. THAT STARTED ME WITH THE WHOLE IDEA OF LIGHT BECAUSE I WANTED TO CONTROL THE

COLOUR, BUT THEN I SUDDENLY BEGAN TO REALIZE JUST HOW MUCH LIGHT AFFECTS A PAINTING — ALL PAINTING IS ABOUT LIGHT. [...] AS I STARTED WORKING WITH LIGHT, I STARTED GETTING MORE AND MORE INTO DIFFERENT COLOURS OF LIGHT INSTEAD OF USING PAINT. I STARTED USING LIGHT BULBS OF COLOUR THAT BECAME MY PAINT./
Alan Vega

Anti-aesthetic, anti-formal, Vega’s work embraces the contemporary reality in which he is immersed. For one of his first exhibitions in New York in 1972, eschewing all preciousness, he looked to the streets for the materials that would become the elements of his work, and presented them in the gallery. At the end of the exhibition, he gave them back to their primary reality, returning these to the street.

This retrospective comprises a large corpus of works created since 1971. Presenting numerous light pieces from all periods, among them the famous series of “crucifixes” which Vega began in the mid-1980s, and a “monumental” version created specifically for the exhibition at the mac^{LYON}.



Exhibition view at OK Harris Gallery, 1972 Mar 11 - Apr 1
Credit Eric Pollitzer
Courtesy Alan Vega & OK Harris Gallery

/GGY, 1976
Exhibited at Project of Living Artists, NYC
Lights, Perspex, wood, 112 x 167,5 cm
Credit Alan Vega
Courtesy Alan Vega

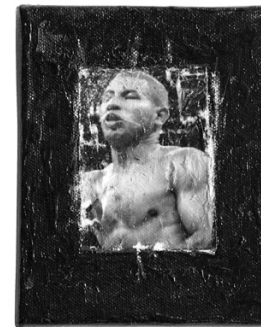


Untitled, undated (80’)
Drawing, 20,5 x 32,5 cm
Courtesy Alan Vega



The retrospective also presents a large body of paintings, and more than a hundred ballpoint drawings that have not previously been exhibited:

/I DRAW JUST PEOPLE. TO ME A FACE IS EVERYTHING ANYWAY. MOST OF THE DRAWINGS I THROW OUT. IT JUST HAS TO COME OUT WITHOUT THINKING [...] WHEN I WRITE LYRICS, OR POETRY, IT COMES FROM MY MIND. IT’S JUST TRYING TO GET DEEP INTO YOURSELF. TO BE HONEST WITH YOU, I HATE WRITING, AND IRONICALLY THE ONLY WAY I CAN SIT DOWN AND WRITE IS IF I DRAW A PORTRAIT./ *Alan Vega*



Jacinto, 2008
Mixed media
Credit Blaise Adilon
Courtesy Alan Vega

In the logic of Vega’s work, including the retrieval and re-use of pre-existing objects, it is not just the works, but the exhibition format itself, that recycles and reintegrates various “materials” from previous exhibitions: glass, walls, structures, etc.

/MY ART IS AN ART OF THE FOUND OBJECT, AND IT’S ALSO THAT OF SALVAGE./

/IT’S NOT SMOOTHED-OUT ART, AND I APPRECIATE THE FACT THAT IT’S COMPOSED OF GARBAGE AND DISCARDED OBJECTS./
Alan Vega

As living legends of rock and punk history, and avant-garde precursors with *Suicide*, Alan Vega and Martin Rev were the first rock musicians to systematically introduce electronic drums into their compositions. Alan Vega is however less well known as an artist, this is the reason why mac^{LYON} proposes his first major solo retrospective, representing more than 40 years of creativity and intensity.

Mathieu Copeland
Independent curator, lives and works in London.