

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New York City. May 23, 2013

The Participants at Denny Gallery with Aiden Simon, Amber Hawk Swanson, Oli Rodriguez and Sean Fader from June 20th to July 21st, 2013

Opening Reception on Thursday, June 20th, 6 - 8 p.m.

Gallery talk with art historian David Getsy on Friday, June 28th, 6:30 p.m.

Denny Gallery is pleased to announce the exhibition *The Participants*, opening June 20th and running through July 21st, 2013. Showcasing work by Sean Fader, Amber Hawk Swanson, Oli Rodriguez, and Aiden Simon, the exhibition presents a new generation of queer artists who have developed practices that re-imagine performance art, life-works, and social participation.

Not content to accept the lives and limits given to them, these artists embed themselves in communities and social practices in order to re-create their pasts and their futures. They engage with these communities not as knowing observers or objective commentators but as earnest contributors. Their work takes the form of social media, photography, performance events, sculpture, and durational concepts, and it revolves around their dedication to opening their lives to new solidarities and populations. From the retracing of parental sex partners to re-imagined youthful memories to looking for love and authenticity online and in real time, these artists undertake practices that alter their lives and their social worlds. Rather than offering ironic critique or self-satisfied oppositionalism, the Participants risk making their lives porous with their art in order to remap their loves and their days. They search for ways to remake their own histories, to re-imagine their futures, and to establish sympathies in unexpected or disavowed locations.

Life and art, public and private, maker and subject — all become impossible distinctions. This work pollutes the making of art with the living out of fantasy, and it does not apologize for its ethical ambiguities, bittersweet pleasures, and leaps of faith. Sex (or its promise) is a major area of concern in these works, as each artist's practice revolves around the needs and sympathies found in other bodies and different persons. The record of these lifeworks — some years in the making and living — are social media archives, photographs, sculptures, and urban legends. This exhibition brings together a range of objects produced in the course of these lifeworks — objects that mark the progress of social engagements and lives lived.

Sean Fader spent 365 days making photographic portraits of men he met on sixteen different online dating sites, recording the discrepancies between the image they presented, the men they revealed themselves to be, and the words in which they couched their desires. **Amber Hawk Swanson** commissioned a life-size sex doll in her own image and has spent the past seven years making performance work with her self-portrait surrogate as collaborator. Both Fader and Hawk Swanson explore the muddled power dynamics of desire, creating records of their daily attempts to find themselves reflected by another. **Oli Rodriguez** re-imagined his childhood by



Amber Hawk Swanson, *Shower Curtain Kiss*, 2007
Archival Pigment Print, 17 x 24 inches

enrolling himself — at age 26 — in baseball camps for adolescent boys. Passing for a boy, Rodriguez became part of the team while his collaborator (in the role of his sister) filmed him as he was taught to play like a man by his coaches. **Aiden Simon** returned to an Arcadia of his youth — a local pool called Twin Lakes where he spent much of his girlhood. Now abandoned and overgrown, Twin Lakes becomes the scene where he makes lush images of a boyhood he never had, recasting his partner as (now) schoolboy playmate.

The artists in *The Participants* live out their desires as their art in order to gamble with who they are. They offer images of possibilities for remaking the past and inhabiting the future. They neither mock nor critique. Instead, they embrace, they risk, and they engage.

Aiden Simon (born 1988, Tucson, Arizona) is a multidisciplinary artist who is interested in the negotiation of play and the disruption of stable subject positions. His drawings, photographs, toys, and sculptures rock, flip, and swing, flirting with utility. Aiden received his BFA in Photography at Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA), and recently completed his MFA at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC).

Amber Hawk Swanson (born 1980, Davenport, Iowa) is a video and performance artist living and working in Brooklyn. Her work is included in the permanent and MPP collections of the Museum of Contemporary Photography (Chicago) and has been profiled and reviewed in *The Drama Review* (TDR), *Criticism*, *GLQ*, *The Huffington Post*, *Hyperallergic*, and *The Associated Press*. Hawk Swanson holds an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (Studio Arts, 2006) and attended Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture (2012).

Sean Fader (born 1979, Los Angeles, California) is a photo and performance artist living and working in Brooklyn. Sean earned his MFA at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. His work was featured in *First Look II: the best of the new artists in the U.S.* at the Hudson Valley Center For Contemporary Art. Sean was named A Blade of Grass Fellow for 2012-2013. Recent exhibitions include *Dynasty*, curated by Sara Reisman and *White Boys*, curated by Hank Willis Thomas and Natasha Logan.

Oli Rodriguez (born Chicago, Illinois) is an interdisciplinary artist working in photography, video and performance. His projects conceptually intersect and dialogue within consent, queerness, childhood and sexuality. Oli has screened, performed, lectured and exhibited internationally and nationally. Currently, he is faculty in the Photography Department at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

David Getsy writes on modern and contemporary art and performance. His research focuses on the use of sexualities and genders as resources for artistic practice. His books include *Scott Burton: Collected Writings on Art and Performance, 1965-1975* (2012) and *Rodin: Sex and the Making of Modern Sculpture* (2010), and he has written essays on such artists as John Chamberlain, Nancy Grossman, Alberto Giacometti, Pablo Picasso, Ernesto Pujol, and Amber Hawk Swanson. He teaches at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where he is the Goldabelle McComb Finn Distinguished Professor of Art History and Chair of the Department of Art History, Theory, and Criticism.

Please join us for a reception for the artists on Thursday, June 20th, from 6 to 8 p.m. Also please join us for a gallery talk with art historian David Getsy on Friday, June 28th, at 6:30 p.m. The talk will begin at 7 p.m.

The gallery is located at 261 Broome Street in New York City. The hours are Wednesday to Sunday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Monday and Tuesday by appointment. For further information, call Elizabeth Denny at 212.266.6537 or email elizabeth@dennygallery.com.