



museum of arts and design

MUSEUM OF ARTS AND DESIGN TO PRESENT FIRST SOLO EXHIBITION OF GENRE-DEFYING ARTIST MACHINE DAZZLE

Queer Maximalism x Machine Dazzle Opens September 10, 2022



Machine Dazzle, 2019. Photo: Gregory Kramer.

NEW YORK, NY (June 29, 2022) – The Museum of Arts and Design (MAD) will present *Queer Maximalism x Machine Dazzle*, the first solo exhibition dedicated to the genre-defying artist Matthew Flower (US, b. 1972), better known as Machine Dazzle. A provocateur commanding an expanding repertoire of stagecraft, design, performance, and music, Machine Dazzle is a virtuoso practitioner of queer maximalism’s aesthetic language of gay liberation.

On view from September 10, 2022 through February 19, 2023, the exhibition brings together more than 80 of the artist’s creations for stage, spectacles, and street theater, alongside a variety of

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environments, ephemera, material samples, photography, and video. Together, they chronicle the metamorphosis of Flower, a closeted suburban kid from Upper Darby, Pennsylvania, into “Machine Dazzle,” the queer experimental theater genius.

On view are both Machine Dazzle’s famous collaborations with drag and performance luminaries such as the Dazzle Dancers and Mx Justin Vivian Bond, among others, as well as the artist’s recent emergence from behind the scenes to center stage of his own artistic life. Installed on two floors of the Museum, the multimedia exhibition culminates with the first public installation of the more than two dozen tour-de-force costumes created by the artist for himself and his long-time collaborator Taylor Mac to wear in the queer performance art concert production, *Taylor Mac’s A 24-Decade History of Popular Music* (2016), a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for Drama.

“Since its founding, the Museum of Arts and Design has been a home for artists who have reimagined and radically subverted traditional craft techniques in search of more authentic self-expression,” said exhibition curator Elissa Auther, Deputy Director of Curatorial Affairs and William and Mildred Lasdon Chief Curator. “In his quest to queer design, Machine Dazzle demonstrates how costumes have world-making capacity, why unorthodox materials have become the preferred way for those outside of majority culture to describe themselves, and the ways in which excess can both transform and transfigure the queer body.”

A self-taught designer, Machine Dazzle’s costumes are a mesmerizing display of densely layered, fantastical found objects and materials that, when draped over the human form, suggest a wearable *Wunderkammer* of American kitsch, culture, and history. Excessive in scale, color, surface, texture, and movement, the living sculptures constantly transform, adapt, and grow with the familiar embellishments of drag and burlesque, such as sequins, glitter, feathers, beads, rhinestones, and ribbons, combined with ping pong balls, hoop skirts, Slinkys, soup cans, holiday lights, pipe insulation, potato-chip bags, chess pieces, toy soldiers, and more to build and deepen the work’s narrative intent. The result is an explosive queer maximalism aesthetic that joyfully counters the prejudices of high culture regarding extravagance and the overly decorated and embraces these associations as queer for affirming hybridity over purity, rejecting cultural hierarchies, and valuing different kinds of bodies.

Queer Maximalism x Machine Dazzle will be accompanied by a 160-page catalog published by Rizzoli. The catalog brings together an expansive collection of essays and reminiscences from fellow performers, historians, and cultural critics that consider every aspect of Machine Dazzle’s rich body of work, along with images of his over-the-top stage creations, made for himself and others, stage environments, ephemera, and more.

During the exhibition, MAD will present a series of films curated by Machine Dazzle. The films, dating to the late seventies and early eighties, helped shape the artist’s aesthetic sensibility as a child. The series, which gets underway this fall, will include screenings of the Faye Dunaway classic *The Eyes of Laura Mars* (1978) for Halloween and *Xanadu* (1980) starring Olivia Newton-John to mark the artist’s birthday. Attendees of the film screenings can expect costume contests, giveaways, photo shoots, and more.

CREDITS

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ABOUT THE ARTIST

Machine Dazzle has been dazzling stages via costumes, sets, and performance since his arrival in New York in 1994. He has collaborated with artists Julie Atlas Muz, Big Art Group, Justin Vivian Bond, Taylor Mac, Chris Tanner, Soomi Kim, Pig Iron Theater, Bombay Rickey, and has designed projects for Opera Philadelphia and Spieglerworld. In addition, he has held residencies at Tyler School of Art at Temple University, Moody Center for the Arts at University of Houston, Wesleyan University, Harvard University's Theater, Dance & Media Department, and Mana Contemporary in Jersey City, NJ. Machine Dazzle's work has been exhibited at Parsons School of Design in New York City, and he contributed to memorable camp-themed looks for Diane von Furstenberg and Cara Delevingne at the 2019 Met Gala. His work for *The Hang* has been recognized with a 2022 Drama Desk Award nomination for Best Costumes for a Musical. This fall, Machine Dazzle will release his first record *Treasure* and will perform songs from the record at New York City's Joe's Pub. Machine Dazzle is represented by Pomegranate Arts.

ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF ARTS AND DESIGN

The Museum of Arts and Design (MAD) champions contemporary makers across creative fields and presents the work of artists, designers, and artisans who apply the highest level of ingenuity and skill. Since the Museum's founding in 1956 by philanthropist and visionary Aileen Osborn Webb, MAD has celebrated all facets of making and the creative processes by which materials are transformed, from traditional techniques to cutting-edge technologies. Today, the Museum's curatorial program builds upon a rich history of exhibitions that emphasize a cross-disciplinary approach to art and design, and reveals the workmanship behind the objects and environments that shape our everyday lives. MAD provides an international platform for practitioners who are influencing the direction of cultural production and driving twenty-first-century innovation, and fosters a participatory setting for visitors to have direct encounters with skilled making and compelling works of art and design. For more information, visit madmuseum.org.

For high-resolution images, visit our press image archive: <http://press.madmuseum.org>

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