

San Antonio Museum of Art
ADAD HANNAH
Intimate Encounters



Adad Hannah, *The Encounter (Two Screens)*, 2012, HD video, 7 min. 1 sec.
Produced in collaboration with the San Antonio Museum of Art
Courtesy of the artist and Pierre-François Ouellette Art Contemporain, Montreal

FACT SHEET

Checklist

5 HD-videos, 11 C-prints
Flat panel monitors can be provided

Space Requirement

130 linear feet

Fee

Check with Katie Luber – TBD

Contacts

David S. Rubin
The Brown Foundation Curator of Contemporary Art
210-978-8115
david.rubin@samuseum.org

Katherine C. Luber
The Kelso Director
210-978-8111
katie.luber@samuseum.org

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EXHIBITION SUMMARY

Over the past decade, Adad Hannah has become known for his innovative investigations of relationships between photography and video. Initially interested in trick photography of the mid-nineteenth century, Hannah became intrigued by the differences between a traditional photograph and a contemporary video. While a photograph is still and captures a single moment in time, a video commonly follows a linear path through time, marked by features such as movement, dialogue, and a story line. Interested in bringing the characteristics of a photograph to the medium of video, Hannah videotapes models who are asked to remain motionless for several minutes. His format is based on the traditional *tableau vivant* or “living picture”, which in the nineteenth century was a common means of replicating famous artworks by staging them with live models. Many of Hannah’s projects have been inspired by or created using objects from museum collections.

Intimate Encounters presents four bodies of work. *Eros and Aphrodite* and *Blocking Adam and Eve* were produced using objects from the collection of the Museo Nacional del Prado in Madrid. A well-known work by the nineteenth century French sculptor Auguste Rodin appears in *Unwrapping Rodin*. A new project, *Daydreams of the Drunken Scholar*, was produced at the San Antonio Museum of Art and was inspired by the scholar’s library and bedroom located in the Lenora and Walter F. Brown Asian Art Wing.

Eros and Aphrodite

Produced in 2008 at the Museo Nacional del Prado in Madrid, *Eros and Aphrodite* shows a man and a woman about to kiss the lips of a double-headed bust of Eros and Aphrodite from the Prado’s collection. As the video progresses over a period of roughly seven minutes, viewers become aware of subtle movements, such as the blinking of the models’ eyes, but the overall tone is one of extended stillness. Ultimately, the dominant perceived feature of the video may be the spaces between the lips of the statue and the models, which assume metaphoric connotations of desire. In one sense, they suggest the heightened eroticism of a prelude to a sexual encounter. Yet, since we know that these sculptures cannot be touched, these poses may also bring to mind the yearning for potential kisses that are never realized.

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Blocking Adam and Eve

A second project from Hannah's visit to the Prado is *Blocking Adam and Eve*. Humorous in temperament, the videos and photos in this series are of a finely dressed man holding a long-handled implement that shields the genitals of Adam and Eve, depicted in a 1507 painting by Albrecht Dürer. Visual irony emerges as we realize the absurdity of hiding the genitalia that are already fig-leaved, while, at the same time, we witness the subtle unsteady movements of the young man's hand—and the resultant vibrations of the implement

Unwrapping Rodin In 2010, Hannah found inspiration in photos of one of the male nude sculptures from Auguste Rodin's *The Burghers of Calais*, which was owned by a collector in Montreal. When the collector showed him snapshots of the sculpture being unwrapped, Hannah conceived the idea for a new series of photographs that would be shot in the stark documentary style common to art history texts and museum catalogs, but with an erotic twist. In contrast to his video work, he now took an inverse approach and focused on motion rather than stillness, with the photographs presented as a sequential series, where each image reveals a successive moment of a continuous action. In the series *Unwrapping Rodin*, the photos progress in a sequence that moves from the male nude figure being fully clothed to completely undressed. While playfully satirizing the art of strip tease, the series also pays homage to the late 19th-century photographic sequences by Eadweard Muybridge. At the same time, it subverts the dominant stereotyping of a stripper as female. In challenging conventional stereotypes, Hannah explains, "I am sensitive to not propagating normative structures so I don't shy away from showing work that has homoerotic elements."

Daydreams of the Drunken Scholar The photographing and videotaping took place over two days, and the resultant videos and photos comprise Hannah's latest project, *Daydreams of the Drunken Scholar*. Although the series takes place in a predominately Asian setting, there is a classical European sensibility in the models' poses that brings to mind art historical sources such as Edouard Manet's *Luncheon on the Grass* (1863). Additionally, Hannah once again has reversed the common tendency in traditional erotic art for females to be more scantily clad than males.

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While *Daydreams of the Drunken Scholar* is rich in potential narratives to be imagined by viewers, the overall composition, with its multiple bonding of bodies and mash-up of cultural details, suggests the idea that sensuality is simply a universal human attribute, common to all cultures past and present. Using objects and human bodies, Hannah has constructed compositions that seem to articulate about interconnectivity—the concept that everything is interconnected and which is popular today among string theorists. If we consider an erotic impulse simply to be just another form of energy, which is a belief that was professed by the Austrian psychiatrist Wilhelm Reich (1897-1957), then it becomes plausible to imagine what Reich termed “Orgone energy” connecting one body to the next in any form of erotic encounter. At the same time, this energy may also fill the space around us, thereby linking us to the infinite realms of the cosmos. This concept may be applied to works such as Hannah’s panoramic video *The Encounter (Two Screens)*. While the players in the fictional scholar’s daydream share a sensual energy within a common space, each seems mentally engaged with Zen-like concentration in a different place from one another, be it within themselves or somewhere off in the distance. In the idealized world of the scholar’s daydream, these personas seem to be at peace within themselves, with one another, and with their metaphysical consciousness of being.

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EXHIBITION BACKGROUND

Adad Hannah, the internationally acclaimed Canadian artist, came to SAMA in January 2012 looking for inspiration. Known for photographic and video works using or inspired by objects in museum collections, Hannah was here to select something in the Museum's collection as the basis for a new project. I hosted the artist as we met with all the department curators to tour the collections. By the end of the visit, Hannah and I were both in agreement that we could easily imagine narratives taking place in the scholar's library and bedroom located in the Lenora and Walter F. Brown Asian Art Wing. Since the actual rooms and the objects they house are much too delicate to be used as stage sets, the Museum staff worked with Hannah to create a new set as a hybrid variant of the rooms. We temporarily deinstalled a section of the Contemporary Galleries as the location for the production. To make the setting more complex and at the same time playful, Hannah decided to incorporate objects from other cultures, such as the Irish silver from the fourth floor mezzanine of the Museum's East Tower.

In preparation for Hannah's return visit to produce the new work, I lined up a corps of twelve volunteer models, most of them local artists, a set designer, a seamstress, and a hair-and-makeup artist. Local photographer Ansen Seale, whose work is included in the SAMA collection, signed on as Hannah's photography assistant.

When Hannah arrived in mid-April for production, we worked with John Johnston, the Coates-Cowden-Brown Curator of Asian Art, and the registrars and installation crew to gather objects from Museum storage, as well as from local private collections, to be used on the set. We borrowed oriental rugs from two local dealers in the genre for the backdrop and flooring. Hannah also ordered colorful fabrics from Japan and had these shipped to the Museum, where the seamstress turned them into costumes.

The entire production of Hannah's latest project, *Daydreams of the Drunken Scholar*, took place over the course of a week, with two days devoted to gathering objects, three days for set construction, and the final two days for photographing and videotaping. Two of the videos and four of the photographs are included in *Adad Hannah: Intimate Encounters*, an exhibition on view in the Focus Gallery from September 1 – December 30, 2012.

David S. Rubin
The Brown Foundation Curator of Contemporary Art
San Antonio Museum of Art

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ABOUT THE ARTIST

Adad Hannah was born in New York in 1971, spent his childhood in Israel and England, and moved to Vancouver in the early 1980's. He lives and works between Montreal and Vancouver. In 2004 he won the Toronto Images Festival Installation/New Media Award, and the Bogdanka Poznanovic Award at Videomedija 8. His work has been funded by the Canada Council for the Arts, the Conseil des Arts et des Lettres du Québec, the B.C Arts Council, the Vancouver Foundation/Contemporary Art Gallery, the Quebec Delegations and Canadian Embassies in Madrid, Seoul, and New York. He has produced works at museums including the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, the National Gallery of Canada, the Vancouver Art Gallery, the Rodin Gallery (Seoul), and the Prado Museum (Madrid). Hannah has recently finished shooting projects in London, Calais, Russia, and Seoul. A body of videos and photographs was produced in collaboration with the Prado Museum in Madrid, a site-specific work was commissioned for the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, and a work was produced with five sets of identical twins for the Vancouver Art Gallery. He has been longlisted three times for the Sobey Art Award.

To see additional works and learn more about the artist, visit www.adadhannah.com.

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Illustrated Checklist



Eros, 2008

C-print

40 x 53 ½ in.

Produced with the cooperation of the Museo Nacional del Prado.

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Aphrodite, 2008

C-print

40 x 53 ½ in.

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Eros and Aphrodite, 2008

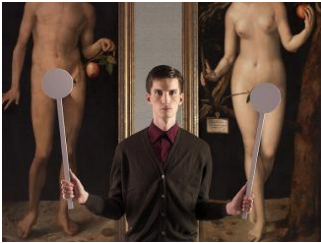
HD video

7 min. 18 sec.

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Blocking Adam and Eve, 2009

C-print

30 x 40 in.

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Left: *Blocking Adam (Vertical Video)*, 2009

HD video

6 min. 51 sec.

Produced with the cooperation of the Museo Nacional del Prado.

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Right: *Blocking Eve (Vertical Video)*, 2009

HD video

6 min. 27 sec.

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Unwrapping Rodin (Blue) 3, 2010

C-print
69 x 50 in.

Courtesy of the artist and Pierre-François Ouellette Art Contemporain, Montreal



Unwrapping Rodin (Blue) 5, 2010

C-print
69 x 50 in.

Courtesy of the artist and Pierre-François Ouellette Art Contemporain, Montreal



Unwrapping Rodin (Blue) 7, 2010

C-print
69 x 50 in.

Courtesy of the artist and Pierre-François Ouellette Art Contemporain, Montreal



Unwrapping Rodin (Blue) 8, 2010

C-print
69 x 50 in.

Courtesy of the artist and Pierre-François Ouellette Art Contemporain, Montreal

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A Period of Rest (with Melon), 2012

C-print

37 x 55 ½ in.

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After a Gentle Storm, 2012

C-print

39 ½ x 53 in.

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Gifts (Wrapped and Unwrapped), 2012

C-print

37 x 55 ½ in.

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The Cricket Cage, 2012

C-print

37 x 55 ½ in.

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The Encounter (Two Screens), 2012

HD video

7 min. 1 sec.

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Two Body Equilibrium, 2012

HD video

4 min. 4 sec.

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