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## MEMORIAL ART GALLERY PRESENTS NOSFERATU (THE UNDEAD)



**April 22–June 17, 2018**

Rochester, NY, March 5<sup>th</sup> 2018 — The Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester (MAG) is pleased to announce *NOSFERATU (The Undead)*, a film installation by New York-based artist Javier Téllez that focuses on cinema and mental illness. The work will premiere at MAG on April 22 and remain on view through June 17. *NOSFERATU (The Undead)* is the first exhibition to be presented as part of “Reflections on Place,” a series of media art commissions inspired by the City of Rochester, New York, and curated by world-renowned authority on the moving image John G. Hanhardt.

Téllez’ film was inspired by *Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens*, the expressionist silent masterpiece directed by F. W. Murnau in 1922. Téllez made the work in collaboration with people living with mental illness after a series of workshops that he conducted on the subjects of vampirism and the representation of psychiatric institutions in film. Combining black-and-white 16mm and color digital film, *NOSFERATU (The Undead)* was shot at the Eastman Kodak factory, the Dryden Theatre of the George Eastman Museum, and at the Main Street Armory, all in Rochester. “We chose a vampire for the main character of the film,” said Téllez, “because we wanted to reflect on light and darkness as the fundamental principles of cinema, and to focus on those who are stigmatized by being different and condemned to invisibility.”

The *mise en scène* of *NOSFERATU (The Undead)* comprises a “film inside a film,” juxtaposing scenes from *Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens* with additional scenes the artist developed with his collaborators who act as fictional patients in a set representing a ward at an insane asylum circa 1960. Téllez shows them simultaneously as actors and spectators of their own film. This reversal of roles is a recurrent motif in Téllez work, and it is a way to destabilize preconceived notions about the perception of mental illness. *NOSFERATU (The Undead)* also mixes documentary and fiction, including aspects of the manufacturing of celluloid film at the Kodak factory. It documents a performance of the internationally renowned silent film accompanist Philip C. Carli, the George Eastman Museum’s resident musician, who provides a superb piano accompaniment for Murnau’s silent film.

Javier Téllez’ film projects involve close collaborative ventures with disenfranchised communities, such as psychiatric patients or people with disabilities, allowing them to participate in the creative process in order to produce a dignified and non-stereotyped image of themselves. Combining different approaches with filmmaking, Téllez opens a dialogue that provides a fresh interpretation of classical myths, private and collective memories, and historical references.

“Javier Téllez is an innovative artist who has created a distinguished body of work. He has made a major contribution to the art of the moving image,” said MAG’s Consulting Senior Curator of Media Arts John G. Hanhardt. “His work is risk-taking and full of surprises, and is the result of a great deal of research, of really plumbing a place, its stories, and people. For this project he explores Rochester’s contributions to and influence on global culture as the historical epicenter of the filmic medium.”

In advance of the launch of this first of three new media art commissions, MAG’s Mary W. and Donald R. Clark Director Jonathan P. Binstock stated, “the series “Reflections on Place” is a crowning achievement of John Hanhardt’s work as a pioneering curator of media art. He was born, raised, and educated in Rochester. With his deep knowledge of the region, John identified three extraordinary artists to be inspired by our history, politics, and culture. We are proud to present the first of these commissions, a new installation by the internationally renowned artist, Javier Téllez.”

For Téllez’ project, MAG is constructing a theater with rear-screen projection and theater seating in its newly renovated Docent Gallery. *NOSFERATU (The Undead)* will be projected in 4K.

Javier Téllez, *NOSFERATU (The Undead)* (still, detail) 2018. Courtesy of the artist.

### About MAG’s “Reflections on Place” series

Memorial Art Gallery has commissioned Javier Téllez, Dara Birnbaum, (U.S., b. 1946) and Isaac Julien (U.K., b. 1960) as part of a new media art series, “Reflections on Place,” inspired by the City of Rochester, New York. The three works will be individually presented beginning in April 2018, and will enter MAG’s permanent collection at the end of the exhibitions.

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## About Javier Téllez

Javier Téllez (b. 1969 Venezuela; lives and works in New York City) is an artist recognized internationally for his sophisticated visual language drawn from the history of culture. Téllez has been the subject of solo exhibitions at the San Francisco Art Institute (2014); Kunsthaus Zürich (2014); Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, Ghent (2013); Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland (2011); Bronx Museum of the Arts, New York (2005); and Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil, Mexico City (2004). He has participated in group exhibitions at SITE Santa Fe, NM; MoMA PS1, Long Island City; Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam; Museo de Bellas Artes, Caracas; Castello di Rivoli, Torino; Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie, Karlsruhe, Germany; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; and Renaissance Society, Chicago, as well as *DOCUMENTA*, Kassel, Germany (2012); *Manifesta*, Trento, Italy; *Sydney Biennial*; and the *Whitney Biennial*, New York (all 2008); *Venice Biennale* (2001 and 2003); and *Yokohama Triennial* (2001). He received a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1999, and in 2016 the Global Mental Health Award for Innovation in the Arts from Columbia University, New York. Javier Téllez has lived and worked in New York since 1993.

## About John G. Hanhardt

John G. Hanhardt is MAG's consulting senior curator of media arts. Hanhardt began his museum career in the department of film and video at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, and from there went to the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis to establish its film program and film study collection. From 1974 to 1996 he was curator and head of the film and video department at the Whitney Museum of American Art. He was the senior curator of film and media arts at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum from 1996 to 2006. He joined the Smithsonian American Art Museum's staff in 2006, and was a consulting senior curator of film and media arts there until 2016.

As a native of Rochester and University of Rochester alum, Hanhardt was inspired by photography, film, and media arts during frequent visits to the George Eastman Museum and by the programming of the Visual Studies Workshop.

## About The Memorial Art Gallery

The Memorial Art Gallery showcases visual art from antiquity to the present day, including an outdoor public Centennial Sculpture Park. In addition to its permanent collection, MAG offers a year-round schedule of special exhibitions, lectures, concerts, tours, after-hours social events, and family activities.

Hours: Wednesday–Sunday 11 am to 5 pm, and until 9 pm on Thursdays and First Fridays. Closed Mondays and Tuesdays.

Admission: \$15; senior citizens, \$12; college students with ID and children 6–18, \$6. Always free to members, University of Rochester faculty/staff and students, and children 5 and under. Half-price general admission Thursdays from 5–9 pm is made possible in part by Monroe County. For more information, call 585.276.8900 or visit [mag.rochester.edu](http://mag.rochester.edu).

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