



PRESS RELEASE

14 January 2020

Vhils opens first major solo exhibition in U.S. institution at Cincinnati Contemporary Arts Center in February

New solo show by Portuguese visual artist Alexandre Farto aka Vhils—Haze—opens February 22, 2020 at the Cincinnati Contemporary Arts Center, presenting a new body of works that encompasses some of the broad range of innovative techniques and media which, over the last decade, have given shape to his signature visual language.

Seeking to establish a subtle dialogue with the iconic building designed by renowned Iraqi-British architect Zaha Hadid, the exhibition takes over two floors of the institution—one of the first geared towards contemporary art in the U.S.—engaging the viewer with a variety of mostly site-specific works materialized in various media, including carved wooden doors, sculptural dioramas, large-scale and small-scale hand-carved billboard pieces, immersive video installations, and carved plasterboard compositions, among others. In a world premiere, Vhils will also be performing one of his much celebrated works with recourse to explosives inside an arts institution.

Renowned for interacting directly with the tangible reality of the locations he works in, Vhils will be creating some pieces with materials gathered from the streets of Cincinnati. Having first visited the United States in 2008 for a group show in [New York](#), the artist has in the meantime traveled and worked extensively throughout the country, leaving his mark in a number of states and cities, including [Baltimore](#) (2012), [Chicago](#) (2018), [Detroit](#) (2014), [Fort Smith](#) (2015), [Honolulu](#) (2014), [Las Vegas](#) (2013), [Los Angeles](#) (2010, 2011, 2014 and 2018), [Miami](#) (2011 and 2018), [Philadelphia](#) (2013) and [San Diego](#) (2010). Vhils is happy to be returning to [Cincinnati](#) (Ohio), which he first visited in April 2011 and left one of his iconic bas-relief mural pieces on a wall at 301 West Fifth Street. A second visit last October saw him create another wall piece in the scope of the BLINK Cincinnati – Light-based Art Festival, where he paid tribute to the abolitionist and politician John Mercer Langston (1829–1897).

As has been habitual in his current practice, with Haze the artist will take the opportunity to create an interaction between the local reality and the wider, global context as a means of reflecting on the present-day human condition.

As Vhils himself explains:

“This exhibition can be seen as a direct continuation—and in some ways, as the culmination—of the work I’ve been developing in the course of the last decade in a variety of locations across Europe, Africa, Asia, Oceania, and the Americas, which has been exploring a variety of topics related to the nature of our contemporary urban environments, the dominant model of globalized development, and their impact on cultural contexts and identities worldwide.

The exhibition will comprise various site-specific works with a distinct patchwork-quality, each woven from a wide range of subject matter, people and materials sourced from locations including Cincinnati, Miami, Los Angeles, New York, Mexico City, Bogotá, Rio de Janeiro, Lisbon, Paris, London, Hong Kong, Beijing, Shanghai, Dakar, Johannesburg, Sydney and other cities I’ve worked in. This intentional juxtaposition of materials and subject matter mirrors the interplay between elements from various cultures which we observe at work today in large, globalized urban environments, and seeks to both confront and establish a dialogue that explores the underlying similarities and differences between them.”

Notes to editors:

About Alexandre Farto aka Vhils

Portuguese visual artist [Alexandre Farto aka Vhils](#) (b. 1987) has developed a unique visual language based on the removal of the surface layers of walls and other media with non-conventional tools and techniques, establishing symbolic reflections on identity, the relationship of interdependence between people and the

surrounding environment, and life in contemporary urban societies, as well as the impact of development, the passage of time, and material transformation.

Having begun to interact with the urban environment through the practice of graffiti in the early 2000s, Vhils has been hailed as one of the most innovative artists of his generation. His poignant, poetic portraits chiseled into flaking walls can be seen adorning cityscapes around the world.

Based on his aesthetics of vandalism, Vhils destroys as a means to create. He carves, cuts, drills, etches and blasts his way through the layers of materials. Yet, like an archaeologist, he removes in order to expose, bringing to light the beauty that lies trapped beneath the surface of things.

Since 2005, he has presented his work in over 30 countries around the world in solo and group exhibitions, site-specific art interventions, artistic events and projects in various contexts – from working with communities in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, to collaborations with well-reputed artistic and museological institutions such as the EDP Foundation (Lisbon), Centre Pompidou (Paris), Barbican Centre (London), CAFA Art Museum (Beijing), or the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego (San Diego), among others. An avid experimentalist, besides his groundbreaking bas-relief carving technique – which forms the basis of the “Scratching the Surface” project –, Vhils has been developing his personal aesthetics in a plurality of media: from stencil painting to metal etching, from pyrotechnic explosions and video to sculptural installations. He has also directed several music videos, short films, and two stage productions.

Vhils works with several leading galleries, including Vera Cortês Gallery (Portugal), Lazarides gallery (United Kingdom), Danysz gallery (France and China), and Over the Influence gallery (Hong Kong and USA). His work is represented in several public and private collections in various countries.

www.vhils.com

–

About CAC in Cincinnati

The [Contemporary Arts Center's](http://www.contemporaryartscenter.org) mission is rooted in the belief that there is an intimate link between art and life and that connections are made through contemporary art. Since 1939, the CAC—one of the nation's oldest and most celebrated contemporary art institutions—has been a steadfast facilitator for that connection, and a conduit for innovation. It remains today an open hub for creative inspiration, art celebration, and intellectual stimulation—a place to be inspired by new ideas and where art connects people to each other and to the world outside.

At the cutting edge of contemporary art for decades, the CAC is known around the world for the creative freedom and support it gives to artists, the access and opportunities it provides to the public and the space it creates for cross-generational and cross-societal dialogue around contemporary issues.

The CAC has a long and rich history. In 1940 it was one of the first venues in the United States to exhibit Picasso's *Guernica*; it presented one of the first museum exhibitions of Pop art—with works by future icons such as Jim Dine, Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol; one of the first major exhibitions of the famed sculptor, Dale Chihuly; and the first museum survey to spotlight the underground, DIY, street art movement with *Beautiful Losers*. It has hosted lectures and performances by future luminaries such as Buckminster Fuller, Margaret Meade, Maya Angelou, and David Byrne; commissioned valued public art installations; and furthered public discourse over contemporary art.

Its current home, the Lois and Richard Rosenthal Center for Contemporary Art, opened in 2003. It was the first U.S. art museum designed by a woman, London-based Zaha Hadid. Called “the most important American building to be completed since the end of the cold war” by the *New York Times*, the design won Hadid the prestigious Pritzker Prize.

www.contemporaryartscenter.org

–

Practical information:

Haze

– Alexandre Farto aka Vhils

Exhibition on view until July 6, 2020

CAC Opening Hours

Saturday to Monday: 10 am to 4 pm

Tuesday: Closed

Wednesday to Friday: 10 am to 9 pm

Address:

44 E. 6th Street, Cincinnati, OH 45202

–

For all media inquiries, please contact:

press@vhilstudio.com