

Red Bull Studios New York is proud to announce the first comprehensive New York presentation of the GALA Committee's *In the Name of the Place*, a covert conceptual artwork deployed on the primetime television show *Melrose Place* from 1995-97. *TOTAL PROOF: The GALA Committee 1995-1997* will be open to the public September 30 through November 27, 2016.

The GALA Committee's site specific intervention with *Melrose Place* is one of the most elaborate and well orchestrated collaborations in contemporary art and television history. In 1995, invited by co-curators Julie Lazar and Tom Finkelppearl to participate in a group show at the Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles (MOCA) titled *Uncommon Sense*, artist Mel Chin gathered a team of artists, along with faculty and students from the University of Georgia (UGA), Athens, GA, California Institute of the Arts (CalArts), Los Angeles, CA, and Grand Arts, Kansas City, MO, to form the GALA Committee. Realizing that a powerful site for a public artwork wasn't necessarily a physical place, but network television, they arranged with *Melrose Place* producers to create artworks as props for the popular primetime soap opera. Over several seasons, the artists produced a range of conceptual artworks and objects that updated art historical movements like Dada, Surrealism, and Agitprop, commented on social and political realities, deepened the content of unfolding plotlines, and elevated the form and content of a '90s pop-culture mainstay.

Flying under the censor's radar, aware of the power of images and their placement, the group made scores of props that appeared on the sets, reflecting and critiquing social norms. Unrolled condoms (an image still forbidden by the FCC) appeared on a set of sheets in the bedroom of a particularly promiscuous character. In another scene, mimicking the popular Absolut Vodka advertising of the time, GALA's ad featured a liquor-bottle shaped impact crater as damage to the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, site of the 1995 Oklahoma City Bombing, a domestic terrorist attack that killed 168 people. The work raised questions about alcohol abuse, homegrown terrorism, and the dangers of persuasive corporate advertising. Bypassing the opportunity to dismantle and critique *Melrose Place*, the GALA Committee's interventions were placements of additional levels of content, rather than commercial products, seeking to expand the highly controlled boundaries of sponsored primetime television. The GALA Committee furthered a progressive agenda as urgent today as it was twenty years ago.

After the GALA Committee worked for three years with *Melrose Place* (unpaid by Spelling Entertainment and independently funded by MOCA, Grand Arts, The Rockefeller Foundation and sustained by CalArts and UGA), the artworks were finally exhibited in the *Uncommon Sense* exhibition at MOCA, the commissioning institution. The exhibition itself was featured and named on Season 5, Episode 28 of *Melrose Place*, breaking down the fourth wall that demands the

separation between fantasy and reality. After the MOCA show, the works were auctioned at Sotheby's, Los Angeles, in a sale titled *Primetime Contemporary Art: Art by the GALA Committee as Seen on Melrose Place*, an auction organized by the GALA Committee, resolving the project's narrative arc. All money raised was donated to two women's education charities in California and Georgia that supported women aged 18-49, the same target audience as *Melrose Place*. The works can still be seen in the reruns of *Melrose Place* through international syndication, something the GALA Committee forecasted as the viral capacity of mass media.

*TOTAL PROOF: The GALA Committee 1995-1997* will exist as part archive, part film set. Red Bull Studios New York will be built out to resemble certain reoccurring sets from *Melrose Place*'s televised version of '90s Los Angeles, with the GALA Committee's objects displayed in situ. Accompanying these works will be a variety of archival documents—communiqués, sketches, and other ephemera—attesting to the vast network of communication (and collaboration) which powers televised entertainment, and the GALA Committee's historic intervention. A sunken *Melrose Place* Convo Pool designed by Mel Chin will be a prime space to discuss the ramifications of “the generational transfer of ideas” developed by the work of the GALA Committee.

Exhibition design by Lot-ek.

Max Wolf, Curator

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Candice Strongwater, Associate Curator

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