

# Vaginal Davis: Magnificent Product

May 18 – October 13, 2024

Award-winning artist and author Vaginal Davis is coming to Stockholm. Vaginal Davis's work is a home for everyone who feels different. In her pioneering and incredibly diverse oeuvre, punk meets glamour, queer activism meets racial justice and resistance meets joy. *Magnificent Product* is her first major solo exhibition internationally, presented at Moderna Museet and other art institutions in Stockholm, including Nationalmuseum, Accelerator, Index – Swedish Foundation for Contemporary Art, Tensta Konsthall, and MDT (Moderna Dansteatern).

## The Exhibition

Vaginal Davis is an icon. Her oeuvre, spanning over five decades, defies categorization: a published author, award-winning blacktress, visual artist, drag terrorist, celebrated film and documentary maker, cult figure, international superstar, spokesmodel, gossip columnist, influential socialite, performance artist, educator, fictional (auto)biographer, and counterculture trailblazer.

*"She was one of the founders of the queer underground punk scene in the 1980s and 1990s in her hometown of Los Angeles, before moving to Berlin in 2005 to play a leading role in the German capital's vibrant cultural life,"* says Hendrik Folkerts, curator for international contemporary art and exhibition curator, Moderna Museet.

In the exhibition *Magnificent Product* at Moderna Museet, Vaginal Davis's work manifests through three major installations that stage the artist's expansive history in new ways.

*"Everything that is culturally fascinating and interesting in the world of entertainment originates in the black queer twilight world, then is adapted by the black straight population and finally incorporated into the dominant or popular culture,"* says Vaginal Davis.

In the first gallery, in the so-called "Carla DuPlantier Cinerama Dome," four of Ms. Davis's early films and recordings of iconic punk concerts and nightclub events from the 1990s are presented alongside a selection of materials from her vast archive. The second installation, entitled "HAG – small, contemporary, haggard", is a

manifestation of her former apartment gallery in Los Angeles, now showing some of Ms. Davis's own paintings and sculptures. "The Wicked Pavilion," housed in the third major gallery, takes the visitor further into Vaginal Davis's universe, as she draws out the core elements of her practice through a so-called "fantasy library" and an installation of a "tween bedroom."

*"The exhibition is part of Moderna Museet's long history of showing art that pushes boundaries. Since the museum's beginnings, the most interesting things on the American art scene have also been introduced to the museum's many visitors," says Gitte Ørskou, Director at Moderna Museet.*

### **Other venues**

Vaginal Davis's genre-defying and multifaceted practice cannot be contained within the four walls and roof of Moderna Museet. *Vaginal Davis: Magnificent Product* also takes place at five other venues in Stockholm:

- Nationalmuseum: In the exhibition *Naked on my Ozgoad: Fausthaus – Anal Deep Throat* (May 17 - October 20) Vaginal Davis's life-long fascination with Frank L. Baum's books of Oz is highlighted in a new work housed in the Nationalmuseum's The Old Library, alongside a focused presentation of her paintings.
- Index – Swedish Foundation for Contemporary Art: The installation *Vaginal Davis's Hofpfisterei* (May 17 - September 1) showcases Ms. Davis's writing practice, from her years as teen correspondent in Los Angeles and her groundbreaking zines, to her mature years as a friction-writer.
- Accelerator | Stockholm University: In the exhibition *Choose Mutation* (May 17 -September 15), Vaginal Davis's work with (and as part of) the Berlin-based CHEAP performance collective takes centre stage.
- MDT (Moderna Dansteatern): For one time only, on September 4, Vaginal Davis will introduce the films *All That Jazz* by Jon Fosse (1979) and *HAIR* by Miloš Forman (1979), as only she can.
- Tensta Konsthall: Near the end of this "magnificent product," you are invited to Vaginal Davis's "Universität for the Damaged and Gifted", a weekend-long festival with 'lecturinas' performances, and screenings on September 6-7.

Welcome to the wondrous world of Mme. Vaginal "Crème" Davis!

### **About Vaginal Davis**

Vaginal Davis was born during the latter half of the twentieth century, in the eastern part of Los Angeles, to a French-Creole mother and Mexico-born father. A child prodigy, she graced the stage of numerous elementary school theatres, enrolled in the local genius honours program, and, at the age of eight years, mounted her first exhibition, a spin on L. Frank Baum's famous Oz books, at the Pio Pico Library in Los Angeles. Inspired by the militancy of the Black Panthers's pursuit of social justice in the United States, Vaginal named herself after feminist political activist Angela Davis—forever cementing her name in the annals of history: Vaginal Davis.

### **Early punk era**

Her cousin Carla "Maddog" DuPlantier of the band The Controllers, introduced Vaginal Davis to the Los Angeles punk scene. Ms. Davis started a band called The Afro Sisters in the late 1970s, followed by other bands including Cholita! The Female Menudo; Pedro, Muriel & Esther (PME); and Black Flag. Vaginal Davis became integral to the scene referred to as "homocore", which parodied and challenged the white heterosexual bias of punk and refused the normative approach of the gay mainstream. Ms. Davis created her own mythology—an interplay between dis/identification, fiction, and social critique— during the live performances of her "multiracial, maxi-gendered" bands. She spread the word across art and music networks through her self-published zines, and soon she was playing to superstars and plebeians alike on the stages of night clubs, gay bars, and punk pits.

### **Counterculture typology**

Amidst the onset of the AIDS epidemic, when LGBTQIA+ rights remained but a distant dream, Ms. Davis created a radical alternative for both punk and queer politics, and those living outside of polite society. In her own words, Vaginal Davis was "too gay for the punk scene and too punk for the gay". She became the embodiment of the fundamentally disruptive and destabilizing "terrorist drag", pairing joy with resistance as she championed anti-normative and anti-capitalist, and pro-punk aesthetics. An artist who threatens the moral fabric of society, and understands pop culture like no other, Ms. Davis fearlessly paved the path to world domination: "Everything that is culturally fascinating and interesting in the world originated in the Black queer demimonde then gets adapted by the Black straight populace, then co-opted into dominant or popular culture."

### **Catalogue**

*Vaginal Davis: Magnificent Product* is accompanied by a major publication, comprising commissioned essays by such renowned authors as Lia Gangitano (Founding Director, Participant Inc., New York), Bojana Kunst (Professor, Giessen University, Giessen), Elisabeth Lebovici (critic, Paris), and Troizel (artist and writer, New York). The catalogue also includes twenty letters to Vaginal Davis from former collaborators, friends, and co-conspirators, including artist Jonathan Berger, art historian Darby English, writer Lisa Teasley, artist Wu Tsang, and band members of Xiu Xiu, among many others.

*Vaginal Davis: Magnificent Product* is curated by Hendrik Folkerts, curator of international contemporary art and curator of exhibitions, Moderna Museet.

The exhibition *Vaginal Davis: Magnificent Product* is an initiative of Moderna Museet and branches out to several different locations in Stockholm – Moderna Museet, Nationalmuseum, Accelerator, Index – The Swedish Contemporary Art Foundation, Tensta Konsthall and MDT (Moderna Dansteatern). Each institution highlights different parts of Vaginal Davis multifaceted work.

*Vaginal Davis: Magnificent Product* is supported by the Terra Foundation for American Art and The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.

**Press viewing Thursday May 16, 11 AM–1 PM at Moderna Museet Stockholm in the presence of Vaginal Davis.**

**Doors open from 10.45 AM. Exhibition at level 2. Introduction starts 11 AM.**

Registration for press preview and interview requests to

Lovisa Lönnebo

[l.lonnebo@modernamuseet.se](mailto:l.lonnebo@modernamuseet.se)

+46 72-500 91 90

Press room with images, texts and in-depth material:

[Press room - Press \(modernamuseet.se\)](#)