

# THE LEVER HOUSE ART COLLECTION



## **Adam Pendleton**

### **what a day was this**

*Lever House Art Collection, New York  
8th March through August 2018*

Lever House Art Collection is pleased to present *what a day was this*, a site-specific installation by New York-based artist Adam Pendleton (b. 1984). The installation establishes a spatial and conceptual dialogue with the transparency and reflection of the iconic modernist architecture. Pendleton groups together works from his OK DADA OK BLACK DADA OK and System of Display series, along with two multi-paneled silkscreen ink on Mylar works.

Pendleton engages with language, abstraction, and identity through a wide range of media, including painting, sculpture, writing, film, and performance. Here, he has installed a layered selection executed in black silkscreen ink and spray paint together with a floor-to-ceiling piece, which the artist refers to as a Wall Work, applied directly to the wall. Juxtaposing geometric shapes, fragments of painted and mechanically reproduced text, pictures of masks, book pages, and historical photographs, Pendleton simultaneously indexes and conflates his sources, critically examining the resonance of ideas from varied aesthetic and theoretical perspectives.

Pendleton's artistic practice is centered around linguistic and visual communication with varying degrees of legibility to create thought-provoking presentations. He explores the construction and negation of meaning through Black Dada, a phrase derived from the 1964 poem "Black Dada Nihilismus" by LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka). With Black Dada, Pendleton proposes a conceptual framework for his work, inserting it into broader conversations about appropriation, representation, and political engagement. Often referencing

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both political and artistic history, Pendleton's works invoke and deconstruct the past to propose an alternative history of modernism and to address contemporary cultural issues. The Wall Work *Black Dada Reader* (Wall Work #2) presented here reproduces texts that he has anthologized in his *Black Dada Reader*, including W.E.B. Du Bois's "Of Our Spiritual Strivings," Hugo Ball's "Dada Manifesto," and an interview with choreographer Trajal Harrell. As Pendleton explains, "Black Dada is a way to talk about the future while talking about the past. It is our present moment."

This exhibition is curated by Roya Sachs.

**Adam Pendleton** has been the subject of solo exhibitions across the United States and abroad, at institutions including the Indianapolis Museum of Contemporary Art (2008); Kunstverein, Amsterdam (2009); The Kitchen, New York (2010); Kunst-Werke Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin (2017); Baltimore Museum of Art (2017); and MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, Massachusetts (2018). His 2016 exhibition *Becoming Imperceptible* was organized by the Contemporary Arts Center, New Orleans, and traveled to the Museum of Contemporary Art, Denver, before closing at the Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland. His work has been featured in numerous group exhibitions including *Radical Presence: Black Performance in Contemporary Art*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (2014); the Belgian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale (2015); *The Revolution Will Not Be Grey*, Aspen Art Museum, Colorado (2016); and the Gwangju Biennale, South Korea (2016); *Public Movement: On Art, Politics and Dance*, Moderna Museet Malmö, Sweden (2017); and *How To Live Together*, Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna (2017).