

NICODIM

JOHN DUNCAN

February 3 - March 17, 2018



Nicodim Gallery is pleased to present the iconic Los Angeles artist John Duncan's first solo exhibition in the city, an immersive retrospective installation featuring some of his best-known and most challenging works, including *Scare*, 1976, *Blind Date*, 1980, *Icons*, 1995, and *Dream House: Rage Room*, 2010.

Duncan arrived in Los Angeles at a peculiar time in its cultural history: post-Watts, pre-Lowbrow; post-Manson, pre-Helter Skelter; post-Walter Hopps, pre-Black Flag. After meeting Allan Kaprow, who introduced him to the Aktionists and the music of Mauricio Kagel, Steve Reich, and Pauline Oliveros, among others, he abandoned painting and never looked back. The performances he began staging in 1975 have become

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legendary for their effects on participants. In *Scare* (Los Angeles, 1976), Duncan knocked on the doors of people he knew—namely Tom Recchion and Paul McCarthy—at night, disguised; when they answered he fired a gun loaded with blanks into their faces and disappeared. "Participants" in *Scare* were thereby forced to experience the extremes of terror of death approaching, followed by anger, relief, and possibly fascination when the panic was over.

In May of 1980, Duncan performed what would be the most controversial artistic act of his career, *Blind Date*, in which he travelled to Tijuana to purchase a female corpse, with which he had sex. Shortly thereafter, he had a vasectomy so that his last potent seed was incinerated with the cadaver. *Blind Date* transformed him into a Los Angeles pariah. The Los Angeles art community saw to it his work was informally banned here—even his closest friends turned against him—and Duncan exiled himself to Japan for the years following.

Informed by the seismic shift in his livelihood after *Blind Date*, *Dream House: Rage Room*, was created as a prototype for the center room of a seven-level structure based on the architecture of the human brain, constructed from 495 shipping container modules, designed to reflect or invoke specific states of mind. The core container—*Rage Room*—is dedicated to abject rage, and has been recreated at the center of **Nicodim's gallery space**. The walls are bloody, furniture is smashed and broken on the floor.

This is an exhibition of an artist at his rawest.