

[McCarthy at Hauser & Wirth, Los Angeles](#)

Artist Resources – Paul McCarthy (American, b. 1945)

MoMA's 1995 feature exhibition, [Projects 51: Paul McCarthy](#) introduced the performance artist to the contemporary art market and initiated his development from solitary performance projects to video work and installation.

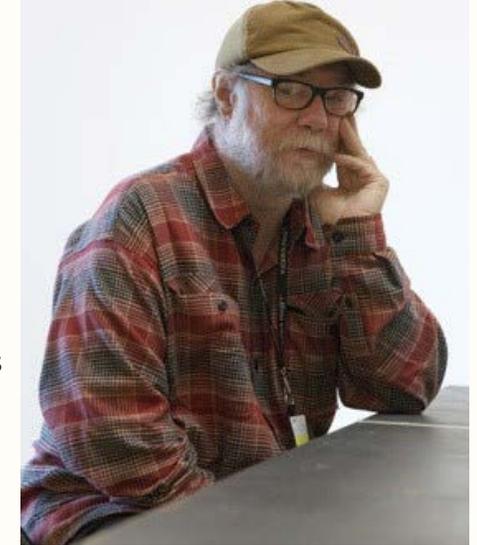
McCarthy's off-beat personality shines in his 2003 [BOMB Magazine interview](#) with longtime friend Benjamin Weissman.

In 2007, McCarthy transformed the [Maccarone Gallery](#) in Los Angeles into [a functioning chocolate factory](#), producing and selling edible reproductions of some of his most famous and provocative sculptures.

"That's the difference between making art and making entertainment," McCarthy told [Art21 in a video interview](#) from 2008 about his performance art, video work, and sculpture. "It's the explorations of ideas. I'm not trying to satisfy an audience...my responsibility is to the idea." The interview was recorded while McCarthy was preparing for an [exhibition at the Whitney](#) featuring architectural installations.

McCarthy discussed his sculptures and video work, inspirations, and how culture "conditions reality" in a [conversation at Art Basel from 2012](#).

"I operate in a kind of theatre. That definition of performance as reality – as concrete – became less interesting to me. I became more interested in mimicking, appropriation, fiction, representation and questioning meaning," McCarthy explained in a [2016 interview with Artspace](#).



McCarthy, 2012

Photograph: Åsa Lundén/Moderna Museet



McCarthy's LA studio, installation in process, ca. 2003

[Hauser & Wirth's first gallery exhibition for McCarthy](#) in 2017 introduced his grotesque aesthetic with a series of monumental wood sculptures inspired by the German folktale *Schneewittchen* and its better known animated Disney counterpart, *Snow White*.

[Interview Magazine](#) spoke with McCarthy in 2019 about his [recent work in feature films](#). "I've always been interested in the subject of the pretend...where you have this element of a narrative being made, but where the suspension of disbelief isn't so strong, so you kind of realize that people are pretending to be those characters," reflects McCarthy.

In the project, [A&E drawing sessions, Santa Anita](#), begun in 2019, McCarthy invited German actress Lilith Stangenberg for a series of improvised filmed performances in which they enacted scenes as Adolf Hitler and wife, Eva Braun. The [series of drawings](#) that resulted reflect themes of exploitative power, violence, and toxic masculinity at the heart of McCarthy's aesthetic explorations.

[UCLA's Hammer Museum](#) hosted the first comprehensive survey of McCarthy's works on paper in the United States in 2020, bringing together 600 drawings and paintings produced between the 1960s and 2019. Watch [McCarthy's artist talk](#) with exhibition curators and [read his interview](#) with fellow LA-based artist Tala Madani about character, performance, social convention, and making art that acts as "a mirror with a crack."



Paul McCarthy (American, b. 1945)

A&E Eva Mom Baby Fook and Throne with Mickey Baby, Santa Anita, 2019

Chair, stuffed animal, acrylic paint and brushes on canvas panel

Private Collection; L2020:36.3

Paul McCarthy began his career as a performance artist in the 1970s, using the vehicles of film and costume to examine childhood fears, sexuality, and pop culture narratives. As he gained recognition in the 1980s and 1990s, McCarthy expanded his creative vision through installation, sculpture, and paintings, in which he used unusual material such as condiments to mimic bodily fluids in provocative, disconcerting tableaux. Performance remains a central component of McCarthy's practice, informing film projects such as the 2019 series *A&E*, in which he and German actress Lilith Stangenberg engaged in unrehearsed drawing and painting sessions while embodying specified characters.

As an isolated installation, **A&E Eva Mom Baby Fook and Throne with Mickey Baby, Santa Anita** distills the energy of physical performance and mark-making into a haunting, static scene adorned with perplexing symbols. The titular acronym A&E designates a trio of references: Adolf Hitler and his wife Eva Braun, Adam and Eve, and the media moniker of "Arts & Entertainment." In the performance, McCarthy and Stangenberg transformed themselves into the German dictator and his wife, proxies for the biblical couple, to explore themes of power, violence, and toxic masculinity.

On view January 27 – May 2, 2021