

Harbourfront Centre to host genre-defying artist Machine Dazzle's first major solo exhibition in Canada

Harbourfront Centre hosts Canada's first major solo exhibition from prolific New York City costume designer, performance artist and creative provocateur, Machine Dazzle. Titled *Art and Intention*, the sprawling exhibition will be hosted in the newly renovated 235 Queens Quay West from June 16 to August 13, 2023.

June 15, 2023 – TORONTO, ON – Multi-disciplinary artist **Machine Dazzle** is debuting his first major solo exhibition in Canada and exclusively at Harbourfront Centre. Showcasing one of the most extensive collections to date of his fantastical costume designs and experimental creations for the stage and film, *Art and Intention* will share a retrospective look into his explosive queer maximalist aesthetic and creative process through photography, video, found object, ephemera and his trademark volume of glitter.

Radical in scale, colour, pomp, texture and movement, *Art and Intention* offers visitors a rare opportunity to immerse into the imaginary world and creative process of Machine for a look at his profound and thoroughly joyful contributions to queer art and storytelling. "There's an inherent transformation in my work, the desire to turn fantasy into reality, or turn my truth into something you can see or hear," he says. "The stories in my work are as important as the aesthetic that tells them."

Machine has created bespoke looks for fashion icons, including designer Diane von Furstenberg and model Cara Delevingne, for the 2019 Metropolitan Museum of Art Gala and his costumes, and sets were featured in Taylor Mac's Pulitzer Prize-nominated *A 24-Decade History of Popular Music*. An HBO original documentary feature film directed by Jeffrey Friedman and Rob Epstein and co-produced by Pomegranate Arts will be premiering at the Tribeca Film Festival.

Bon vivant and all-around creative provocateur, Machine Dazzle is an artist, costume designer, set designer, singer/songwriter, art director and maker. Machine describes himself as a radical queer, instinct-based concept artist and thinker trapped in the role of a costume designer. He has collaborated with artists from the New York scene and beyond, including drag and performance luminaries the Dazzle Dancers and Mx Justin Vivian Bond, long-time collaborator and theatre artist Taylor Mac, Basil Twist, Godfrey Reggio, Jennifer Miller, Pig Iron Theatre Company, Opera Philadelphia, the Bearded Ladies Cabaret, the Curran Theatre and Spiegelworld.

Recent collaborations include the Catalyst Quartet on *Bassline Fabulous* – a reimagining of Bach's Goldberg Variations at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and his

debut collaboration with Opera Lafayette for the historic premiere of the never-before-seen Rameau comedic opéra-ballet, *Io*.

Machine Dazzle's work has been exhibited internationally. His first solo exhibition, *Queer Maximalism x Machine Dazzle*, was held at the Museum of Arts and Design in New York City in 2022.

Presented by Harbourfront Centre and curated by Pomegranate Arts, Inc. from New York, *Art and Intention* is on view from **June 16 to August 13, 2023**, at Harbourfront Centre's main building, **235 Queens Quay West** in the heart of Toronto's waterfront.

This sprawling exhibition is divided into six sections.

Treasure

Machine Dazzle unveiled his musical theatre piece, *Treasure*, at the Guggenheim as a commission by the museum's Work and Process series during New York Fashion Week in 2019. For the show, dubbed a "rock 'n' roll cabaret," *Treasure* is a future psyche-sex-adelic synth rock experience with stories about Machine's mother, their relationship and the legacy she left to him. Exploring how stories, narratives and beliefs are enforced and reinforced in the home, *Treasure* undresses layers of his past to make sense of the present, featuring stories told and stitched together through song.

Sixteen looks from the original performance work ***Treasure by Machine Dazzle*** will be on display, accompanied by audio playback of songs from the album. The sculptures were exhibited in *Queer Maximalism x Machine Dazzle* at the Museum of Arts and Design (MAD) from September 10, 2022, to February 19, 2023.

Whitman in the Woods. [World Premiere]

Whitman in the Woods. is a short film featuring Taylor Mac performing the poetry of Walt Whitman. Directed by Noah Greenberg and edited by Luis Moreno in 2020, All Arts originally commissioned and aired the film. The eight wearable sculptures created for Taylor Mac, who wore them in the film, will be on public view for the first time alongside the film.

Taylor Mac's A 24-Decade History of Popular Music

A 24-Decade History of Popular Music is a 24-hour performance art concert created and performed by theatre maker Taylor Mac, a 24-piece band and dozens of local

performers. Years in development, the piece was originally performed as a one-time 24-hour event in 2016 and recognized on *The New York Times* 2016 lists: Best Performances, Best Theater and Best Music. The project continued to tour nationally and internationally over the course of eight years.

Machine Dazzle created more than 45 wearable sculptures for this project, including looks for himself, Taylor Mac and audience members brought onstage to participate in the performance. Exhibited for the first time are large format photographs of Taylor Mac wearing an iteration of each of the 24 costumes created for him by Machine Dazzle. Captured by New York-based portrait photographer Gregory Kramer, this collection represents the final iteration of each of these evolving looks representing each decade from 1776 to the present.

Taylor Mac's *A 24-Decade History of Popular Music* is the subject of a new HBO Original feature-length documentary directed by filmmakers Jeffrey Friedman and Rob Epstein, premiering on June 14 at the Tribeca Film Festival and available in Canada only on Crave from June 27, 2023.

Special Occasions

This “Special Occasions” collection was drawn from looks meant for public consumption – for a bawdy night out on the town or strolling the streets of a parade, decked out in maximalist yet thoughtfully constructed finery.

Special Occasions is a “silver foil cityscape.” A retrospective exhibition that looks at the surreal looks Machine has created for himself and countless models and muses who have worn Machine Dazzle bespoke creations when attending special public events, like Pride and New York’s Easter parade. For Machine, the looks represent his approach to activism. “This is about creating queer space,” he says. “They don’t just give it to you, you know. Queers must make their own space.”

Ephemera

Mini fantasy worlds manifest throughout the vitrines of Harbourfront Centre’s main building. Props, jewellery, headpieces and other ephemera and selected photographs of Machine Dazzle by Eileen Keane come together to create an imaginary landscape of colour and pageantry in the display vitrines of 235 Queens Quay West. (Artist/photographer Eileen Keane is Machine Dazzle’s best friend and has been his inspiration for decades.)

Ideas that are way, way out there: Session 4 of TED2023

For Machine's recent talk at the 2023 TED conference in Vancouver, he created *Mother Nature*, an elaborate look that straddles the boundaries of costume and set. Worn by his friend and collaborator Matty Crosland, *Mother Nature* states the importance of fostering a nurturing environment for plants, creatures and humans to learn, thrive and co-exist.

About Machine Dazzle

Beloved American bon vivant and all-around creative provocateur, Machine Dazzle (aka Matthew Flower) has been dazzling stages via costumes, sets, and performances since he arrived in New York in 1994. An artist, costume designer, set designer, singer/songwriter, art director and maker, Machine describes himself as a radical queer, emotionally driven, instinct-based concept artist and thinker trapped in the role of a costume designer.

Machine designs unconventional, wearable art pieces and bespoke installations. As a stage designer, Machine has collaborated with artists from the New York downtown scene and beyond – including Julie Atlas Muz, Big Art Group, Mx. Justin Vivian Bond, Taylor Mac, Basil Twist, Godfrey Reggio, Jennifer Miller, The Dazzle dancers, Big Art Group, Mike Albo, Stanley Love, Soomi Kim, Pig Iron Theatre Company, Opera Philadelphia, the Bearded Ladies Cabaret, the Curran Theatre and Spiegelworld. He has created bespoke looks for fashion icons, including designer Diane von Furstenberg and model Cara Delevingne, for the 2019 Metropolitan Museum of Art Gala.

About Pomegranate Arts

Founded by Linda Brumbach in 1998, Pomegranate Arts is an independent production company based in New York City dedicated to developing international performing arts projects. As a creative producing team, Pomegranate Arts collaborates closely with contemporary artists and arts institutions to bring bold and ambitious artistic ideas to fruition. With a hands-on approach, Pomegranate creates unique structures and partnerships in all performance mediums. Whether creating new work with established artists at the peak of their careers or introducing the vision of a younger artist, Pomegranate specializes in producing provocative performance events of the highest quality.

About Harbourfront Centre

Harbourfront Centre is a leading international centre for contemporary arts, culture and ideas, and a registered, charitable not-for-profit cultural organization operating a 10-acre campus on Toronto's central waterfront. Harbourfront Centre provides year-round programming 52 weeks a year, seven days a week, supporting a wide range of artists and communities. We inspire audiences and visitors with a breadth of bold, ambitious and engaging experiences, and champion contemporary Canadian artists throughout their careers, presenting them alongside international artists, and fostering national and international artistic exchange between disciplines and cultures.

Harbourfront Centre gratefully acknowledges its Programming Partners: Government of Canada, Canada Council for the Arts, Ontario Arts Council and City of Toronto, as well as its Corporate Site Partner: Labatt.

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