

# NEWS

## WALKER ART CENTER PRESENTS PAUL CHAN: *BREATHERS*, A MAJOR SURVEY OF THE ARTIST’S WORK OVER THE PAST DECADE

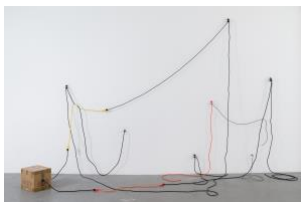
On View November 17, 2022 – April 23, 2023,  
 Exhibition to Feature Approximately 40 Works Including a New Installation



Paul Chan, *Khara En Penta (Joyer in 5)*, 2019 Courtesy the artist and Greene Naftali, New York

**MINNEAPOLIS, JULY 26, 2022** —This fall, the Walker Art Center will open the first major U.S.-based museum exhibition of works by artist, writer, publisher, and activist Paul Chan in 15 years. Chan came to prominence in the early 2000s with vibrant moving image works that touched upon aspects of war, religion, pleasure, and politics. Around 2009, Chan embarked on what he described as a “breather” from the art world, turning his attention to experimental publishing and the economics of information by founding the press Badlands Unlimited. The forthcoming exhibition, titled *Paul Chan: Breathers*, traces the artist’s return to artmaking through approximately 40 installations, works on paper, and suites of objects, including a new installation made especially for the Walker. Together, the featured works capture Chan’s creative and conceptual innovations, from his publishing work through to his current experimentations with the boundless possibilities of the moving image. Following its presentation at the Walker, from November 17, 2022, to April 23, 2023, the exhibition will travel to the Institute for Contemporary Art at VCU and Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis.

Taking the notion of a “breather” as its organizing principle, this exhibition surveys Chan’s recent work in three chapters. It opens with the radical publications produced by Badlands Unlimited, including selections of paperbacks, e-books, zines, GIFs, protest signs, and books on stone tablets across such genres as erotic fiction, artists’ writings, and poetry. Badlands Unlimited was established in 2010 with the vision to challenge and expand the possibilities of publishing through experimentations with language, technology, design, and networks of circulation. The presentation in *Breathers* offers visitors a look at Badland Unlimited’s creative production, illuminating Chan’s interest in breaking the barriers of a given field or genre—a sensibility that he carried forward as he gradually began making art again.



Paul Chan, *The argument: haircut (of the year)*, 2012–2013. Courtesy the artist and Greene Naftali, New York. Photo: Jason Mandella.

In 2012, Chan began considering the possibilities that could result from freeing the moving image from the screen and the confines of the frame more broadly. His *Arguments* series (2012-2013) featured electrical cords plugged into a spectrum of objects and surfaces, from walls and doors to furniture to concrete-filled shoes. Presented in myriad configurations, the *Arguments* isolated the electric currents

necessary for a projection from any functional projecting body. These works gave way to the *Nonprojections* (2013), which separated the working projector—its lights flickering—from any surface onto which it could illuminate an image. These works, which broke the natural processes of projection and animation, laid the groundwork for his newest explorations.

The artist's latest works, part of the *Breathers* series, explore animation through sculptural forms in three-dimensional space. Composed of nylon fabric figures and forms set in motion by industrial fans, the *Breathers* shift the action of the moving image into real space and in connection with the people in it. Meticulously orchestrated, Chan has taken the same precision to the choreography of motion with these kinetic installations as with the intricate animations of his early career. At the same time, the billowing forms convey a sense of openness and breath—a notion central to Chan's life and career since 2009 and one that is amazingly astute in its relationship to our contemporary climate, as we all grapple with the ramifications of the pandemic, the proliferation of digital screens, and the profound and pervasive communal sense of burnout.

"In 2009, I was questioning my work, my motivations, and what my practice meant. I needed to take a breath and break—something I believe is critical to innovative thinking, to creativity, and to life in general. The idea of simply being and breathing was crucial in that moment, and it has become core to my practice now," said Chan. "My newest work is a kind of choreography of breath, and it is providing me with avenues to consider movement and the moving image in a much broader context fertile with possibilities beyond the screen. And at the same time, I could not have imagined how significant these ideas would become in our communities. As our lives become increasingly mediated by digital screens, it feels significant to break art and ourselves from those frames, to be present and breathing in the moment."

*Paul Chan: Breathers* builds on the Walker's long history with the artist, which began in 1999 when the Performing Arts department featured a live moving image component created by Chan and Scott Marshall as part of a performance by Fred Ho's Afro Asian Music Ensemble. The institution has subsequently featured Chan in four exhibitions between 2007 and 2021 and acquired several of his works, forming a deep engagement with his practice. *Breathers*, and its accompanying catalogue, was developed as a close collaboration between Chan and Pavel Pyš, the Walker's curator, Visual Arts, with additional support from Matthew Villar Miranda, curatorial fellow, Visual Arts.

"It takes courage to turn away from familiar ways of doing things and search instead for new possibilities and meaning in life and work," said Pyš. "This exhibition shows how Paul consistently challenges and expands the possibilities of publishing, activism, and the limits of how we understand the moving image medium. We are thrilled to present the exhibition and catalogue that together shed light on shifts in Paul's practice across the last decade."

The exhibition is accompanied by a Walker designed and published catalogue created in close collaboration with the artist, with contributions by Pavel S. Pyš, Vic Brooks, and Paul Chan.

**Exhibition Tour:**

Walker Art Center: November 17, 2022–April 23, 2023

Institute for Contemporary Art at VCU: September 8, 2023–January 7, 2024

Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis: March 8–August 11, 2024

**ABOUT THE WALKER ART CENTER**

Known for presenting today’s most compelling artists from close to home and around the world, the Walker Art Center features a broad array of contemporary visual arts, music, dance, theater, and moving image works. Ranging from concerts and films to exhibitions and workshops, Walker programs bring us together to examine the questions that shape and inspire us as individuals, cultures, and communities. The adjacent Minneapolis Sculpture Garden, one of the first urban sculpture parks of its kind in the United States, holds at its center the beloved Twin Cities landmark *Spoonbridge and Cherry* by Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen as well as some 60 sculptures on the 19-acre Walker campus. Visit [walkerart.org](http://walkerart.org) for more information on upcoming events and programs.

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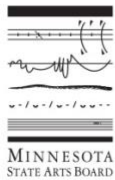
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