



Conrad Ventur, *A green new deal*

January 5 - February 9, 2020

Opening reception, Sunday, January 5, 7-9pm

From January 5 to February 9, 2020 Participant Inc is pleased to debut *A green new deal*, a solo exhibition by **Conrad Ventur**. In recent years and by necessity, Ventur has become a gardener, manifesting a commitment to sustainable life work amid the precarity of maintaining an art practice in New York. *A green new deal* represents this period of training and growth through new works in photography, video, and installation.

At the center of the exhibition is a functioning greenhouse, housing plants gathered by the artist and on loan from his friends. Ventur will tend to the plants throughout the run of the exhibition, and parts of the installation will be donated to a community garden at its conclusion. In tandem, Ventur's new feature-length single-channel video, *The Internship*, edited by Ying Liu, is projected large-scale. It is comprised of recordings made during his first gardening job as horticulturist at Wave Hill Public Gardens in the Bronx and conversations about gardening with artist Barbara Hammer made during the final months of her life. Shot with a pair of camera-fitted sunglasses, *The Internship* documents Ventur working, socializing, observing, and commuting to the gardens – metaphoric of his interests in memory, ecology, habitat, and utopia.

Drawing from both his professional transition and the history of his own work, *A green new deal* reflects a genealogy of influence. Ventur's ongoing partnership with Participant Inc largely involved his long-term collaboration with Mario Montez. Around 2010 while researching Warhol's early films, Ventur learned that the reclusive underground actor had begun to emerge from retirement after 35 years. They began a friendship through Ventur's re-staging of Warhol's 'screen tests' using the same methods and Factory stars, including Montez. They continued their collaboration for three years, Ventur noting that, "I began to think about people, not just the media in which they were recorded years ago." Ventur subsequently produced a series of digital c-prints, videos, and live performances with Montez, which was to culminate in *Mario Montez Returns*, a six-week performance environment starring the actor in November 2013. Montez died on September 26, 2013.

Ventur had come to love Montez as a friend, a muse, grandfather, and drag mother all in one. With Mario's sudden departure, he struggled with what we were still capable of organizing, if anything at all, and while tribute screenings were held in November 2013, *A green new deal* feels like a continuation of that tribute. Here, mentors Hammer and Carolee Schneemann are prominently featured through photographic portraits, presented alongside Ventur's self-portraiture as a gardener and art worker; photographs made in the garden of the artist's chosen family; and cyanotypes of material pruned and collected through the process of the artist's gardening labor. In essence, *A green new deal* is just what its title could imply: an expression of resilience amidst precarity and loss; a modest gesture within a larger political call for sustainability made through processes of labor and stewardship.

**Conrad Ventur** is a multimedia artist and horticulturist based in New York City. His intimate photographic series emerge from years collaborating with his subjects. His work, which also encompasses video, installation, and independent publication projects, considers ecology, family, habitat, and memory. Ventur studied photography at the Rochester Institute of Technology (BFA, 1999) and fine art at Goldsmiths, University of London (MFA, 2008). Recent solo exhibitions include *IVY* at Baxter Street at the Camera Club of New York, 2016 and *Pink Seat* at Rokeby, London, 2016. Recent group exhibitions include *Be Seen: Portrait Photography After Stonewall*, The Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, CT, curated by Patricia Hickson (2019) and *Face to Face: Portraits of Artists*, The Philadelphia Museum of Art, curated by Peter Barberie (2018). Ventur's moving image work has screened at The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh; C/O Berlin; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museum of the City of New York; Participant Inc; and the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, among other venues. Ventur is a grantee of the Arch and Bruce Brown Foundation (2017) and the Franklin Furnace Fund (2013). His work is held in the permanent collections of The Philadelphia Museum of Art, The Wadsworth Atheneum, and The Whitney Museum.

IMAGE: Conrad Ventur, *The Internship*. 2018-19. video, sound. 43:38 minutes. [The interior of a greenhouse filled with boxes of potted plants shows soft blue light entering through the transparent ceiling, with rows of light bulbs along the ceiling.]

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