

**PARTICIPANT INC**  
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**LA><ART**  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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LA><ART Director Lauri Firstenberg curates

**Thomas Lawson**  
***NEW WORLD***

**An LA><ART off-site initiative at PARTICIPANT INC**

**June 14 – July 26, 2009**

**Opening reception Sunday, June 14, 7–9 pm**

LA><ART off-site initiatives and PARTICIPANT INC are pleased to debut a body of new work by Los Angeles-based artist **Thomas Lawson**. Taking a series of photographs of young individuals as his point of departure, Lawson translates his subject into paint under the rubric of ***A New World***. Perverse, yet hopeful, these figurative paintings feature individuals and groups with their backs to the viewer, looking into the distance, leaving us to confront a hyper-carnavalesque palette, eccentric patterning, experimental compositional and iconographic tactics.

Inspired by Giandomenico Tiepolo's Rococo *The New World*, Lawson reworks the scene of a crowd lining up to view a spectacular attraction, restaged here with contemporary subjects rendered in experimental hues and facture inclusive of fuchsia flesh, royal blue boots, and lime green limbs. The density and excess of these canvases complicate the artist's interest in 'passive confrontation' with his subjects. Lawson frames his figures with decorative details, which he reveals are forms taken from his studio, including abstractions inspired by a faux marble medium, stripes gesturing to Cubist lozenges, and circles adapted from coffee cans.

A large canvas entitled *Twins* depicts two women against a crimson background, one donning a white mask. Lawson paints an ominous noir specter across the bodies of the figures. The most recent painting features two male figures taken from an image captured in a local mall on Lawson's iPhone. In Lawson's rendition, one figure is holding an American flag – and the canvas is boldly covered in stars and stripes.

**Thomas Lawson** is the Dean of the School of Art at CalArts. He has shown paintings at Metro Pictures in New York, Anthony Reynolds in London, and the Richard Kuhlenschmidt and Rosamund Felsen galleries in Los Angeles. More recently he has staged solo exhibitions at LA><ART and David Kordansky in Los Angeles. His work is currently featured in *The Pictures Generation, 1974-1984* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

**About LAXART**

Responding to Los Angeles' cultural climate, **LA><ART** questions given contexts for the exhibition of contemporary art, architecture and design. With a renewed vision for the potential of independent

art spaces, LA><ART provides a center for interdisciplinary discussion and interaction and for the production and exhibition of new exploratory work. LA><ART offers a space for provocation, dialogue, and confrontation by practices on the ground in Los Angeles and abroad. LA><ART is a hub for artists based on flexibility, transition, spontaneity, and change. The space responds to an urgency and obligation to provide an accessible exhibition space for contemporary artists, architects, and designers.

This exhibition was made possible by LA><ART funders.

**About PARTICIPANT INC:**

PARTICIPANT INC's exhibitions are made possible with public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts, a state agency.

This program is supported, in part, by funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

PARTICIPANT INC receives generous support from the Harriett Ames Charitable Trust, Bloomberg, The Brown Foundation, Inc. of Houston, Foundation 20 21, Peter Norton Family Foundation, The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, and numerous individuals.

PARTICIPANT INC is located at 253 East Houston Street, between Norfolk and Suffolk Streets on the LES. Subway: F/V to Second Avenue, Allen Street exit.

Gallery Hours: Wednesday-Sunday, noon–7pm

