

An abstract painting by Alan Vega, featuring a central vertical column of light grey and white, flanked by dark blue and red, set against a dark, textured background. The text 'ALAN VEGA' is overlaid in white, sans-serif font.

ALAN VEGA

Revue de Presse

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CRITIQUE

SUICIDE, FILS DE BRUT

Par [Christophe Conte \(https://www.liberation.fr/auteur/18972-christophe-conte\)](https://www.liberation.fr/auteur/18972-christophe-conte)
— 4 août 2019 à 17:36

Réédité en vinyle dans sa version originale de 1977, le premier album des New-Yorkais demeure, quarante-deux ans plus tard, toujours aussi incisif et disjoncté. Retour avec Martin Rev, moitié survivante du duo, sur la genèse apocalyptique de ce chef-d'œuvre.



Un flux sanguin de synthés qui grésillent à tombeau ouvert, avec par-dessus la voix suppliciée d'un Ghost Rider qui hoquette un rock'n'roll primal ressorti des tréfonds de l'enfer. Noël 1977, Elvis Presley n'est pas refroidi depuis six mois qu'une version zombie radioactive du King s'offre avec prudence aux pieds des sapins : le premier album du duo new-yorkais Suicide. Le nom du groupe n'est pas très engageant, pas plus que la pochette grossièrement maculée par ce qui semble un mélange de sang et d'huile de moteur. Ce disque floqué d'une étoile rouge en plein front demeure, quarante-deux ans plus tard, le cadeau empoisonné que l'on fera à ses pires ennemis comme aux êtres les plus chers, tant l'humanité se divisera *ad vitam* entre ceux que sa brutalité stridente répugne et les autres, qui ne se sont jamais remis de leur première rencontre avec ce sillon sacré, aujourd'hui réédité en vinyle écarlate. On dit toujours du premier Velvet Underground qu'il fit un four mémorable à sa sortie, en 1967, mais que tous ceux qui se risquèrent à ramener chez eux «le disque à la banane» eurent aussitôt envie de monter un groupe.

Pureté animale

Dix ans plus tard, au même endroit, le choc sonique est comparable, l'échec cuisant aussi, mais cette fois ceux qui ont tenté Suicide éprouvent une seule envie, celle de tuer quelqu'un. Les seules dix minutes de *Frankie Teardrop*, morceau de bravoure dostoïevskien aux hurlements hallucinés, constituent une épreuve dont personne ne ressort indemne, voire vivant. Même à New York, même à cette époque où surgissent à tous les coins de rue des Ramones, Talking Heads, Television, Richard Hell ou Patti Smith, Suicide est accueilli partout où il passe comme un ballon de soufre prêt à exploser. Alan Vega et Martin Rev, qui semblent ne former qu'un seul être mutant (Revega), mi-cavalier de l'apocalypse, mi-androïd dysfonctionnel, n'ont de brevet punk à recevoir de personne. Ils étaient punks quand le punk ne désignait encore pas grand-chose, et les affiches de leurs premiers shows underground, où il est écrit «*Punk Music By Suicide*», en attestent. On est au tout début des années 70, à l'entrée d'un long tunnel de déveines et de frustrations pour nos deux âmes errantes, et si le premier album finira par sortir au bout de sept ans, leur son est punk depuis le premier jour. Un mot piqué dans une chronique d'un concert des Stooges signée Lester Bangs dans *Creem*. Les Stooges de 69, c'est pour Alan Vega l'équivalent de la Sainte Vierge pour Miss Soubirou.

Lorsqu'il voit Iggy Pop et son escouade électrique, deux soirs de suite au New York State Pavilion du Queens, le *blast* est si puissant que tout ce qu'il a ébauché jusqu'ici vole en éclat. Alan Bermowitz n'a plus de temps à perdre. Il a déjà 31 ans (il est né en 1938), il est déjà marié et divorcé, son diplôme d'art du Brooklyn College étant sa seule maigre carte de visite pour se présenter comme «artiste» dans une ville où tout le monde l'est un peu. Il réalise des sculptures lumineuses fauchées avec des matériaux de décharge, capture des bruits blancs et crades sur des bandes magnétiques, et grenouille auprès des derniers fossiles de la Beat Generation et de Fluxus. Mais il subsiste en lui quelque chose du rock de sa jeunesse qui n'a jamais cautérisé, et dont les Stooges ont rouvert la plaie. Cette pureté animale qu'il a retrouvée en Iggy, pourquoi n'irait-il pas à son tour la chercher ? Avec son physique de petit juif d'Europe de l'Est, cet œil de fou qui transperce comme une foreuse ceux qui croisent son regard, Alan devenu Vega ne misera pas sur son sex-appeal, plutôt sur la terreur qu'il inspire et sur sa présence épileptique. Et on ne l'a pas encore entendu chanter.

Dentition et pied de micro

Début 1970, il aide au fonctionnement d'un lieu alternatif, pompeusement baptisé Museum : A Project For Living Artists. En réalité un genre de squat crasseux situé dans NoHo, qui sent l'urine de rat et l'humidité, sorte de Factory du pauvre où les déclassés du milieu artistique de Manhattan trouvent refuge. C'est là qu'un soir il fait la connaissance de Martin Reverby, un type discret, de dix ans son cadet (il est né en 1947), pianiste de jazz au sein d'une formation à géométrie libre, Reverend B, dont il aspire d'ailleurs à se libérer. Martin Rev porte désormais seul la parole de Suicide depuis la mort d'Alan Vega il y a trois ans. Au téléphone depuis New York, il se souvient de la rencontre électrochoc de sa vie : «*Alan était performer, plasticien, mais j'ai surtout compris très vite qu'avec lui, la musique que je jouais pouvait avoir un futur. Les sixties avaient laissé l'esprit du rock en lambeaux et, dans la sphère des musiques improvisées dans laquelle j'évoluais jusque-là, il manquait cette vibration qui nous avait excités dans le début du rock, mais que l'on retrouvait chez Alice Copper ou les Stooges. Nous étions très différents, Alan et moi, mais il ne fallait pas le pratiquer longtemps pour voir qu'il était habité par quelque chose qui dépassait le cadre de la simple posture artistique.*»

Issu lui aussi d'une famille juive venue de l'Est, né comme Vega à la périphérie du cratère arty de Manhattan, dans le Bronx, Martin Reverby ampute son nom et apprend à déjouer (c'est à la base un virtuose, élève de Lennie Tristano, qui connaît Monk et Cecil Taylor sur le bout des phalanges), n'hésitant pas à troquer le piano pour des orgues barbares et des proto-synthés qui crachouillent tels des robots tuberculeux.

La version en chantier de Suicide (d'après l'épisode «*Satan Suicide*» du comic book *Ghost Rider*, qui donnera au passage son titre à leur premier morceau) abrite un troisième larron, Paul Liebgott, alias Cool P., trafiquant des guitares, puis la future femme de Martin, Mari, à la batterie, avant qu'une boîte à rythmes rudimentaire ne

dispense le duo d'une rythmique humaine. *«Le temps fut long avant que n'arrive la perspective d'un album, raconte Martin Rev. On devait survivre, et économiquement c'était une époque délicate. A deux, on pouvait toutefois s'en sortir, trouver des concerts, et d'ailleurs on a joué partout dans New York.»* Du Mercer Arts Center jusqu'au CBGB's en passant par le Max's Kansas City, pas un mur pelé du Village et d'ailleurs qui n'ait en effet tremblé sous les assauts de ces deux cyber cow-boys vêtus de noir.

Vega est un garçon lettré, cultivé mais, posé sur des planches, il se métamorphose en voyou des trottoirs, menace le public avec une chaîne de moto et n'hésite jamais à refaire une dentition gratos avec son pied de micro. Impassible derrière ses claviers, Martin Rev a une vue imprenable sur ce public maso qui persiste à les suivre malgré la réputation insurrectionnelle qui les précède : *«La seule chose dont j'avais conscience, c'est que nous étions différents de tout ce qui se passait autour de nous. Je n'avais pas la moindre idée de l'impact que cela aurait, mais j'étais sûr d'une chose : personne ne faisait cette musique-là. Une musique pourtant typiquement américaine, avec des racines de blues classiques, de rhythm'n'blues et de rock'n'roll.»* Vega l'initie à tous ces groupes qui tentent de faire dégondrer le rock, des ancêtres de Suicide, le duo Silver Apples, jusqu'aux Allemands de Can, Neu ! ou Kraftwerk. *«Je reconnaissais une parenté évidente avec ce que nous faisions, mais il y avait chez eux une approche plus cérébrale, plus intellectuelle, qui n'était pas forcément la mienne. Les sons abstraits ou trop savants de l'époque ne m'intéressaient pas, j'étais allé au bout avec le free-jazz. Je cherchais juste à réinitialiser, avec des instruments électroniques, ce que le rock avait de plus primitif, ce qui m'avait touché étant jeune. Les textes qu'écrivait Alan étaient aussi en lien avec ce primitivisme, et c'est sa façon de chanter, d'habiter les paroles, qui influait sur ma propre façon de jouer.»*

«Un truc fait à l'instinct»

Le manager des New York Dolls, Marty Thau, est l'un des rares à percevoir derrière cette éjaculation sonore quelque chose d'indubitablement romantique et sensible, et accessoirement une musique qui a trente ans d'avance sur son époque. De leur première rencontre chez un disquaire en 1972 jusqu'à la production de leur album pour son label Red Star cinq ans plus tard, Thau ne lâchera jamais l'affaire. Il continuera à suivre leur trace sans se formaliser des traumatismes qu'elle provoque, attendant le moment opportun pour figer dans la cire des chansons, et une attitude globale, qui font passer le reste du punk-rock local (et international) pour un centre aéré de gosses de riches qui jouent à se faire peur.

Thau a commis d'office Craig Leon pour capturer en studio la sauvagerie du duo. Leon a accompagné l'éclosion des premiers Ramones et Blondie, mais ce n'est pas ça qui importe. Il a surtout travaillé quelques années plus tôt en Jamaïque auprès de Lee Scratch Perry et Bob Marley, et c'est l'utilisation des delay, dilatations et diffractions du dub sur les synthés de Rev et la voix de Vega qui va modifier le corps de l'album sans en dénaturer l'esprit. *«Nous avons enregistré live, en temps réel, confirme Martin Rev. Par la suite, Craig a fait des overdubs. L'idée était de garder l'énergie des concerts où on avait rodé la plupart des morceaux, sauf Frankie Teardrop qui ne ressemblait pas du tout à ça. Alan a changé le texte au dernier moment après avoir lu un article sur un type qui avait buté sa famille avant de se suicider. J'ai improvisé les effets avec une petite radio sur ondes courtes, c'était un truc très à vif, fait à l'instinct. C'est sans doute pour ça que le morceau a eu un tel écho.»*

Des décennies plus tard, les sept péchés capitaux du premier *Suicide* n'ont rien perdu de leur beauté convulsive. Et sans doute *Rocket USA*, *Cheree* ou *Ghost Rider* sonnent-ils encore plus réalistes encore, l'histoire contemporaine ayant souvent emboîté le pas de leur terrifiante prémonition.

[Christophe Conte \(https://www.liberation.fr/auteur/18972-christophe-conte\)](https://www.liberation.fr/auteur/18972-christophe-conte)

[Suicide de SUICIDE \(Mute Records\)](#).

ART & DESIGN

Alan Vega Ignored the Art World. It Won't Return the Favor.

By FRANK ROSE JUNE 23, 2017

There is art, there is anti-art — and there is Alan Vega. The front half of the proto-punk duo Suicide, an outfit so confrontational he once had to dodge a flying hatchet from the audience, Vega also spent nearly half a century stringing together “light sculptures” out of old neon tubing, junked electrical parts and bulbs he sometimes stole from the subway. Some he hung on the wall; others he scattered across the floor. On occasion he even made drawings and paintings — surreal at first, spidery and jittery later on. During this time he was treated to a single museum retrospective and fewer than a dozen gallery shows. Yet today, not quite a year after his death last July at 78, he looms over a scene he ignored almost as assiduously as it ignored him.

“He was never really part of the ‘art world,’” said his wife, Liz Lamere, sitting in the memento-filled apartment they shared in the Financial District. “You had to be part of the scene to promote yourself. That wasn’t what he was about. He was purely about creating.” If not fame, then money? “He could live in a refrigerator box,” she said.

Jeffrey Deitch, the New York art adviser and curator, concurred. “He was not playing the careerist game.” And yet, Mr. Deitch asserted, “he’s going to end up having much more influence than many artists” who did.

If so, Mr. Deitch will be at least partly responsible. Along with Julian Schnabel and the dealer Barbara Gladstone, he is part of a small coterie of art-world insiders who have championed Vega's work. Now he has helped orchestrate a series of events that should elevate it further. On Friday, June 30, the Lower East Side gallery Invisible-Exports is presenting a show that will spotlight Vega's final paintings — lush yet ghostly images that reprise the drawings that will be shown with them. On July 14, the New York independent-music label Fader plans to release his final album, "IT"; the album cover features a photograph he'd once taken of an exit sign. (The first single, "DTM," is available on streaming services.) And on July 18, Mr. Deitch plans to open a show in his own SoHo gallery that will feature drawings and assemblages from Vega's earliest days to his last, as well as a larger-than-life projection of Suicide in concert that, he promises, will make people "feel as if they're there."

As a performer, Vega was legendary. Suicide's albums were hardly major sellers, and their performances were long limited to art galleries and downtown clubs like CBGB and Max's Kansas City. But Vega was a menacing, volatile presence. He would chant, yelp and shriek while his bandmate, Martin Rev, stood impassively in the background, his face half-hidden by dark glasses, droning away on a cheap electronic keyboard. As often as not, the show would end in a riot.

"They were scary," said Arto Lindsay, an important figure in the "no wave" music scene that Suicide helped inspire in the late '70s. "So loud. Excruciatingly loud."

Vega took to music almost by accident. He'd majored in art at Brooklyn College, where he fell under the sway of Kurt Seligmann, the Swiss surrealist, and Ad Reinhardt, the unrelenting abstractionist who reduced his art to variations on a single color: black. In the late '60s, Vega helped open an art space on lower Broadway called the Project of Living Artists. It was open to anyone who identified as an artist — including Vega himself, who lived for a time in a sleeping bag on the floor.

During this period he made two critical connections — Mr. Rev, then a jazz musician, and Ivan Karp, whose OK Harris art gallery was one of the first in SoHo. Vega (then still known as Alan Bermowitz, his given name growing up in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn) had taken to arranging junk electrical parts to form assemblages that sprawled across the floor. Mr. Karp, who was exhibiting now-

celebrated artists like Duane Hanson, Malcolm Morley and Richard Pettibone, offered him a show — the first of several. He also offered Suicide a stage.

For Vega, it was a critical moment. A year earlier, he had caught Iggy and the Stooges at their first show in New York. Iggy was a ferocious performer, cutting his bare chest, leaping headfirst into the audience. Vega was in awe. “It changed his perspective totally,” Mr. Rev recalled in a phone interview. “He said to himself he could no longer be an artist unless he performed. That was the transition.”

Suicide's first album came out in 1977, the year New York hit rock bottom. The city had only narrowly averted bankruptcy. A power blackout sparked a looting spree. The serial killer known as Son of Sam was terrorizing the city. In the East Village, tenements that hadn't been torched became squats. “There was kind of a ‘Rosemary's Baby’ vibe to New York,” recalled Mr. Lindsay. “You'd walk by a building and wonder what was going on in there — what kind of devil worship or orgy.”

Suicide fit right in. The highlight of their self-titled debut was “Frankie Teardrop,” a harrowing number about a young factory worker who, unable to feed his family or pay the rent, turns a gun on his infant son, his wife and himself. Bruce Springsteen told *Rolling Stone* it was “one of the most amazing songs I ever heard.” A video version by the artists Walter Robinson and Paul Dougherty and the critic Edit deAk is in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art.

Vega was invited to edit an issue of *Art-Rite*, the punked-out art 'zine Mr. Robinson and Ms. deAk were publishing. But he wouldn't show again in Manhattan until 1983, when Ms. Gladstone, who was exhibiting Robert Mapplethorpe and Anish Kapoor, put him in a group show. When she gave him a solo show the following year, Mr. Schnabel bought one of his light sculptures.

“I thought it was a cool thing to have,” Mr. Schnabel said recently in a phone interview. It put him in mind of a phrase that's been applied to the avant-garde films of Jack Smith, but could just as well describe the work of the Fluxus artists of the '60s or the Swiss sculptor Jean Tinguely: “The sheer beauty of junk.”

Ms. Gladstone wanted Vega to keep making art, but he objected to having to “crank out these pieces,” Ms. Lamere recalled. Yet he kept making them, regardless, cannibalizing one assemblage to complete another. The disregard for his own work was typical: After his final show at OK Harris, he tore down his

sculptures and dumped their parts on the street. “He would never cherish an object,” declared Mathieu Copeland, the curator who organized Vega’s only full-scale retrospective, at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Lyon. “For him, it was all about the energy.”

Nearly 20 years would pass before his next gallery show, at Deitch Projects in 2002. It came because a group of much younger artists caught Vega in a 2000 New Year’s Eve performance and came back raving about how cool he was. In 1975, as a young gallery assistant, Mr. Deitch had seen his work at OK Harris and come away equally stunned. He considered it “one of the greatest art exhibitions I saw in New York in the ’70s” — on a par with Vito Acconci, the transgressive pioneer of performance art, who likewise stepped away from art.

In Vega’s case, the line between art and not-art was always blurry. “The aesthetic of his sculpture, the aesthetic of his music — one fit right into the other,” Mr. Deitch said. “It was the same aesthetic” — the beauty of junk. You can see it in Jean-Michel Basquiat, in paintings that present “a collage of all these found elements in an energetic assemblage that has its own inner logic,” as Mr. Deitch put it. You can sense it in Tony Oursler, whose installations feature found objects and disturbing video projections. “He was very anti-form,” Mr. Deitch said of Vega, “but he was also conceptually rigorous. That’s one reason why he inspires so many artists and musicians today.”

Mr. Oursler and his friend Mike Kelley played the first Suicide album nonstop in 1977-78, when they were students at the California Institute of the Arts and had a band called the Poetics. “We’d never heard anything like it,” Mr. Oursler said. “He was slipping between art and music in a wonderful way.” Mr. Oursler had heard that the light sculptures in the OK Harris shows smelled like “smoldering junk” when they were plugged in. “I had this image in my mind for years. It inspired me without ever having to see it.”

In recent years, even as he was recording his final album with Ms. Lamere, Vega returned increasingly to sculpture. After the Lyon show, in 2009, there were solo exhibitions in Paris and at Invisible-Exports; group shows in Moscow, Milan, Copenhagen and Geneva; and a Semiotext(e) conference at MoMA PS1 in New York. There was also a stroke, in 2012, and congestive heart failure, which was discovered at the same time, and after that a series of mini-strokes. On May 20 last year, he fell in his kitchen and broke his hip. He got a partial replacement,

but there were complications. He spent weeks in the hospital, then went to a rehab center in Brooklyn. “But his heart was starting to do weird things,” Ms. Lamere said. And then “he just passed in his sleep.”

Several months before his death, Vega unexpectedly took up painting again, for the first time in decades. He was up all night, doing the series of portraits that will be shown at Invisible-Exports. “They didn’t have any faces,” Ms. Lamere remarked. “I said — and he didn’t correct me — that they were like spirits.” Human shapes, but with a void. Though they never talked about it, the two had a tacit understanding: “We kind of knew he was preparing to go into the other world.”

A version of this article appears in print on June 25, 2017, on Page AR12 of the New York edition with the headline: He Ignored the Art World, Then Inspired It.

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Alan Vega: Dead or Alive

— Art



July 06, 2017

When it was announced nearly a year ago that Alan Vega had passed, I remember walking out of my East Village apartment and seeing the loss. He was 78 years old, not of my generation per se, but you cannot (and should not) avoid the anarchistic icon that was Vega. Record stores, coffee shops, and along the Bowery— his spirit was spray-painted, crudely and carefully, a commemoration of an important figure for both the city and the neighborhood scene. A front-runner in the earliest roots of punk, an artist spanning across a multitude of mediums, he was known as one half of the band Suicide— but his roots had been grounded in visual art. At Invisible Exports on Eldridge Street, an exhibition that opened last week pays tribute to Vega's last works— a

...walking through the snow
**provides the corporeal
evidence of the cyclical
nature and power of
creative presence, an
experience not worth
missing.**

**Keep IT Alive will be up
through July 29th, 2017.**

Text and photos by Anna Zanes



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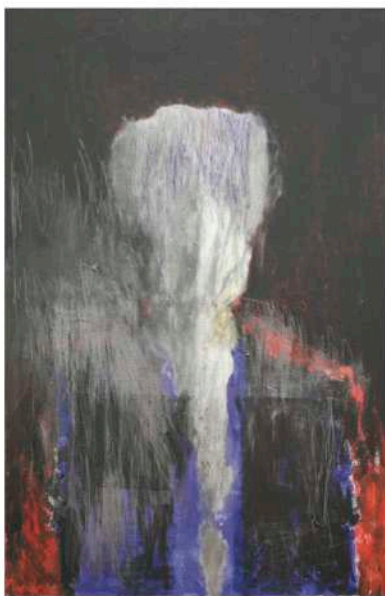
STAGE PRESENCE

Alan Licht on Alan Vega

AS THE 1960S DISSOLVED into the '70s, the late Alan Vega made two transitions: from painter to light sculptor, and from visual artist to rock vocalist. After an epiphanic experience witnessing Iggy Pop in concert in 1969, he teamed up with Martin Rev to form Suicide. The notorious New York duo was equally provocative and prescient, setting the pace not only for punk but for the electropop and EDM movements by stripping rock instrumentation down to a keyboard, drum machine, and vocals. One of Suicide's first gigs took place at Lower Manhattan's OK Harris gallery in 1970, alongside an exhibition of Vega's light sculptures; he also showed at Barbara Gladstone gallery in 1983 and Deitch Projects in 2002. But despite the interest from high-profile gallerists, Vega's art career has remained obscure, while his music, particularly Suicide's eponymous 1977 debut LP, achieved legendary status. This summer, marking the first anniversary of his death, two exhibitions opened in New York—a show of recent works at Invisible-Exports and an immersive memorial retrospective at Deitch Projects that mixed his drawings and sculpture with photographs, concert videos, and interviews—alongside the release of Vega's last album, *IT* (Fader), in an effort to shed light on his myriad artistic pursuits.

With a veritable force field of classic industrial drilling electronics blasting behind his vocals, *IT* is starkly abrasive compared to Vega's other solo albums, in which he frequently strove to modify the Suicide sound into something commercially viable. Notably having dropped his trademark "Elvis from Hell" slap-back echo and other vocal effects, Vega here comes across more as a poet than as a singer. Though partly a knowing farewell statement—in "Stars," he sings, "It's your life / It's your given hand, your final hand"—the album is dominated by his characteristic vignettes of American death and destruction, featuring the clipped phrases and blood-and-guts imagery that are typical of his lyrics.

It was the 2016 paintings at Invisible-Exports that truly showed an artistic departure—a final turn—for Vega, who had not painted on canvas for decades. Each was an eerie portrait of a faceless figure from the waist up against a turbulent, brushy monochromatic backdrop, echoing *IT*'s combinations of Vega's voice and droning noise. The paintings seemed to have evolved from dozens of similar untitled drawings of street people exhibited at Deitch, and all were a step away from the iconographic Pop-trash workings of Vega's mixed-media sculptures, though one could still make out vague traces of Elvis, Buddha, the Elephant Man, and Jesus in them. The gallery's use of footlights to illuminate the canvases was apt—they intimated stage lighting, and if viewers moved toward a painting, they would cast shadows that further shrouded the portraits in mystery. (Ironically,



Above: Alan Vega, *Stars*, 2016, graphite and acrylic on canvas, 36 x 24". Below: Alan Vega in his studio, New York, 1982. Photo: Alan Tannenbaum/Getty Images.

Vega's last album is dominated by characteristic vignettes of American death and destruction.



Vega initially began fastening lights directly to his color-field paintings in order to keep them evenly lit regardless of the viewer's position; he ultimately removed the paintings altogether and focused on the light bulbs as material for sculpture.)

It's no coincidence that the Invisible-Exports show was called "Keep IT Alive"—the seven paintings all shared titles with tracks on the album. (The 2002 Deitch show was also named for a Vega solo album, 1981's *Collision Drive*.) But there is little apparent relationship between the songs' lyrics and the paintings, or the paintings' titles and their voided subjects. Rather than serve an illustrative purpose, the doublings reinforce the idea of his music and artwork sharing a unified aesthetic. In the sculptures at Invisible-Exports, Suicide songs like "Ghost Rider" and "Rocker USA" were evoked by the *Ghost Rider* and rocket stickers on *Holy Ghost*, 2016, and *Magister Ludi*, 2007; the flickering Christmas-tree lights in *American Supreme*, 2016 (also the title of a 2002 Suicide album), have the same unrelenting pulsation as Suicide's rhythm box; and the chain attached to *Bill Dee*, 2013, recalls the bike chains Vega wielded onstage in Suicide's confrontational early concerts. Vega seized on crucifixes as a motif in the '80s, and a correspondence can be gleaned between the structures of his sculptures (lights, electronics, and sundry debris attached to an invariably chewed-up two-plank cross) and his songs (streetwise lyrics over a distorted, two- or three-note repeated figure and a similarly obsessive, hypnotic beat). In a video interview with filmmaker Paul Tschinkel on display in the Deitch show, Vega said that he conceives of a cross as two parallel lines that meet at the point of infinity, which could also be seen as a metaphor for the intersection of his art and music, or the durability and remarkable chemistry of his partnership with Rev.

There is also a very faint cross in each of the 2016 paintings, two barely detectable thin lines that extend to the edges. This nods toward the influence of Ad Reinhardt, Vega's art teacher at Brooklyn College in the late '50s, whose legendary "black paintings" feature monochromatic crosses that hover near imperceptibility. Vega was also an admirer of Jackson Pollock, and compared the numerous electric wires dangling from his sculptures to Pollock's splashes. As the dramatic juxtaposition of Vega's blown-out sculptures and a larger-than-life video projection of a still-startling 1980 Suicide concert in the Deitch show's main room made abundantly clear, of all the artists who sought to propel color field and action painting into new forms beyond the picture plane, Vega was surely the only one to take these as far as assemblage, performance, and the catharsis of rock. □

ALAN LICHT IS A WRITER AND MUSICIAN BASED IN NEW YORK.

IN PICTURES

Notre sélection d'expositions
dans les galeries parisiennes

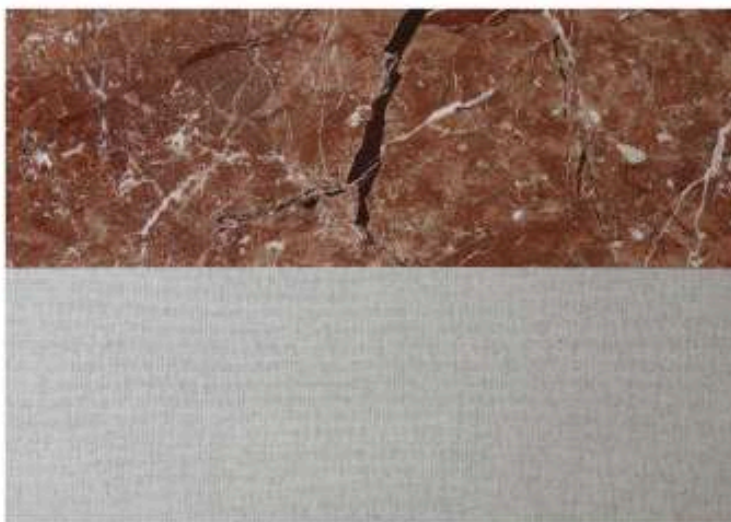
La Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac expose la dernière série des *Pigment paintings* du peintre britannique Jason Martin, dont les monochromes témoignent d'un travail singulier de la matière picturale. « Jason Martin. New Pigments », jusqu'au 28 juillet, Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, 75008 Paris, ropac.net

Jason Martin, *Untitled (Ultramarine Blue) I*, 2018, technique mixte sur velours, 130 x 130 x 10 cm. Courtesy Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, London, Paris, Salzburg. © Photo : Dave Morgan. © Jason Martin / Adapp Paris, 2018



Sous le titre « Monuments offerts », la Galerie Thomas Bernard/Cortex Athletico présente une nouvelle exposition d'Andreas Fogarasi, qui questionne les motifs architecturaux pour faire émerger des « monuments dysfonctionnels » et « éphémères ». « Andreas Fogarasi. Monuments offerts », Thomas Bernard/Cortex Athletico, 75008 Paris, www.galeriethomasbernard.com

Andreas Fogarasi, *Study 25*, 2018, marbre, couverture de livre, 50 x 70 x 2 cm. Courtesy Galerie Thomas Bernard/Cortex Athletico



La Galerie Laurent Godin rend hommage au rockeur Alan Vega en faisant dialoguer des œuvres de 1988 à 2016, année de la mort de l'artiste. L'exposition mêle ses sculptures en néon, une sélection de dessins, des vidéos sur son travail et ses dernières peintures, les *Spirit paintings*. « Alan Vega. Universe », jusqu'au 28 juillet, Galerie Laurent Godin, 75013 Paris, www.laurentgodin.com

Vue de l'exposition « Alan Vega, Universe », Galerie Laurent Godin, Paris, 2018. Courtesy Galerie Laurent Godin. © Photo : Yann Bohac



Vu EN GALERIE

Dans notre sélection de vernissages, plongée vers des ambiances du passé, avec des artistes qui ressuscitent ou revivent à leur façon l'après-guerre.

Par **Guillaume Picon, Rafael Pic, Juliette Soulez**

Alan Vega – Todd Bienvenu

GALERIE LAURENT GODIN

Vive New York !

À l'occasion de la réédition des albums du groupe américain de punk-rock Suicide et du concert hommage au Lieu Secret, à Paris dans le 14^e, voici un ensemble de sculptures cruciformes de lumière du pionnier du rock électronique minimaliste, Alan Vega, alias Alan Bermowitz, décédé à 80 ans en juillet 2016. Entre grigris, bricolage et images de boxeurs, cette œuvre avait été découverte par Barbara Gladstone dans les années 1980, après que le marchand d'art Ivan Karp l'avait sorti de l'ombre à Broadway. Le MAC de Lyon avait organisé sa première rétrospective française en 2009. Cette exposition se double d'une présentation défricheuse de Todd Bienvenu, jeune peintre américain né en 1980. « *Tous deux ont un rapport à leur quotidien et à la rue assez direct, franc, sans faux-semblant. La ville de New York est très importante dans ces deux univers. C'est un hymne à la vie, même si le groupe d'Alan Vega s'appelait Suicide* », confie Laurent Godin.

JULIETTE SOULEZ



Alan Vega « Universe »,
Todd Bienvenu « Jaywalk »
Jusqu'au 28 juillet,
36 bis, rue Eugène-Oudiné, Paris 13^e.
laurentgodin.com



Ci-dessus :
Alan Vega,
Mike.
1983, bois, papier,
ampoules, plastique, clous,
fils électrique,
61 x 66 x 18 cm, unique.

Ci-contre,
de gauche à droite :
I Miss Cigarettes 3.
2018, acrylique sur toile,
61 x 53,5 cm, unique.
Todd Bienvenu,
Hannah NYC View.
2018, acrylique sur toile,
193 x 167,6 cm, unique.



Photos : Juliette Soulez.

Alan Vega's "Universe" at Galerie Laurent Godin, Paris

BY BLOUIN ARTINFO | JUNE 29, 2018



 View Slideshow

"Stars," 2016 Alan Vega (1938 - 2016) graphite and acrylic on canvas, 91.4 x 61 cm, unique
(Courtesy Galerie Laurent Godin © Yann Bohac)

RELATED

VENUES

Galerie Laurent Godin

Alan Vega's second solo exhibition at Galerie Laurent Godin titled "Universe" brings together works from 1983 to 2016 that involves neon sculptures, boxer series, drawings, videos about his work and life and concert experts. The event will also include his latest "Spirit paintings" that was made in 2016 and is on view through July 28, 2018.

Alan Vega was an American vocalist and visual artist. According to gallery, it is said that "the piles of bulbs and electric wires that revealed him to the art world at the beginning of the 1970s was like the icebreaker of the New York school and that he forgot what it brought to painting."

The installations he presented that were scattered on the floor are based on a bodily approach and an organic look that appears somewhat of an "eccentric abstraction" a term that was invented by Lucy Lippard referring to a specific post-minimal movement.

He later focused on cruciform objects and created assemblages with found images with a particular interest for boxing figures. Vega had a fascination for black boxers and their anger to the terror inspired by the marmoreal beauty of the Wehrmacht soldiers. The works that illustrate these include "Dachau," a suburb of Munich, and "Buchenwald," a suburb of Weimar. As the gallery writes, "this electric appropriation of beauties and tragedies with whatever was at hand or in the street, bulbs in bulk traded for the gold of the Pop church or that of the minimalist temple, was a bit like cheap mass Vega-style."

Behind the crosses and charms, Vega establishes an unrestricted empathy that he was moved by. According to the gallery, "his late drawings and paintings look like a strange come back to existentialist painting. Star seems like the masterpiece of the series, announcing the shining disappearance of his avatar."

This exhibition is on view through July 28, 2018, at Galerie Laurent Godin, 36 bis rue Eugene Oudine, 75013, Paris, France.

For details please visit: <https://www.laurentgodin.com>

Click on the slideshow for a sneak peek at the exhibition.

<http://www.blouinartinfo.com>

Founder: Louise Blouin



Alan Vega, côté Art...

La chronique de Jean Rouzaud.

29 août 2018 • Par Jean Rouzaud



Une série de documents et de films sur Alan Vega sont enfin réunis sur un DVD. Soit cinq films de Marc Hurtado, musicien et réalisateur, et amateur de spécimens rares avec lesquels il a lui-même joué.

Rock Arty, dur, minimal, électronique, urbain, rebelle

Marc Hurtado, musicien et réalisateur, passionné et précis, a choisi son camp : un Rock Arty, dur, minimal, électronique, urbain, rebelle... On pourrait dire « industriel planant », dans lequel il s'est impliqué.



(c) Joseph Caprio

Genesis P-Orridge (ex Throbbing Gristle, groupe anglais qui a « inventé » la musique « industrielle » en 1970, avec des concerts - shows, proto-punk, sorte de trash électronique), Lydia Lunch (ex Teenage Jesus and the Jerks), Gabi Delgado (ex DAF - Deutsch American Freundschaft, et autres Christophe, sont sa famille (Adams ?) de la Cold-wave.

Entre ballade à Manhattan, interviews, concerts et expositions, le portrait d'Alan Vega apparaît, kaléidoscopique, comme l'artiste avant-gardiste qu'il a toujours été depuis 1965 (!)...

Ses premières expo ? Dans des backrooms de clubs homos !



(c) Vue d'exposition, Universe, Alan Vega, Galerie Laurent Godin, Paris, 2018. © Yann Bohac, Courtesy galerie Laurent Godin

Vega est d'abord sorti d'école d'Art avec des visions urbaines. Un art de la récupération, du détournement. Il bricole des ex votos du Rock new-yorkais, avec des photos de jeunes boxeurs chrétiens, des fils électriques et des ampoules rouges, bleues, violettes...

Un peu comme le photographe américain et rebelle Robert Mapplethorpe (à la même époque, 1965-1970), ses sculptures évoquent la ville, le Rock, l'électricité, la souffrance et la rédemption des enfants des rues, nimbée d'une vision presque

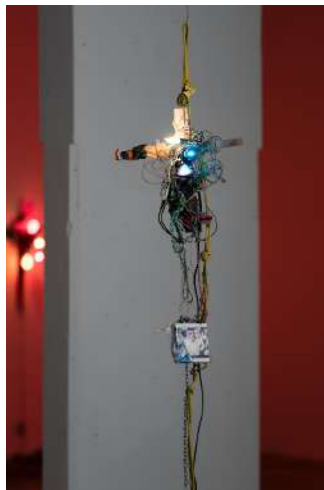


Comme les débris d'un défilé d'objets...

ramassé par terre : fils électriques, barbelés, bouts de circuits électroniques, ampoules et diodes, images, journaux, commutateurs. Ces assemblages raffinés éclairés d'une lueur, sont comme des veilleuses, en hommage aux citoyens inconnus...

Avec son alter ego Martin Rev au clavier et une boîte à rythmes, ils allaient créer le groupe Suicide, et un nouveau concept Rock.

Elvis, en électronique à l'extrême



(c)Vue d'exposition, Universe, Alan Vega, Galerie Laurent Godin, Paris, 2018. © Yann Bohac, Courtesy galerie Laurent Godin, Paris

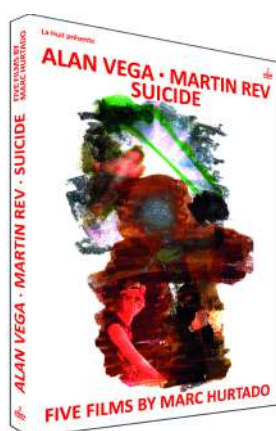


Sur la forme de son cabinet de diffusion

hommage à Lavis, électronique à l'extrême, à la fois fragile et vibrant, surfant sur des nappes de synthétiseurs et de vrombissements.

Avec leur groupe Suicide, Rev et Vega inventent la matrice d'un « psychobilly » serré, d'une cavalcade de bruits rythmés, de cris, de plaintes, enchâssées dans une sorte de moteur ronflant, et sur le choc binaire d'un Rock brut, ponctué par la voix fantomatique d'Alan.

Leurs interviews sur ces films nous éclairent un peu sur la poésie urbaine des ces deux artistes, leur transcendance, perdus dans le monde Rock, jamais vraiment compris ni acceptés, devenus cultes en 1980, grâce au mouvement Cold et No Wave à New York.



Quand j'ai pu rencontrer Vega, avec le même timbre de voix, doux et adolescent, il m'a évoqué ses premières expos dans des backrooms de clubs homos (!), puis ses premiers concert intimistes où il faisait fuir le public, frappant le sol avec une chaîne...

Cet artiste radical est aujourd'hui un des artistes électro qui a eu le plus d'influence sur les scènes Rock, lui qui avait choisi la démarche la plus artistique et inattendue possible. Il est une « essence » musicale qui reste à découvrir. Un absolu.

Alan Vega, Martin Rev, Suicide. Five Films by Marc Hurtado. The infinite Mercy film. 16' (2009). Saturne drive duplex .6' (2011) Saturne drive duplex redux . 4' (2014) Infinite Dreamers. 82' (2016), Saturne drive. 5' (2016).

2 DVD. Livret de 36 pages (textes Marc Hurtado), Alexandre Breton. Peinture de Sébastien Vittré (16 euros 33)

Alan Vega est également à l'affiche de l'exposition *Alan Vega, Universe*, [galerie Laurent Godin](#), visible à Paris jusqu'au 23 septembre.



Creators

FINE ART

An Art Punk Legend Rises Again with Two Posthumous Shows



DJ PANGBURN

Jul 14 2017, 8:37pm



Photo: Alan Vega by Ric Ocasek. Images from the vinyl gatefold album artwork for IT, released by FADER Label and designed by [Albert Porto](#).

Artist and Suicide frontman Alan Vega left behind a treasure trove of art and photography. See it at two new exhibitions and in a special new vinyl sleeve.

SHARE

TWEET

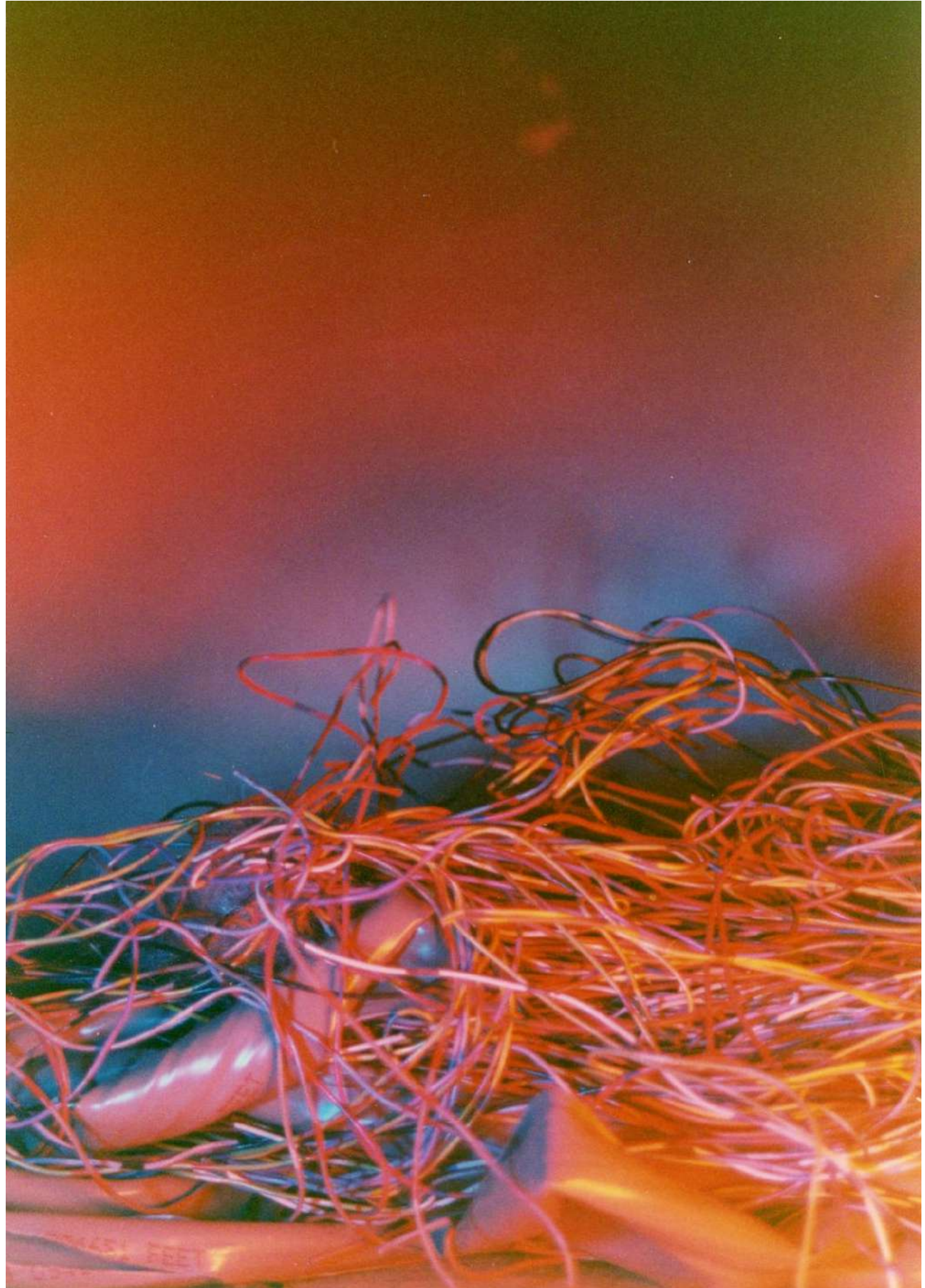
When the New York band, Suicide, arrived on the scene in the early 70s, audiences were rather confounded by their mixture of confrontational music, performance, and sound art. And while Suicide was reshaping the musical landscape, the duo's frontman, Alan Vega, was creating artwork, as he had in the 60s before the band

working art and music during the last year of his life, and operating beneath the cultural radar, much like pioneering New York street artist Richard Hambleton.



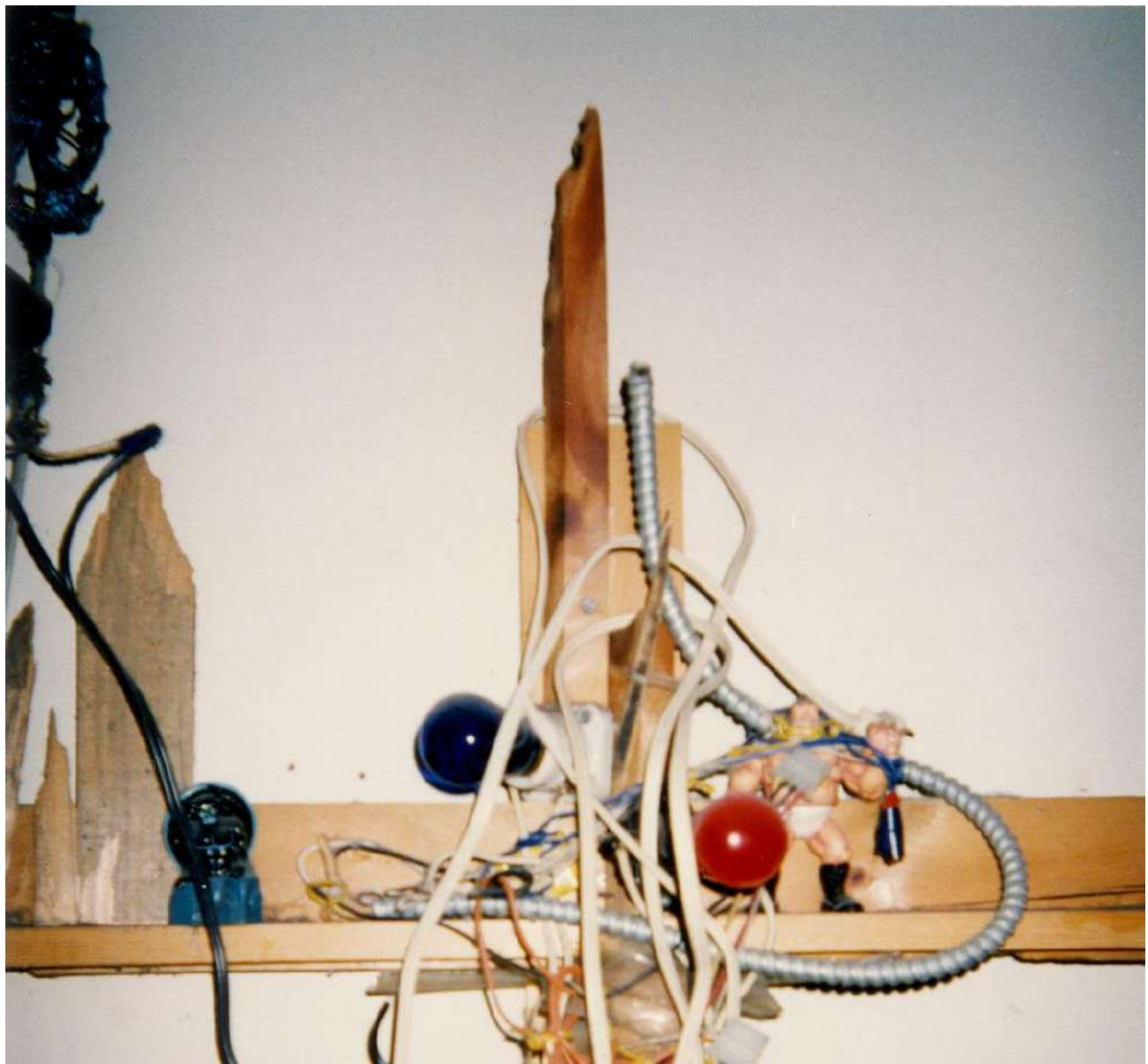
Photo: Alan Vega

The Deitch Projects show, *Dream Baby Dream*, features video projections of Suicide performances, as well select light sculptures and works on paper from the 1970s onward. Invisible-Exports' exhibition, *Keep IT Alive*, features seven large-scale paintings that Vega completed just before his passing. The dueling shows coincide with the release of a new posthumous album, *It*, out July 14th via FADER. The vinyl release—designed by Albert Porto—features a special gatefold that includes never-before-seen drawings and photos of Vega's sculptures. The single, "DTM," is vintage Vega—abrasive but catchy—and comes with a new music video directed by Brook Linder.



Vega's widow, Liz Lahere, tells Creators that the new album occupied the last six years of the artist and musician's life. Its long gestation period had as much to do with Vega's frequent art exhibitions and musical performances in Europe as his penchant for creating music spontaneously without expectations.

Originally, Vega had planned on being a physicist, but a chance encounter with surrealist artist Kurt Seligmann, who saw Vega doodling in a notebook at Brooklyn College, convinced him to take up art. Vega ended up studying under both Seligmann and Ad Reinhardt at Brooklyn College, with his early work done in paint. After seeing how the colors in his paintings shifted depending on the angle of light, however, Vega decided to make light sculptures instead.



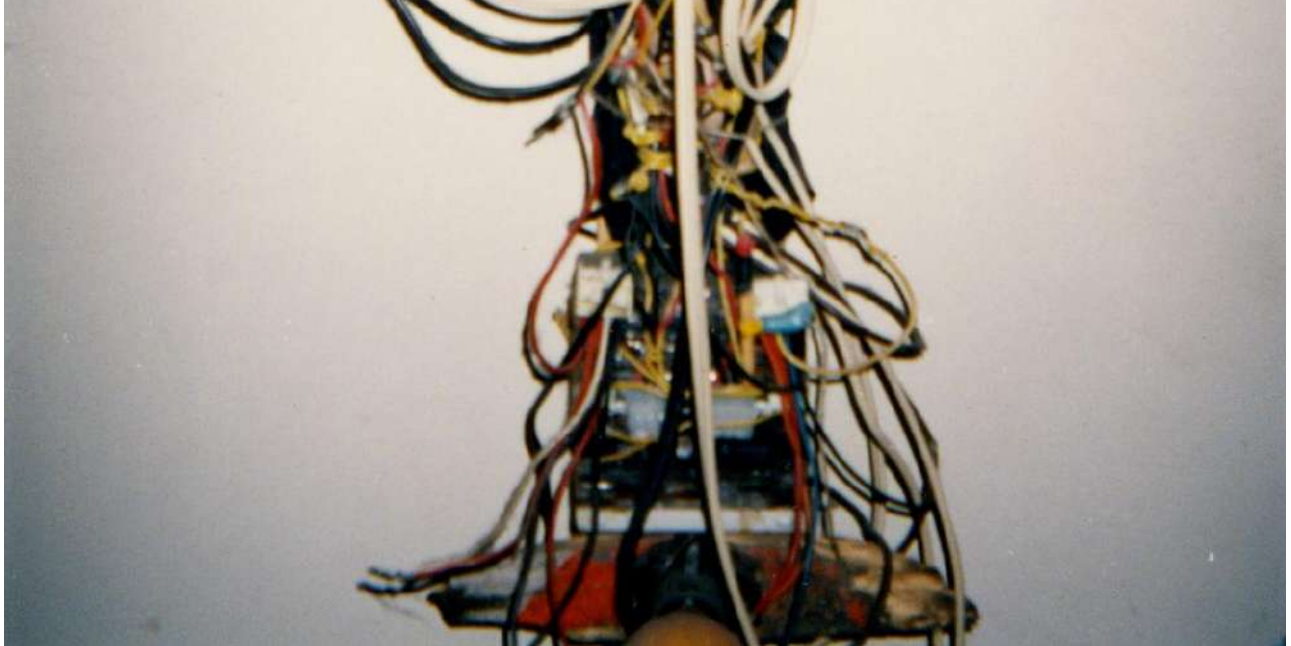


Photo: Alan Vega

Vega made many of these light sculptures at the Project of Living Artists, an art space he opened with public funding in Lower Manhattan. It was, as Lamere explains, a place where artists could come and simply create.

"Alan was making these light sculptures and pulling materials off the streets to make them," says Lamere. "Ivan Karp, who discovered Andy Warhol and had the OK Harris gallery, stumbles into the Project of Living Artists in the early 70s, sees Alan's

could have it ready in three weeks, and Alan was like, 'Sure, why not?'"

QUICK DRAW PRIZE PAYOUTS

NUMBERS MATCHED	PRIZE PER \$1 PLAYED	NUMBERS MATCHED	PRIZE PER \$1 PLAYED
10 SPOT GAME		6 SPOT GAME	
10	\$100,000	6	\$ 1,000
9	\$ 5,000	5	\$ 55
8	\$ 300	4	\$ 6
7	\$ 45	3	\$ 1
6	\$ 10	Overall Chances of Winning 1:6.19	
5	\$ 2	5 SPOT GAME	
0	\$ 5	5	\$ 300
Overall Chances of Winning 1:9.95		4	\$ 20
9 SPOT GAME		3	\$ 2
9	\$ 30,000	Overall Chances of Winning 1:10.34	
8	\$ 3,000	4 SPOT GAME	
7	\$ 125	4	\$ 55
6	\$ 20	3	\$ 5
5	\$ 5	2	\$ 1
0	\$ 2	Overall Chances of Winning 1:3.86	
Overall Chances of Winning 1:9.74		3 SPOT GAME	
8 SPOT GAME		3	\$ 23
8	\$ 10,000	2	\$ 2
7	\$ 550	Overall Chances of Winning 1:6.55	
6	\$ 75	2 SPOT GAME	
5	\$ 6	2	\$ 10
0	\$ 2	Overall Chances of Winning 1:6.55	
Overall Chances of Winning 1:9.17		7 SPOT GAME	
7 SPOT GAME		2 SPOT GAME	
7	\$ 5,000	2	\$ 10
6	\$ 500	Overall Chances of Winning 1:6.55	
5	\$ 50	1 SPOT GAME	
0	\$ 2	1	\$ 2
Overall Chances of Winning 1:9.17		Overall Chances of Winning 1:6.55	

SPOT GAME

Overall Chances of Winning 1:5.4 **Overall Chances of Winning 1:4.00**
 If more than \$1 played per draw, multiply prize shown by amount played.

*The total liability for the 10 of 10 prize is limited to \$5,000,000. For any draw in which there are more than the equivalent of 50 \$1 wagers matching 10 winning numbers, the prize payable per each \$1 will be \$5,000,000 divided by the total amount wagered. For Quick Draw Extra wagers only, a maximum of an additional \$1,000,000 will be added to the 10 of 10 prize pool.

Quick Draw Extra Promotional Feature
 The Quick Draw Extra number is used to multiply any amount won on the related Quick Draw game. Possible Quick Draw Extra numbers are 2, 3, 4, 5, or 10.
 Note: You must play Quick Draw in order to play Quick Draw Extra and the amount you wager on Quick Draw Extra will *always* equal the amount you wager on Quick Draw. For example, if you wager \$1 on the 4-spot and play Quick Draw Extra your total wager will cost \$2. (\$1 for regular Quick Draw and \$1 for Quick Draw Extra). If you match 3 numbers on your 4-spot wager for the regular Quick Draw drawing and the Quick Draw Extra number for that drawing is 5, your winnings will be as follows:

Quick Draw Extra Number	Winning Amount if Quick Draw Extra not played	Winning Amount if Quick Draw Extra played	Extra	Odds
5x	\$5	\$25	1x	1:2.5
			2x	1:2.35
			3x	1:16
			4x	1:16
			5x	1:26.67
			10x	1:80


Overall odds of Quick Draw Extra number being 2 or higher 1:1.67
 See game brochure for Rules and Regulations.

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WARNING: Tickets may not be sold to minors under the age of 18.
 Persons under the age of 21 may not play Quick Draw where alcoholic beverages are served.

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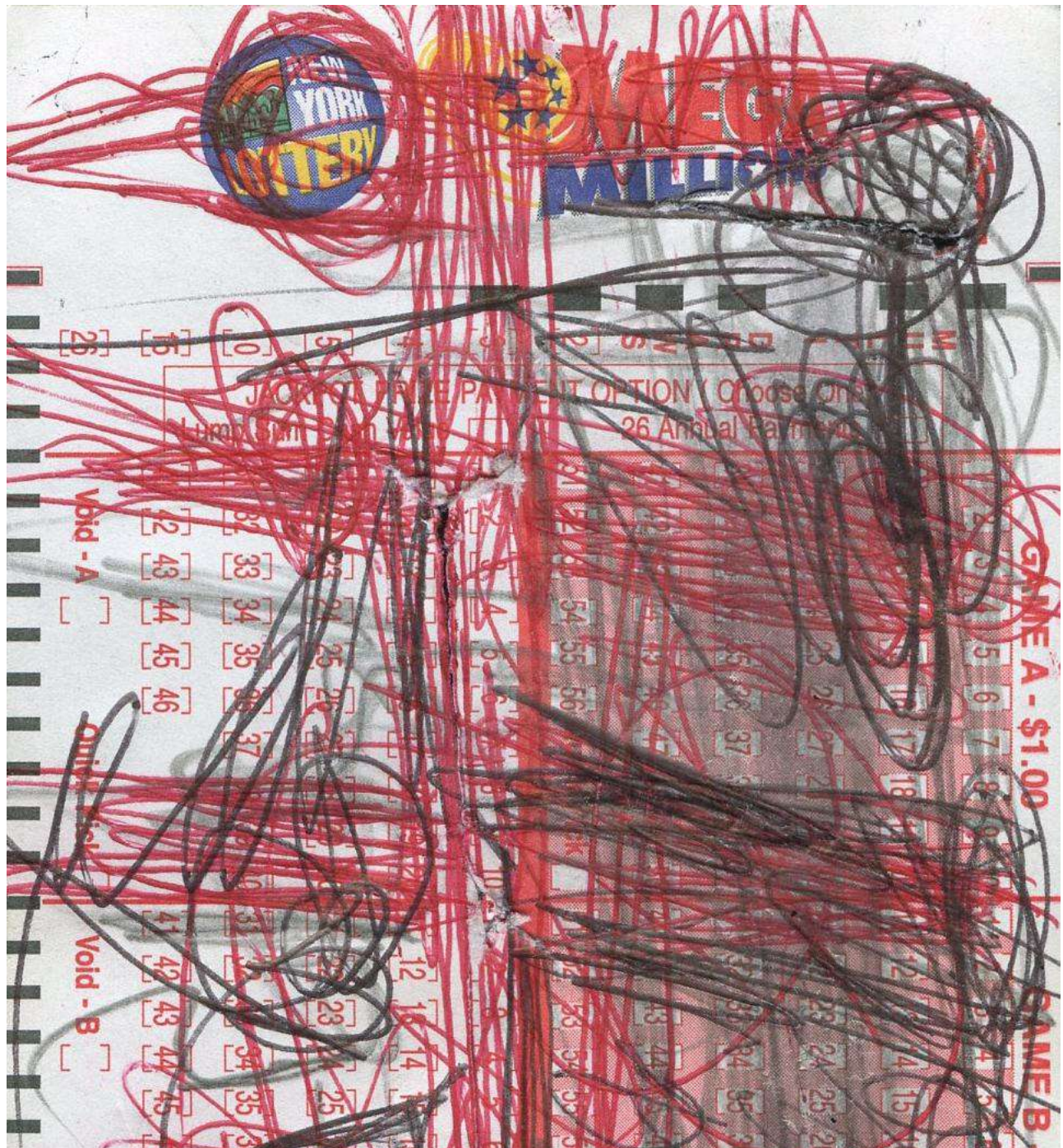
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It was at Project of Living Artists where Vega met and began his collaboration with Suicide bandmate Martin Rev, a jazz virtuoso who was already working with electronic equipment. Their first shows were at art galleries because music venue

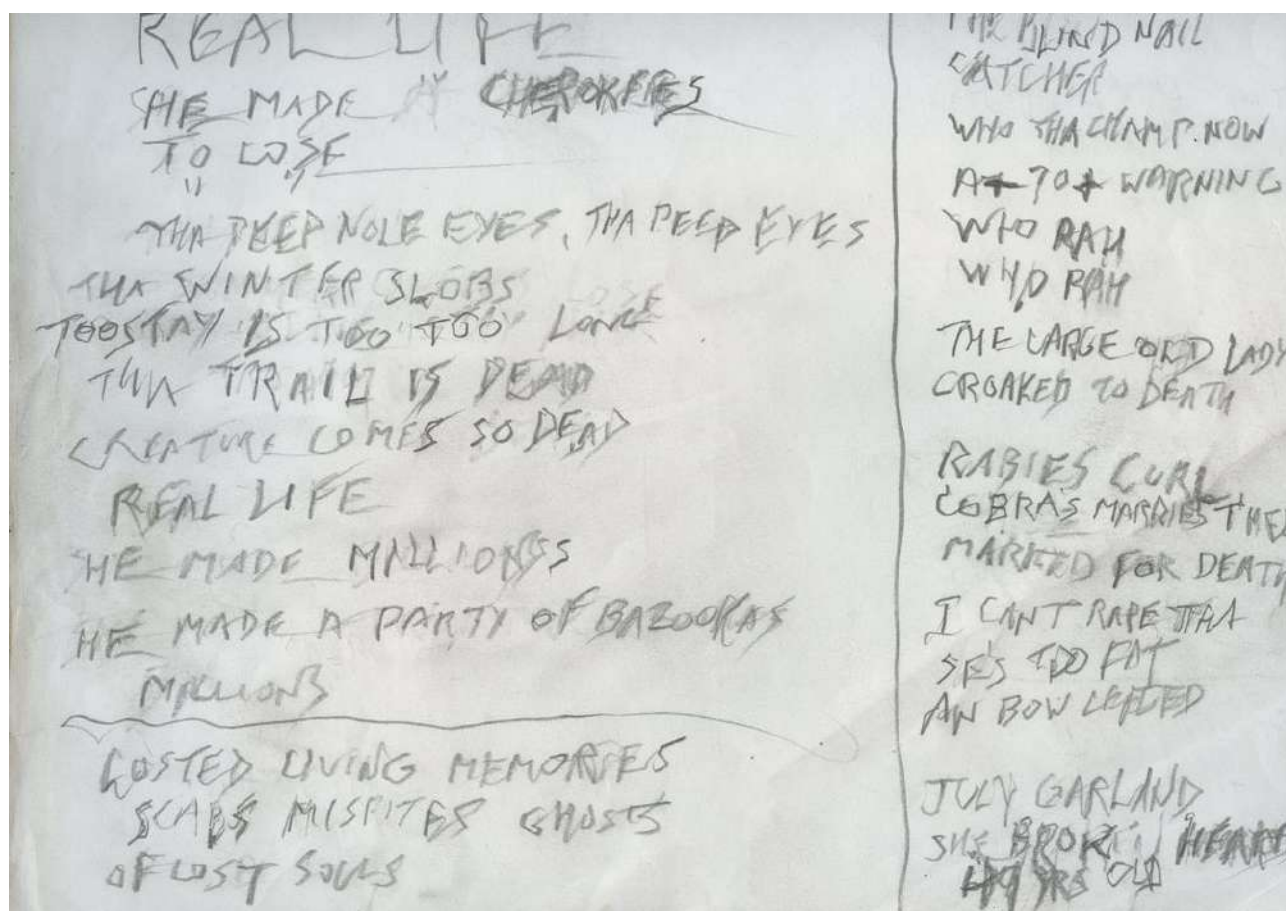
telling him that if he put them up on walls that she might be able to sell them.

"So, in the early 80s Alan started doing these crosses, and continued those until 2016," says Lamere. "The cross was very much a universal theme for him, and then very often images of cultural icons like boxers, like Mike Tyson, Clint Eastwood, Marilyn Monroe, comic book characters, stuff he found on the street, things he pulled out of magazines. He'd combine this with lights, wires, and wood."

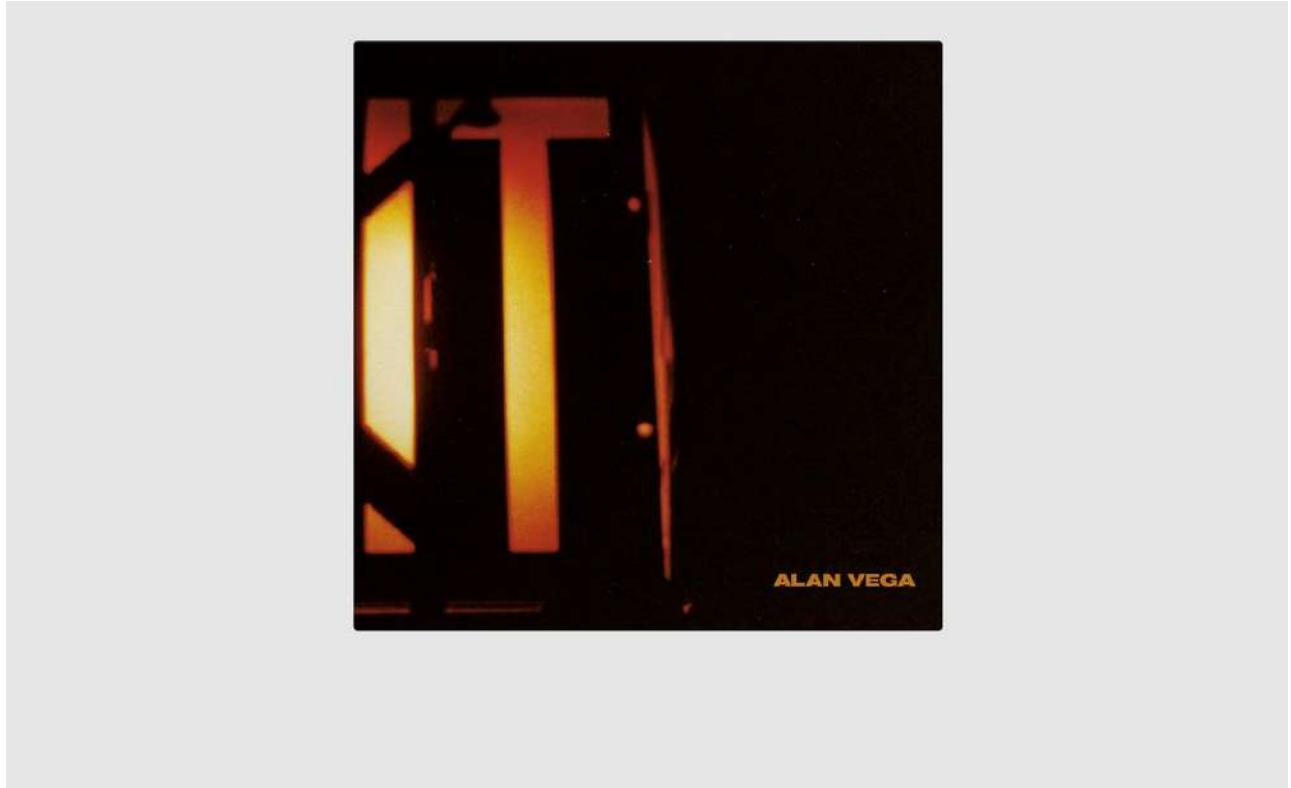


At night, Vega drew portraits depicting intense faces that tended to be of elderly people, drawn on lottery tickets, which he was fond of buying. Vega told Lamere they were self-portraits, but she also describes them as depictions of the "everyman." These drawings inspired Vega's writing, which he also did nightly, and appear collaged on the special vinyl gatefold for *It*.

"Alan's very final work—the seven paintings at Invisible-Exports—are like the portrait drawings except their full body but without faces," Lamere notes. "But, they're from different periods of time: there is someone from medieval times, there is a military guy—he was obsessed with them. The exhibitions are a nice cross-section of his work."











'It was like going into the trenches': how Suicide rioted against plastic punk

One year after the death of Suicide's Alan Vega, and amid a crop of new recordings, bandmate Martin Rev recalls their 1978 Brussels gig that turned into a riot in 23 minutes

Daniel Dylan Wray

Tuesday 18 July 2017 13.10 BST

I'll never retire, it's not in my blood. I'll die dancing. I'll die right on stage," Alan Vega, who passed away in his sleep a year ago this week, defiantly told me in 2015. Vega, one half, with Martin Rev, of pioneering electronic proto-punk duo Suicide, may not have died on stage, but came close over the years. The levels of animosity, rage and violence that he faced while performing would have finished off lesser artists decades earlier.

He was right about not retiring, making music right up to his death; *IT*, a posthumous album, has just been released. The recent single *DTM* shows that even in his final moments, Vega's commitment to creating uncompromising throbs of industrially charged electronic noise remained potent, and recalls, too, the often brutal intensity of some of Suicide's earlier work and live shows.

One live show that teemed with such intensity took place in 1978. Suicide went to Europe for the first time to support Elvis Costello and the Clash. The duo's 1977 self-titled debut album - a wildly original concoction of malevolent ambience, pulsating electronics, distorted doo-wop and howling vocals - had been relatively well-received by the UK press, but the band were still ostensibly unknown and stood as a seething, sneering antithesis to conventional guitar-based punk. "Going to Europe, I felt like that finally we were going to get some of the recognition that American artists have traditionally gotten there," Rev says.



Alan Vega strikes a pose. Photograph: Press Agency/Rex/Shutterstock

However, what they faced was not recognition but flat-out hostility. On 16 June 1978, they were in Belgium, and played a show that would be immortalised in the recording titled *23 Minutes Over Brussels* - because that was how long they lasted on stage before a riot broke out. It is a document of a group operating so far ahead of their time that the police had to be called to tear-gas an angry mob, who were incapable of processing the sounds they heard.

The tour's opening night was at a science-fiction festival in Metz, France. It wasn't the most auspicious of starts. "The audience just flipped out and started throwing stuff," Rev recalls. "I felt something hit me, I looked down and someone had taken off their boot and thrown it." Howard Thompson, who recorded many of these shows and was the band's UK label rep, also recalls seeing "a wooden chair get slung at them" that night. This, though, was merely a warmup for Brussels. As Rev himself says: "After that, it was like going into the trenches."

When the singer of a band is screaming, only eight minutes in, "I hate your fucking guts" over a sea of boos and chants of another artist's name, it suggests the gig isn't going so well. In Brussels, from the off, Suicide were fighting against the audience. Smatterings of claps can be heard on the recording but the boos tower above them. As the gig goes on, the crowd's impatience and antagonism builds and soon the band respond with their own venom, brewing up a perfect storm of tension and angst.

"Alan's yelping and screams - magnified and echoing repeatedly via the mix - only inflamed them," Thompson reflects. "It was like Alan was taunting them to react." Initially, Rev was thrown by the extreme reaction. "At first, I was disappointed, but you just play stronger. You're left with either getting off stage or just playing right into it." They did the latter.

"Then the shit hit the fan," Thompson tells me. A crowd member became so enraged that they stormed the stage and stole the microphone. After great applause for the interjection and more

chants of “Elvis, Elvis, Elvis”, Vega is heard saying: “We’re just a fucking bunch of poor musicians, like every one of you. We’d like to have our microphone back otherwise the show doesn’t go on. Please, please! Ah, fuck you, man!”

Vega ended up with a new microphone and began to sing the song again a cappella, but it was met immediately by a booming echo of boos. “Shut the fuck up, this is about Frankie!” Vega screeches with a guttural and lung-busting scream as though he were trying to punch every audience member in the chest with the force of his words. The Frankie in question being the protagonist from Frankie Teardrop, a song as potently harrowing as it is bleakly poignant. He then drops the microphone and leaves the stage as the crowd erupt in euphoria at their exit.

Thompson remembers being backstage after the show. “Everyone was a little shell-shocked, nervously making jokes, asking if it was going to be like this all the time. But they were unafraid and certainly not about to give up.”



Rev and Vega. Photograph: Ebet Roberts/Redferns

The pair had worked the crowd into a state and when Elvis Costello didn’t perform an encore, the crowd’s anger erupted once more. “The audience were tearing the tiles from the walls,” Rev remembers. “Bouncers had kids in full nelson headlocks as we were rushed out the side door because we were told it was too dangerous. The place was a mess; it was a total riot.” Soon the police stormed the room and discharged tear gas. Thompson recalls the chaos: “Fans were tearing the place apart. They were throwing whatever they could at the security and the cops. We got to the car, but we’d been spotted by angry fans so we reversed at speed up an alley and drove straight to Paris to get out of there.”

The evening was a first in Suicide’s career, but not the last, as Rev remembers: “Every night was like Brussels, and a lot of them were worse.” Thompson echoes this. “The Clash tour was pretty tough. Their fans mostly hated Suicide. A lot of them were plastic punks who just thought punk rock was guitars, safety pins and bin bags. Every night, Alan’s shiny purple suit would be so stained and covered with gobs of spit that it appeared black by the end of their set. Vega prowled the stage and got as close to the audience as he could. He wasn’t scared of anything. Everything that wasn’t nailed down got thrown at them: coins, shoes, beer glasses, ashtrays”. Apparently even an axe made its way whizzing past Vega’s head in Glasgow, while a member of the National Front broke Vega’s nose in Crawley.

For Thompson, that night in Brussels and some of the other dates that followed were pinnacle moments of “excitement, vision and originality”. “They were spectacularly powerful in the face of

outright hostility,” he says. “Alan and Marty stood and took everything the crowd could batter them with without flinching.”

“Performing can often give you a false sense of power and strength,” Rev says of those days. “Even when you have two or three thousand people wanting to string you up alive, I still felt like I could have taken them all on with one hand.”

. Martin Rev’s new album, *Demolition 9*, is out now. Alan Vega’s posthumous album, *IT*, is out now.

Since you’re here ...

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Infinity Punk: A Career-Spanning Interview With Suicide's Alan Vega

Following the musical iconoclast's death at age 78—an in-depth conversation from 2002 that includes tales of dangerous old New York, what it meant to be a radical artist in the Vietnam era, and that time someone threw an ax at him onstage.



Alan Vega performing in London in 1982. Photo by David Corio/Redferns.

by **Simon Reynolds**

Contributor

INTERVIEW

/ ELECTRONIC

JULY 19 2016

Best known as the confrontational frontman of Suicide, Alan Vega was also a talented visual artist. January 2002 saw the first exhibition of his light sculptures in almost 20 years, in New York's SoHo district. At that time, I interviewed Vega about the exhibition for *The Village Voice* but, as I was also researching my post punk history *Rip It Up and Start Again*, I seized the opportunity to ask questions about the entire span of his career as a singer and musician. A condensed version of this conversation later featured in the book *Totally Wired: Postpunk Interviews and Overviews*.

“We were talking about society’s suicide, especially American society. New York City was collapsing. The Vietnam War was going on. The name Suicide said it all to us.”

— ALAN VEGA

Simon Reynolds: The neighborhood we're in right now, SoHo, was Suicide's homebase back in the early '70s. Today it's nothing but clothes boutiques and galleries, but back in the day...

Alan Vega: Nothing but rats and roaches! You know how it goes: The artists move in and make it so people notice it's a nice area, the rents go up, and the artists have to move out again. We moved to SoHo in 1971, when it was all factories and cheap clothing stores. Very dangerous at night: You took your life in your hands walking outside, it was pretty deserted.

We used to play music at three or 4 o'clock in the morning, all-night-long jam sessions, and sit out on the stoop at this Project of Living Artists place on Greene Street, where we lived. All of a sudden people started walking by giving us weird looks, like we didn't belong there, and then we knew it was time to move. I moved to Tribeca, further south in Manhattan, and the same crap happened again, so I moved further down to Fulton Street, where it was great until they started building up the Sea Port. Now I'm all the way down to the Wall Street area. I'm on the tip of Manhattan after being pushed out of every place I've lived in this city. But I'm not going back to Brooklyn. That's where I grew up. I left Brooklyn when I was 17.

What was this Project of Living Artists outfit you were involved with?

Around 1969-'79, artists were trying to see themselves as "art workers." It was a socialist concept, more Trotskyist than Maoist. We wanted to get paid when they put pictures of our works in books and we started to make demands of museums; we actually barricaded the Museum of Modern Art. From there, I met a bunch of people, and we tried to form an organization. One of the people managed to get money from the New York State Council of the Arts. There was about six of us involved and we kept this space open 24 hours a day so that artists—could be a tap dancer or anybody—were able to work there. That was the Project of Living Artists. Often it was a lot of different people doing a lot of different things all at the same time, so there always had to be two or three of us present at all times. A lot of homeless

people would come in, and deranged people too. We were janitors and peacekeepers at the same time.

The Project was located near New York University, at Broadway and Waverly, and that's where Suicide started. Marty Rev came in one day. He'd just got tossed out of NYU—they asked him to play Beethoven, and he played it *his* way. Marty was one of the weirdest looking guys I ever saw. He just hung around, not saying a word to us, for weeks. He'd come in every night. At that time I was working with a couple of guys doing electronic music, with tapes and guitars and all kinds of stuff.

Eventually, I had to live at the Project illegally. I was saved by a friend who gave me a sleeping bag, because it was freezing in the winters, man. In the early '70s, we were all starving. I used to eat a tuna sandwich from Blimpie every day. It cost a dollar. Marty would have a tomato and lettuce sandwich. We would get jobs here and there. I worked as an electrician, as a house painter; a friend of mine was a contractor, so I worked with him, cleaning walls. If I had done a job, maybe I'd be living on two sandwiches for a while. If I had hardly any money, I would much prefer to get drunk, because at least that way the gnawing pain of the hunger would go away and I could fall asleep. I was living on the vodka diet for a while.

But we managed to survive and make things happen. We were young and we were going to change things. This was the time of the Vietnam War and Nixon. I used to go on peace marches, went down to Washington a few times. Tear gas. Got my head whacked by the cops.

Did the socialist concepts of the Project of Living Artists lead to “Che,” that gorgeous paean to Che Guevara, on the first Suicide album?

He was a hero. More than Castro, he was the real guy. He wanted to continue the revolution. And of course the American government hunted him down in Bolivia and killed him. As much as I hate the guy, Bin Laden's whole way of thinking is kind of like Che Guevara; for the Muslim world, he's their Che.

Che was glamorous—a wall poster icon of radical chic.

A revolutionary pin-up.

Speaking of pin-ups, some of the characters in Suicide songs are heroic and larger than life. And you use very simple language, adding to the two-dimensional quality.

In "Cheree," there's the line, "Cheree, my comic book fantasy." "Ghost Rider" was from a comic book—that was my favorite comic because it had all these religious, metaphysical things going on in it. Transformations. One of its issues was titled "Satan Suicide" and at that time me and Marty and a friend were trying to think of a name for the band. We were laughing our

heads off at all these stupid names we came up with, it was three of the funniest days of my life. Then I saw this issue of *Ghost Rider* and I was like, “There’s the name: Satan Suicide.” But Marty was like, “Let’s just take Suicide.” We were talking about society’s suicide, especially American society. New York City was collapsing. The Vietnam War was going on. The name Suicide said it all to us. It was the worst choice we could have made, though. It held us back a lot and kept us off the radio. Thirty years later, it’s a little better—there’s all these bands with worse names!

So the first Suicide gig was actually at the Project of Living Artists?

We did a couple of gigs there. We didn’t have songs really, it was more of a free jazz thing. And then, maybe a year into it, Marty started going into this pattern, and it became our first real song. Suicide was like the big bang: chaos, the formation of the universe, then, after a while, the gases began to form little balls that became the galaxies. The first song that came out of all that chaotic stuff was “Cheree.” Then “Ghost Rider.”

Early on we used to jam for hours. I wish I had been able to keep all the tapes. I was playing trumpet alongside Marty’s drums. He is really a phenomenal drummer, the fastest in the world. I was blowing and then one day, my body said, “Al, give it up.” I had a stomach that was like a rock. Trumpet is a demanding instrument: You have to play every day, you get calloused lips, you gotta keep your breath happening. It was the best thing in the world for me in a way, because I never had any trouble singing. Playing a brass instrument is the best way to learn to bring up the air. You’re supposed to sing from down in the gut, but most people in rock sing from the throat and they get nodes. I never had any trouble with my throat, despite screaming for 20 years.

The art-into-rock thing doesn't seem to be quite as strong in America as in Britain. But then again, there was Suicide, Talking Heads, Devo...

Tom Verlaine was art school. And the New York Dolls were very into the visual thing. With a lot of those New York bands, they either had an art or literary background. Richard Hell and Patti Smith had a literary thing. It was a mind thing as well as a musical thing. I've lived in both worlds. The art world is more of an intellectual world, but these bands were intellectual too. It was the beginning of a new thing. The artists of the future are going to have to be good with everything—it's not going to be just video or just sculpture or just music. I'm lucky because I've had talent in both areas. I'm not Picasso or Beethoven, but I've done some pretty good work in my life. In the early '70s, all these people were coming from separate worlds, and maybe it was the beginning of 21st Century art.

“There was a poll going around about which band you would least like your daughter to go out with—and Suicide were ranked number one in that category!”

You also hung out and played some gigs with Suicide at the Mercer Arts Center, the iconoclastic downtown theater that famously collapsed in 1973.

I was there the day it collapsed. The whole building fell down, and a whole era came down with it. The Mercer started out as a theater place, and round the front of the building was this hotel where all the famous junkies stayed. For some reason they started putting on music there. It became a place to party. The Dolls got in there, they had some heavy duty management at the time—the same guys who went on to manage Aerosmith, who copped all the Dolls ideas and went on to huge fame. Suddenly a whole scene started there at the Mercer.

And we eventually got in there after a year. We knew the Dolls. Marty Rev was very friendly with them, he knew a girl who was doing all the clothing for them. Marty and David Johansen became really tight. David is a brilliant guy—he has this façade, but he’s tremendously into music and really funny. He actually had the nerve and balls to come up onstage when Suicide was playing and support us back when everyone was hating us. The Dolls were really hot and famous, while Suicide was at the bottom of the barrel. There was a poll going around about which band you would least like your daughter to go out with—and Suicide were ranked number one in that category!

This Mercer crowd was the same scene that would later cohere around CBGB, right?

Kinda. Suicide played very early at CBGB's, when they first opened up to this kind of music. But we got banned for several years, for a stupid reason I don't even want to get into. Then Patti Smith played one night, and that was what really started it up. Suddenly all our painter friends started going to CBs. Before that, they never went to rock clubs. Patti gave it the benediction because she was meant to be an artist, a poet. But we were hanging out more at Max's. It was a different crowd, a bridge-and-tunnel crowd—people from Brooklyn and New Jersey—and for some reason those people got on much better with Suicide.

Did they respond to the aggression of the performance?

Exactly. I just liked Max's better anyway. It was on Park Avenue and 15th Street, and Warhol and Lou Reed and all those people had hung out there in the '60s. Eventually I wormed my way in and finally got a gig there. A guy who owned an art gallery gave me a note to say it's OK for Suicide to play there, like: "This guy is a certified artist."



Martin Rev and Alan Vega of Suicide circa 1980. Photo by Ebet Roberts/Redferns.

Did the problem Suicide have with getting gigs—in the six years between forming and punk rock blowing up, you only got to do a handful—stem from promoters and audiences not being able to get their heads around the idea of two people being onstage with no guitar and no drum kit? A kind of synth-phobia?

Oh yeah, that was a cause for a riot immediately, before we even started doing the music! We were coming out of the '60s when guitar/bass/drums was the sound. Marty and I knew right away we didn't want that. We didn't want drums, although we needed them. One day Marty walked in with this strange looking brown box that he bought in a furniture store; this furniture manufacturer was making little drum machines to be used at weddings and bar mitzvahs. Basic rumbas and sambas. And that's where the Suicide suicide rhythm came from. These simple beats.

Plus, I was totally confrontational. In those days, people just wanted to go to a show to be removed from life, for entertainment, to forget their lives for a few hours. They came in off the street and I gave them the street right back.

Almost every time we played there was a riot. Then it only got worse when we opened for bands like the Clash and the Cars. It was riots on a larger scale! I got the worst injuries I received, one of them was a busted nose from the skinheads who followed Sham 69 around. [Sham 69 frontman] Jimmy Pursey wanted to go see Suicide, and they followed him—hundreds of skinheads managed to get over the iron barricades in front of the stage, punched me out. But I wouldn't leave the stage.

Then there was the time in France, near the end of a set. Ironically, it was going really well. I said to Marty, "Let's do more, man." And next thing I know, my head started going black and I heard this hissing sound. I thought I was having a stroke or something and started to walk offstage and got my sight back, but I noticed my hand was wet. There was all this blood. I checked my head and there was this huge bump. This huge wrench that somebody clocked me with just missed my eye.

The things that I would see fly by me onstage! One time I was playing support to the Clash in Glasgow in 1978, and this ax flew past my head. Nobody ever believed that story for years, and then I did this solo gig in Leeds in 1987 and Jesus and Mary Chain came backstage afterwards and said they were there at the gig and they saw the ax flying by my head.

The Suicide sound is like rock'n'roll meets science fiction, and the rock'n'roll is mostly located in your voice, the Elvis-like timbre and mannerisms, plus the "space echo" that seems to consciously hark back to the reverb that Sam Phillips slapped on Presley's vocals.

I grew up on Elvis. I didn't want to go to school and I needed something to push me out the door, so the only way you could get me to school was by putting on "Hound Dog" or something. But Roy Orbison had the greatest voice in rock'n'roll. He had a profound effect on me, the way he looked with those shades. Elvis, Little Richard, Buddy Holly, Gene Vincent, Jerry Lee Lewis, Fats Domino, Chuck Berry—I was lucky to be a kid when that was happening.

Was there a feeling at the very end of the '60s that rock had lost some of its original raw feeling by getting too arty and conceptual and technical?

But you still had Iggy. He pretty much changed my life. I saw him in 1969, when I had been fooling around a bit with electronic music, but I was still basically a visual artist. One night I got a phone call at 4 a.m. in the morning

telling me to turn on the radio. It was “I Wanna Be Your Dog,” with this amazing wah-wah guitar. I didn’t know anything about the Stooges, but my friend said, “They’re supporting the MC5 at the Pavilion, let’s go.”

I didn’t know anything from Iggy Pop, all I was interested in was hearing that big guitar. All of sudden I see somebody onstage standing behind this big bass amp. I thought it was a girl, with these bangs, and I was like, “That’s a nice looking girl—strange looking but nice.” And then out walks this androgynous figure, no shirt on, muscled. He was walking out telling everybody to go fuck themselves and he had this look in his eye, and this amazing body. It kicked into “I Wanna Be Your Dog,” then “1969,” and suddenly Iggy’s flying into the audience. Then he’s back onstage and cutting himself up with drumsticks and bleeding. The bass player is humping the guitar player with his bass. The whole set lasted 20 minutes maybe. Usually at rock shows they put on some rock’n’roll between the bands’ sets, but right after the the Stooges finished, whoever was in the sound booth put on one of Bach’s Brandenburg Concertos. It was perfect, because what we had just seen was great art, and the person in the booth understood that. That show was the first time in my life the audience and the stage merged into one.

The next night, they played again, and I dragged this friend of mine who was a heavy theater guy to the show, and his mouth dropped. He’d done cutting-edge theater but this was heavier than anything he’d done. I realized that, as a [visual] artist, I could either carry on down this road and be dishonest, or I had to make some moves. Whatever I was doing as an artist was insignificant at this point. That’s what got me moving in the direction of the music thing more intensely—because it was a vehicle for doing something more environmental than painting.

So you consciously saw Suicide gigs as attempts to create happenings where everybody's a participant, whether they want to be or not?

Absolutely.

“I don't think Suicide was ever a punk band. Then again someone said everybody hated Suicide, including the punks—ergo, Suicide was the ultimate punk band!”

You mentioned having dabbled in electronic music before this Iggy epiphany—what else did you grow up listening to?

I had my father's country-and-western and my mother's opera, and then I had rock'n'roll, which I had to listen to under the covers, because they didn't want me to be into it. Then I got into modern classical. I did the first scratch records of all-time, scratching Bartók records to make them more interesting. A friend had a two-track tape recorder, and I started using toy sounds and feedback from guitars, and you could make the tape recorder itself feedback. It was related to being into science, building telescopes and spectrosopes.

But when you hooked up with Marty, you took on the role of vocalist and frontman, rather than handling the electronics?

That's what the Iggy thing did. I realized I had to become the front guy, get out onstage—destroy the stage, in fact. And Marty was such a brilliant musician I realized I couldn't compete.



Suicide in Toronto circa 1978. Photo by Peter Noble/Redferns.

In some accounts, Suicide are the first group to describe their own music as “punk.”

We announced that first gig at [SoHo gallery] OK Harris, in February 1971, as a Punk Music Mass on flyers all round the city. As far as I know that's the first time, except for an article that the great writer Lester Bangs wrote on Iggy Pop in which he used the word.

I'm sure I got the word from Lester's piece, never imagining that punk would become a style of music. But I don't think Suicide was ever a punk band. Then again someone said everybody hated Suicide, including the punks—ergo, Suicide was the ultimate punk band!

And yet you were also the first post-punk band—you got rid of the guitars and drums, and brought in the synths.

People have called us everything under the sun, but they could never categorize us. We've been called techno, electronic, punk, post-punk, glitter, industrial, psychobilly. I always say it's Suicide music.

You mentioned the street edge to Suicide, but there's two sides to the songs—on the one hand things like “Frankie Teardrop” or “Harlem” are apocalyptic, and then there are Suicide songs that are almost religious, with hymnal, trance-inducing melodies and this devotional aura of tenderness and grace. Do you have religious or mystical feelings?

I guess I do. I don't subscribe to any particular religion but, to me, there is some power out there. One day I did have this religious experience—I was staying in this brilliant art critic's home for three months, and I found a 90-page pamphlet on infinity written by this college professor and started reading it. I wasn't stoned or anything, but I suddenly saw those two parallel lines that start out at infinity and meet. I got a picture of the universe and understood what infinity was for one-tenth of a second. And then it was gone. I tried to hold on to it, but it dissolved. I put the book away and then, a day or two later, I wanted to read it again. I looked all over, but it had gone. It was like the book never existed.

Having split your energies equally between music and visual art up until punk, you more or less focused entirely on music after a certain point, right?

People always say this to people who want to be artists: “Study this and use it to get a real job on the side, that way you can support your art.” And I say, “I did—to support my art career, I got into music to make money. Suicide is my regular job!” We didn’t make very much money for the first 10 years or so, but we’ve been making money off this supposedly non-commercial music [since]. We got a Tia Maria commercial in Europe off the weirdest song: a basement two-track tape recording from 1975 called “Amen,” an outtake from the second Suicide album sessions. Henry Rollins did “Ghost Rider” on the soundtrack of *The Crow*, which sold six million copies. And overall the first Suicide album must have sold a quarter of a million copies worldwide. It came out in 1977 and it quietly sells every year.

Is it true the first Suicide album was recorded in four hours?

Maybe a bit more. But it was recorded live, with me singing along while Marty played. Except “Frankie Teardrop,” which I redid. But yeah, it was recorded in a single evening. Then we spent months mixing it.

Was that period around the second Suicide album in 1980, when No Wave turned into mutant disco, a good time for you? That whole downtown bohemian demimonde?

It was beautiful, you'd go from one club to another. And when the clubs shut at 4 a.m., you had all the after hours joints like Berlin, which was across the street from Danceteria. It was a never-ending thing where I'd go out around 2 a.m. and stay out until 8 in the morning. You'd walk out from the clubs into the painful sunlight, stoned out of your mind, and there'd be all these people going to work—straight people looking at you pissed as hell because you were looking all fucked-up and going home to sleep, while they're off to work. I never had to pay for a drink—there was an unwritten law that if you had performed in a club, you didn't have to buy a drink there forever after. So I'd come in with my entourage. In the early '80s I had an entourage! I'd had the solo hit in Europe with "Jukebox Babe" and then signed to Elektra. But it got to be too much, actually. I was never alone, ever. And the women—at first it was great but after a while you find you're not doing any work. You have to deliver an album and suddenly you realize you've only got one song, because you've been partying all the time.

Just as you were leaving behind the electronic sound with your two rockabilly-infused—albeit still ultra-minimal—solo albums in the early '80s, Suicide's influence was coming through big-time with synthpop groups like Soft Cell.

In 1978, we opened for the Clash in the UK and got all the heavy shit. After that we had our own tour of eight UK cities, and it went over very well, because we did have a fans but they couldn't make themselves heard through the Clash fans shouting abuse at us. When we played Leeds, the dressing room was packed. I was scared for my life, I could hardly breathe! And a lot of the kids who came through in the '80s were these kids who were crushing me! Soft Cell were at the Leeds show. Dave Ball, the keyboard player, has been at me for 15 years to make a record with him.

We are probably one of the most influential bands ever when you think about it. R.E.M. covered our songs. Moby's a big fan apparently. And Björk. You got Spacemen 3, Spiritualized. The Pan Sonic guys in Finland. They idolize Suicide the way I might have idolized Elvis.

GHOST RIDER STILL ALIVE AFTER SUICIDE: 'IT' IS THE HEAVY ALAN VEGA RELEASE FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE!

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Suicide
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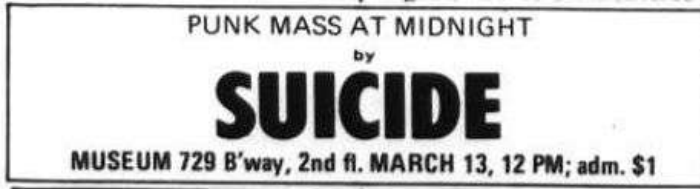
Alan Vega the solo artist and lead singer of the groundbreaking synthpunk duo Suicide who passed from this mortal plane almost exactly one year ago (7/16/16) is not done with us just yet *and this is the best news I've heard in ages...*

My own personal experiences and encounters with Alan Vega are varied, and over many decades, sometimes very near and sometimes far away, but always *intense*. Not like scary movie intense but like *escaping death* intense. As an innocent 16-year-old going to Max's Kansas City in 1976 determined to get in "this time," and being very under age, everything lined up right: my parents went out for the night and I got a friend from school to go with me, but the bands I knew about (Ramones, etc.) weren't playing but *anything* would have been good.

FROM OUR PARTNERS AT VICE

Back then every band played two sets each night. We got there right on time for the early show and saw a band called The Cramps playing their third gig *ever!* (*That* is a major revelation I have gone into elsewhere many times). When Suicide hit the stage it was not packed but pretty crowded. I had been very into weird music for many of my young years but nothing on earth—I repeat, nothing—could prepare me for what I was about to go through. I had seen "bands." And for God's sake I had just seen *The Cramps* for the first time, but two guys come up, NO guitar, NO bass, NO drums and SCREEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEGH#%&*#!\$#@ PLAY THE LOUDEST THING I HAD EVER HEARD!!

I had never seen a band with "no" instruments *and* they were louder than any band WITH instruments. I had never been literally scared of music and people I paid to "have fun" watching. By this point the singer was bleeding from pummeling his own face with his microphone. And it just got louder and louder. Vega would lean into the audience and people would run to the bar! I was mesmerized. I was glued to my seat. I went into another galaxy and I was changed *forever*. My friend was long gone, outside I found out, and he'd been outside since thirty seconds after they'd come onstage. This in itself was the dividing line between myself and the rest of my entire world as I knew it. The deciding factor that I needed to exist in THIS world and not the world I had known up



By the 1990s I had followed this path for quite a while and was familiar with and friends with many of these people, and was one of them. When my band D Generation was recording our second LP *No Lunch* at Electric Lady studio with producer Ric Ocasek, chosen much for the fact that he could work with Suicide *and* The Bad Brains (musically AND personally), the idea came up for us to have Alan Vega pay a visit. Once there, we thought he'd be tickled about a song we had just finished called *Frankie* about a tough cross-dressing punk type, a sort of homage to his *Frankie Teardrop*. Next thing you know he is in the studio recording a vocal. All I can think about was that first life changing night at Max's Kansas City which was then twenty years prior (now *forty one*) as I watch and listen to him give Ric and the engineer instructions to take all the music out except the kick drum, the bass (yay!) and Jesse Malin's vocal. He then went to work squirming and shrieking and saying all kinds of wild heavy stuff. It was truly a privilege to be a part of that.



The author with Alan Vega

After that we knew each other better. Jesse brought him to meet Bruce Springsteen and Alan and Jesse became close. Alan once did a set doing the first Suicide LP live at Jesse's club Bowery Electric. Jesse's sideman Derek Cruz (with my help or at my suggestion I believe) sampled all the sounds from the LP and played the sounds on pads so it sounded exactly like the record! Amazing! But not exactly as planned as the sound man didn't know the record and since I did (and I knew the soundman) I ran into the sound booth and asked him where the echo was and to turn it on and I did the echo frenzy on Alan's vocal just like the record throughout the show. His beautiful wife Liz Lamere thanked me, as did audience members. That was a perfect experience to bring my life as far as Alan Vega is concerned to a perfect circle.

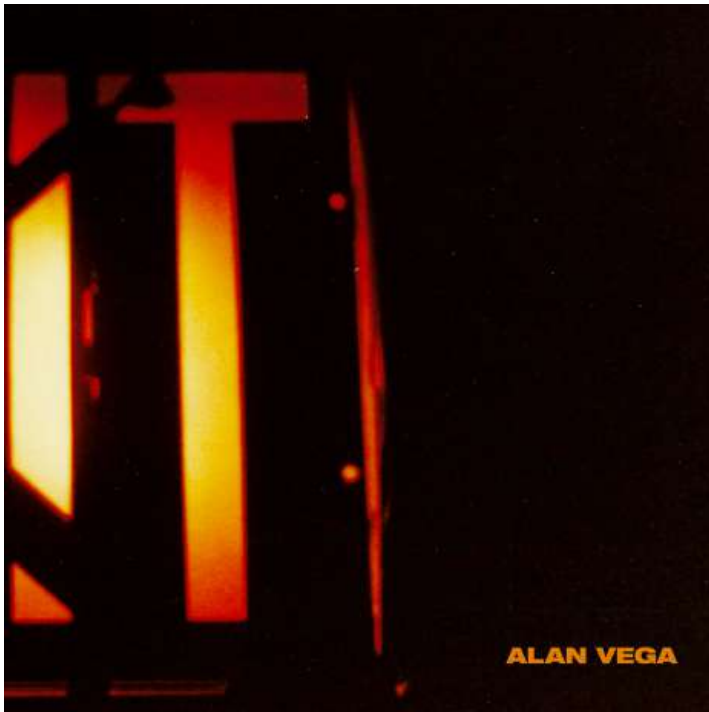
Until now.

Photo by Bob Gruen



Almost a year to the day after Alan Vega passed he has sent us all a massive electronic slap in the face. And like the first time I was exposed to his music, it is harsh, exciting and necessary. Electronic meditations on sorrow, loss and darkness from the Suicide king. The new album, titled *IT* hits the streets on July 14th and is truly a message from beyond. *IT* can be downloaded digitally and bought on vinyl, with a 2-LP gatefold including unpublished drawings, writings, and photos by Vega. The digital album is now available for pre-order [here](#), and the standard vinyl can be pre-ordered via Amazon.com [here](#). A special limited release of *IT* will also be available on transparent orange vinyl, sold exclusively at select indie retail locations, the list of which will soon be announced.

Leading up to the one-year anniversary of Vega's passing, New York City will host a series of events deemed "Alan Vega Week" including exhibits and performances in Alan's memory. On June 30th, [INVISIBLE-EXPORTS](#) opened an exhibition featuring Vega's historic light sculptures, as well as his final series of work including acrylic and graphite paintings. Depictions of a single mythical man, they also form, together, a shifting, serial self-portrait. Additionally, on July 18th, [Jeffrey Deitch](#) will open "Dream Baby Dream," a memorial exhibition commemorating Vega's life and work, including video projections of historic performances by Suicide, and a selection of Vega's sculptures and works on paper from the 1960s to his last works in 2016. Stay tuned for additional memorial events around "Alan Vega Week" to be announced.



The album opens with its first single and video called *Dead To Me*. "Life is no joke/It's days and nights-pure evil/Heyyyyy, sometimes the skanks save souls/DTM-dead to me." Over a pounding atonal electronic repetitive groove, it is relentless, bleak and very heavy. Spitting out lines of endtimes doom and truth, it's a tough pill to swallow. But surely one worth forcing down.

It's so hard to pull quotes from this album as every line is more incredible than the last. Here's a few that struck me (as I understood them).

From "Vision":

From "Screaming Jesus"

The red, white and blue is destroyed
There's no more-just war-war-American war
Screaming Jesus

(The music sounds like thousands of July 4th firecrackers exploding at once.)

From "Motorcycle Explodes"

It smells of misery
And goddamn rivers of blood everywhere
Damn gasoline is burning agony
The skull is dead
Ferocious deadly blast
It kills in seconds
The truth is dead
At rocket speed
Gone... gone... gone...

From "Prayer"

Acceleration
A meditation
A war is over
For a broken soldier
Returns
Hallelujah
A prayer for the broken soldier
Say your confession
At galaxy speed
Pray, oh pray for redemption

From "Prophecy"

I will get up
I will survive
I will go on and on
So fuck you killers
FUCK YOU!
I stand-I stand
It's my prophecy



Beginning in 2010 until the time of his death in July 2016, Vega wrote and recorded *IT* along with his wife Liz Lamere in New York City. I emailed with Liz at length about a few angles that I was curious about.

Howie Pyro: What was Alan listening to before/during the recording?

Liz Lamere: Alan mainly listened to soundtracks on the TV—movies, ads, sports, TV

Until his physical problems slowed him down, he walked around the financial district late at night, and near the Brooklyn Bridge, by Battery Park and took photos and recorded sounds (in the street, in the subway). He had no interest in owning a cell phone, or using a computer (other than in the studio) and had zero exposure to social media or popular music other than by osmosis (mainly on TV or in the street). His private music collection was classical, jazz and some rap. When anyone sent him a recording it was not easy getting him to listen and then he'd do so for maybe 30 seconds. He had no interest in knowing what was "current" or the names of genres. He hung out at the Blarney Stone or Killarney Rose for about an hour after midnight, to have a drink with the working class guys, then come home to draw portraits, write, listen to the most recent studio recordings, work on a sculpture or painting. There had to be a very good reason (like a benefit or a special gig or shows in Europe) to get him into a music club.

How much of the album was recorded near the end of his life?

This is also a complicated answer (smiley face). A lot of the sound tracks were recorded from 2010 – 2012, and then he was sidetracked by a stroke and art shows in Paris in 2012. During the period, 2010-2015, Alan, Dante and I were doing annual concerts in Europe, mostly Paris (road testing tracks from the evolving *IT*). The last time we performed songs from *IT* was at the Barbican in London July 2015 / Moog festival (Alan and Marty each did a solo set and then a Suicide set). Each time we'd come back from doing shows, we'd do some tweaking, or tracks would be added or subtracted. He also did a crazy stripped down minimal version of *IT* in 2014/15 pulling out all but 2-3 tracks for each song (we have that version in the vault and it's brutal). We did final mixing (there were infinite possibilities) in 2015-2016.

By way of further background: When listening to the lyrics and how relevant they are to our present political climate, it is surprising to note that the vocals were recorded at the end of 2011! Alan wrote religiously every night – then when a recording was near done, would pick lyrics (that were often prescient). His solo album that came out prior to Sept 11th, foreshadowed the attack, and starting in early 2001 he was making hanging memorial artworks that looked eerily like those that later formed at "Ground Zero." When people saw them in the 2002 Deitch show they assumed he made them post 9/11 as a nod to the memorial.

It is also highly unusual that Alan would record vocals when the album was not in its final stages - he always picked lyrics from his writings and recorded vocals last. However, during much of 2011—2012 he was preparing art works for a major showing at the Laurent Godin gallery and solo booth at the FIAC international art fair in Paris. So, in late 2011 he decided to record the vocals for the album that was taking shape, before he began to focus almost entirely on the art in anticipation of the fall 2012 shows. It was also fortunate that the vocals were completed before his stroke May 16, 2012—he was 73. The stroke made it hard for him to speak and find words for some time – that improved over time and singing was easier, but still... At the time, he also had a minor heart attack and the doctors discovered he had severe congestive heart failure. Even though they got a stent in the only artery not over 90% blocked, because both of the carotid arteries leading to his brain were almost entirely blocked, they couldn't attempt intervention without triggering a massive stroke. Alan lived from 2012 – 2016 with this knowledge, but he never let it stop him from creating. He never focused on it, only his art. Six months after leaving the hospital, he was in Paris not only for the art shows but performing a concert of songs from *IT*!

Side note 1: In 2009, Alan had a major retrospective at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MAC) Lyon and thereafter was represented by Laurent Godin of the Godin Gallery in Paris, and his works were gaining significant recognition in Europe. This led to the shows in 2012. He had never stopped working on the art from the early 70s (he studied art at Brooklyn College with some key artists, Ad Reinhardt and Kurt Seligman). Alan never sought out galleries to show his works (Ivan Karp/OK Harris "discovered" his work at the Project of Living Artists and started to show him). After his shows at OK Harris and Barbara Gladstone in the 70s-83, he signed with Elektra Records and the music started taking more of his time and he stopped showing. Then in early 2001, Jeffrey Deitch discovered he was still doing the art (after his gallery staff had seen a Suicide show at the Knitting Factory and told Jeffrey how incredible they were). Deitch tracked us down, saw the apartment filled with works, and asked him to exhibit – hence the "Collision Drive" exhibition at Deitch Projects in 2002. Suicide ended the exhibition run with an awesome concert at Deitch (that will be shown for the first time as part of the upcoming Deitch exhibition)!

So, Alan got a bit sidetracked from the music in 2012. In April that year, he was honored by Artists Space (at which point Alan asked me "Did I die and they forgot to tell me?") He always thought this type of recognition would only come after he was dead and it really creeped him out. He was more stressed due to that event than I've ever seen him. Also, until he turned 70 everyone (including himself) thought he was ten years younger and that "reveal" birthday party hit him hard. Then, when he was 71 he was robbed and beaten up pretty badly in the street by Battery Park (on a 2am walk). This felony assault required 25 staples to close the back of his skull and thirteen stitches on his forehead—but he managed to get up and walk home several blocks to get back to me and an ambulance (he alludes to this in "Prophecy"). Then two years later came the stroke. Meanwhile, he got up and went on and on to finish the art for the show and the concert and we flew to Paris 6 months later.

Side note 2: From about 1988 until 2016, Alan and I recorded only 7 albums together – however there is a substantial library of unreleased music. During this period we went into the recording studio about 3 nights a week – like going to the gym - (less for me when Dante was a baby). The goal was mainly to create sound - a very different

face). For instance, on *IT* there are no guitars, just sounds that may sound like that and may actually have started with a recording of a motorcycle engine, or the blender, or a radio static, then run through a series of effects, etc. Every few years or so an industry person (usually Paul Smith, Mute / Blast First) would ask if there was a new album and we'd then focus in on pulling sounds into 9-11 cohesive tracks that worked together as a conceptual whole—we'd make an album! In addition to helping create and/or morph some of the sounds, my role as producer was in being the "General"—getting to commitment on finalizing songs and most importantly getting Alan to record vocals for the album. Ironically, vocals was the last thing he wanted to do—he could keep morphing sound tracks for ages but vocals were usually one take performance and the lyrics and performance had to be 1000% commitment, because he was laying it all on the line in that moment. The beauty of working with Alan was that there were no "mistakes" and no expectations; but he must have felt pressure on himself with the choice of lyrics. He would avoid it like the plague until he got in that vocal booth and Perkin (the engineer) and I would listen while the magic happened and our jaws would drop. Then we loved mixing (and had the best fights during that process) and we could get lost for eons in the mix, so again I had to exert some control. Also if it were totally up to Alan it could be almost unlistenable (smiley face).

So, because the pattern was for each album to evolve over the course of years, we have quite a large library of unreleased sound (and some vocal tracks) but that's another story for the future!

Did Alan have any culture nostalgia or was he always looking to the future artistically?

As far as his own creation and life journey, Alan rarely looked back. And, he didn't like revisiting the 70s at all. It was very hard at first for him and Marty to agree to perform the first Suicide album for the series of concerts they did later in life. He had nostalgia for early rock n roll (Gene Vincent, Roy Orbison, Elvis), the jazz masters (Miles, Coltrane, Albert Ayler) old school hip-hop and rap, but very little for his personal history (other than some favorite memories—especially crazy tour episodes). When it came to creative inspiration, he was absolutely and always looking to the future, searching for new ways to express his vision and create unique sound.

As Elektra discovered, his constant re-creation of his sound made it hard to market him as a major label artist—there was no predictable reproducible formula. His purpose was to break the mold not mass produce it. That's one of the reasons he lost interest in producing the light sculptures to show when Barbara Gladstone started selling them in the 80s and wanted him to keep showing. It's why he was stifled by the major label when they brought in top producers to help create the "hit" sound and make him a rockstar – that was the death knell and his salvation. When I met him just as *Just a Million Dreams* was coming out – he was living at the Gramercy Park hotel with a series of light sculptures on the wall and a crazy linked up array of effects pedals on the floor making really weird and beautiful sound. He was so incredibly passionate about his quest for the next creation. He called himself "the research scientist in the basement." He rarely listened to his own past music. Jesse Malin can tell you a story of when he went to see Bruce, and after the show Alan's song "Dujang Prang" came on... Alan turned to Jesse and said "Hey I like this, who is it?" And Jesse said, "Alan, it's you!" I'm pretty sure he hadn't listened to that song since we did the final mix. He wouldn't even listen to (or keep) the records sent to us when they were released.

Did he have a message to this crazy world or want the public to know anything we wouldn't understand from his art about him or his world view?

I think the casual observer may not know how deeply creative Alan was, and that truly was his life purpose. He had almost no material needs or the need to define himself by outward signs of "success" or acquired status symbols – I loved that about him so much! He was a brilliant man. He was majoring in physics at Brooklyn College when Kurt Seligman saw him doodling in a text book and told him he should be majoring in art!

Alan knew that the world was pretty fucked up, but it didn't scare him or cause panic. He was a survivor. Even sitting in our apartment blocks away from Ground Zero on 9/11, as our neighbors were evacuating, Alan hunkered down: "They've blown their wad, we're safer here than going out into the toxic air" We watched the events unfolding on TV as if it wasn't happening in our backyard. He had already been a child of the Depression era, his parents were Jewish immigrants, his first wife Mariette Bermowitz (married from 1960-70) was a Holocaust survivor. Suicide formed out of the squalor of a bankrupt NYC, the horrors of Vietnam (and the mostly deplorable welcome home vets received), and the corruption of the Nixon era. They were not in the mood to entertain and feed escapism – Alan and Marty were giving the audience a taste of real life, the good, the bad and the ugly.

So, with this backdrop it took a lot for Alan to feel hopeless about the future. Human suffering and war and evil has existed since the beginning of time as we know it. He was fascinated by the circus of the election – called Trump "the Archie Bunker of our times," and I don't think he would've been surprised that he won the election – for a variety of reasons, but beyond the scope here. Bottom line, he wouldn't panic, he'd tell us stand firm in our beliefs and focus on the things we can do to make positive change and not lose sight of our values. The greatest beauty often comes from adversity. He would look for the common ground, the universal truths that bind us together as humans. His art, in every form it took, tapped into the collective unconscious that exists in the universe, and brings to bear all the energy of all those who have come before us. It's where Alan resides now. His art was a catharsis for him and captures the spectrum of human emotion. The portrait drawings he did daily, the "self portraits" are also

meaning from it -whatever they needed. And that gave him great joy. I think the message of his art and music can be found in the words to the final song on *IT* called "Stars" which he said is the anthem and final message to this planet:

"It's yours, It's your life, your given hand, your final hand, the Power is given. They give you the Universe, it's all yours, for free. Do what you want, anything, anything. The ocean, your river, your mountain majesty, the land, the stars, for free, it's your life"



As I said earlier, this record is as harsh-sounding for today's audience as Suicide's first LP was in 1977! When The Clash took them on tour with them in the UK punk audiences were so upset by Suicide that they tried to kill them—every night! So did the teeny bopper American fans of The Cars when Suicide toured with them. **It was not easy but it had to be done.** This new record is THAT heavy, if not more so. Get *IT* now, before it's too late.

Alan Vega, l'homme qui inventa le punk

VIDÉOS. L'ancien chanteur du groupe Suicide, dont la carrière avait explosé en France grâce au tube "Jukebox Babe", s'est éteint à l'âge de 78 ans.



Il était l'un des chanteurs emblématiques du duo américain Suicide. Alan Vega s'est éteint ce samedi. C'est via le site internet du chanteur et producteur Henry Rollins que l'annonce a été faite. En accord avec la famille d'Alan Vega, le message a été posté le 17 juillet : « C'est avec une immense tristesse, que seule une information comme celle-ci peut provoquer, que je vous annonce que l'incroyable artiste et force créative Alan Vega est décédé. Alan est mort paisiblement dans la nuit du 16 juillet, dans son sommeil. Il avait 78 ans. »

Une légende du punk

Originaire de Brooklyn, il débuta comme artiste avant de se lancer dans l'aventure Suicide, dans les années 70, avec Martin Rev. Une expérience qui lui vaudra l'estime des fans de rock noir et influencera de très nombreux groupes rock et punk par la suite.

Le duo est d'ailleurs crédité de l'utilisation du terme punk (voyou en anglais) pour se décrire, après avoir lu un article du grand journaliste musical Lester Bangs. Et sur les premiers posters du duo on pouvait lire l'expression - qui fera ensuite florès et définira tout un genre musical - « Punk Music ».

Un tube et c'est tout

Mais c'est grâce à sa carrière solo qu'il connaîtra le succès auprès du grand public dans les années 80. Son tube « Jukebox Babe » sera un carton planétaire et le propulsera sur le devant de la scène, notamment en France. Mais, peu réceptif au côté commercial de l'industrie musicale qui s'ouvrait devant lui, il décida de faire un break à la fin des années 80. Producteur dans les années 90, il lança de nombreux projets musicaux inédits, inspirés de nombreux styles musicaux (électro, hip-hop...).

Légende du punk, admirée notamment par Alain Bashung, il avait récemment collaboré au dernier album de Christophe, *Les Vestiges du chaos*. Il laisse derrière lui un fils, Dante, et sa femme, Liz.

ARCHIVES

ALAN VEGA EN 1992 : «J'AIMERAIS BIEN QUE TU DISES AUX GENS QUE JE NE SUIS NI JUNKIE NI QUINQUAGÉNAIRE»

Par Eric Dahan (<http://www.liberation.fr/auteur/3909-eric-dahan>)

— 17 juillet 2016 à 15:25

Nous republions ici, telle quelle, cette interview d'Alan Vega, publiée dans «Libération» le 3 août 1992, à l'occasion de la sortie de «Why Be Blue» de Suicide, «gyroscope funky décapotable», selon les mots d'Eric Dahan. Où Vega, qui affirme alors avoir 44 ans mais en avait 54, parle des studios new-yorkais, de la voix nasillarde de Neil Diamond, de Camus et de Selby Jr, des «plans loto» et de sa passion pour le gangsta rap.





Alan Vega, en 1979, aux Bains Douches, à Paris. Photo Richard DUMAS

Suicide en fête

Le 4ème album du duo new-wave capital, parfaitement technopop, est fun comme une virée à la plage. L'occasion, vingt ans après la naissance de Suicide, d'aller «encore plus loin» avec Vega l'âme.

Sans remonter à la naissance de cette étoile absolue de l'avant-garde new yorjkaise, il n'est pas inutile de rappeler que, loin de s'éteindre avec le temps et l'époque, l'irréductible étrangeté d'Alan Vega n'a sans doute jamais aussi sidéré que sur ses derniers envois OVNI, aussi bien en solo qu'avec son copilote Martin Rev.

Deuce Avenue, il y a deux ans, était l'exceptionnel Polaroid neutronique d'un Alphabet City en extase, avec ses raps décalés, ses voix en abréaction et ses trous noirs émotionnels. Presque aussi désintégré par l'indifférence que son successeur *Power On To Zero Hour*, véritable cloaque électro-abrasif, traversé en surplace par le même vertige d'exister jusqu'à la nausée.

Aussi, quel plaisir que ce *Why Be Blue*, gyroscope funky décapotable, rappelant d'autres vols de nuit autour du globe, bercés de fugacités discoïdes ! Et qu'on ne vienne pas pleurnicher de nostalgie à la fantasmithologie du rat d'égout et de la mort souterraine perdue, car cette capacité de réduction

jusqu'à l'idiotie, avec ses ressources inépuisables d'étonnement, révèle plus de failles, lignes de fracture ou de fuite qu'il n'y paraît, sous ses faux airs de soundtrack balnéaire pour carrosseries aveuglantes.

Tension du cryptique et du manifeste

Hypnobilly-scratch d'autoroute fantôme issu d'un *Dune* vitrifié, Why Be Blue installe en souplesse Cheat Cheat entre *China Girl* et Human League : «*Ainsi vont mes jours / Ainsi vont mes nuits / Je manque de temps / Toujours chassant / Ainsi vont mes larmes / Ne tombe jamais dedans / Toujours chassant la vie*». Sur quoi, une descente de bambou à la Japan et quelques accents d'orgue aigret sur hoquet swingbeat introduisent à *Hot Ticket* : «*Soldats à roquettes / En place pour la gloire / Dans des maisons-labyrinthes / Me laissant sans voix / Combattant sous une pluie éternelle / Bon plan pour une nuit chaude*».

Mais le soldat Vega «*perdant le contrôle*», «*Dracula s'échappe de la télé*» : *Universe*, constellé de clochettes sidérales, est une plongée entre les rides de l'espace pour chanter la honte du travailleur, «*L'ice (drogue synthétique, NDR) en canettes ! Les bus remplis de monstres affairés au crime*», et à appeler en dernier recours à «*l'univers*».

Mais voilà Zaratoustra - «*Il faut encore porter du chaos en soi pour donner naissance à l'étoile dansante*» -, surréllement funky but chic, comme un Ferry de *Same Old Scene* téléporté à Minneapolis, invitant à un quadrille minimal de western atomique : «*Les poches pleines de souvenirs / Une dernière fois /*

*Dernière fois...». Et un cran au-dessus dans le «superficiel par profondeur», *Play The Dream*, et son piano frivolement house rappelant qu'il faut «jouer le rêve» car «un à un, ils se sont perdus».*

Pump It choque en retour aux cadences syncopées, pour laisser transpirer à nouveau l'ennui, au hasard des «*Rues chaudes / Je suis bien / Chair moite / Pantalon moulant*». Qui trouve sa traduction FM ringarde dans le soda éventé d'un *Flashy Love* en terrasse ; tandis que *Chewy Chewy* pétille de lucidité élastique : «*Personne n'est beau / Pas de miracle / Rapide serviteur sexuel / Oiseau de beauté / Bise bise / Peut-être de l'amour ? / Mastiquesque / Mastiquesque / Zimba-zou*». Mujo enfin, malgré ses «nerfs», conclut qu'il faut «*rester cool avec le beat*». Fin d'émission.

Sur la pochette mauve et bleue, Vega et Rev sont en sportswear blanc, spationautes de l'accélération urbaine douchés de candeur. Proposés en double évaluation convertible, tassés recto, lestés verso. Un équilibre unique que cette tension du cryptique et du manifeste, dans un monde de «jeunes Egyptiens».

Alan Vega. Mon enfance ? Je n'y pense pas, je n'aime pas en parler. Enfin... Mère d'origine espagnole, née à NY ; père russe débarqué à NYC à trois ans, ou polonais - un jour l'un, un jour l'autre... Peut-être qu'il venait d'un village frontalier, pour raisons militaires... C'était un super graveur, manuel quoi. Et

ma mère, comme les Américaines au foyer de l'époque, elle élevait ses deux gosses : moi et mon petit frère. Etudes ? Le New York City College : diplômé en art et physique.

Libération. L'initiation musicale ?

A.V. J'avais commencé un peu vers trois ans, ma mère m'a demandé : «*Bon, tu veux continuer les leçons ou jouer au ballon dans la rue ?*»... De toute façon, ce qu'on nous enseigne, on finit par le haïr. En quittant l'école, on doit désapprendre pour commencer à vivre. Marty, lui, a appris la musique de façon académique.

Libération. Parle-nous de ce désapprentissage : les drogues, quoi d'autre ?

A.V. Les drogues ne changent jamais rien ! C'est plus un truc mental. Pendant des années on te ressasse : «*cette couleur ne va pas avec elle-là...Fais pas ci fais pas ça*». Donc, en faisant ce dont j'ai envie je me sens criminel, artiste. Suicide, notre nom, c'est ça : détruire en soi pour découvrir, apprendre par soi-même et oublier ce qui vaut pour les autres. C'est une espèce de mouvement vital, comme avec les filles. Pas facile ; peu de gens vivent ainsi.

Libération. Comment y es-tu parvenu, depuis tant d'années, dans ce milieu ?

A.V. J'essaie de survivre, entre les avances des maisons de disque et les concerts... Depuis 77, je n'ai jamais eu d'autres ressources. Je touche du bois, j'ai de la chance. Mes expos (trash sculpture) me rapportent aussi un peu... Evidemment, je ne flambe pas en coupé sport - d'ailleurs, je n'ai pas de bagnole, il faut choisir. On reste en vie, on lit, on chie, quoi.

Libération. Les vrais débuts du duo ?

A.V. Je travaillais au Project of Living Artists. Une sorte d'espace pour artistes expérimentaux que j'avais récupéré (Television, Blondie et autres New York Dolls sortent de là). Martin Rev y répétait avec des jazzmen famoureux, post post-Coltrane : tout en triple ou en quadruple, trois batteurs jouant la même chose en même temps, six trompettes, au moins vingt-cinq personnes, et lui devant ses claviers électroniques. Bien avant Chick Corea ! Enfin, c'était tellement free, polyrythmique, pas du tout éclaté... Ensemble, on a voulu se brancher électronique; ça a donné Suicide. Avec Paul Lieb Gott, «Cool P.», qui jouait de la guitare mais nous a rapidement quittés pour les arts graphiques et la famille. Il disait qu'il se «suiciderait» s'il restait dans le groupe. Nous, on pensait : «*C'est marié, avec les gosses, qu'il va se suicider!*» (Rires).

Libération. Qu'est-ce que Ric Ocasek aime en vous ?

A.V. On ne répète jamais, voilà. On débarque sur scène, si ça n'assure pas, s'il ne se passe rien, c'est qu'on est des nuls, qu'on a rien à exprimer, répétitions ou pas. Ric a toujours été fan, depuis quinze ans, comme du Velvet, qui a changé sa vie dans les 60's.

Libération. L'album sonne classe par rapport au précédent...

A.V. Pour le précédent, Ric avait réservé l'Electric Lady à NY, hors de prix, donc il fallait foncer. Pour celui-là, comme on s'est installés dans son studio perso, on a pu prendre le temps. Mais bon, le précédent était délibérément déglingué aussi. Il a fallu un an pour faire celui-ci. Quinze titres au départ ; d'abord basse, batterie, je chante, Marty ajoute des claviers et Ric de la guitare. On recommence, on efface...

Libération. Beaucoup de programmation ?

A.V. Non. Juste la boîte à rythmes, tout le reste est joué à la main. Chez moi j'ai le M1 de Korg, il m'a fallu un mois et demi rien que pour lire la notice ! C'est trop. L'Ensoniq ou le Jupiter qu'on utilisait il y a huit ans sont des trucs préhistoriques. Comme la grosse Linn dans le studio de Ric ; aujourd'hui, ça a la taille d'un paquet de clopes.

Libération. Pas de romance sur *Why Be Blue*...

A.V. Il y avait un slow mais on l'a abandonné. Marty fait facilement ça ; toujours des problèmes amoureux. Notre première chanson a été *Cheree*...

Libération. Tu as fait le test pour savoir si tu étais séropositif ?

A.V. Q'est-ce que c'est que ces questions... ? Bon, oui, régulièrement. Mais ce n'est pas une obsession. Liz (Liz Lamère est la compagne d'Alan Vega) est une fille vraiment super. Je ne déconne pas à droite et à gauche.

Libération. A une époque, ne disais-tu pas que le seul intérêt dans l'existence, c'est baiser...?

A.V. Je ne te parle pas de baiser, je parle aussi de mes relations avec des mecs. Marty, c'est un vrai mariage. D'ailleurs, je n'ai jamais dit ça. Rester en vie, voilà l'essentiel. Le sexe, c'est comme manger, écouter de la musique... Ca ne veut pas dire que je bande quand je suis sur scène, mais tout ça est du même ordre.

Libération. Et tes fameuses courses de canassons ?

A.V. Plus tellement, plutôt les plans loto. Dommage, parce que j'aime tout le truc avec les chevaux : les toucher, les voir... Ca m'a aidé, à une époque où je n'avais rien d'autre.

Libération. Est-ce que tu te reconnais dans ce que certains appelleraient «la voix juive» ? Une sorte de lignée grave, mélancolique, sans âge, des Dylan, Cohen, Gainsbourg...

A.V. Etrange question... C'est vrai que Marty... Il vient d'une famille complètement athée, son père était syndicaliste, et puis, il y a sept ans, il a tourné complètement religieux comme ça : il va à la synagogue, shabbat, casher... Et moi qui ai été élevé là-dedans - ça m'a toujours déplu -, je vis plus comme un catholique.

Du coup, on ne peut plus jouer vendredi soir ! Ni voyager samedi... Ce qui est dramatique, vu que c'est là que les clubs font le plus de blé - je déteste ce côté épicier, mais...

Moi, à treize ans, j'ai tout balancé, j'ai dit à mes parents que je ne voulais plus entendre parler de tout ça ; la religion ne m'intéresse pas.

Marty n'a jamais terminé ses études, moi j'ai toujours beaucoup lu. Lui s'est récemment mis à lire Homère, et puis les Grecs, et ainsi de suite jusqu'à la Bible... Totalement fasciné par «la mémoire»! Il s'est senti «*tiré en arrière par le passé de façon irrésistible*»... Il a essayé de m'expliquer. Tout ce que j'en ai retenu, c'est qu'il s'est trouvé une protection contre les drogues. Quand j'ai soulevé le problème de shabbat, il m'a rétorqué : «*Tu préférerais qu'on foire des tournées parce que je serais trop défoncé ?*». A ce sujet, j'aimerais bien que tu dises aux gens que je ne suis ni junkie ni quinquagénaire.

Libération. Bon, tu vas tout de même finir par la donner ta date de naissance ?...

A.V. Je ne comprends pas que vous y teniez à ce point-là, mais enfin... 23 juin 1948. Pour en revenir à cette question de la «voix»... d'abord, c'est quoi ce cliché de la «voix juive» ? Toujours à geindre, à nasiller ? Neil Diamond, voilà le vrai nasillard geignard ! Toute notre jeunesse. Tous mes voisins ont fini comme Neil Diamond, leur modèle... Non, je crois que ce que tu évoques n'est pas spécifiquement juif, peut-être méditerranéen... Ou européen.

Libération. As-tu déjà fait sérieusement l'expérience de la maladie ?

A.V. A huit ans, on m'a diagnostiqué leucémique : fièvre délirante, inflation de globules blancs ; et le médecin a failli me tuer. En fait, j'avais une septicémie ! Ca me tue, chaque fois que je vois un gamin raide par terre dans la rue. Putain, on a toute la mort pour rester couché ; la vie c'est quand même autre chose... Alcool, un joint, coke à la rigueur, c'est cool... Mais pas tous ces speeds synthétiques de merde non plus !

Libération. Tu vis toujours 3è rue Est (East-Village, Alphabet City) ?

A.V. Non. Je n'ai vécu que deux mois dans l'immeuble des Hell's Angels. Trop grave, trop dangereux. Désormais, je vis downtown, près de Wall Street, à quatre blocs du Staten Island Ferry. Deuxième étage.

Libération. Tes livres ?

A.V. Camus, Hubert Selby Jr, Dostoïevski, Dickens, Bukowski, Henry Rollins - sa maison d'édition va bientôt publier mes textes. *L'Homme révolté* a changé ma vie... J'avais dix-neuf ans. *Sur la route* de Kerouac aussi. Ce ne sont pas les meilleurs livres... Mais à cet âge de ma vie, ils ont été inestimables. Comme les peintures noires de Reinhardt, ou Iggy en 69. Impossible, après de voir le monde avec les mêmes yeux.

Libération. Encore ce genre d'émotions aujourd'hui ?

A.V. Avec le rap. Les Last Poets, le Gangsta-Rap, Ice T., Ice Cube... J'aime le beat. Directement de la rue au studio. Tous ces headbangers, à côté, c'est de la branlette. Et quant à la musique électronique, Phil Glass radote depuis vingt ans.

Libération. Ta plage préférée sur le nouvel album ?

A.V. *Universe*. A la fois planant et acéré, urbain comme une scène de rue dans un film, avec cette invocation à l'univers. S'il y a quelque chose de mystique en moi, alors c'est dans ces régions-là. *Play The Dream* et *Why Be Blue*, c'est la morale : se remuer le cul. *Last Time*, c'est *Ghost Rider* plus *Juke Box Baby*. Comme une pochade au sujet de Suicide : «*C'est bien la dernière nuit que je passerai dans un hôtel en tournée, la dernière fois que je me taperai la première fille venue...*». Et en même temps : «*Allez, encore une fois, la dernière fois, mais, bon, vraiment la dernière...*»

Libération. Le prochain Vega ?

A.V. J'y suis : douze heures par jour à la batterie depuis deux mois. J'entends un bruit dans ma tête... On verra ça dans trois mois - sachant que ça n'aura rien à voir. Mais tant mieux. Ça changera ma vie malgré moi ; ça me fait une raison de vivre pour les mois qui viennent.

RECUEILLI PAR ERIC DAHAN

Why Be Blue, de Suicide, CD/LP/K7 WMD.



Suicide's Alan Vega Dead at 78



Alan Vega has died at 78. Henry Rollins broke the news via his website, with a statement from Vega's family. The singer of iconic New York proto-punk band Suicide passed away peacefully in his sleep. Rollins will dedicate his show on radio station KCRW tomorrow to Vega and his work. Find the full text of the family statement below.

With profound sadness and a stillness that only news like this can bring, we regret to inform

you that the great artist and creative force, **Alan Vega** has passed away.

Alan passed peacefully in his sleep last night, July 16. He was 78 years of age.

Alan was not only relentlessly creative, writing music and painting until the end, he was also startlingly unique. Along with Martin Rev, in the early 1970's, they formed the two person avant band known as Suicide. Almost immediately, their incredible and unclassifiable music went against every possible grain. Their confrontational live performances, light-years before Punk Rock, are the stuff of legend. Their first, self-titled album is one of the single most challenging and noteworthy achievements in American music.

Alan Vega was the quintessential artist on every imaginable level. His entire life was devoted to outputting what his vision commanded of him.

One of the greatest aspects of Alan Vega was his unflinching adherence to the demands of his art. He only did what he wanted. Simply put, he lived to create. After decades of constant output, the world seemed to catch up with Alan and he was acknowledged as the groundbreaking creative individual he had been from the very start.

Alan's life is a lesson of what it is to truly live for art. The work, the incredible amount of time required, the courage to keep seeing it and the strength to bring it forth—this was Alan Vega.

Alan is survived by his amazing family, wife Liz and son Dante. His incredible body of work, spanning five decades, will be with us forever.

ARTFORUM

PASSAGES

ALAN VEGA (1938–2016)

October 07, 2016 • Polly Watson



Alan Vega, 1980. Photo: Ebet Roberts.

“Screams at:

03:33

03:59

04:38

06:15

08:11

09:24

09:50.”

“imagine just playing this , like casually like ppl would listen to Beyonce and shit”

—Comments on a YouTube video of Suicide’s “Frankie Teardrop”

THERE WAS NOTHING CASUAL ABOUT ALAN VEGA, who died last summer at (what turned out to be) the age of seventy-eight. An artist, musician, provocateur, and all-around wild man, Vega was best known as the vocalist for the lightning-bolt-channeling Suicide, who in the late 1970s gave Frankenstein-life to the extraordinarily loud, harsh breed of synth punk that not only inspired others to take up the genre, but arguably spawned new wave, industrial, dance punk, and electroclash, and influenced countless diverse acts as well-known and beloved as Bruce Springsteen and as obscure and overlooked as Years on Earth.

The incandescent warmth of Vega’s unhinged-Elvis-style croon lent a soda-fountain sweetness to partner Martin Rev’s open-heart-surgery synths, most famously in the epic “Frankie Teardrop,” in which, over an electronic cicada-drone throb, and punctuating his whisper-spoken narrative with tortured shrieks, Vega starkly limns the travails of a not-yet-of-voting-age Vietnam veteran who shoots his family and himself over money woes. “We’re all Frankies,” Vega concludes. “We’re all lying in hell.”

Suicide, “Frankie Teardrop,” 1977 [video]

In fact, having fought his way out of blue-collar Bensonhurst, the Brooklyn native spent little time reclining: Suicide put out five full-length studio albums, around and between which Vega built for himself a solo career. He collaborated with, among others, Alex Chilton (who would later be celebrated for his own undersung band, the power-poppy Big Star); Lydia Lunch, Genesis P-Orridge, and the Cars’ Ric Ocasek. Additionally, he continued to make artwork, as he had done before Suicide’s genesis, creating paintings,

light sculptures, and works made from detritus he found in the street, much of it to more immediate acclaim than he initially received for his music, and none of it earning him an axe thrown in his face, as his work with Suicide reputedly had.

He continued to provoke to the very end. “Life is boring,” he told *Noisey* a few months before his death. “Right now, I want to get rich. That’s all.” When he died, the public learned that he’d shaved ten years off his age, presumably in an attempt to battle the still-dominant music-biz bias against anyone who’s needed the services of a razor for more than a decade. Consciously or not, Vega resisted the culture of infantilization that has increasingly infected American civilization in recent years; his work was consistently adult, marked by aggression and knowingness, not passivity and innocence. In creating something entirely new, he didn’t attempt to ignore the old; rather, he acknowledged it, then tore it apart, reassembling it into something at once glowing and ugly. Late-modern capitalism posits youth as simultaneously eternal and fleeting, a thing only just gone, that must be continually recaptured; Vega’s work looks only forward, evocative of that which can never be captured to begin with, only sought forever.

Polly Watson is a musician, editor, and writer based in New York.

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GRAZIA

PEOPLE / OPINION / CULTURE / MUSIQUE / MAGAZINE / ACTUALITÉ

Vega l'âme : un hommage à Alan Vega par Bayon

Par Bayon - Le 01 septembre 2016

En exclusivité pour Grazia, Bayon, écrivain et ancien critique rock du quotidien Libération, rend hommage à Alan Vega, le leader du duo Suicide, décédé en juillet dernier. Portrait inspiré d'une comète punk...

L'un de ses hymnes les plus vibrants, *Wipeout Beat*, clamait par la bouche d'un vétéran du Vietnam aux yeux évidés dans le métro new-yorkais ce cantique clochard : "*J'entends les anges du paradis chanter leurs Alleluias pour vous.*" Sous solarisation cheap du rockeur en sosie de Kadhafi chez Madame Arthur, un autre appel psalmodiait quelque chose s'entendant "*Allah, Allah, Allah* (en fait "Outlaw")/*Ave Marie, Ave Marie...*".

Ledit Alan Vega (Boruch Alan Bermowitz) a rejoint son paradis agité via "son lit" de repos où il s'est éteint, comme on dit, à 78 ans ce 16 juillet, des suites d'un AVC 2012 (Alan Vega Cérébral ?), au terme d'une vie riche en excès zonards, arty, drogués, dandy si l'on veut, rock, de façon assez privilégiée. Dont on ne pleurera donc pas la fin.

On ne peut pas être triste de tout

On ne peut être triste de tout, de Nice 2016, de la tuerie Dropped argentine 2015 et du simple passage de la comète Vega. La longue extinction d'Alan Vega, telle celle du grillé neuronal Vince Taylor rédimé sur sa fin par une vestale suisse, aura été maternée par la bien nommée Liz Lamere, compagne mécène bienvenue.

Au surplus, un enregistrement au sommet in extremis avec saint Christophe, patron des chauffards, lui aura offert un finale en triomphe sur l'air cabalistique de la *Tangerine* : "*Tout au creux de ta main, il fait soleil/Si tu la lances dans le ciel, tu sais que tu la suivras.*" Chiche ? Sans larmes de crocodile rock, sans bio nécro officielle disponible dans toutes les bonnes publications, sans oraison, l'occasion d'un retour de bivouac sur quelques impressions perdues du vieux Gavroche saturnien. Cinq entrées de sortie, disons.

Junkie un jour...

Jusqu'au bout, Alan Vega nous aura tenus pour "*le plus grand dealeur de Paris*" - ainsi que nous le rapportait de première main l'ami Jiri Smetana, animateur princier tchèque du Gibus, boîte rock de la République des années 80-90, et à ce titre emblématique programmateur récurrent de Vega. Vega, formel devant la stupeur et les dénégations de Jiri, d'évoquer la livraison express cool as ice par nous en personne, de la main à la main, d'un paquet de poudre miracle un jour de singe...

Le vaudeville défoncé peut se recomposer ainsi : pour les besoins d'un énième reportage *Rock & Folk* et *Libération* (*Métal hurlant*, *Pariscope*, *Playboy*, *Nitro...*) sur Vega, attendu sur scène dans quelque province reculée (Vitrolles ? Aix ? Plomeur ?), nous voilà cordialement "chargé" par son petit label français, ça tombe bien, d'apporter au challenger de *Jukebox Babe/Collision Drive* des affaires de rechange et un médicament qu'il attend urgemment. Nous convoyons et livrons cela sans le moindre souci ni soupçon, avec le sourire, à qui de droit. Alléluia, sauvé. Show en torpille remonté à bloc afférent, et vingt-cinquième chronique sur l'impayable Vega. Au passage, on l'aura compris, c'est de ce convoyage massif de chnouffe malgré nous, mule du pop et dindon de la farce bien farci, que data le respect de Vega pour notre double éminence de parrain de la dope titi sous couvert de rock critic - dont rien ne l'aura jamais fait démordre.

Le king

Comme tous les gens de goût, Alan Vega aimait Elvis. Qu'il célébrait dans son fanzine arty obsédé de vitesse, de course de chevaux et de rock, en icône scénique aux socquettes léchées par de jeunes hystériques redneck idolâtres. L'un dans l'autre, Elvis et Vega restent indissociablement liés aux deux fautes professionnelles déclarées les plus heureuses de notre petite

carrière au quotidien *Libération*. Une "oreille" de une à notre idée représentait un jour l'animal fétiche Vega dans ses oeuvres en train de tirer la langue. Cette grosse langue grasse de sale gosse au lecteur, très symbolique, contraria vivement notre directeur Serge July ; d'où recadrage.

Seconde cause parente de réprimande directoriale aggravée : j'imaginai un jour de mi-août 1987 particulièrement creux certaine couv manchettée "*Un week-end à mourir*" figurant sa majesté Elvis 1er en train de lire le *Libération* d'ennui mortel qui le figurait, etc. - le célèbre logo rouge en losange du quotidien se retrouvant porté sur ce seul journal en abyme un peu froissé, réduit et très décadré, entre les mains du King, au milieu de cette une vide d'actualité. Cette fantaisie d'édition mit hors de lui notre patron réaliste, alors en vacances, qui en passa un savon en direct à descente d'avion, le jour de parution, à la directrice artistique du journal dévoyée par moi. Honte sur nous... Jusqu'à ce qu'un prix de la meilleure une de l'année couronne notre oeuvre de trash art à la Vega, qui dès lors ornerait en trophée déployé sous verre le bureau directorial - la une à la langue warholienne de Vega tirée et encadrée non loin, juste en sortant, sur les baies vitrées de l'aquarium voisin attenant à l'ascenseur. Viva Vega.

Kraftwerk

Alan Vega nous contait un jour à Pigalle, entre -une ode à Jean-Claude Pascal et un éloge du beat de Beethoven digne de Selby en mauvais goût amerloque, sa rencontre préhistorique avec deux drôles d'esthètes allemands macabres à New York en 1971, autour de son Project of Living Artists : Ralf et Florian quelque chose. Alan fait découvrir aux étranges émissaires mélomanes leurs recherches synthétiques proto cold wave avancées avec Martin Rev son "*Man Machine*".

Il confie dans la foulée les matrices de ces enregistrements électroniques radicaux, labellisés Suicide, alors trio, aux jeunes Germains modernes, qui les remportent à Munich pour s'en occuper... Suit la sortie d'Autobahn, sans signe de reconnaissance des fameux Kraftwerk en retour vers Vega... Plissement spatio-temporel et de contrariété. Tectonique de noeuds de voix ferrées névrotiques et machinations.

Live

Le sacre du King Dagobert se tint dans la friche culturelle des décombres d'Austerlitz et au Palace, un soir de 1980 par là. Grand branle-bas rue du Faubourg-Montmartre autour du débarquement en tornade du groupe rockabilly vedette à l'affiche : The Stray Cats. A grands coups de *Runaway Boys* tubesque slappé, de bananes rétro flashy et de *Storm The Embassy* aux lignes de basse sans âge ni faute, l'emballante formation huppée fit son effet. Quand bien même l'événement branché, plastique, durable et profond, pour certains, cette nuit-là se passait ailleurs, avant, à côté. Du bas-côté de la scène, avec l'anti-avènement du *Kung Fu Cowboy*... Soit le porte-voix du duo exterminateur électronique Suicide relancé en solo rockab disjoncté, via le manifeste loubard janséniste Alan Vega. Sans groupe, en formation squelettique réduite à sa plus simple expression, à cor et à cri sous projo blanc à cru, apparié d'un ordi boîte à rythmes et basta, le nouveau héros zéro claqueur de boucles à écho maniérées, jappant, râlant, talonnant, jaculant.

Drôle de corps, mélange déclamatoire de Ritchie Valens et Esquerita raté, Elvis de poubelles karatéka rectifiant l'infirmes Gene Vincent, zombie maya couleur aubergine hors d'âge convoquant le ridicule à outrance, de morceaux en morceaux effrités, bombant le torse et rentrant le ventre, seul au monde en Dernière Bande d'un

"*théâtre de la cruauté*" étriqué à Perfecto Macadam Cowboy mauve. Le messie du néant avancé affrontait un public étique ouvertement hostile, avec un cran de fou, boogie à la gestuelle maniaque hargneuse, à base de ligatures junkie du câble de micro à son coude de cuir levé, de spasmes torsadés et de poings brandis à la gueule des spectateurs les plus proches de la rampe, affrontés (au sens propre) à plaisir.

Foutu d'avance

Les spectateurs en question, venus à la curée, avaient d'entrée ouvert le feu, en ballet de mollards, criblant le visiteur halluciné à la drôle de coiffure andine de crachats comme d'insultes vomies en continu. Lesquels jets de salive dégoulaient de plus en plus, en bave lustrale de passion rock dégénérée, sur le visage pathétique du célébrant à la peau d'escargot, son corps souffrant de James Brown boxeur d'ombres, poussant coûte que coûte son set sacré absurde sous le ciel vide, ponctué de bruitages chuintants en réponse aux flotchs écrasés des crachats, d'enchaînements déboîtés, d'agenouillements de superstar affreusement déplacés, de grognements couinants, de glapissements, de menaces.

Rien ne faisait reculer ni cesser ce Don Quichotte grotesque et beau, foutu d'avance - littéralement "suicidé". Vega, illuminé de fureur, se voyait finalement reluire, douché de mucus de la tête aux pieds, ruisseler de plus de "*trois litres*" de bave parisienne abjecte, selon la production, à la mesure du mépris du comité d'accueil, au terme de sa prise de contact live avec le pays du *Rien de rien* de Piaf, l'Elvis française. Alan Vega aurait d'ailleurs esquivé d'un rien ce soir-là, en prime, un marteau au vol de la tête - en clou du sacrifice raté sublime. La plage asphaltée au goudron vocal laviatique Vega majeur sur *Les Vestiges du chaos* du crooner

Christophe, *Tangerine*, retour en flamme 2016 de l'oeuvre au noir machinique 80's *Wipeout Beat*, est l'accomplissement in extremis d'un long go-between impossible...

Volte/face, Christophe/Vega

Au tournant des années disco-punk, proche d'Alan Vega comme du chanteur rock Christophe, que tout le monde méprise alors tel un Hervé Vilard bis mais que nous connaissons et cultivons depuis 1967 (au temps des Lamborghini et Aston du Stand-14 de Beltoise et Landereau à Montlhéry), nous nous hasardons, sur requête pressante du chanteur expérimental de *Rock Monsieur* et *Coeur défiguré*, à le mettre en contact avec Vega. Grave erreur, chacun à sa place... Dûment chapitré, galvanisé par nous, Alan Vega (qui se raidissait d'abord en s'entendant dire : "*Christophe pourrait être pour toi un Ric Ocasek français. - Un 2e Ocasek ! Autant me tirer une balle...*"), Vega commence par planter le rendez-vous au sommet chez Christophe, boulevard Flandrin, où l'on doit le conduire sous escorte. "*I don't go*", tranche Vega, tout à trac. Rupture diplomatique, rappel des ambassadeurs.

Un album plus tard, passé force salamalecs et rafistolages de chancelleries, une nuit de show apocalyptique crapoteux à souhait au petit Rex, où l'on a fait la garde d'honneur en bande quai Voltaire pour Christophe juché sur une banquette comme un tanagra parmi les pogoteurs pourris, situation inversée : attendu en grande pompe dans les loges du sous-sol, le petit marquis de Succès fou se fait désirer. C'est un rêve de mythologie miteuse : Alan fardé comme une Cadillac volée a revêtu ses plus beaux atours (une sorte de combinaison Las Vegas en plastoc bleuâtre moulant son corps de *Cage aux folles* de basement) et mis les petits plats dans les grands pour l'occasion (chips, picorettes, olives, bières...). Or Christophe, homme de vapeurs, ne vient pas, ne

condescend pas. On a beau se démenner, le raffiné populaire ne sent plus le coup ce soir-là, préfère remettre... Une leçon pour nous ; ne jamais s'entremettre... Nous voilà bien, en plein incident d'ego, au contact, à essuyer la décharge, glaciale. "*Je ne suis pas assez bien, on dirait, pour ton Ric Ocasek français...*", fulmine en substance Vega planté là, légitimement mortifié. Coup pourri, coup pour rien, coups à prendre.

La connexion s'opère

Il faudra des mois, tant d'années, pour que finalement la connexion s'opère, sans nous à force, suivant son cours hasardeux nécessaire. Un tiers de siècle pour que notre bouture contrariée de 1981 porte coûte que coûte ses fruits, en *Tangerine*, fleuron bifide du manifeste philosophal christophien 2016, magnificat electro-pop éclaboussé d'insolation bolide : *Ghost Rider* contre *Agitation*, au coeur de Tanger, fief beat generation. En fait, le morceau était en boîte depuis "*quatre ans*", nous révèle Christophe le lévitant, encore sous le choc du *Darkness* d'outre-tombe de Bowie suicidé.

La voix de Vega, incantatoire comme aux plus beaux jours, prise "*deux ans avant*" (la rupture d'anévrisme), remonte à 2010. Accident magique que cette sortie différée en avance de sortie. L'exergue en envoi, s'il en faut. C'est en France, cimetière des éléphants binaires et des perdants magnifiques, où Willy DeVille, par exemple, a coulé ses derniers jours montmartrois indiens entre Terrass' Hôtel et Relais Gascon, c'est en France qu'Alan Vega aura percé, brillé, et qu'il se voit pour finir honoré à la vie à la mort comme un des plus beaux "*vestiges du chaos*", qu'il fut au fond. Contemporain de Cochran sauté en hobo du *Mystery Train* dans le convoi new wave, fantôme de pionniers ou pionnier fantôme. Vive la France. Suivant.

KILLING US SOFTLY: THE ART CAREER OF SUICIDE'S ALAN VEGA

BY *M. H. Miller* (<http://www.artnews.com/author/mmiller/>) POSTED 07/26/16 12:39 PM

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Alan Vega, "Welcome to Wyoming."

COURTESY INVISIBLE-EXPORTS

Alan Vega—the singer for the influential punk duo Suicide who passed away last week at age 78—was also an important visual artist, albeit with a slightly quieter persona. Vega was in fact an artist first and a frontman second. He studied with Ad Reinhardt at Brooklyn College, and he showed work at the OK Harris Gallery in New York in 1974, three years before Suicide released their first record. Suicide were aggressive Minimalists, pioneers in both punk and electronic dance music. Vega's art was similarly intense and understated. When the dealer Barbara Gladstone, who currently represents artists including Matthew Barney and Thomas Hirschhorn, moved her gallery from 57th Street to SoHo in 1983, it was Vega who inaugurated the space.

"You know, I was going from uptown to downtown," Gladstone said in a phone interview. "And I thought he was a perfect way to express that."

Vega showed neon crucifix assemblages, made of pieces of found metal that were "kind of put together in a sort of arte povera manner," Gladstone said. The gallery had no overhead lighting, so the only light source for the exhibition was the sculptures themselves. "It was very moody," Gladstone said. "It was beautiful. It was very much like him." She said working with Vega was a "wonderful" experience. "The

only problem for me is that I'm a daytime person and he wasn't awake in the

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Vega was, to use Gladstone's word, an "elusive" artist. She never saw his studio, and wasn't totally sure if he had one. (At the time, "he lived in a hotel," she said.) That show in 1983 was for many years his only major outing in New York.

Jeffrey Deitch attempted to revive Vega's artistic career with a show at his gallery in SoHo in 2002. (Suicide performed at the show, as well.) Deitch had seen Vega's OK Harris show in 1974 and, "I thought it was some of the most radical work I'd ever seen," he said. "I thought it was extraordinary. Assemblages of all kinds of electronic parts, discarded TVs, radios, fluorescent tubes—he just plugged it in and whatever lit up, that was the piece."



Install shot of Alan Vega's work at Invisible Exports.
COURTESY INVISIBLE-EXPORTS

Not long after encountering Vega's art, Deitch saw Suicide perform for the first time, which he viewed as the musical equivalent of Vega's sculpture. Suicide's sound was so new, they endured catcalls and rioting audiences in their early years. The response to Vega's art was slightly more muted. ("The collector response was kind of nonexistent," Gladstone said of the '83 show. "But the artist and kind of general hip response was great.") Decades later, when Deitch reached out to Vega about doing an exhibition, he recalled the artist had to be talked into the idea. "The art world and all the politics of the art world—that was not something that was relevant to him."

This has certainly not helped the public knowledge of his art. Deitch's show introduced Vega's art to a new generation—he remembered how Dan Colen and Dash Snow, two Deitch artists, asked Vega to perform inside their so-called hamster's nest installation at the gallery in 2007—but Vega mostly kept quiet. An extensive exhibition in Lyon, France, in 2009 led to a solo show in 2015 at Invisible-Exports, on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, Vega's first show in New York since Deitch's.

"The funny thing about Alan is I think he was always making stuff, but he never really cared whether it was seen or not," said Benjamin Tischer, a co-owner of Invisible-Exports. "It was just something he did." A major component of the show was a series of portraits of the same face at the same angle with slight variations throughout. Tischer said he started doing these merely to build up his dexterity after a stroke. (Tischer did see Vega's studio, though. It was a small, blocked-off section of the Financial District apartment he shared with his wife and son.)

Deitch is hoping that a Vega exhibition like the one in Lyon will eventually come to the States. Whether Deitch himself will lead this charge is unclear, but his fall show at his gallery on Wooster Street (which has been closed since 2009 and is reopening this September) will feature Walter Robinson, an artist who also worked on a video for Suicide's song "Frankie Teardrop." (The video is in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art.)

Deitch called Vega "one of the great, radical cultural figures." He's had a wide-ranging impact on music, but in the art world, Deitch said, "It's not fully understood yet how important and radical his work is, and how essential it is in the contemporary artistic dialogue. I think it will become more and more important."

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Alan Vega - Life

Expos / art-contemporain

**Du Vendredi 17 avril 2015 au
samedi 13 juin 2015**

15h-19h

Entrepôt 9

9 boulevard de l'Europe 21800 Quetigny -



Contact : Téléphone : 0380662326 Email : contact@galerie-barnoud.com Url : <http://www.entrepot9.fr>

Présentation :

ONE+ONE, the art & rock event propose chaque année des rencontres entre plasticiens et musiciens pour une relecture de l'histoire de l'art via le rock'n'roll et ses ramifications. En 2015, la galerie Barnoud s'associe à nouveau à cet évènement et présente à Entrepôt 9 une exposition personnelle consacrée à Alan Vega, en collaboration avec la galerie Laurent Godin (Paris). Life : sous ce titre, choisi par Alan Vega, est proposé un ensemble de sculptures lumineuses et de portraits – visages anonymes dessinés à l'encre, au stylo bille et au crayon, représentations de boxeurs réalisées à partir de photographies d'écrans télévisés ou de coupures de journaux – ainsi qu'une vidéo. Lumière colorée des néons et des lampes, tracés sinueux et quasi sismiques des dessins et des câbles électriques au sol, figures ensanglantées des boxeurs, c'est sans doute aussi cela la vie.

Né à Brooklyn en 1938, Alan Vega est un acteur majeur de la scène artistique alternative new-yorkaise du début des années 70. Cofondateur avec Martin Rev du groupe de rock électronique Suicide, il mène parallèlement une activité de plasticien, dont les sculptures, collages, dessins et films sont imprégnés de l'esprit punk-rock et du mode de vie urbain

qui est le sien. Il réalise notamment des Light Sculptures, enchevêtrements baroques de néons et de lampes de couleurs, de câbles, d'objets divers ramassés dans la rue. Posées au sol, suspendues en chapelet ou vaguement accrochées au mur, démontées et recomposées différemment au gré des expositions, les premières sculptures lumineuses sont en quelque sorte des figurations du chaos et de la violence de la métropole américaine des années 70, alors au bord de la faillite, mais à l'activité créatrice intense, particulièrement dans la mouvance punk, opposée à l'establishment. Dès le début des années 80, Alan Vega donne à ses sculptures une forme plus structurée fondée sur la croix. À l'esthétique et au formaliste séduisants des artistes du Pop Art, actifs au même moment et au même endroit, il oppose un style libre, radical et violent, émanation sensible de la sous-culture dans laquelle il évolue et qu'il nomme « the romance of the underculture » (cité dans le catalogue de l'exposition Alan Vega, Infinite Mercy - Musée d'art contemporain de Lyon, 2009). Parmi les ingrédients essentiels de cette romance, il y a bien sûr le rock'n'roll, mais aussi le cinéma, les courses hippiques, la pornographie, la boxe ; autant d'éléments constitutifs d'une vaste iconographie, à la source d'une œuvre nerveuse et décidément sans concession.

Visuel : Alan Vega, Pineda, 1984-2001 – courtesy galerie Laurent Godin (Paris) – photo : Florian Bourgeois.

Suicide still bringing the noise: 'We can't predict the content, but who would want to?'

The veteran New York punk duo have survived a heart attack and a stroke, and are using their squalling classics as the springboard for further experimentation



Suicide: Martin Rev, left and Alan Vega. Photograph: Sarah Lee

Martin Longley

Tuesday 17 February 2015 12.00 GMT

“I’m still alive, still ticking over,” announces Alan Vega, the singer with Suicide, his long-running duo project with perverter-of-electronics Martin Rev. In 2012, Vega suffered a heart attack and a stroke, eventually undergoing surgery, which wasn’t initially thought to be viable. There have been a handful of Suicide gigs since his recovery: at Primavera Sound in Barcelona, David Lynch’s Silencio club in Paris, and the Station to Station happening-on-a-train in New York.

Back in 1977, when their eponymous debut album was released, Suicide stood alone on New York’s punk-dominated plane. Their disturbingly minimalist songs sounded distinctly antisocial, yet managed to marry elements of heavily obscured pop with deep slurries of noise. Vega was prone to intense spurts of fragmented vocalisation, dotted with sudden screams and mutterings, while Rev was intent on crafting repetitive keyboard pulses, shooting primitivist drum machine stutters underneath.

In the 45 years since their first performances, the pair’s sporadic, though persistent, reunions have produced a line of sound that has only gradually evolved, lately attaining an increasingly abstract, improvisational feel.

“We never really rehearse, because at our age it doesn’t really matter,” says Vega. “What we know, we know already. My ears are getting better, harmonically, with time, and my drawings are getting better with time; I don’t understand why.”

Even before teaming up with Rev, Vega was actively engaged with the art world, as a sculptor, painter and performance artist. He studied at Brooklyn College, and has operated this career in parallel with Suicide.

“Things have looked up - things are looking great, so far. If it doesn't work, fuck it anyway,” says Vega, who is looking forward to next month's rare NYC appearance, at Webster Hall (7 March).

“We move ahead with the way we're playing now,” says Rev. “Now, it's not a direct selection, but things will sound like aspects of the first album, although we're not re-playing it.”

“We very easily combine,” says Rev. “Wherever we are. We're not an arranged act. I have an idea, an outline, and Alan has an idea of what he's going to do. He has an array of words stored up and a lot of them come spontaneously. I can't predict the content, but who would want to?”

“I go with it, I love the idea of letting it become what it is, and seeing where it goes,” says Vega. “It's also OK when it goes elsewhere. Who knows, who cares?”

For a while, around the time of their 40th anniversary, Suicide shows had involved playing their debut album in full, but the current approach is set on using that source as a launching point for wilder digressions and developments, Vega spouting stream-of-consciousness lyrics or riffing on existing songs.

Rev's approach might not have altered too radically, but evolution comes with the steady changes he makes to his equipment, the details, the textures made possible by new effects units. It's easier now to instantly trigger sounds digitally, compared to his laborious processes in the old days.

“You bring your life with you,” says Rev. “The way you are in the present, what you've learned, what you know. But I'm always looking for the next cool instrument or pedal. I'm not using software, live, so not everything works for me; I don't need everything.”

Vega had hoped that their song Ghost Rider would be used in the movie adaptation of the Marvel comicbook of the same name, but was ultimately frustrated. “I really think that Dream Baby Dream is the national anthem of America, Bruce's [Springsteen] version,” Vega enthuses, taking that as consolation.

Although the pair first started performing together way back in 1970, it took seven years to produce their first recorded evidence. “We started like sculptors,” says Rev. “With a big piece of stone, pure clay, pure sound, big lumps of sound. We started from scratch, and then out of that we carved out the songs. After a year or two, we were playing the earliest, Ghost Rider, Cheree and Rocket USA. Also, when I was finally able to get a rhythm machine, that changed things a lot. I was able to delineate songs more clearly. The first year or two was a pure wall of sound.”

It's difficult to cite direct precedents for the extremity of Suicide's sound. There are submerged hints of rock'n'roll in the vocals, with Gene Vincent and Roy Orbison evoked,

while the electronics hark back to Terry Riley or Philip Glass, but Rev doesn't quite agree, and points out some surprisingly jazzy antecedents: "Not as much as [John] Coltrane and [Albert] Ayler. The free improvisation of New York was very vibrant." Another pair of strong contenders are the Velvet Underground's Sister Ray and 96 Tears, by ? & The Mysterians, the latter of which Suicide have actually covered.

When they emerged Vega and Rev felt that rock'n'roll was still very much an unexplored area, ripe for introducing attitudes from other musical zones. Rev recalls: "When Alan saw Iggy [Pop] in New York, he said that he would now have to perform to be an artist, and he could not be an artist anymore unless he went in that direction."

Next month, Vega will be particularly busy, as the Suicide gig falls right in the middle of New York art fair the Armory Show, where he will be exhibiting artwork. Some of his pieces will be from the 1970s, but there is also a large amount of more recent work, including his series of box paintings, and his latest portraits of imaginary faces. Perhaps one of these could be Frankie Teardrop?

Drawing Now, retour au Temple

Pour sa 8^e édition, le Salon du dessin contemporain revient au Carreau du Temple, où il s'était déjà tenu en 2009, et ouvre un deuxième espace dédié aux jeunes galeries

La marge était étroite entre la fin des travaux de rénovation et l'inauguration de la 8^e édition de Drawing Now Paris, le Salon du dessin contemporain, au Carreau du Temple. La commission de sécurité a donné son feu vert dans les temps pour la réouverture du lieu au public après quatre années de fermeture. « Nous n'avons pas été trop inquiets, affirme Christine Phal, la présidente fondatrice de la manifestation. Et puis comme nous avons l'habitude d'investir des lieux dans un cadre événementiel, ce type de situation est fréquent. » C'est dans ce même Carreau que s'était tenu Drawing Now en mars 2009, juste avant que cet ancien marché couvert du 3^e arrondissement de Paris, construit en 1863, ne baisse le rideau pour être entièrement refait. Le Salon du dessin en aura donc fait la fer-

meture et l'ouverture. S'il s'était installé là en catastrophe en 2009 et grâce au maire du 3^e, Pierre Aidenbaum, c'était parce qu'il n'avait pas obtenu, à l'époque, l'autorisation de la commission de sécurité pour se tenir dans les tout nouveaux « Docks en Seine, Cité de la Mode et du design », situés quai d'Austerlitz. Entre ces deux dates, 2009 et 2014, la manifestation a fait salon au Carrousel du Louvre.

« Le Carrousel du Louvre nous a permis d'inscrire le salon sur un plan international (Christine Phal)

Créé en 2007 à l'initiative de la galeriste Christine Phal et du critique d'art Laurent Boudier en tant que directeur artistique, le salon, qui ne s'appelait pas « Drawing Now » à l'époque (ce

nouvel intitulé date de 2010), mais tout simplement « Salon du dessin contemporain », va en effet d'abord inaugurer sa première édition avenue d'Éléna (Paris 16^e), dans un hôtel particulier, ancien siège de la Fédération française de football. L'année suivante il déménage rue du Général-Foix (Paris 8^e), dans un immeuble qui venait d'être entièrement réhabilité. En 2009, la 3^e édition mise sur le Carreau et en 2010, la 4^e atterrit au Carrousel, avec Philippe Pigué comme copilote artistique (succédant à Laurent Boudier) et Carine Tissot, directrice nommée, elle, fin 2009.

Alors pourquoi avoir cette année quitté le Louvre pour revenir au Temple ? « Nous avions envie d'insérer le dessin dans la ville, indique Christine Phal. Par son prestige, le Carrousel du Louvre nous a permis d'inscrire le salon sur un plan international, de lui donner cette dimension-là, essentielle aujourd'hui, aussi bien pour les galeries que pour le public, les institutions. Nous avons ainsi augmenté notre participation de galeries étrangères qui atteint aujourd'hui 40 %. Mais il fallait faire

DRAWING NOW PARIS, du mercredi 26 mars au dimanche 30 mars, Carreau du Temple, 4, rue Eugène-Spuler, 75003 Paris ; Espace Communes, 17, rue Communes, 75003 Paris, tél. 01 45 38 51 15, www.drawingnowparis.com, mercredi, jeudi et samedi 11h-20h, vendredi 11h-22h, dimanche 11h-19h. À noter également, du 28 au 30 mars, la tenue de la 2^e édition de D Dessin à l'Atelier Richelieu, 60, rue de Richelieu, 75002 Paris, www.ddessinparis.com

rayonner le dessin contemporain de façon la plus large possible. » Et de fait, le Carrousel est assez enterré, confiné, bas de plafond.

« Fresh », plateforme pour les jeunes galeries

En prenant le Carreau comme vaisseau amiral, Drawing Now, qui avait besoin de plus de superficie qu'il n'en offre (3 000 m² sur deux niveaux), a été obligé de faire des petits cette année et a investi un deuxième site, l'Espace Communes, pour une plateforme



Alan Vega, *Untitled 29*, 2008, stylo-bille sur papier, 21 x 15 cm. Courtesy galerie Laurent Gadin, Paris

AUTRE

GHOST RIDER MOTORCYCLE HERO: AN INTERVIEW WITH ALAN VEGA

February 23, 2015



When Alan Vega first heard Bruce Springsteen's album *Nebraska*, he was convinced that the song "State Trooper" was a long lost Suicide song that he had forgotten about. The song was not a lost Suicide track – it was one of Springsteen's own, but an obvious homage nonetheless.

That's how powerful Suicide's influence was and still is – a band created by two nice Jewish boys from Brooklyn. Black clad and with a **lethally high-voltage sound**, Suicide has had a profound influence on bands like Joy Division and The Jesus and Mary

Chain – amongst countless others. But what many people don't know is that Suicide provided a strange and pulsating soundtrack for a major change in American culture: art was being stripped to a bare minimalism of shapes and primary colors, and music was being peeled away to reveal simple digitized rhythms, computerized static and monotone vocals. Alan Vega – the front man of Suicide – was one of the **first people to use the word 'punk'** to describe their music. Today, Vega, and his band Suicide, is considered the missing link in the lineage between rock n' roll and what would become known as punk, electro-punk, no wave, new wave and early industrial music. Before listening to Nine Inch Nails, start with Suicide.

Many people also don't know that Alan Vega is also an established visual artist - art is actually his first passion. In fact, he studied under abstract expressionist turned minimalist artist Ad Reinhardt – an artist who was famous for his black on black painting that he deemed would be the last paintings anyone could ever paint. Vega would seemingly become a physical and creative manifestation of those "last paintings." Experimenting with bare materials and items found in the barren and depressed landscape that was New York in the 1970s, Vega would create unique light sculptures that resembled Christmas ornamented crucifixes; **a pastiche of a dystopian consumerist American culture.**

In a new solo show at Invisible Exports – the first show devoted entirely to new work since 1983 – Vega presents a few of his iconic light sculptures and a series of semi-autobiographical portraits that are much more personal than his three-dimensional work. We were fortunate enough to speak with Alan Vega on the eve of the opening of this exhibition – entitled *Welcome to Wyoming*. In the following interview, Vega talks about Suicide, his current show at Invisible-Exports and how age brings wisdom and the general notion of not giving a fuck anymore what

people think.

What was your earliest introduction to art – when was your introduction?

It must have been in the late sixties – I started making art and that soon turned into music. But I was always into music, anyhow. I was always doing music while I was making art. But I wasn't doing it as a career or anything. Not even when I started Suicide. To me, we were doing art.

**"EVERYTHING. EVERYTHING
WAS CHANGING.**

**AND IT WAS GREAT. AT TIMES,
IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE**

**TO KNOW WHAT THE HELL
WAS GOING ON."**

Who were some of your earliest artistic influences?

I was influenced by Ad Reinhardt, and also some of the early surrealists. And Picasso – I used to hear all these stories about Picasso that were really wild. But Ad [Ad Reinhardt] was my generation, and as far as I'm concerned [his work] was the end of painting. It was black on black and almost no color.

And that was sort of the birth of minimalism, right – at the end of the 50s?

Yeah, it was. It was the beginning of the end. I didn't know where to go from there at the time. It was like, 'Oh shit, what do we do now?'

But that stripped down minimalism must have had a huge effect on your band, Suicide?

Yeah, it did. It was a time of minimalism – in art, in music. And Ad really started that beginning – to the end.

Well, that whole era was a time of change – the end

of the fifties and early sixties – everything seemed to be changing at that point in history.

Everything. Everything was changing. And it was great. At times, it was impossible to know what the hell was going on. But seeing Ad [Reinhardt] was enough – I remember seeing his paintings for the first time and I was like, ‘Holy shit.’ I knew Ad very well – he was a very shy guy, but he was also really funny. But just to see his paintings was really a treat itself.

I want to talk about Iggy Pop for a second, because he has also had a major influence on you as well – mainly as a musician and performer, right?

Yeah, well, Iggy was a major influence. The first time I saw Iggy was in 1969 at the World’s Fair in New York City and MC5 was the headliner. And they [MC5] tried very hard to outdo Iggy, but they could not outdo Iggy – no one could outdo Iggy. And it was twenty minutes of Hell. All his jumping on stage. He was all bloodied. I remember bringing two or three people with me and all their mouths were dropped.

So, how did you come up with the name Suicide?

[laughs] We all laughed at first when we first thought of it. We would try to come up with names for days and each time we thought of Suicide, we would

laugh. And then one day Marty [Martin Rev] decided let's just keep the name, because that was really the band: SUICIDE – and it was. Suicide sort of summed up the world we lived in: Nixon, the bombings, and the war, and what the hell! People thought we were describing our own suicide, but it was the only appropriate name.

**"IT GREETED HELL FOR ME,
BECAUSE**

**EVERYONE THAT SAW IT WAS,
LIKE 'HOLY SHIT.'**

THEY TRIED TO KILL ME."

Well, it's one of the greatest band names, probably ever...

It probably is one of the greatest names of all time. Everyday, you read the newspaper and you feel like you are getting closer and closer to suicide [laughs].

And you used to walk around with a jacket that read Suicide, right?

Yeah, it said Suicide on the back. It greeted hell for me, because everyone that saw it was, like 'Holy shit.' They tried to kill me. They threw things at me. It was just a jacket! I took hell. In fact, I took hell for the first ten to fifteen years of Suicide.

Yeah, I mean people probably hadn't seen anything like that before. Can you describe one of your craziest experiences?

Oh god, there are so many of them. It's hard, because we were younger. We also went out with a different energy than we do now. We were insane. Or we were acting insane. Or maybe we were insane! Every night was different. Really, because we never knew what to do – we never knew how to start. Sometimes it started right off the bat and sometimes there was silence. Waiting for a sound.

For something....



So, when do you think that people started really appreciating the sound?

Well, we started getting appreciation in the United Kingdom in the early 80s. I remember there was a show in Edinburgh at the Glass Door and we expected all kinds of hell – I remember they had a big disco ball, but it was completely dark while we played four numbers or so. Then I told Marty to watch out – “expect it from all angles.” But then the lights came on and people were dancing! So it started then – then people were against the walls and they started following us. They really loved Suicide.

What about some of your peers – I mean there were other bands in New York making very avant-garde music, like Television and a number of other bands. How did they perceive your music?

I liked the guys from Television, but they were more rock n’ roll. But I liked the guys. I knew the drummer – he was very friendly with me. The lead singer was a very quiet guy and he didn’t really talk to anybody. But compared to Suicide, they were more commercial.

Speaking of commercial, Bruce Springsteen has said that you guys have been a major, major

influence, right?

Bruce – I became very friendly with him. He was in the same studio we were in – in about 1981 or 1982. We had a lot of laughs together, me and Bruce. But when I first heard that album [Nebraska] I thought: Did I write a song that I don't remember now? There was a song on there that I thought was a Suicide song, but no, it was Bruce Springsteen. But I like Bruce and I always liked his music.

So, I wanted to talk about your upcoming show at Invisible-Exports. Can you tell us a little bit about Welcome to Wyoming?

I've always wanted to go to Wyoming all my life and I want to go before I die, and see the horses. So I was working on these drawings and the show came up, so I decided to call it *Welcome to Wyoming*.



And this is your first show devoted to new work in multiple years – what prompted you to show your work again?

Well, I love the gallery and the two people that run the gallery, they really know me.

And a majority of the work in this show is portraits – are they self-portraits?

They are portraits, but they are not really self-portraits. I've been doing these drawings since I was a kid. I would do them on the Bowery – these

portraits of old people. But in a way they are self-portraits. And I don't use any models or anything like that – I just draw. I've been doing it all my life. I did it before Suicide stuff. In this show, there are a bunch of drawings of these guys.

And I heard that you like to draw while under the influence?

I did, but....

Not anymore?

Yeah, I did, but now the doctors have got me staying away. But I've been focused – I've been doing shows. Suicide has been better than ever. And I have new music that I've been working on. It's the blues, which is something that I've always wanted to do.

"AGE IS A HELL OF A THING.

**MAYBE IT'S THE IDEA OF
RUNNING OUT OF TIME –**

**KNOWING THAT I COULD GO
AT ANY DAY."**

You've always wanted to make blues music or play the blues?

Yeah, I was only going to do one song...maybe two... but it turned into a volume of ten songs...and everything is live from the top of my head. I just heard a few tracks and it sounds really good. As I get older, everything is better. Drawing is better. Singing is better. So, I don't know...I don't know what's happened. After forty years, maybe I finally know what the hell I'm doing. And the album is going to come out soon.

Do you think wisdom comes from age?

Yeah, I do. Yeah, there is a lot of shit that comes with youth. Horrendous fuck-ups. Which is great – I really

love fuck-ups. But working through that is a good thing. But after forty years – forty-five years – of busting my hump...now I don't give a shit. I just do what I want to do. Age is a hell of a thing. Maybe it's the idea of running out of time – knowing that I could go at any day.

Well, I hope for more albums and music and more of everything...

I hope so too! But I'm going through a re-birth. I'm already thinking of the next show and I am hoping for good things for it. I have a lot of ideas for it and now I don't want to die. Whereas before, I was like, 'The hell with it.' Now I feel like I could live a little longer. Now, I can keep making my art, but all my friends are starting to reach that age...

But you can't really retire from art, right?

You never retire from it. I get calls all the time – people asking why don't I quit or retire. But why the hell would I want to quit? How do you stop art or music? You don't...you do it forever and that's what I want to do and I love it.

Alan Vega 'Welcome to Wyoming' is on view now until March 29, 2015 at [Invisible-Exports](#) in New York. [Click here](#) to see photos from the opening. Text and interview by Oliver Maxwell Kupper. Follow Autre on Instagram: [@AUTREMAGAZINE](#)



TOP PICKS: THE ARMORY SHOW 2015

MAR 6, 2015

by KATY DIAMOND HAMER

This winter while New York City [snowbirds](#) are migrating south, flocks of art lovers are migrating to Manhattan's westside and Pier's 92 and 94 for New York's biggest art fair. Founded in 1994 by dealers Colin de Land, Pat Hearn, Matthew Marks, and Paul Morris and renamed [The Armory Show](#) in 1999, a record number of visitors are attracted each year along with galleries in both contemporary and modern art. As always contemporary art housed in Pier 94 with 143 exhibitors separated into four sections including: Contemporary, Armory Presents (solo and two-person projects by galleries less than ten years old), Not-for-Profit (museums, arts organizations and not-for-profit galleries), and Armory Focus (a curated section with a global cultural focus). This year Armory Focus is on the Middle East, North Africa, and the Mediterranean (MENAM) regions. Selected by [Omar Kholeif](#), Curator at the Whitechapel Gallery in London and cultural partner [Edge of Arabia](#) and Education Partner [Art Jameel](#), MENAM consists of fifteen booths, some with solo projects, others presenting multiple artists.

As always, the VIP opening found a flurry of collectors and artists alike scurrying through the long art-filled corridors looking to hand out that next business card, or make a deal on a piece they've been eyeing. One of the best parts of The Armory Show is seeing an artwork by an old favorite or discovering something by an artist new to the scene or just on your personal radar. Celebrities come out and actually do a great job of blending in (talking to you [Mike Myers](#)) and each year the gallery roster changes. Below are Top Fifteen Picks for 2015 as selected by Katy Diamond Hamer, in no particular order. Will you brave the cold?

ALAN VEGA

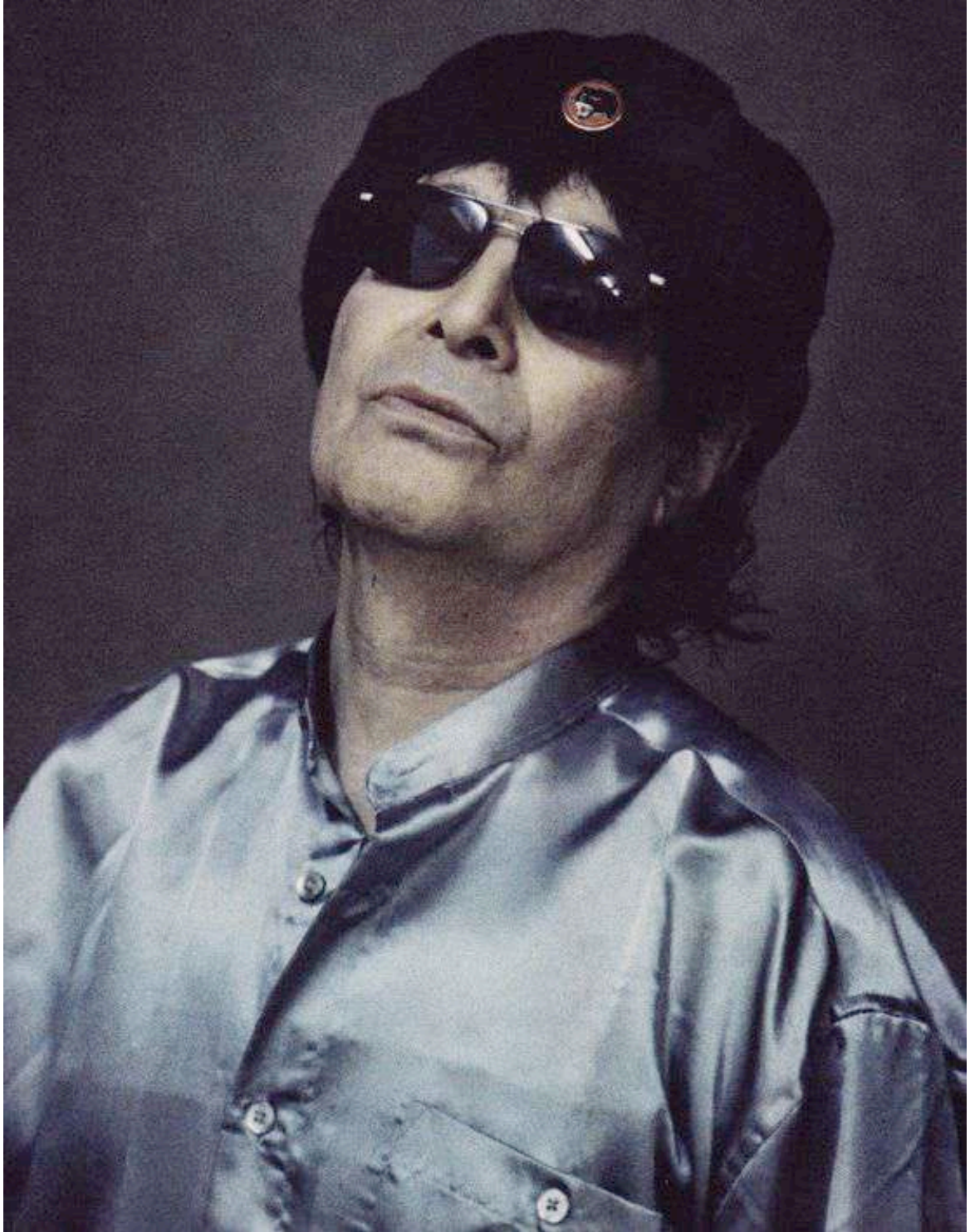
[Galerie Laurent Godin, Paris](#)



Alan Vega, Rouge, 2014, Mixed media, Galerie Laurent Godin, Paris, Photograph by Katy Hamer, The Armory Show, 2015



Before ascending to the pantheon of music legend as the lead singer of the seminal New York protopunk band Suicide, Alan Vega (born Boruch Alan Bermowitz of Bensonhurst) was a hustling young artist on the spear tip of the city's art scene, studying under Ad Reinhardt at Brooklyn College and then joining the radical Art Workers' Coalition—alongside Hans Haacke, Carl Andre, and *Avalanche* founders Liza Bear and Willoughby Sharp—that pressured museums to show more work by women and minorities. His own art was very much in the angry spirit of the times, mostly messy yet precise sculptures out of junked materials to fixate on themes of aggression (boxers and Nazis are recurring themes) and sex. Made three years before Suicide's first album was released, this piece pays to the ultimate protopunk artist, Vincent van Gogh, with a crucifix-shaped tangle of electric detritus that glows in the rapturous yellows of the Dutch painter's sunflowers. It has all the crunching economy of a Suicide song, a few of which Vega—who in recent years has shown at MoMA PS1 and Invisible Exports—played the Saturday of the fair at Webster Hall.



ELECTRIC SUICIDE

ALAN VEGA INTERVIEWÉ PAR JÉRÔME SANS

Alan Vega, pionnier du rock électronique minimaliste, fondateur avec Martin Rev – au début des années 1970 – du groupe mythique Suicide, est avant tout un artiste plasticien, actif sur la scène new-yorkaise depuis la fin des années 1960. Entre sculptures et dessins électriques, son univers obsessionnel réinvente un vocabulaire très sonore, un journal construit à la lumière des jours et des nuits. Le Project of Living Artists (projet des artistes vivants), qu'il cofonda en 1968 dans un loft à Manhattan, fut l'un des premiers lieux alternatifs new-yorkais. Il revient ici sur ses débuts et son rapport à l'art.

Jérôme Sans : Avant de faire de la musique dans les années 1960, vous avez commencé par la peinture. Pourquoi ?

Alan Vega : J'ai suivi les cours de la City University of New York à Brooklyn (Cuny). Etudiant, on a tendance à explorer tous les supports, mais je me suis d'abord concentré sur la peinture. J'aimais l'art abstrait, mais j'appréciais aussi la réalisation de portraits de SDF – à l'époque on disait des clochards. A la fin de mes études, pour gagner ma vie, j'ai commencé à faire des portraits sur commande. Mais je n'ai jamais cessé de dessiner des inconnus – des hommes désespérés, à la rue. Je ne sais pas pourquoi mais je m'identifiais à eux, étant donné que je suis le "Roi des clochards".

Vos études d'art étaient-elles importantes pour vous ?

J'ai eu d'excellents professeurs. C'étaient de grands artistes à part entière, ils étaient une véritable source d'inspiration. Mais par

pièce, que la couleur du tableau changeait, passant d'un violet marron à un violet bleuté... Etant donné qu'il n'y avait qu'un seul éclairage – issu du plafond – j'avais peu de contrôle sur la perception que l'on pouvait avoir de la teinte du tableau. Cela me déplaisait car je voulais réaliser un monochrome. Soudain, j'ai eu une illumination ! Pourquoi ne pas déplacer la source d'éclairage en l'orientant directement sur le tableau, seule manière de maîtriser la lumière... C'est ainsi que je suis devenu artiste de la lumière. J'ai tout d'abord dirigé une seule lumière sur le tableau, puis plusieurs, et un jour j'ai supprimé le tableau de cette composition, pour ne conserver que des sculptures de lumière. La lumière pour la lumière.

Avez-vous exposé ces pièces à l'époque ?

Pas immédiatement, ce n'est que quelques années plus tard, dans le cadre d'une exposition collective au Project of Living

avec tout ce qui me tombait sous la main. Project of Living Artists m'a ensuite procuré un lieu pour créer, c'est là que j'ai rencontré Marty Rev, ensemble nous avons formé le groupe Suicide. Marty, issu de l'univers du jazz avec sa formation Reverend B, avait fait le tour de ce genre musical. Quant à moi, je ressentais le besoin d'étendre ma palette créative, de m'orienter vers un domaine qui puisse relever de la performance. Pour des raisons différentes, nous avions donc besoin l'un de l'autre : c'est ainsi qu'a commencé Suicide. La suite appartient à l'histoire.

Pourquoi avez-vous intitulé votre groupe Suicide ? Pour tuer quelque chose en vous ?

Nous cherchions un nom de groupe et avons pensé à Ghost Rider, un personnage de bande dessinée (récemment adapté au cinéma avec Nicolas Cage). C'était mon personnage favori à cette époque, où je lisais beaucoup d'albums de BD. L'une des histoires s'intitulait *Saint Suicidé* et, après réflexion, nous avons choisi

"LE MOT SUICIDE N'ÉVOQUE PAS UNIQUEMENT LA MORT, MAIS SE RAPPORTE À LA VIE."

ailleurs, cela me posait problème, car j'étais tellement influencé par leur travail qu'à l'issue de mes études, j'ai eu des difficultés à trouver ma propre voix. Parallèlement, pour m'amuser, je jouais de la musique électronique – sans imaginer que j'allais en faire carrière.

Qui étaient ces professeurs ?

Ad Reinhardt a eu une influence considérable sur moi, avec ses tableaux noir sur noir. Kurt Seligman, l'un des surréalistes historiques était également présent. Et d'autres grandes figures comme Burgoyne Diller, peintre magistral, et Jimmy Ernst, le fils de Max Ernst. C'était une opportunité extraordinaire pour moi de pouvoir bénéficier de l'enseignement de tels maîtres. A l'époque c'était presque déstabilisant, car ce brillant aréopage nous fournissait une telle mine d'informations qu'il était difficile de tout absorber... Il m'arrivait de me demander si j'étais à ma place parmi eux.

Comment avez-vous eu l'idée des sculptures de lumière ?

Alors que je travaillais depuis plusieurs semaines sur une très grande toile devenue progressivement monochrome violet, j'ai remarqué, lors de mes déplacements dans la

Artists. J'avais alors quatre ou cinq expositions personnelles avec Ivan Karp à la galerie OK Harris de Soho, depuis le début des années 1970.

Parlez-nous du Project of Living Artists, cette galerie ouverte 24 heures sur 24.

Nous nous étions regroupés à six pour demander une bourse pour artistes au gouvernement de l'Etat de New York. Nous l'avons obtenue et consacrée à la création de l'espace "Project of Living Artists". Ce n'était pas une galerie classique mais un lieu ouvert 24 heures sur 24, où chacun pouvait s'adonner à toute forme de création. A tour de rôle, nous assurions une présence et la maintenance du lieu. Nous recevions un petit salaire, et étant alors sans domicile fixe, j'ai habité le lieu pendant un certain temps.

Project of Living Artists s'apparentait-il à la Factory, un endroit où tout pouvait arriver ?

C'était effectivement un peu comme la Factory de Warhol. Il y avait des gens complètement dingues, cela générait parfois des situations difficiles.

Pensiez-vous alors à faire de la musique ?

A partir de la fin des années 1960, j'ai pratiqué assidument la musique électronique,

d'appeler le groupe Suicide, car le mot revêt plusieurs sens. Il n'évoque pas uniquement la mort, mais se rapporte à la vie, à l'idée de modifier son existence. C'étaient des années difficiles avec la guerre du Vietnam et New York, notre ville bien-aimée, traversait une crise grave. J'avais coutume de dire, en citant Dickens : *"c'était le meilleur et le pire des temps"*. Et pourtant, nous nous amusions beaucoup : nous disposions de ce formidable espace où nous faisons de l'art et de la musique. J'exposais avec Ivan Karp, mes expositions étaient appréciées, mais je vendais très peu. Je me sentais richissime en termes de créativité, mais je vivais dans un quasi-dénuement.

Vous êtes l'un des précurseurs de la musique électronique ? Comment avez-vous découvert ce genre musical ?

Nous avons été le premier groupe rock à utiliser une boîte à rythme. Marty et moi savions que le style rock'n'roll des années 1960 était dépassé, nous pensions que le moment était venu de changer de direction. A notre premier concert nous avions un guitariste, Paul, qui était aussi peintre et sculpteur, et ne jouait vraiment pas de façon traditionnelle, il était plutôt du genre à faire du bruit avec sa guitare. Il a quitté le groupe



à l'issu du deuxième concert, et nous nous sommes retrouvés à deux, sans guitare ni batterie. Nous avons utilisé une boîte à rythme et là, nous avons réalisé que nous avions trouvé notre son.

Mais pendant ces années, vous avez continué à faire de l'art ?

Oui, l'art me maintient en vie. J'ai toujours des œuvres à différents états d'avancement autour de moi. Lorsque l'on me sollicite pour une exposition, je me concentre et je finalise les pièces. J'aime mener plusieurs projets en même temps – musique, art.

"DANS MA MUSIQUE, CHAQUE CHANSON EST AUTONOME."

écriture. Je me remets à la photographie. J'ai réfléchi au concept de photographie de la lumière, mais je n'ai pas encore trouvé la technologie adéquate, je procède par tâtonnements pour matérialiser mon idée. Mais, entre la musique, l'art, et l'éducation de mon fils, il est difficile de tout mener de front.

Il y a quelques jours, vous m'expliquez que les portraits que vous faites le soir sont l'élément récurrent dans votre pratique.

Je fais des portraits de façon continue, ils jouent un rôle thérapeutique. Je dois en avoir des centaines autour de moi. J'écris également tous les jours, j'ai des piles de carnets, j'y note mes pensées j'y fais des gribouillages, et j'y puise l'inspiration pour les textes de chansons. Et quand je n'arrive pas à composer ou à écrire, je dessine des visages. J'adore les visages. Cela me détend et m'aide à revenir à l'écriture. Parfois, je suis tellement absorbé par les portraits que je ne reviens pas à l'écriture. C'est ainsi que les choses se passent.

Ces dessins sont un peu comme un journal intime ?

Absolument. Quand je les feuillette, je me dis qu'ils reflètent l'état dans lequel je me trouvais cette nuit-là, même s'ils présentent une cohérence stylistique au long des années. Au début, le trait était un peu rigide, et au fil du temps il s'est assoupli. A l'école d'art, nous avions obligation d'étudier l'anatomie, nous dessinions beaucoup de nus. En un sens, j'ai une formation académique dans le domaine du dessin.

Selon moi, vos dessins ne sont pas classiques, ils sont presque électriques. Qu'en pensez-vous ?

Il est tellement difficile de se défaire d'une formation traditionnelle, de trouver son propre style. J'ai été très classique dans mon approche, tel un mathématicien qui résonne par équations, et il m'a fallu du temps pour me libérer de cela. A un moment donné, en regardant mes dessins je me suis fait la réflexion suivante : "Si je trace ces lignes, mes dessins pourraient être des fils électriques". Les sculptures ont contribué à affranchir mon trait, mes dessins sont devenus plus électriques, le courant crée le mouvement des lignes. Les fils de fer de mes sculptures sont comme des petits dessins, des lignes tracées au crayon ou à l'encre. Ils semblent peut-être abstraits, mais ils m'ont permis de libérer mon dessin. J'ai besoin de ces fils de fer pour réaliser des choses complètement folles. Quand je travaille sur une pièce, je ne pense pas à la manière dont le fil de fer va affecter la réalisation. Il me faut une telle quantité de fil de fer pour stabiliser les lignes sur les sculptures que j'en arrive parfois à des formes complètement délirantes. Une fois la pièce achevée, je m'aperçois que le fil de fer crée quelque chose. Quant à l'ombre de la sculpture, c'est encore une autre histoire...

Avez vous déjà envisagé de construire des décors pour vos concerts, de mélanger l'art et la musique ?

Je pense que mes sculptures n'ont jamais été pleinement mises en scène dans une exposition. Il me semble que chaque pièce doit bénéficier de son propre espace et de son éclairage. Peut-être dans un lieu doté de cloisons, pour maîtriser la lumière que crée chaque pièce. Dans ma musique, chaque chanson est autonome et conçue de manière distincte, quelle que soit sa cohérence avec l'album entier. J'aimerais parvenir à cela avec mes sculptures, et c'est principalement une question d'éclairage. Lorsque je travaille sur une pièce, je m'installe dans une salle obscure, pour créer les ombres et maîtriser leur orientation. Dans les galeries et les musées, les œuvres sont placées les unes à côté des autres, chacune étant affectée par l'éclairage de l'autre. De ce fait, elles perdent en qualité de lumière et en spiritualité. Je rêve de pouvoir attribuer une salle à chaque œuvre afin de mettre en évidence l'aura qui s'en dégage.

Avez vous déjà pensé à relier vos performances musicales sur scène à votre pratique de plasticien ?

Il m'est arrivé de faire des associations de sculpture, de musique et de performances. La dernière fois, c'était il y a quelques années à Haarlem aux Pays-Bas. J'ai réalisé une sculpture de lumière suspendue à la charpente d'une église, semblable à une crucifixion. Des centaines de petites ampoules stroboscopiques réglées à différentes vitesses étaient suspendues au plafond et placées sur le sol, tandis qu'un mécanisme soufflait de la fumée dans la lumière. La performance avait lieu au coucher du soleil, et le plafond était constellé de lumières. Quand j'ai eu fini la mise en place des éclairages le matin, l'équipe a couvert le plafond de bâches et de ruban adhésif et a suspendu des rideaux noirs autour de l'œuvre, pour l'identifier à une tente inscrite dans la performance. A plusieurs endroits, le rideau baillait, laissant filtrer la lumière qui se dissipait à mesure que le ciel s'assombrissait. Liz, Dante et moi avons réalisé une performance délirante à partir de morceaux sur lesquels nous travaillions à l'époque. Nous avons joué à l'aide d'un radio-cassette, avec un minimum d'amplification sur la voix. Les visiteurs se sont placés autour de nous, la sculpture est alors devenue une sorte de feu de camp sur Pluton.

Que pensez-vous de la musique d'aujourd'hui ?

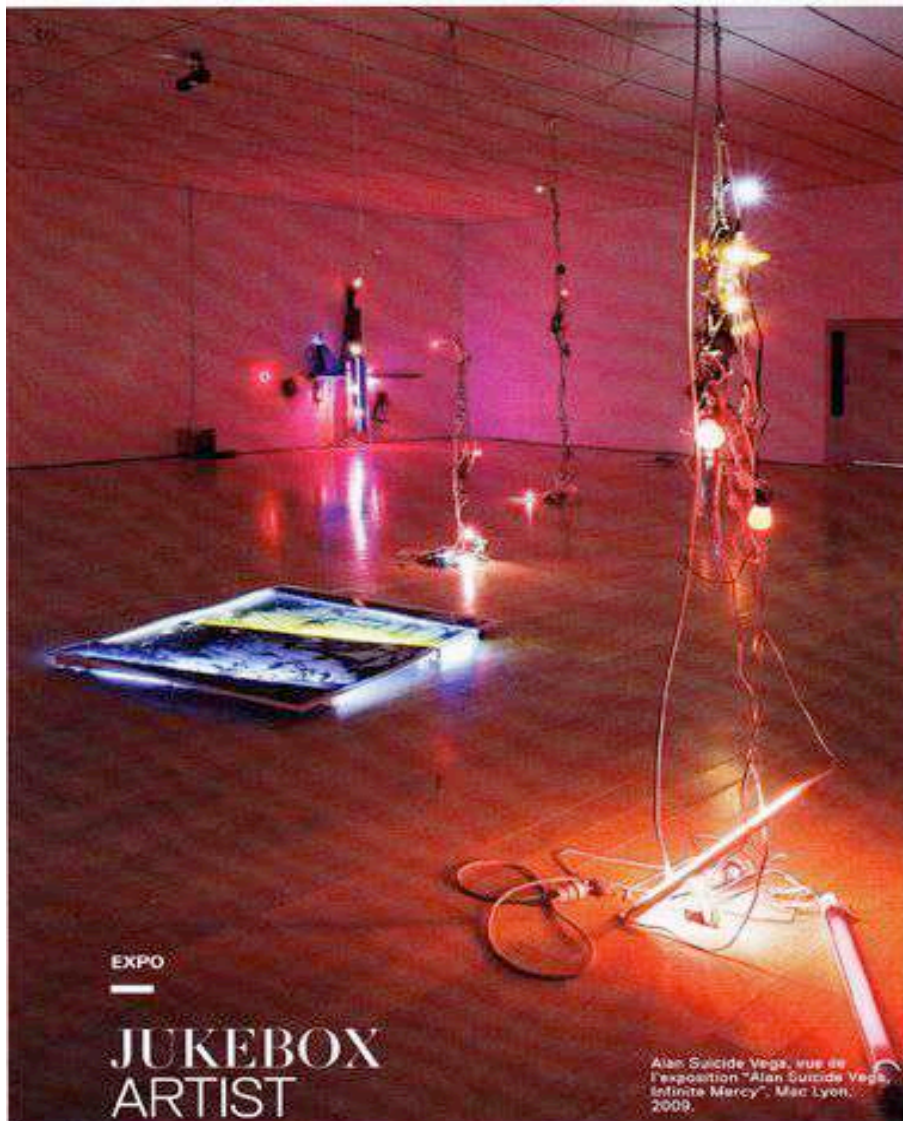
Il y a toujours un truc un peu fou qui me plaît, mais rien d'autre. Le son actuel n'est pas nouveau. Parfois j'entends tout de même quelque chose qui attire mon attention, comme à l'arrivée du rap. Mais je ne peux pas dire que j'écoute beaucoup ce que font les autres ces temps-ci. Il faut dire que je suis occupé à ma propre musique, et aux collaborations avec différents musiciens. Faire de la musique c'est fondamental, ce qui ne laisse pas beaucoup de disponibilité pour écouter la musique d'autrui. En général, je ne trouve pas leur son assez fort. J'aime la musique puissante.

Extrait d'un texte paru dans *It's not Only Rock 'n' Roll, Baby!* Boom Publishers, Bozar, Bruxelles, 2008.

À VOIR Alan Suicide Vega, "Holy Shit", du 19 octobre au 24 novembre Galerie Laurent Godin, 5, rue du genier Saint-Lazare, Paris 3^e. T +33 1 42 71 10 66, www.laurentgodin.com

À ÉCOUTER Vega/Hurtado, Gaité lyrique, 19 oct., 20h, 3 bis, rue Papin, Paris 3^e. T +33 1 53 01 52 00.





EXPO

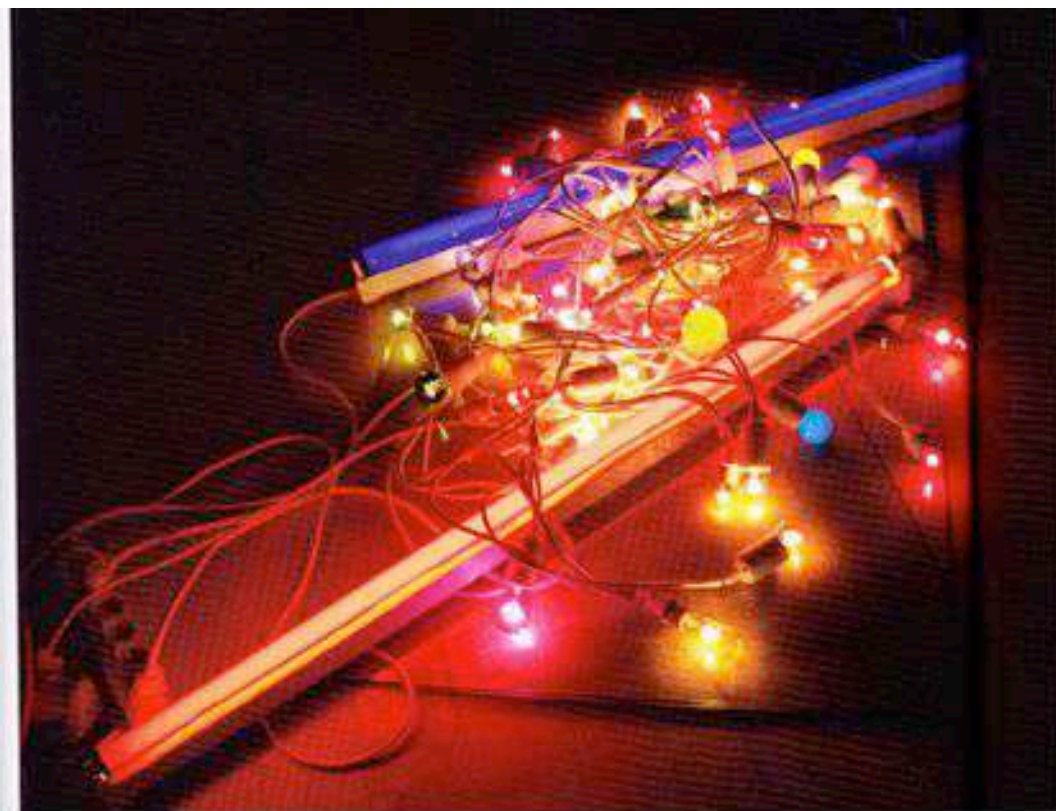
JUKEBOX ARTIST

Alan Suicide Vega, vue de l'exposition "Alan Suicide Vega, Infinite Mercy", Mac Lyon, 2009.

En 1981, Alan Bermowitz alias **Alan Suicide Vega** fait pour la première fois résonner un son new wave rageur aux influences punk et électronique. Depuis, il continue d'arpenter la scène musicale. Alan Suicide Vega n'a jamais cessé de cultiver une âme d'artiste. D'artiste maudit, bien sûr. Son exposition "**Holy Shit**" dévoile des croix et des écrans incrustés d'ampoules multicolores, comme tombées du sapin d'un Noël dangereusement abîmé. Tout en faux-semblants comme son créateur : jusqu'à l'annonce de son 70^e anniversaire en 2008, tout le monde le croyait dix ans plus jeune. Le rock, ça conserve. **www**

"Holy Shit" de Alan Suicide Vega. Galerie Laurent Gaudin, 15, rue du Grenier-Saint-Lazare, Paris 1^{er}, du 19 octobre au 29 novembre 2012. www.laurentgaudin.com. En concert avec Marie Perle à la Gaîté lyrique le 19 octobre.





né en 1938, États-Unis

Alan Suicide Vega

Si quelque chose d'électrique est à l'œuvre dans le travail d'Alan Suicide Vega, ce n'est pas seulement du fait que ses sculptures sont constituées à base de néons, mais parce qu'il est tout en même temps chanteur de rock et artiste plasticien. Entre groupe de musique façon Velvet Underground, pop art et art minimal, ses installations, où lumières, fils, câbles, lampes, dessins et photos accaparent l'espace du sol au plafond, ouvrent sur un monde à part, coloré, radieux et envoûtant. *P.P. P.*

→ Galerie Laurent Godin (stand 0.A07)



Vega le mutant

Quand il n'est pas sur scène, **Alan Vega** se consacre à son amour premier, la sculpture. Le New-Yorkais expose et joue à Paris.

Je commence à me dire qu'on a dû faire quelque chose de révolutionnaire à un moment donné. On nous détestait dans les années 70. J'aimais bien qu'on nous haïsse. Aujourd'hui, peu importe ce que je fais, les gens adorent", lâchait Alan Vega après le festival Primavera de Barcelone, en 2011. L'Américain venait d'effectuer un retour acclamé avec Suicide, son duo formé avec Martin Rev, effectivement l'un des groupes les plus détestés de la scène new-yorkaise des 70's. À l'époque, Vega ne se laissait pas faire. Sa plus grande arme : son protopunk électronique, agressif, sombre, lugubre, minimaliste, expérimental et profondément radical.

Diplômé en art du **Brooklyn College**, élève d'Ad Reinhardt, le New-Yorkais a pourtant commencé loin des claviers sauvages et des performances scéniques agressives. Gérant d'une galerie d'art de Manhattan, Vega se tourne très vite vers les sculptures construites à base d'éclairages électriques, d'ampoules, de guirlandes et de câbles. Si la lumière apparaît dans la noirceur de son travail musical, ses sculptures suivent les mêmes

principes : les installations de Vega inquiètent, fascinent et semblent toujours sur le fil, à l'instar de cette croix où se tiennent côte à côte le Christ et Mohamed Ali.

Célébré en 2009 lors de la rétrospective *Infinite Mercy* au musée d'Art contemporain de Lyon, l'Américain revient ce mois-ci en France avec l'exposition *Holy Shit* à la galerie Laurent Godin et deux concerts en solo, l'un dans le cadre de la Fiac, l'autre à la Gaité Lyrique.

Parlant de ses prestations avec Suicide, Alan Vega explique : "Je ne sais jamais comment un concert va se passer. Je sais qu'on a telle ou telle chanson, mais je ne sais pas ce qu'on va en faire. C'est Suicide, c'est toujours un miracle."

Accompagnées de photos, de dessins et d'objets de la vie quotidienne, ses sculptures suivent le même précepte : jamais fixes, elles s'adaptent au lieu, s'ajustent à l'atmosphère, mutantes, comme ses concerts, à l'infini. **Ondine Benetier**

exposition *Holy Shit*, du 19 octobre au 24 novembre à la galerie Laurent Godin, Paris III^e, laurentgodin.com
concerts à Paris au Grand Palais dans le cadre de la Fiac et à la Gaité Lyrique le 19 octobre .

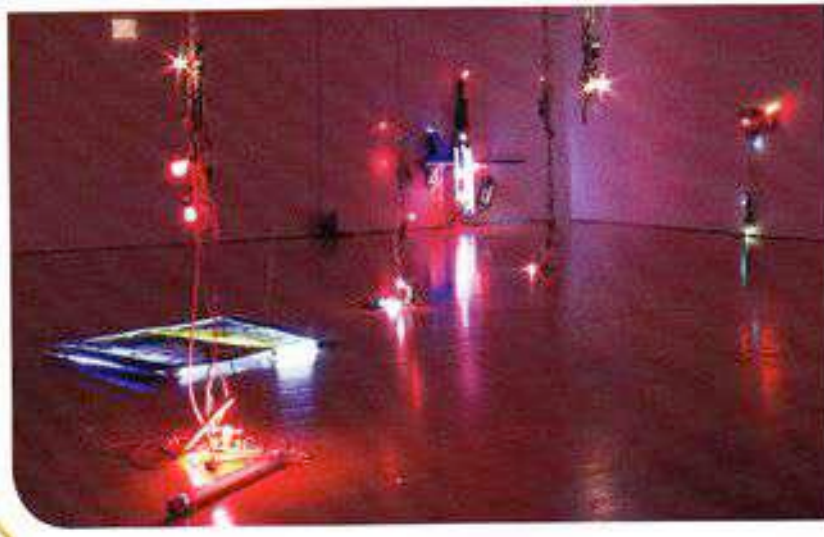
Alan Suicido Vega chez Laurent Godin

PARIS

STAND 0.407

Punk épatant, punk d'après les punks, Alan Vega n'est pas que le leader de Suicide, groupe de musique industrielle dont l'écho gueulard et strident a traversé le meilleur des années 1980-1990. Dès ses débuts, il est aussi artiste quand il ramasse des débris dans New York pour en faire des amas lumineux, plantés de néons ou de guirlandes électriques. Ces «Light Sculptures» brillent d'un éclat sombre, celui des zones interlopes et ténébreuses de l'âme et de la rue.

www.laurentgodin.com





BLAISE ADLON COURTE. GALERIE LAURENT GODIN, PARIS

ALAN SUICIDE VEGA

♥♥ GALERIE LAURENT GODIN 5, rue du Grenier-Saint-Lazare (III^e)
TEL. : 01 42 71 10 66 HORAIRES : du mar. au sam.
de 11h à 19h JUSQU'AU 24 novembre

Plus connu pour avoir été le chanteur du groupe légendaire Suicide, Alan Vega n'a pourtant jamais cessé de poursuivre une carrière de plasticien depuis son diplôme en art du Brooklyn College. Aussi dégingué que sa musique rockabilly, son travail sur la lumière est autant une démonstration de décadence urbaine que de rage esthétisante. Accumulant des amputés et des affiches récupérées dans la rue, Alan « Suicide » Vega crée des installations colorées et sauvages et des collages de figures emblématiques (Marilyn, Mohammed Ali...) qui illustrent son « art-rock ». À 74 ans, l'inoxydable bête de scène donne rendez-vous aux Parisiens à la Piac, à la Galté lyrique pour un concert (le 19) et au Palais de Tokyo (le 20) pour une conversation avec Mathieu Copeland, commissaire de sa rétrospective en 2009 au MAC à Lyon. ■ SOPHIE DESANTIS

[Le Paris de] Alan Vega

De passage dans la capitale pour un concert et la présentation d'une expo personnelle, le chanteur de Suicide a évoqué son Paris. Nostalgique !



Photo : © Denis Rouvre

Votre sensation quand vous êtes arrivé à Paris la première fois...

Un choc. Je me suis fait huer et virer de la scène de l'[Olympia](#) avec [Suicide](#), en première partie d'Elvis Costello. Les Parisiens m'ont sifflé comme ils ont conspué Stravinsky lors de la première du Sacre du printemps au [Théâtre des Champs-Élysées](#).

De quelle couleur est Paris ?

Grise. Je l'ai connue ainsi. Dans les années 70, avant les rénovations. Tout était gris, les monuments et les ponts. On avait l'impression que la ville allait s'effondrer, c'était magnifique.

Décrivez en deux mots le Parisien et la Parisienne.

Il est mince, elle est superbe.

L'odeur de Paris, c'est...

Une odeur de linge sale. Pas désagréable. Les Américains ont l'obsession de la propreté et prennent plusieurs douches par jour. Pas les Parisiens.

Quelle est la chose la plus chic ici ?

Les femmes évidemment. La Parisienne est à peu près aussi importante que les Beatles dans l'imaginaire d'un jeune homme.

Qu'est-ce qu'on ne trouve qu'à Paris et nulle part ailleurs ?

Du papier à dessin et des pinceaux. Et des bibelots chez les antiquaires du Quartier latin que j'ai recyclés dans mes sculptures.

Quel est le lieu qui, à Paris, fait le moins parisien ?

Les McDonald's. Mais ils sont invraisemblablement meilleurs qu'à New York.

Quand avez-vous pris le métro pour la dernière fois ?

Ça doit faire longtemps parce que je me suis retrouvé complètement perdu, à l'autre bout de la ville, dans un compartiment de première classe avec un ticket de seconde. Une personne a mis tellement de coeur à me guider que, après l'avoir écoutée, je savais parler français parfaitement. Ensuite, j'ai oublié.



Vue de l'exposition Alan Suicida Vega, Infinite. Mercy, MAC Lyon - 2009 / Galerie Laurent Godin, Paris / Photo : © Céline Bertin

Qu'est-ce qui fait peur à Paris ?

La mafia.

Quels sont vos lieux favoris à Paris ?

Les restaurants des Halles et Notre-Dame. Cette église me fascine. J'ai passé des nuits entières à en faire le tour. On dirait qu'elle a été posée là par des extraterrestres.

Recommandez-nous un bon hôtel à Paris.

Je ne sais pas s'il existe encore, mais il y en avait un petit qui s'appelait Le Champagne et dont la patronne était si gentille que j'ai longtemps cru que c'était ma mère.

Selon vous, quelle chanson évoque le mieux Paris ?

La Bohème, de Charles Aznavour, et n'importe quel air d'Edith Piaf.

Dans quelle salle rêveriez-vous de jouer ?

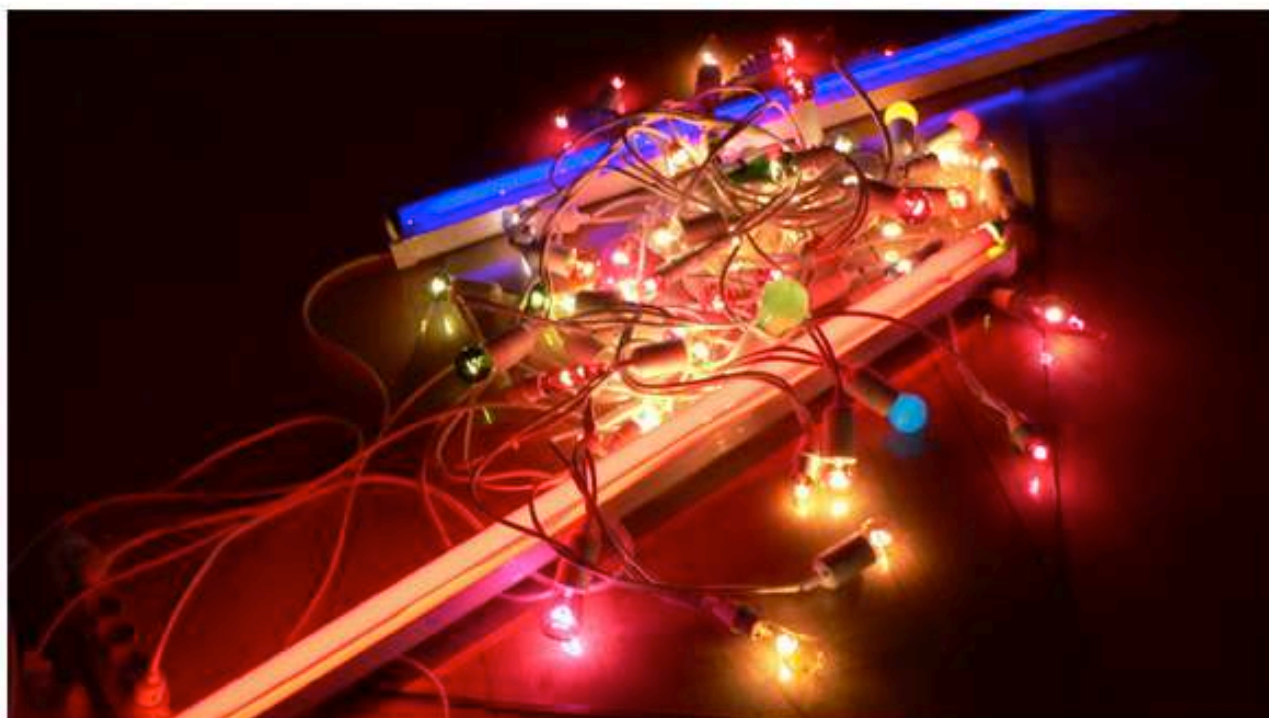
Dans l'*Olympia* désert, au milieu de la nuit. Juste moi et quelques fantômes.

Quel souvenir de Paris faut-il rapporter à son meilleur ami ?

Un béret. J'en ai eu un pendant longtemps. Mon bien le plus précieux. Il a disparu le jour où Air France a perdu mes bagages. J'ai eu tellement de mésaventures avec cette compagnie que je l'ai rebaptisée Air Chance.

Racontez-nous une anecdote drôle qui vous est arrivée à Paris...

Le jour où j'ai joué avec un Ghetto-Blaster pour tout accompagnement devant une foule en délire. La musique s'est arrêtée d'un coup. On a cherché la panne pendant quarante minutes. C'était l'émeute. Avant de s'apercevoir que la prise était simplement débranchée.



Alan Suicida Vega, American Supreme II - 1971- 2009. Technique mixte. Vue de l'exposition Alan Suicida Vega, Infinite Mercy, MAC Lyon - 2009 / Galerie Laurent Godin, Paris / Photo : © Céline Bertin

alanvega.com

laurentgodin.com

Laurent Rigoulet | 3 novembre 2012

- Télérama Sortir n°3277



Theaster Gates chez White Cube
LONDRES-HONG KONG

STAND 0.A22

Lors de la dernière Documenta, il a remis en état un vieil hôtel de Cassel pour le transformer en centre culturel accueillant lectures, performances, recontres. Il est comme ça, Theaster Gates: il va dans les zones urbaines abandonnées à la pauvreté et retape ce qui peut l'être pour y implanter une librairie, des endroits de chaleureuses rencontres. Le dimanche à Chicago, où il habite, il invite les gens à déguster et à discuter de la «soul food», une cuisine afro-américaine traditionnelle dont les origines remontent à l'époque des esclaves. Les questions identitaires, celles de la reconnaissance des droits politiques, sociaux voire économiques, des opprimés, dans l'histoire comme à l'époque contemporaine, sous-tendent son travail plastique. Ainsi, cette année, sa pièce *My Labor Is my Protest* célèbre les émeutes de Chicago qui, en 1968, enflammèrent la ville après l'assassinat de Martin Luther King: la tache de goudron dont il macule un camion de pompiers est aussi un hommage à son père qui, couvreur de son état, avait décidé de faire du goudron qu'il étalait sur le toit des maisons une forme alternative de protestation. Black is beautiful.

<http://whitecube.com>

Stéphanie Cherpin chez Cortex Athletico
BORDEAUX

STAND 1.H11

Ses sculptures occupent l'espace comme un campement sauvage en plein Wall Street. Des formes irrégulières, des matériaux souples, capables de résister à la torsion, dégringolent en cascade plutôt qu'elles ne s'élèvent. Inversion de la dynamique sculpturale: chez Stéphanie Cherpin, il ne s'agit plus pour l'objet de se dresser, ni de se coucher en renversant le socle au passage, mais de se répandre voire de s'arracher.

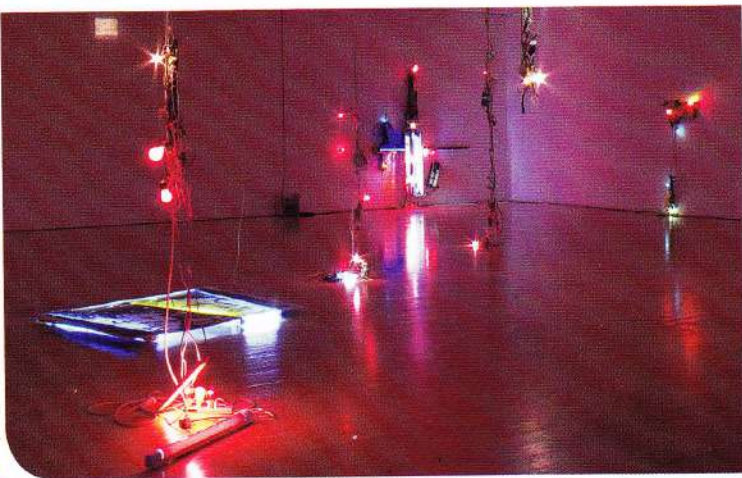
www.cortexathletico.com

Alan Suicide Vega chez Laurent Godin
PARIS

STAND 0.A07

Punk épataant, punk d'après les punks, Alan Vega n'est pas que le leader de Suicide, groupe de musique industrielle dont l'écho gueularde et strident a traversé le meilleur des années 1980-1990. Dès ses débuts, il est aussi artiste quand il ramasse des débris dans New York pour en faire des amas lumineux, plantés de néons ou de guirlandes électriques. Ces «Light Sculptures» brillent d'un éclat sombre, celui des zones interlopes et ténébreuses de l'âme et de la rue.

www.laurentgodin.com



Ian Kiaer chez Marcelle Alix
PARIS

STAND 1.H16

Ses installations sont élaborées avec une admirable minutie. Combinant peintures et sculptures, l'Anglais Ian Kiaer joue sur les échelles très disparates de ses pièces, sur leurs matériaux (pauvres et altérés) ainsi que sur leur disposition (flanquées par terre, adossées à une fenêtre, posées dans un recoin) pour livrer sa vision critique de l'architecture moderne. Mais on peut se passer du substrat philosophique planqué à l'arrière-plan: regorgeant d'inventivité, ces petites mises en scène suffisent à nous combler de bonheur.

www.marcellealix.com



Jorge Pedro Nuñez chez Crèvecoeur
PARIS

STAND 1.G17

Ce Vénézuélien installé à Paris mène une réflexion sur les formes de production de réception de l'histoire de l'art. Ce qui avait abouti dans *Black Mountain in Color* à la reproduction de formes abstraites connectées à l'esthétique de l'Art concret. À la Fiac, il présente une installation constituée de quatre sculptures qui met en regard les divers circuits économiques, notamment celui de la globalisation capitaliste versus celui, plus chic, plus local, de l'artiste lui-même.

www.galeriecrevecoeur.com

Page ci-contre

À gauche

TAKIS

Télépeinture 1 (Mur magnétique)

1972, acrylique sur toile, éléments métalliques et aimants, 175 x 130 x 15 cm. Galerie Xippas

En haut à droite

LARA FAVARETTO

Gummo V 2012, technique mixte, 250 x 500 x 190 cm. Galerie Franco Noero

En bas

DAVID MALEK

Green Points Perspective Grid 2011, laque sur bois, 121,9 x 152,4 cm. Galerie Triple V.

En haut à gauche

STÉPHANIE CHERPIN

Heaven Is a Truck

2011, matériaux divers, dimensions variables. Galerie Cortex Athletico

Ci-contre

ALAN SUICIDE VEGA

«Infinite Mercy» 2009, vue de l'exposition au MAC, Lyon. Galerie Laurent Godin

Ci-dessus

JORGE PEDRO NUÑEZ

Práctica constructiva 2011, plaques de métal, livres, dimensions variables. Galerie Crèvecoeur

Georg Baselitz

L'ENVERS EST L'ENDROIT Les dernières œuvres dansantes de Georg Baselitz retournent le motif à l'envers et sa nouvelle série «Das Negativ» paraphrase avec brio le pathétisme de l'expressionnisme allemand. Adieu Photoshop.

Georg Baselitz turned the motif upside down and his new series "Das Negativ" brilliantly paraphrases German Expressionist pathos, using the idea of photo negatives. No Photoshop here.

GALERIE THADDAEUS ROPAC Stand 0.C19. www.ropac.net



Alan Vega

AMERICAIN SUPRÊME Les halètements d'Alan Vega dans le groupe Suicide ont longtemps occulté ses sculptures de lumière. À tort. Car ses néons enmêlés témoignent d'un même élan punk-rock minimaliste.

Alan Vega is better known as the lead singer of the group Suicide than for his light sculptures. But his minimalistic neons in the same punk spirit are set to change that.

GALERIE LAURENT GODIN Stand 0.A07. www.laurentgodin.com

Cane, Viallat...

PARENTHÈSE ENCHANTÉE Bernard Ceysson revient sur les héroïques années 1970, en convoquant des œuvres jamais montrées de Louis Cane, Daniel Dezeuze ou Claude Viallat, à l'invention formelle toujours déconcertante.

Bernard Ceysson looks back at the heroic 1970s, offering up a selection of never-before-seen works by Louis Cane, Daniel Dezeuze and Claude Viallat.

GALERIE BERNARD CEYSSON
Stand 0.A46. www.bernardceysson.com



Xavier Veilhan

L'ŒUVRE EN SOI Xavier Veilhan brouille les pistes entre art et design, en réalisant des sculptures aux courbes gracieuses, sortes d'empreintes du réel où la technologie rejoint la tradition académique. Une promenade en polyuréthane, où les personnages sont des décors à vivre.

Xavier Veilhan's graceful sculptures blur the boundaries between art and design, as projections of reality whose technology harks back to academic tradition. A "Promenade" of polyurethane figures posing as living decors.

GALERIE EMMANUEL PERROTIN Stand 0.B36. www.perrotin.com

TÉLÉRAMA, Laurent Boudier / 3 - 24 Novembre 2012

EXPOS - INSTALLATION - SCULPTURE

Alan Suicide Vega : Holy Shit



Du 3 novembre au 24 novembre 2012

Les vieux lions bougent encore : la preuve avec Alan Suicide Vega, roi de la musique électro-minimaliste punk, qui fit un carton avec son groupe Suicide dans les années 80. La star alternative revient cette fois-ci sur la scène artistique de Paris avec cette exposition à la galerie Godin, qui fait place aux sculptures, un peu totems « *moderno-archaïques* » (sic), un peu déglinguées en matériaux déchus ou en guirlandes d'ampoules colorées....

Laurent Boudier

SORTIR + [\[Le Paris de\] Alan Vega](#)

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ART | CRITIQUES



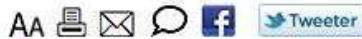
Alan Suicide Vega

Holy Shit

19 oct.-24 nov. 2012

Paris 3e. Galerie Laurent Godin

Radical, parfois trash, Alan Suicide Vega est davantage connu pour sa musique répétitive et envoûtante au sein du groupe Suicide que pour son travail de plasticien. Pourtant, depuis le début des années 70, il n'a cessé de créer. Il présente quelques unes des ses œuvres graphiques et sculptures lumineuses.



Par Marie-Jeanne Caprasse

Artiste new-yorkais aujourd'hui âgé de 74 ans, Alan Suicide Vega est une figure culte du rock électronique. C'est en 1970 qu'il forme avec Martin Rev le groupe culte Suicide, posant les bases d'un rock électronique minimaliste, mélange de tradition rock et d'électronique techno. Cette musique répétitive basée sur des claviers envoûtants mêlés aux chants, cris et halètements de Vega, dégage une ambiance oppressante, à la limite de la transe.

Parallèlement, le chanteur a toujours mené une œuvre de plasticien. Actif sur la scène new-yorkaise dès le début des années 70, il sera cofondateur d'un des premiers lieux alternatifs tenu par des artistes à New York Project of Living Artists. C'est donc un travail qui a pris racine voilà plusieurs décennies que la galerie Laurent Godin présente actuellement. Des œuvres imprégnées d'une sensibilité à fleur de peau, dramatique et parfois violente.

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Créateurs

- Alan Suicide Vega

Lieu

- Galerie Laurent Godin

Ce caractère expressionniste est manifeste dans les œuvres graphiques exposées à l'entrée du lieu. Tel un recueil de traumas, la série de photographies de boxers à la figure tuméfiée sont maltraitées, raturées, déchiquetées et tachées. En face, un polyptique de petits portraits dessinés au crayon et au bic donne un aperçu de la pratique spontanée et rapide d'Alan Suicide Vega. Les tracés sont hésitants et répétés, quelquefois apparentés au geste de Giacometti. Les mines sont tristes, hagardes, avec les yeux figurés comme des billes noires enfoncées au creux des orbites.

L'artiste a un goût prononcé pour les choses cassées, usées, sales. Dans une logique de création toujours en mouvement, il puise dans les déchets de la ville pour les transformer en les assemblant. Faites d'objets de récupération — jouets, ampoules, câbles, chaîne de vélo, bois, clous, agrafes et scotch coloré — ses sculptures lumineuses imposent leur présence comme autant de reliquaires profanes voués au culte des rebus de notre société urbaine.

Exposées dans la pénombre, selon la volonté de l'artiste, ces accumulations d'objets divers dégagent une atmosphère lourde et énigmatique. L'utilisation d'ampoules de couleur leur donne une aura colorée, un magnétisme vivant. Et la lumière s'impose tel un révélateur, mais aussi un facteur de mystère. Elle dévoile certaines parties de l'assemblage tout en maintenant d'autres dans la pénombre.

Comme des autels vaudou ou des fétiches d'Afrique centrale, ces agrégats semblent chargés d'une force occulte et appellent le respect teinté d'un brin de frayeur. Bien que détachés de la figuration, la souffrance et les références à la croix chrétienne y sont omniprésentes. Pétri de références christiques, Vega adresse une prière au monde, une plainte muette qui s'adresse à toutes les âmes brisées. Mais laissant toujours une place à un filet de lumière. Lueur de vie, d'espoir ou petite flamme du souvenir?

Œuvres

- Alan Suicide Vega, *American Suprem II*, 1971-2009. Mixed media.
- Alan Suicide Vega, *Untitled*, Série de 86 dessins de 2005-09 et 11 dessins des années 80.
- Alan Suicide Vega, *Let US Pray*, 2009. Collages.





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