

“First Among Equals”

ICA - INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ART, PHILADELPHIA
University of Pennsylvania, 118 South 36th Street
March 14–August 12

In his 2007 *Harper's* magazine essay “The Ecstasy of Influence,” Jonathan Lethem probed the boundary between creative influence and plagiarism. Citing Bob Dylan’s borrowings from his contemporaries and forebears in service of his own material, Lethem concluded that appropriation (or its lure) can actually engender originality. It’s a good entry point into this exhibition, which considers mutual influence, connectedness, and collaboration between artists and art collectives across disparate generations and zip codes. Curated by Alex Klein and Kate Kraczon, the show will rotate seventy-seven Los Angeles– and Philadelphia-based artists and collectives who willfully draw from one another to create work and evolve their practices. It also includes a stellar schedule of performances, events, and conversations during the course of its five-month run.



Alex Da Corte, *SCENE TAKE SIX* (detail), 2012, mixed media, dimensions variable.

The connectivity is most apt in Alex Da Corte’s sprawling installation *SCENE TAKE SIX*, 2012. Partially inspired by two discrete installations that Da Corte exhibited last year at Philadelphia’s artist-run galleries Extra Extra and Bodega, the work flanks both sides of a central, freestanding gallery wall. Da Corte asked nearly two dozen artists—including Anna Betbeze, Sam Anderson, and Strauss Bourque-LaFrance—to contribute singular pieces for him to respond to and include. Also on view in the installation are Da Corte’s “dedications,” re-creations of specific works by such artists as Karen Kilimnik, Jim Hodges, and Polly Apfelbaum. The result is a manic amalgam. Da Corte’s own contribution to the installation includes scavenged materials, including shampoo, soda pop, bubble wrap, and terry cloth. The overflowing effect is both droll and inspired—a feeling not unlike the one that occurs after spending too much time feverishly perusing the Internet for inspiration.

— Carmen Winant