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## **GRONK'S THEATER OF PAINT** **May 29 - September 4, 2016**

*Legendary artist Gronk stages his first solo museum exhibition in Los Angeles in more than two decades at the Craft & Folk Art Museum*

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*Theater of Paint*, four color letterpress print, 2016, published by Bert Green Fine Art/Aardvark Letterpress. Photo: Bert Green Fine Art



Backdrop from "Los Faustinos," Cornerstone Theater Company, acrylic on canvas, 1994. Collection of Mike (Surito) Echeverria and Julio Villarreal

LOS ANGELES — The Craft & Folk Art Museum (CAFAM) presents ***Gronk's Theater of Paint***, the first solo museum exhibition in Los Angeles of legendary artist Gronk in more than two decades. Curated by CAFAM Exhibitions Curator Holly Jerger in close collaboration with the artist, the exhibition delves into Gronk's extensive work in theatrical set design, exemplified by a newly commissioned site-specific theater installation in CAFAM's third floor gallery. The exhibition also includes site-specific paintings, original set pieces, artist drawings, photographs, and ephemera documenting his past productions, beginning with East L.A. multimedia art collective ASCO up to his recent opera productions with director Peter Sellars. CAFAM members will be invited to a special, behind-the-scenes tour to see Gronk installing his exhibition on May 19 and 24 from 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. *Gronk's Theater of Paint* is on view from May 29 - September 4, 2016.

"Gronk is a seminal Los Angeles artist, long overdue for a museum exhibition in this city. We are thrilled to recognize his work and shine light on his unique contributions to the world of theater and set design, both here in Los Angeles and worldwide," says CAFAM Executive Director Suzanne Isken.

"Set design is a significant component of Gronk's multi-faceted practice, and this exhibition is an important opportunity to explore that aspect of his work more fully," says curator Holly Jerger. "Gronk shares CAFAM's commitment to making, collaboration, and public interaction, and this presentation encompasses all those elements."

Though he is known mostly as a painter and muralist, theatricality and collaboration are consistent hallmarks of Gronk's artistic practice, demonstrated in his early experimental performances with queer artists Mundo Meza and Cyclona, as well as through ASCO's iconic public art, performance, and multimedia works. In the early 1980s, Gronk turned his attention to painting, eventually extending it towards creating scenic design for local theatrical productions with Los Angeles Theatre Center, East West Players, LA Opera, and Cornerstone Theater Company, among others. Over the last decade, Gronk has partnered with experimental opera director Peter Sellars to realize monumental backdrops and settings for the operas *Ainadamar* (2005), *Griselda* (2011), and most recently for the international presentation of *The Indian Queen* (2013).

Gronk's installation at CAFAM merges his love of the low-budget aesthetic of B-movies with the grandeur of opera. Gronk has always drawn parallels between opera and B-movies, as both genres share archetypal characters, tragic themes, and overstated performances. In conceiving *Gronk's Theater of Paint*, Gronk envisioned the installation as the theater set for an imaginary opera production based on a book of absurdist, science fiction poetry called *Tomorrow You'll Be One of Us* (2013). Written by Gail Wronsky and Chuck Rosenthal, the book contains poems constructed from sci-fi and horror B-movie dialogue and was illustrated by Gronk.



*Tormenta Suite in 12 Movements (#9)*,  
linoleum cut, 2001, published by Tandem Press.  
Collection of the artist



Mask for *Gronk's Theater of Paint*, acrylic on  
wood, 2016. Courtesy of the artist

As Gronk subverts the traditional parameters of theater by elevating lowbrow pop culture to a grand stage, for the CAFAM exhibition he also breaks the "fifth wall" of the theater by allowing the audience to take action. Visitors are invited to interact with the theater set using Gronk's handmade props, their participation marking the completion of the installation. Gronk has also developed a soundtrack to envelop the visitor experience.

"The exciting part that will pull this show together is that experience of being in a different environment and creating," says Gronk. "Each time I have done an on-site piece inside of a museum situation, each one's dynamics are so different. The room, the shape, the way the light comes in plays into the direction the piece will go. That's one of the things I don't have a pre-plan or sketch of, I want to experience the space and let it inform me."

The space will also provide a dynamic setting for performances and public programs throughout the course of the exhibition, including a prop making workshop with Invertigo Dance Theatre, B-movie screenings with Gronk and writer Marisela Norte, science fiction poetry readings, and artist-led gallery walkthroughs.

### ABOUT GRONK

Gronk is the moniker of painter, printmaker, and performance artist Glugio Nicandro. He was born 1957 in East Los Angeles, California. Gronk was a founding member of ASCO, a multi-media arts collective active in the 1970s and 80s. Influenced by European film, existentialism, and literature, as well as the social discontent in East L.A., ASCO made "movies without film" and staged farcical "happenings" on the streets. Gronk is well known for his murals, including those at Estrada Courts in East Los Angeles. More recently his murals have been intentionally painted as temporary art works, including a large work at the Fowler Museum at UCLA in 2010.

He has been involved with theater since his teenage ASCO days, eventually moving on to more elaborate stage design and scenic work for local and international opera houses and theaters. In 1994, Gronk was nominated for a Theatre LA Ovation Award for Best Set Design for the play "Carpa Clash." He had a solo career retrospective at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) in 1993, exhibiting there again in 2011 for the exhibition *ASCO: Elite of the Obscure*. Gronk's work is represented in numerous private and museum collections across the country, including: the Corcoran Gallery of Art and the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C.; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA); and the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), Los Angeles.

An opening reception for *Gronk's Theater of Paint* will take place on Saturday, May 28 from 6:00 - 9:00p.m. The reception is free for CAFAM members and open to the public for a \$12 admission fee.

*This exhibition is supported in part by the Los Angeles County Arts Commission and the Department of Cultural Affairs, Los Angeles.*





Mask study for *The Indian Queen*, acrylic on cardboard, 2013. Courtesy of the artist



Gronk in his studio, 2016.

## PUBLIC PROGRAMS

CAFAM will offer exhibition-related workshops and events in conjunction with the exhibition, including CraftLab family workshops on the second Sunday of each month from 1:30 - 3:30 p.m. Details about all programs can be found at [www.cafam.org/programs](http://www.cafam.org/programs).

### Member Event: Behind the Scenes with Gronk

May 19 & May 24 | 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

### Member Event: Gallery Talk with Gronk and Holly Jerger

Sunday, June 26 | 11:00 a.m.

### Chuck Rosenthal & Gail Wronsky with Gronk

Sunday, July 24 | Time TBD

### Peter Sellars with Gronk

Sunday, August 6 | Time TBD

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Situated on historic Museum Row since 1973, the **Craft & Folk Art Museum (CAFAM)** is an invaluable contributor to Los Angeles culture, exhibiting current artists with intriguing perspectives and distinctive practices. Exploring the leading edge of craft, art, and design, CAFAM gives audience to diverse makers and artists whose work is often not represented in larger art institutions. The museum is a place to see art and make art — all under one roof. CAFAM coordinates a robust roster of hands-on workshops led by professional artists and makers. The intimate, atypical museum space and independent spirit at CAFAM combine to create an atmosphere of excitement and innovation, where people in Los Angeles deepen their relationships to art, creativity and one another. For more information, visit [www.cafam.org](http://www.cafam.org)

Location: 5814 Wilshire Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90036

Admission: FREE every Sunday

Regularly: \$7 for adults; \$5 for students, teachers, and seniors; free for CAFAM members

Hours: Tuesday-Friday, 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.; Saturday & Sunday, 12:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.;

closed Mondays. Every first Thursday of the month, extended hours 6:30 - 9:30 p.m.