



## RAMM:ΣLL:ZΣΣ

Ransom Notes: Selected artwork 1983–93

29th April–5th June 2022

Kunsthall Oslo is very pleased to present *Ransom Notes*, the first-ever exhibition in Norway of work by the legendary New York artist Rammellzee (1960–2010). Rammellzee made seminal contributions to graffiti culture in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and explored new directions for painting, sculpture and performance in the following decades. What marked him out was his ability to alchemize the street culture of his youth into a complete theoretical system and transform his life into a continuous and total act of creation. The exhibition is curated by Kunsthall Oslo and Maxwell Wolf of New Canons. Wolf was the co-curator of the major Rammellzee retrospective *Racing for Thunder* at Red Bull Arts in New York in 2018.

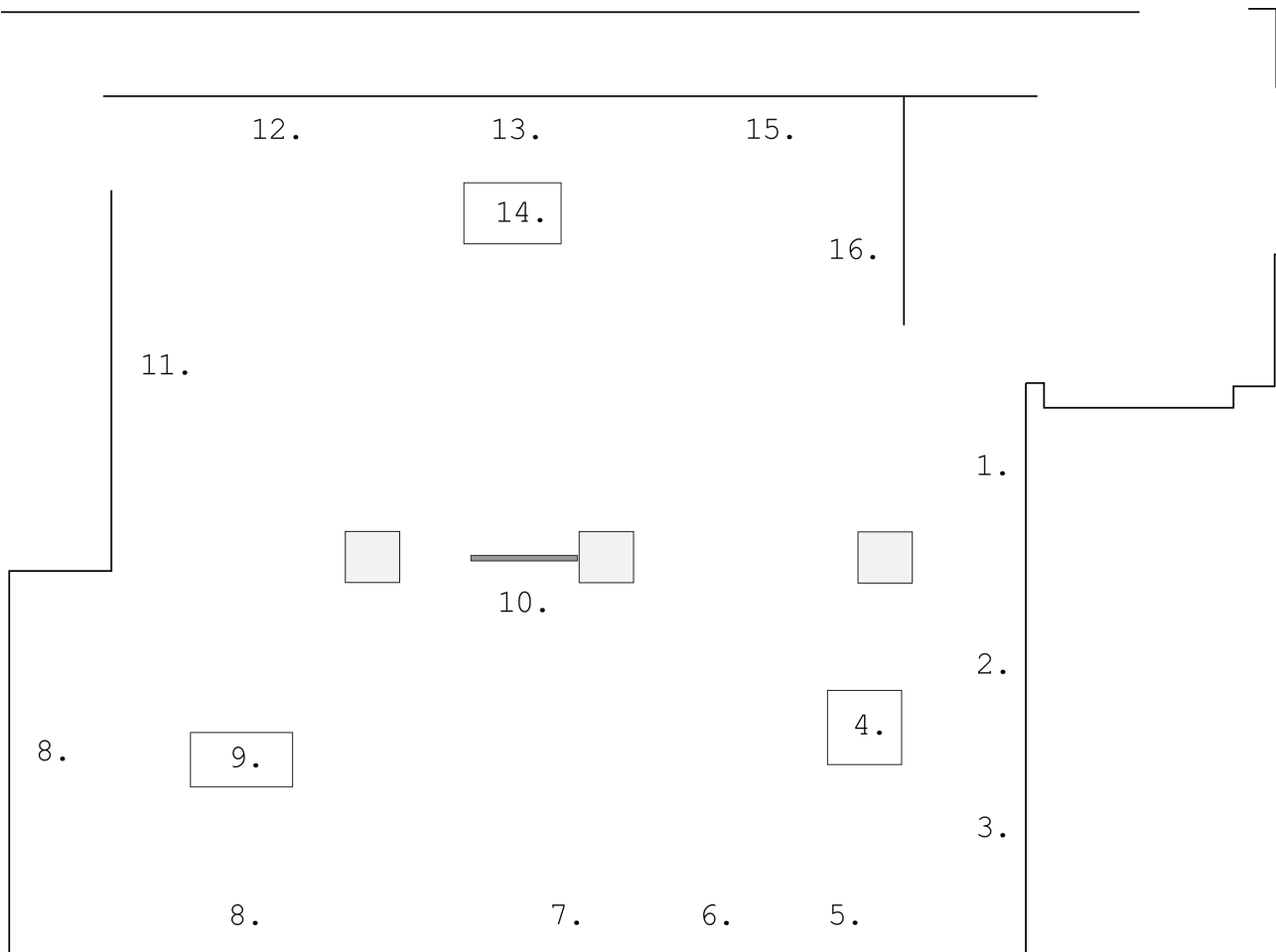
Rammellzee earned his cult status in the early years of the hip hop scene, and confirmed it with the creation of his Garbage Gods, the home-made cyborg costumes he worked on and used in public appearances from the late 1980s until his death. But between these two phases of his career he channelled much of his considerable creative energy into the formal art world, producing a body of work whose freestyle invention and inspirational power is as relevant now as it ever was. The exhibition *Ransom Notes* focuses on this period, roughly the decade 1983–93, bringing together painting, drawing, assemblage and sculpture, along with texts and rare archive material. The works on show, with their personal mythologies, mystic science, magpie aesthetics and astral perspective, evoke a collision between Robert Rauschenberg, Afrika Bambaataa, Joseph Beuys and Sun Ra—though Rammellzee, of course, refused to be placed in relation to any mythology other than his own.

As a teenager in Far Rockaway in Queens, he was one of the writers responsible for the development of wildstyle, bombing the A train under the tag EG for Evolution Griller. By 1979 he had become RAMM:ΣLL:ZΣΣ—an equation, not a name, according to the artist himself—and begun developing his theory of Gothic Futurism as well as a new style that he called Ikonoklast Panzerism. Informed by the teachings of the Five Percent Nation, by science fiction and an autodidact reading of medieval history, he laid out his ideas in a manifesto titled the Ionic Treatise Gothic Futurism Assassin Knowledges of the Remanipulated Square Point One to 720°.

In Rammellzee's account the letter forms of wildstyle became armoured, ornamented—armamented, as he called it—and streamlined to survive and battle in the harsh environment of the subway tunnels, just as the monks of the gothic period ornamented and illuminated their letters and manuscripts, transforming the alphabet to the point where the letter as image is liberated from the message it carries and begins to pursue a separate existence.

In the early eighties Rammellzee introduced himself to Fred Braithwaite, AKA Fab 5 Freddy, whose connections with the Manhattan scene led to Rammellzee's artwork appearing in the seminal exhibition *Beyond Words*, along with Jean Michel Basquiat, Keith Haring, Futura 2000 and Lady Pink among others. Rammellzee gained a following in the New York art world and in Europe, with shows at several private galleries, and rapped on the 12" single *Beat Bop* that was financed and produced by Basquiat. He established a studio in a loft in Manhattan that became known as the Battle Station where, as well as painting, he began making sculpture out of junk scavenged from around the city and using epoxy resin to cast found objects into frozen still lifes, the so-called resin frescoes. Like the modified watches he called *Time Stoppers*, these works embody Rammellzee's preoccupation with entropy and infinity, deep history and humanity's distant future. During this phase of his career he also appeared in Jim Jarmusch's film *Stranger Than Paradise*, produced a plan for an opera (*The Requiem of Gothic Futurism*) that dramatised the role of his graphic creations in a far-future inter-galactic war, and launched a new musical project *Gettovetts*, who performed in Oslo in 1985.

The curators would like to thank David Fouks, Alain-Dominique Gallizia, Johnny Grizot, Yaki Kornblit, Henk Pinjenberg, Serge Ziegler and the Dutch Graffiti Library. Image: Rammellzee performing with *Gettovetts* at Rockefeller, Oslo, 1985, photographed by Morten Andersen.



### List of works

1. Lake of Grimas, 1984
2. Treatise on the Luxturnomere, 1984
3. Film of Rammellzee working his self-titled solo exhibition at Galerie Ziegler, directed by Rolf Waeber and Andreas Honegger, 1985, and video of Rammellzee presenting his artwork to tourists in New York in the early 1990s.
4. Ionic Treatise Gothic Futurism Assassin Knowledges of the Remanipulated Square, 1979
5. Gothic Futurist I, 1985
6. Red Shot Recision Hypha, 1984
7. Towers of Panzerism Mega Stroke, 1991
8. Wild Style Alphabet, 2008
9. Untitled (Skim Stone), 1985
10. Gargoylian Books of Stock, 1986
11. Ransom Note of the Infinium Sirpiereule, 1984
12. Infinium 45 Zee the Band of Steel, 1985
13. Untitled (Object with a clock), 1985
14. Untitled (Object Space), 1985
16. Mettropolstersizer the Ikonizer Exposes the Platinum Galaxy, 1986
16. Atomic Note 6 Degrees, 1985

In reception area: Audio of Rammellzee's lecture *Underground Inner Thinking*, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, 1987.

## Introduction

A title concerning a new twist on the old mythologies and religions. It explains through the form of *Intellectual Horrors* the reasons for its intellectual existence as a statement for the warning set by the prophets of the *macrocosmic* and the *microcosmic*. Which tales can only be told by the RAMM:ELL:ZEE. A performer of GRIMMS LAW, Ikonoklast Letters Racerism, which are forms of illuminations that aeronautically and aerodynamically weapon-slave the Letters A thru Z. In today's ignorant yet somewhat technologically advanced society the heart-wrenching and brain-sweating thought of the flying Letter, using the masculines and feminines other than phonetically on the Letter that is neutral, but not an accessory to the human races, since speech is not an accessory to humans' passion to conceive. THE RAMM:ELL:ZEE's study of the Dictionary's Language Tree combined with GRIMMS LAW allowed the artist, through art mediums such as paint on canvas, resin frescoes, drawings, sculptures, carpet, and performance art, including literature, lectures, poetry and music, to maintain his intellectual factory as a stable foundation for this artforum which includes *mannerism* and *chiaroscuro*. The street urbanism portrayed through these disciplines, combined with his mythology, transcends and ascends all time periods that have indulged and performed FUTURES. In other words, this MECHANIC forms art to form his own government and coverment. Each work of art explained hereafter is to be known as a currency issued and signed by the artist as though he is the secretary of his own Treasury. Since he believes his art is a currency, the currencies have a war department to protect it. The artist has remained non-emotional since the beginning in describing this mythology and/or STOCK FUTURES due to the militancy of the subject and its potential to not contradict, but offer to the futurists and you, a horrific scientific view of the Transversus (universe) as a womb reversed from micro to macro. And the birth of an ODDS GOD. The multiple personalities of the equation THE RAMM:ELL:ZEE performs for science. If this knowledge scares you the equation is working.

## Ransom Note

Depiction: Abstract statements assembled to cause fear or horror. Specifics: Your death, a Planet's death, the death of your Ego, Super Ego, or Id. A Galaxy or womb's death and any kidnapping worth the mechanic's crime.

## Gargoylian Books of Stock

Depiction: Evidence of a stock's dissension versus a stock's ascension. With the visual characteristics of the two nightmares. Specifics: Speed of a stocks downfall versus its opponent's stock. With a "WORD COMBINATOR" representing devotions to emotions, drugs, the military, the dictionary's language tree, politics, sex, and the Clergy or any geological, cryptical, or supernatural gain in the game.

## Mettroposttersizer

Depiction: A meteorological device weaponized that when within a planet's atmosphere, will use the planet's electro-magnetic energy for its purposes of incapacitation of weathers or viruses. Specifics: Military. Planet smasher. Uses turbine power from said star in geometrical congruency with a neutral planets' magnetics to destroy planet targeted or virus on planet targeted, or if planet or its virus can't be destroyed, it has the power to cause "WIZARDS GAME OF POOL" (solar systematical orbital collision till solar system is in a molten state.) Unless ordered to freeze solar system, planet, or virus as example.

## Bands of Steel

Depiction: An abstract arrest of a subject held together by chains, handcuffs, and magnetic grinding wheels. Specifics: Any criminal, political, scientific, mathematical, medical, or zoological motif scrutinized by the mechanic. The arrested, from one of the above, is tortured into submission by the grinding wheels. The answer is presented. You must find the question.

## Atomic Notes

Depiction: A judging tool implemented by plasma genetics revealed on an atomic level (micro) and on a Galactic level of the Transversus Womb (UNIVERSAL). While on the other hand it can ingest galaxies like a squid, or impregnate a planet to become an ova. Specifics: Using the kelvin apparatus for the macro and the micro-cosmic, a GLUCOSIDE PLASMAGNETIC ATOM appears with its neutrons and electrons at a reserved temperature only exposed for the duration of time of one billionth of a second after a Neural-Net ion convulsion, (micro or macro) or after Transversus Womb is sliced for Galactics examination under a God's scrutiny, if an ova is not achieved through ATOMIC NOTES' SPERM which was injected into a primed planet's atmosphere.