DAZED JUNE 2019 FEAR EATS THE SOUL: ALEX DA CORTE IN CONVERSATION WITH KEVIN WILLIAMSON



Still from Slow Graffiti, Alex Da Corte (2017). HD digital video, 13 minutes. Music by Dev Hynes, narration by William Pym and Jorgen Leth. Courtesy of the artist.

Boo! All I wanted to do for this haunted house extravaganza was hook up Alex Da Corte with Kevin Williamson. (Oh, and maybe ask Chloe Sevigny to dress up like a witch.) Kevin is the writer of Scream and the creator of Dawson's Creek. He knows being a teen inside-out and loves horror like vampires love hot blood. Obvs, horror and teens have been a hot couple forever, because horror gives you a way to express the demonic weirdness of adolescence when death gets real and your sexuality suddenly turns wild as a werewolf.

Alex is a magician. When he dresses up as Michael Myers from Halloween or plays a melancholic version of Frankenstein's monster, he transforms these bogeymen into strange and heartbreaking creatures. Horror can be so beautiful it hurts. I asked him why he loves Kevin's work so much, and he texted back: "He showed me a way out." Here, they talk about VCRs, masks, and the stuff that "changes your brain forever". Sink your fangs into it, kids. - Charlie Fox

Alex Da Corte: What is your favorite scary movie?

Kevin Williamson: Halloween.

ADC: (laughs) I concur. I grew up in the suburbs, in Haddonfield, New Jersey. (*Halloween is set in the fictional town of Haddonfield, Illinois.*)

KW: Wow.

ADC: *Halloween* was a fascination for me from a young age. We would play this game where my tallest, oldest cousin would dress up like Michael and hide in one of the homes in the neighborhood and all the parents would agree to leave their doors unlocked and go to bed early and probably drink some wine in their bedrooms while we would play this game where we tried to survive by not being found by Michael Myers - a reverse manhunt.

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strategy John Carpenter had used, but you made it contemporary. As a young person in the 90s, how did you know that that complicity could or should be (achieved) by making a film that was so self-aware?

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KW: (laughs) You had one of the originals!

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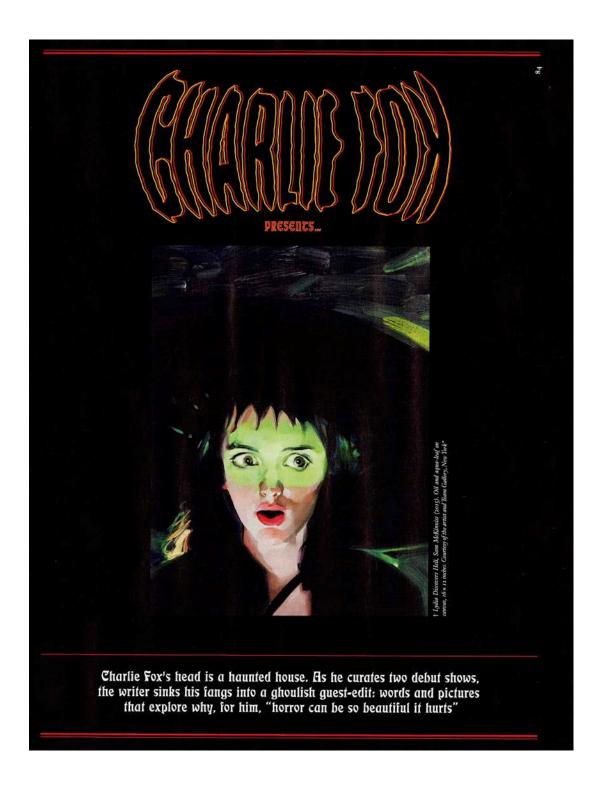
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Charlie grills the artists taking part in one of his two forthcoming exhibitions, My Head Is a Haunted House, about the stuff that gives them goosebumps

What's your favourise scary modie?

Sam McKinniss: Carrie, duh. Or The Shining. Claude Wampler: Let's Scare Jessica to Death (1971). As a kid, I saw this so many times. It seemed to be on TV every Saturday afternoon. Jessica, just released from a mental hospital, moves to a quiet little New England cracker town to recover, but the folks there are the living dead. Or maybe she's still crazy? You never know! It's horrifying and played so beautifully by Zohra Lampert, who was also brilliant in Cassavetes' Opening Night. Actually, now that I think about it, Opening

Night is my favourite scary movie.

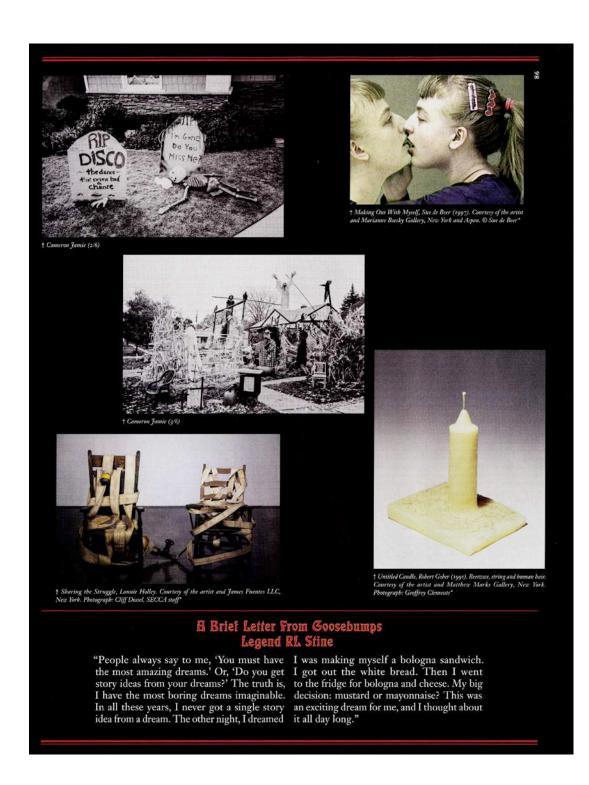
Sue de Beer: I had a hard time choosing; I watch so many scary movies and read so many scary stories. Here is my list: Inferno (Argento). The Birds (Hitchcock). The original Halloween (John Carpenter) -so beautiful. Trouble Every Day (Claire Denis). The Shining – the sound especially. The Wolf Man – the original with Lon Chaney. Paul Morrissey/Andy Warhol's Dracula. Herzog's Dracula. Deep Red (Argento). Eyes of Laura Mars (co-written by John Carpenter, directed by Irvin Kershner) – I love this film. Possession by Andrzej Żuławski. Aliens. Polanski horror is nice – how you peep around corners. An American Werewolf in London. Vertigo (Hitchcock). The Driller Killer (Abel Ferrara). I like Alain Robbe-Grillet's Trans-Europ-Express – not sure if it is scary enough. Meet the Feebles (Peter Jackson).

Marianna Simnett: The Exercist is top of the list.

Cameron Jamie: Black Devil Doll From Hell (1984) by Chester Novell Turner is handsdown one of my all-time favourite films ever made. I pretty much base and judge all of my friendships on how people react to this film.

Jason Yates: Motel Hell.

Matt Copson: The Skeleton Dance.



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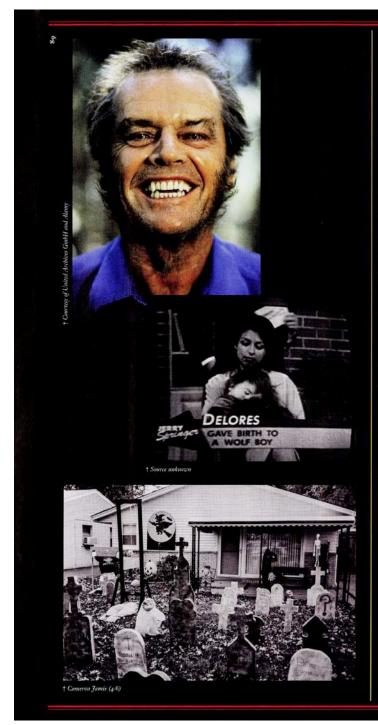
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What's the best nightmare you've ever had?

Sam McKinniss: Ex-boyfriends visit me in my dreams all the time, it's EXHAUSTING and sometimes VERY HOT.

Claude Wampler: Best meaning worst, right? Worst nightmare: I suddenly realised a huge audience in a European warehouse-type venue was waiting for me to do a performance I was completely unprepared for. I decided to do a butoh dance. For my costume, I cut my haby daughter's head off and stretched it over my face as a mask. It was perfect! While I was butoh-ing through the crowd I was thrilled to see the horrified looks on their faces, interpreting it as a great artistic success until I realised they were reacting to the severed baby's head on my face. In that moment I clearly understood my costume was doing all the work. I also realised that I couldn't put my daughter's head back on, because it was badly damaged from the stretching, and she was dead. I woke up knowing that my art practice will be the death of my daughter. Someday. Somehow. In Lee Strasberg's method, actors use the 'sense-memory' technique to get emotional in a scene. Whenever I have to cry on

Sue de Beer: LICE.

Marianna Simnett: I was a horse inside a classroom and they stuck me to the wall, raped me then set me on fire.

Cameron Jamie: I was carefully examining a human foetus made of very soft fabric which I was holding in my hands and every time that I squeezed it, the foetus made extraordinary chirping noises and sounds.

Jason Yates: I was trapped in an automaton

warehouse for Thanksgiving parade and they all

wateriouse for Trainsgrying parade and they an came to life. Snoopy was after me.

Matt Copson: All of the ones where I get to sit down and have a chat with the monster that's chasing me.

PRINCIPLE OF † Exterior of the haunted bouse Charlie's grandfather built for him in the 900 imagine being high in that house... 16 836 91 REPLY View 12 replies ✓ † John Jr. John Waters (2009). Courtesy of the artist and Marianne Bocsky Gallery, New York and Aspen. © John Waters*

Do you believe in ghosis?

Sam McKinniss: Yes.

Claude Wampler: Believe? I don't believe in belief. However, I do know it's unknowable. Ghosts? Sure! Aliens? Sure! God? Sure! I have no fucking idea what's 'real' and it's completely irrelevant anyway, since none of them are coming to save us. Or are they?

Sue de Beer: Maybe I am a ghost. Marianna Simnett: No. You're dead and then you're rotten meat.

Cameron Jamie: I never believed in ghosts until I saw something in 2011 in the form of a severed human leg without a foot floating above the right side of my bed. I couldn't believe it. The whole composition and formation of the severed leg was made up of very tiny luminescent light-greenish glowing energy particles. The leg was also nervously shaking and couldn't stop moving or keep still. I stared at this thing for probably ten minutes to make sure I wasn't hallucinating or dreaming. At one point, the leg started to swing down vertically at an angle as if it was trying to hit something. It was strange because it wasn't attacking me, but hitting the right side of the mattress. At one point, I decided to reach out to put my hand through it, and when I did this the severed leg slowly started to fade and disintegrate. I later realised that there is definitely some other higher-energy thing living with me in my apartment, and I'm totally fine with it. I've never seen anything since, but I immediately started to become more aware of things in my place. Shortly afterwards, I began to hear the doorknob of my bathroom shake slowly from the inside whenever the door was closed, as if someone was locked in and trying to come out. I now always feel obliged to open the bathroom door when I hear this sound to let out whatever is making this noise. It's a bit like owning an invisible cat or a dog scratching the door,

wanting to be let out.

Jason Yates: Absolutely. Matt Copson: I Want to Believe. •

My Head Is a Haunted House runs at London's Sadie Coles HQ, June 4 – August 17, and Dracula's Wedding runs at Rodeo Gallery, London, June 4 – August 3. (On opening night you'll find Charlie running hetween both.)

