

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**ACA GALLERIES PRESENTS JOHN MELLENCAMP: *LIFE, DEATH, LOVE AND FREEDOM*  
THE SECOND SOLO EXHIBITION OF HIS PAINTINGS IN NEW YORK**



*Black on Black* 2017 mixed media on plywood 49 x 36 in.  
Courtesy of © John Mellencamp

**John Mellencamp: *Life, Death, Love and Freedom*  
On View: April 26 through June 2, 2018**

**New York, NY** – We are pleased to announce contemporary artist **John Mellencamp**'s new exhibition, ***Life, Death, Love and Freedom***, opening at **ACA Galleries** on **April 26, 2018** in New York. This is Mellencamp's second solo exhibition with the gallery, and will showcase two bodies of work: Mellencamp's sculptural *assemblages* and series of portraits.

Heavily influenced by the German Expressionists, such as Otto Dix and Max Beckmann, whose anguish over human brutality and corruption speaks to his deep feelings about social justice, Mellencamp's imagery takes its inspiration from the same sources as his music: the oppressive authority and social struggles of the working man and woman. But though that foundation is German, the evolved result is decidedly American, with the brash and snappy visual rhythms of our streets, lives, politics and passions. This can be seen in ***Black on Black***, 2017, which repurposes text from iconic American literature and film, including *The Fugitive Kind*, directed by Sidney Lumet, *Cool Hand Luke*, directed by Stuart Rosenberg, and *Tortilla Flat*, written by John Steinbeck.

An exhibition highlight is ***A Bed of Nails***, 2017, a dimly-rendered portrait of American actor **James Dean**, the canvas embedded with a grid of nails with a line of wire surrounding the nails to frame the subject's face. Widely credited with influencing the development of rock and roll music, Dean – like Mellencamp – was born in Indiana and remains an iconic counter-cultural figure.



*"Mellencamp paints handsomely grotesque portraits in oil that are as solemn and stirring as his hit songs are catchy and inspirational -- depicting existential scenes and human beings ridden with the angst of the everyday"*  
notes critic **Doug McClemont**.

Another highlight is **Jack of Hearts**, a large-scale assemblage depicting the Marlboro Man, common in tobacco advertising campaigns the latter half of the Twentieth Century. Often rendered as a rugged cowboy in nature with a lit cigarette, the figure quickly became an iconic representation of masculinity and the American heartland, as well as an important trope within art history. A thick shadow at the top of the painting suggests the brim of the figure's cowboy hat, on which sits four packs of American Spirit cases – and the *LIFE Magazine* logo, while in the bottom corner of the painting sits a jack of hearts from a deck of playing cards.

John Mellencamp has exhibited his work in solo exhibitions at **The Butler Institute of American Art**, Youngstown, Ohio; the **Tennessee State Museum**, Nashville; **The Museum of Art – Deland**, Florida; and the **Morris Museum of Art**, Augusta, Georgia.

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### **About John Mellencamp**

Born and raised in Seymour, Indiana, John Mellencamp is an acclaimed singer-songwriter and musician, as well as an accomplished painter and long-time activist. Mellencamp started painting at an early age, influenced by his mother, also an artist. Mellencamp studied briefly at the Arts Student League in New York, where he discovered the work of Twentieth-Century Modernists. As his musical career flourished, Mellencamp began to paint earnestly in the 1980s with an early affinity for portraiture influenced by the works of Otto Dix and Max Beckmann. He is a member of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, a Grammy winner, recipient of The Woody Guthrie Award, the John Steinbeck Award, ASCAP Foundation's Champion Award, the Americana Music Association's Lifetime Achievement Award, the Founders Award, and co-founder of Farm Aid – a nonprofit organization whose mission is to keep family farmers on the land. [www.mellencamp.com](http://www.mellencamp.com) | [@johnmellencamp](https://twitter.com/johnmellencamp)

### **About ACA GALLERIES**

American Contemporary Art Gallery (ACA) was established in 1932 by Herman Baron. Artists Stuart Davis, Yasuo Kuniyoshi and Adolf Dehn were early members. At the time, ACA was one of only three galleries in New York primarily dedicated to exhibiting the work of American artists. For over 80 years, ACA has supported artists in diverse disciplines with singular points of view. The gallery has presented over 800 exhibitions and published over 400 books and catalogues. ACA continues its tradition of featuring artists whose talent transcends their nationality, race or gender by presenting monthly exhibitions, organizing traveling exhibitions, both nationally and internationally, and working closely with museums and private collectors to build collections. Today ACA continues to break new ground by representing and exhibiting distinguished artists and estates. The artistic and humanitarian mission of the gallery still endures, and ACA is committed to upholding this tradition by continuing to support artists from around the world in their commitment to make significant and brave contributions to the field. [www.acagalleries.com](http://www.acagalleries.com) | [@acagalleries1932](https://twitter.com/acagalleries1932)

### **ACA Galleries**

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### **Hours**

Tuesday – Saturday: 11am – 6pm  
Sunday – Monday: By Appointment Only

### **Press Contact**

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