FIRST AMONG EQUALS
MARCH 14–AUGUST 12, 2012

OPENING PROGRAM + WALKTHROUGH:
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 14, 6:30PM
WITH CURATORS ALEX KLEIN AND KATE KRACZON
OPENING RECEPTION: WEDNESDAY, APRIL 4, 6-8PM
WALKTHROUGH at 5PM (ICA MEMBERS ONLY)

PHILADELPHIA, PA
In a moment of unprecedented social connection, how do artists work together outside of their individual practices? Focusing on Los Angeles and Philadelphia, First Among Equals considers the various modes that contemporary artists have developed to work with their peers and reach across generations. Cooperative, if at times contentious, contributions to the show include performance, publications, curatorial projects, and artworks that incorporate the work of other artists. Who comes first in these relationships? By highlighting the dynamics of negotiation, dialogue, influence, contingency, and competition at work in contemporary artistic practice, First Among Equals resists the notion that collaboration equals consensus.

First Among Equals draws on the respective communities of the exhibition’s curators. Philadelphia participants include Bodega, Alex Da Corte, Extra Extra, and Marginal Utility and Machete Group. Los Angeles participants include Kathryn Andrews, P&Co., Mateo Tannatt, and Wu Tsang.

Kathryn Andrews (b. 1973, Mobile, Alabama; lives Los Angeles) creates work that raises questions of authenticity and display while adroitly testing the boundaries of authorship and autonomy. In Serial Killer (2012) a chain link sculpture sits uncomfortably close to another artist’s work; periodically throughout the exhibition the sculpture will select its next “victim” and be repositioned with the help of a living statue. Hanging on the center wall of the gallery, Massacre (Selection) (2012) frames an existing work from the 1980s by the conceptual artist Allen Ruppersberg with Andrews’ own contribution, literally extending and incorporating the earlier piece as artistic material.

Bodega (founded 2010, Philadelphia: Elyse Derosia, Ariela Kuh, Lydia Okrent, James Pettengill, Eric Veit) is a hub for performance, exhibitions, and self-publishing. Bodega’s physical presence within ICA consists of dowels draped with black-and-white Xeroxed posters. These evoke a series of performances that will take place over the run of the show by Xavier Cha, Yve Laris Cohen, Nick Paparone and Pooneh Maghazehe, Elizabeth Orr, and Jen Rosenblit, who submitted the poster images that will serve as backdrops. Bodega has also invited some of their peers at independent and artist-run spaces to reflect on the everyday experience of their work in take-away pamphlets.

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Alex Da Corte (b. 1980 Camden, New Jersey; lives Philadelphia) expresses his Pop sensibility through a barrage of mass culture references, often using unconventional materials (such as soda and shampoo) as well as the work of other artists. **SCENE TAKE SIX** (2012) is a two-sided, day-and-night, tableau that hugs a curved free-standing wall. The installation incorporates actual works by Sam Anderson, Anna Betbeze, Strauss Bourque-LaFrance, Paul Cowan, Andrew Gbur, Brendan Lynch, and Paul Thek as well as “dedications” made by Da Corte to artists Polly Apfelbaum, Jim Hodges, Karen Kilimnik, and Rory Mulligan. Permission was sought from all of the artists, their galleries, and lenders—including for one of Da Corte’s own early sculptures from a private collection.

**Extra Extra** (founded 2010, Philadelphia: Derek Frech, Joe Lacina, Daniel Wallace) is an artist-run gallery space that often focuses on digital and web-based artwork. For **First Among Equals**, Extra Extra collaborated with artist John Transue and virtual architect Laura Nejman to create an interactive virtual museum. “Lock in” your body to view the space and navigate digital galleries that have been installed with Transue’s artwork curated by Extra Extra. Paintings, sculptures, and installations are filled with sly references to corporate logos as well as portals that open onto surreal environments beyond the virtual gallery walls.

**Marginal Utility** (founded 2009, Philadelphia: Yuka Yokoyama and David Dempewolf) has exhibited dozens of artists in their Philadelphia space while publishing **Machete Magazine** and providing a platform for **Machete Group** (founded 2009, Philadelphia: Avi Alpert, Alexi Kukuljevic, and Gabriel Rockhill) to run participatory symposia. Their ICA projects are structured around a physically malleable gallery space that can adapt artists’ architectural needs. Changing throughout the run of **First Among Equals**, the gallery will host rotating solo exhibitions curated by Marginal Utility. Artists include Abigail DeVille, John Hawke, Richard Harrod, Alexi Kukuljevic, Daniel Lefcourt, Jayson Scott Musson, and Mike Vass. These exhibitions serve as a foil for **Dictionary of the Present**, Machete Group’s ongoing series of discussions with help from **Shifter Magazine** (Sreshta Rit Premnath and Matt Metzger), Mashinka Firunts, Danny Snelson, and The Order of the Third Bird, as well as posters designed by Emilio Macchia and Luisa Lorenza Corna.

**P&CO.** (founded 2009, Los Angeles: Aram Moshyedi, Carter Mull, Jesse Willenbring) produces a bi-annual newspaper that loosely revolves around an art historically evocative name, such as “Joan” or “Marcel,” to frame a dialogue with their peers and other contributors. For **First Among Equals** P&Co. produced seven prints based on a series of discussions organized between artists and other cultural producers in Warsaw, Zurich, Los Angeles, Providence, and New York. Working within the gridded format of the broadsheet, the prints feature selections from transcriptions of the discussions as well as vinyl picture discs of the remixed audio. These tracks can be accessed on ICA’s website and on iPod touches (available for check out at the front desk). At the entrance to the gallery, visitors are also encouraged to peruse and take home a copy of **P&Co. Loves**, a special issue specifically created for ICA. Collaborators on this project are AP News, David...
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**MATEO TANNATT** (b. 1979, Los Angeles; lives Los Angeles) is an artist whose work often addresses the makeshift and theatrical nature of the studio. In *Studio Complex / Beardsley Farm / Heaven’s Gate* (2012) a scaffolding structure creates an open network of support for works by other artists, along with a video by Pauline (Tannatt’s alias for his curatorial projects and collaborative undertakings) featuring the actress JingJing Dan. To create this mise-en-scène Tannat offered up to collaborators his signature yellow dot pattern and a textile, produced with artist Jesse Willenbring as literal material for other artists to work with—see *Studio Complex / The Yellow Book* (2012). Finding his own inspiration in the projects of figures such as Frederick Kiesler, Daniel Buren, and Aubrey Beardsley, Tannat relinquishes full control and invites artists Darren Bader, Tina Braegger, Barry Macgregor Johnston, Federico Spadoni, and clothing designer Nancy Soto each to fashion new objects, strategies, and gestures within his work.

**WU TSANG** (b. 1982 Worcester, Massachusetts; lives Los Angeles) is an artist, performer, and filmmaker whose work engages issues of mediation, community, and activism. Tsang is the only artist to contribute existing works to *First Among Equals*. In a special event at International House on July 25th, Tsang will screen his film *Wildness* (2012). The film reflects on the relationships and unexpected tensions that resulted when Tsang and friends throw a weekly queer art party at a longstanding Los Angeles Latina transgender bar, The Silver Platter. *The Fist is Still Up* (2010)—a reworking of the bar’s neon signage—originally hung in an adjacent storefront that Tsang established with other artists to provide legal advice and health services. On July 26th Tsang will also collaborate on a performative event with Wendy Yao (Ooga Booga) and invited guests Ashland Mines, DJ Venus X, and Leilah Weintraub.

In addition to participants invited by the curators, each artist or group has included additional artists and cultural producers in their projects, highlighting both overlapping networks of peers as well as an expanded, intergenerational notion of community and influence. These include:

Sam Anderson, AP News, Polly Apfelbaum, David Armstrong, Darren Bader, Tenzing Barshee, Anna Betbeze, Strauss Bourque-LaFrance, Tina Braegger, Marco Kane Braunschweiler, Bureau of Loose Associations, Xavier Cha, Ben Chapman, Chris Cechin, Jay Chung, Yve Laris Cohen, Tony Cokes,
Related programming will be organized by Wendy Yao (Ooga Booga) as a lead-in to her installation at ICA in fall 2012, *Excursus III.*

The exhibition is organized by Program Curator Alex Klein and Assistant Curator Kate Kraczon. It will be accompanied by a catalogue documenting the many performances, events, and conversations that will take place over its five-month run.

ICA acknowledges an anonymous donor for generous support of this exhibition. Programming associated with this exhibition has been supported by the Spiegel Fund to Support Contemporary Culture and Visual Arts and the Christian R. and Mary F. Lindback Foundation. ICA acknowledges Barbara B. & Theodore R. Aronson for their sponsorship of the exhibition publication. Additional funding has been provided by The Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation; The Dietrich Foundation, Inc.; the Overseers Board for the Institute of Contemporary Art; friends and members of ICA; and the University of Pennsylvania. General operating support provided, in part, by the Philadelphia Cultural Fund. ICA receives state arts funding support through a grant from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, a state agency funded by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency. ICA thanks La Colombe for providing complimentary coffee at public events. We acknowledge Le Méridien Philadelphia as our official Unlock Art™ Partner Hotel.