

For Immediate Release

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DIRTY HANDS: THE ART & CRIMES OF DAVID CHOE

a documentary film by Harry Kim

opens in Los Angeles on April 30, 2010

David Choe's art exhibit *Nothing to Declare* opens in LA on April 23

Filmmaker HARRY KIM and Artist DAVID CHOE are available for interviews

Upper Playground is proud to present the Los Angeles Theatrical premiere of **DIRTY HANDS**, a documentary by Harry Kim. The film will open on Friday, April 30 at the Laemmle Sunset 5 Theater in West Hollywood.

Director Harry Kim spent eight tumultuous years following a young near-schizophrenic street artist, David Choe, who devises numerous criminal schemes that make it possible for him to hitchhike across the globe. Choe skirts the legal constraints of society to "freely" create his art. His nonchalant law-breaking style lands him in jail several times, leading to his eventual demise in solitary confinement in a Tokyo prison cell. He resurfaces with a radically religious agenda and returns home with hope to overcome his criminal temptations and repair his severed relationships.

The filmmaker (who has been friends with Choe since they met at the Korean-American teenage summer camp in 1990) captures the complexity of David's life through a collage work of archived childhood home videos, still photographs, intimate artwork, animation, and eight years of footage shot on the road with the artist.

DIRTY HANDS premiered at the 2008 Los Angeles Film Festival, and it won the Grand Jury Prize at the San Diego Asian Film Festival. The film also screened at the Hawaii International Film Festival and the San Francisco International Asian American Film Festival.

David Choe is returning to Los Angeles (his hometown), after a six year absence, with an art exhibit at Lazarides (April 23 - May 23), the gallery that brought Outsider artists to the masses. Launching on April 23, Lazarides will host 4 unique exhibitions in a secret 8,000 square foot venue in Beverly Hills. With an already reputable relationship with the US, three sell-out exhibitions — Banksy's Barely Legal (2006), Antony Micallef's Impure Idols (2007) and Outsiders (2008)—Lazarides is returning stateside with an impressive line-up of solo and group exhibitions.

Information about the artist at:

<http://www.davidchoe.com/>

Film's web site:

<http://dirtyhandsmovie.com/>

92 min. In English USA

To request a screener for review / interview purposes, please contact Sasha Berman at Showtell Media at SashaBerman@mac.com, or 310-450-5571.

WHY I'M MAKING A MOVIE ABOUT DAVE

I've known David Choe for over half my life. We met at a Korean-American teenage summer camp back in 1990. Back then, the boys were either introverted nerds or all about hip hop and R&B. By default, Dave, his brother Jimmy, and I, the three metal heads of Camp Conifer, stuck out like crazy circus freaks. It's because we knew that G'n'R could rock your shit better than Toni Tony Tone ever could. We've been friends ever since.

As a hood kid, David was obsessed with travel, escape, art, banging drums and crime. His charisma and endless energy to plot and scheme was contagious. I knew early on that I had to document our journeys through the city streets and around the globe. The perfect opportunity came while I was in film school. In 2000, I put out short film, "Whales and Orgies", and it got good reviews which prompted me to make an extended, 30 minute version with more art, more crime, his outlook and motivation in life, interviews with his girlfriend and friends.

Of course, when I was wrapping up the edit for this extended piece in 2003, David went to jail (again!). I thought, "no big deal, he's done this before". I guess several months alone in a Tokyo prison cell will change you. He came out radically different with a new take on life that was worth capturing. This opened up a whole new dimension to my film and thus prompted the making of the feature to share Dave's creative life, a burgeoning career and struggling with the consequences of hasty decisions.



IT'S FUNNY CUZ IT'S TRUE: DAVE - ISMS

"TV news and stories I hear from friends, I write 'em down, twist them with some fucked up things I think about doing. Like raping, murder, or stealing, depending on my mood, I play it out on paper."

"I justified all my own bullshit to serve my needs, I had a whole Robin Hood complex going, steal from the rich and giving to the poor (the poor happened to be me). I've never said no to crime... I always get what I want... and it always ends up working out good for me."

"After my 4th bike got stolen, I said fuck this, and continued down that vicious cycle like a child who gets raped or molested only to grow into an adult that molests other little kids. It's a learned habit... a sort of rite of passage. I've stolen and given away so many bikes, I don't know how many I took."

"I'm not Robin Hood. I'm a fucking idiot."

"[God] is a shapeshifter. Sometimes he's a four foot pygmy leading me out of the jungle, sometimes he's a dirty whore telling me about her fucked up life, sometimes he looks like my friend that betrayed me... by being lazy and ignoring me."

"Finally, I get asked to show in New York, and it's for urine drawings. It doesn't get more art fag than that. I'm king of the art fags. I'm excited and I just can't hide it."

"Billions of years ago there was nothing then a big explosion happened and now you're beating off to the internet, eating junk, playing video games, buying dandruff shampoo, teeth whitening toothpaste and doing sit ups on a weird rubber thing you bought from an infomercial for \$49.99... Who planned this?"

SCENES FROM DIRTY HANDS



THE CREW

Director/Producer



Harry Kim was born in Ann Arbor, Michigan in 1976 and grew up in Los Angeles. He studied media theory at Pomona College and received his MFA at USC School of Cinema-Television. While at USC, he directed and took "Whales And Orgies" and "Rigor Man Scores" through the festival circuit. He also created a 16mm film called "The Great Poet" based on Charles Bukowski's short story. Harry stars in two seasons of VBS.tv's adventure series, called Thumbs Up! and hitchhikes his way across America. Harry, often acting as a one man film crew, followed subject David Choe around the globe for seven years for his feature documentary, *Dirty Hands: The Art & Crimes of David Choe*.

Producer



Elizabeth Ai grew up in Los Angeles and attended the University of Southern California. She went on to work for New Line Cinema, Merv Griffin Entertainment, and William Morris, and in 2003, she founded and continues to run the nonprofit group Reaching to Embrace Arts. Since then, she has written, produced, and directed several short films, including "PostGen: Be the Revolution" and "Ride On!" In 2006, she joined with Harry Kim and David Choe to work on the original series "Thumbs Up" for VBS.tv.

Editors



Daniel Freedman started his film career at the ripe age of 15 by editing homemade kung fu films he starred in. He attended the Museum School of Fine Arts in Boston and Art Center College of Design in Pasadena in which he proudly dropped out of both to pursue his creative endeavors in the real world. He landed his first gig with Lions Gate and Twisted Pictures to edit for the feature film, *Catacombs*. Daniel is currently cutting documentary work, writing and traveling by way of hitchhiking.

Heather Lenz is thrilled to be editing *Dirty Hands*. She recently received a grant from the Japan US Friendship Commission for a feature documentary she is directing, editing, and co-producing about Yayoi Kusama and her contributions to the sixties New York art world.



WINNER!
Grand Jury Prize
San Diego Asian
Film Festival



Most Attended
Documentary
Los Angeles
Film Festival



WINNER!
Special Jury Prize
San Francisco
International
Asian Film
Festival



Official Selection
San Francisco
Asian American
Film Festival



Official Selection
Hawaii International
Film Festival

DIRTY HANDS REVIEWS



June 27, 2008

Choe, at root a Los Angeles tagger whose often elaborate works can be baroquely figurative, gleefully obscene and/or adolescently indulgent (he provided the art work for the bedroom of "Juno's" pregnant heroine), is unapologetic about his part-time criminality.

And he's done his time: A semi-accidental assault on a police officer in Tokyo cost Choe three months in jail and an acute revaluation of his art and purpose. A painter who would punch himself repeatedly in the nose in order to draw blood with which to color his work (we watch him do it) and who goes dinosaur-hunting in the Congo, has over the last seven years gone through a series of profound transformations in terms of art and religion; he's progressed from spray-can bomber and sex-mag illustrator to respected muralist, portraitist and graphic novelist.

But nowhere does one get the sense Choe has sold out, regardless of what he says about himself. And all the while, Kim has been there. Fortunately for all of us, the time wasn't wasted.

The film is about as indulgent as Choe is, rampaging around the globe and its subject's mind and defying common convention, much like the artist himself. But there are moments of bliss, such as the moment when Choe, with a spray can in each hand, executes with ambidextrous virtuosity an ornate face on a blank white wall. It may be illegal, but it's exhilarating.

-John Anderson



June 18, 2008

CRITIC'S PICK DIRTY HANDS: THE ART AND CRIMES OF DAVID CHOE (USA) "There's a downside to making your dreams come true," sayeth the titular "outlaw" graphic designer, and as long as it sticks to memorializing the feckless life and career that ran up against that seemingly inevitable moment of clarity, Harry Kim's tagalong documentary has nearly as much run-amuck energy to burn as its self-destructive, supertalented subject. Then, after an hour or so of watching kleptomaniac tagger, muralist and magazine illustrator Choe say and do and (most urgently) paint whatever comes into his explosive head, there come — as an only possibly unintended consequence of so much self-will run riot — three months in a Tokyo jail cell (on assault charges) and the transformative epiphany at which those most invested, emotionally and otherwise, in the artist and his renegade career can only shake their bemused heads and avert their eyes.



July 2, 2008

Amazingly, Kim is there from the beginning of Choe's unusual career, catching the tagger as he stands on the roof of a car to create a series of whales on the side of the freeway in his early twenties, then capturing an older but not necessarily wiser Choe lamenting on how he's sold out by doing graffiti for corporate presentations. The thrill may have subsided for Choe, who in one scene punches his own nose repeatedly to get the proper shade of crimson, yet watching him work, illegally or not, is invigorating. The film's messy aesthetic seems all too true to the artist, who, if he didn't insist on defying categorization, would be classified in parts as self-destructive, misogynistic, cynical and yes, immensely talented.

A little past midway through Harry Kim's documentary *Dirty Hands: The Art & Crimes of David Choe*, a list is ticked off of the number of diagnoses artist David Choe has been given after receiving psychotherapy. And while the list is long, getting ever more serious which each disease added on top of the last, none of it is actually surprising at all.

David Choe has A.D.D., clinical depression, bipolar disease, kleptomania, and gambling, and sexual addictions. After witnessing Choe in all his madness throughout the film, this list merely becomes a statement of the obvious, finally realized in institutionalized terms. But hearing them said about Choe doesn't make them seem as negative as usual, probably because all of it undoubtedly is what makes Choe the genius talent he is.

This type of contradiction found in Choe – the artful brilliance versus the angsty arrogance – is portrayed wonderfully through Kim's work by creating a narrative that too is spastic and disorienting. By interspersing one moment in which Choe spits out that his graffiti and stealing are a way of claiming things for himself with another moment where he solemnly shows his sadly hopeful drawings from his time in prison, Kim is pulling audiences in to understand this strange and controversial, but so inherently human, life of David Choe.

While Choe's flawed idiosyncrasies and faults are all on display in *Dirty Hands*, so too are his most positive traits. Choe makes for a great documentary subject; he is unabashedly honest but reflective, unapologetic but personable. Passionate about his art, and those he loves. At one point, upon remembering what was going through his mind when he awaiting his release date from jail, Choe said he wanted to make sure he'd be back for his brother's birthday and for Vietnamese New Year. His knack for dry jokes lightens the film throughout and his constant need for excitement makes for fun and unusual adventures.

In portraying both these reflective and mischievous sides of Choe, *Dirty Hands* refuses to give sympathy to or apologize for his eccentricities. "We embrace this character in all his imperfections in order to patch together a true portrait," said Ai.

Nevertheless, the film can still make its subject proud, for just like Choe, *Dirty Hands* wraps skill, fun, desire, and honesty all into one to loudly state the fact that sometimes madness just creates the best art.

Giant Robot

April 3, 2008

Harry Kim puts it together with tons of footage from all over the world. He's been following David for years. It covers his story from the days before I met him which was in maybe 1997. It's been a while, and somehow there's photos and footage from that period of time.

What does this mean for Harry? His technique, choices of edits, how things are arranged, and the bits of filmmaking technique puts him on the map. Yes, you'd think Harry is Dave's sidekick, but with this you gotta look at him as being a guy who can put together a production, and do a good job with it.

It has drama that goes up and down in different parts of the doc, from going to Africa, to prison, and much more. It contains a ton of interviews and imagery that keeps this pic moving. It's going to be a hot one and people are going to love this. The thing is, I know David, and what you don't see and won't get to know, is fodder for the next doc or story when you talk to him. I won't give away too much, since you need to get somewhere and see this when it comes out. This is an early sneak peek.

-Eric Nakamura
Editor of Giant Robot



July 2, 2008

One of the films that has stayed with us since hitting up the LAFF is the rabble rouser *Dirty Hands: The Art and Crimes of David Choe*. A story close to where our hearts would be if we hadn't already sold them to the devil. It's your average documentary about a struggling artist that robs, steals, vandalizes, causes pain, and is an all around son-of-a-bitch, and yet gets paid mad money for his genius.

From the beginning of the movie, you get that sink-or-swim introduction. It's guerilla style filming starting back from 2000 and on to the present day. What you see isn't just a boy fucking around, but the growth of a boy to a man who continues to fuck around and take his chances despite all the shit that's happened to him as a result of his recklessness. Choe is one of those people who's life is so intense that at it's best, you can't help feeling happy for the guy. And at it's worst, makes you feel a hell of a lot better about yourself and your problems.

Be on the lookout for it at an indie theater near you or in stores on DVD sometime in the future. Trust us yo, this shit is worth it.

DAVE'S CLIENTS

"Hire me and I'll do anything... if you don't like your ex-husband, I'll throw a pie in his face."

-David Choe



For a full listing of David's clients, go to: www.davidchoe.com

SAMPLING OF CLIENT WORK

Cover Art By David Choe =
5 million Copies Sold



Jay-Z & Linkin Park
Collision Course
Multi-Platinum-Selling
Album

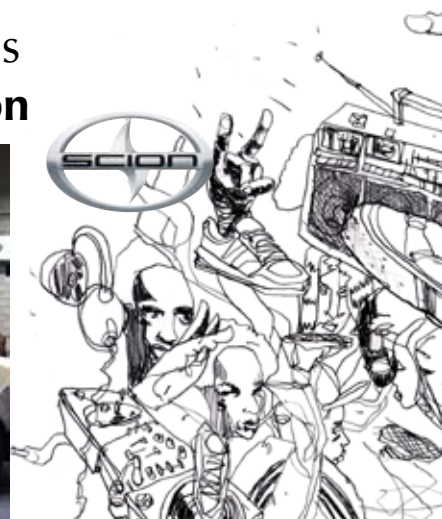
Cover art and all
illustrations on the CD
jacket and interior
by David Choe



Sold-out limited edition David
Choe-designed **Converse** sneakers



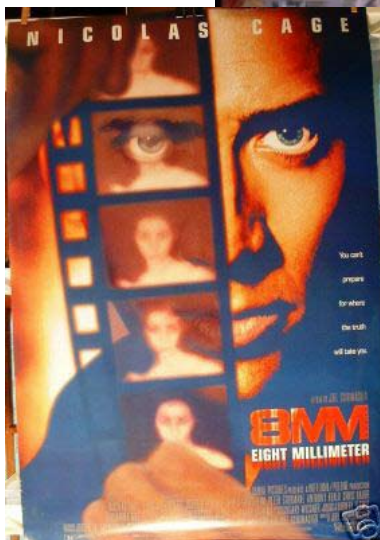
David designs
a car for **Scion**





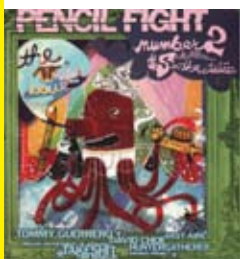
"I guess when Hollywood needs to decorate the rooms of troubled teenage girls, they come to me"

-David Choe



David's artwork featured
Juno (2007)
The Glass House (2001)
8mm (1999)

PRESS



Sell-out shows on view this week are for the Los Angeles street artist, David Choe, who has sold more than 45 works priced at up to £40,000 each in exhibitions at the Lazarides Gallery's two branches in London and Newcastle.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/arts/main.jhtml?xml=/arts/2008/03/18/bamarket118.xml>



Artist runs the gamut of food, sex and death

Mar 12 2008 by Sam Wonfor, The Journal UK



Art can be anarchy. Ben Robinson hears all about a one-off artist with a Murderous Heart.

US-BORN David Choe is the creator of a powerful new series of works currently on show at Lazarides Galleries in both Newcastle and London.

Choe's multi disciplinary display Murderous Heart, including the work If It Hurts, I'll Hit It Harder, is being exhibited at Lazarides 77 Quayside until April 25.

Employing a spectrum of mediums, Choe's award-winning work portrays anything from beautiful girls with manga lips to guerrilla machine-men wielding street weapons.

His style ranges through Basquiat graffiti, manga realism and Baconesque figuration. While he lists his influences as food and sex, in that order, Choe draws his energy from a heavily-conflicted cultural and sexual identity.

Born in 1976, raised in Los Angeles and of Korean descent, the artist describes his exhibition as that of an angry teenager, adding "except I'm 31, so more like a gay dude that spent his whole life in the closet and then just came out to his friends and family and they all reject him, so now he's an angry gay dude and has to make paintings to express his angry gayness."

His aggression is also fuelled by his heritage. "I'm Korean so all we care about is revenge.





The Art and Crimes of David Choe

What People are Saying:

“... beautifully disturbing... breaking with any kind of conventional narrative... Edward Hopperesque... luminous drawings and acerbic beat writing...”

-Bizaar Magazine

“Much of this work was fueled by anger, torment, despair, sexual angst and bad metal.”

-Hyphen Magazine

“I like David’s art a lot.”

-Heidi Fleiss

“Beautifully printed L.A. love affairs and New York violence made him Vice’s ‘Artist of the Year,’ and *Trippin’* Magazine’s ‘Kooreen Human Bee-in for the new Millennium,’ It also made him an arrogant cocksucker.”

-Vice Magazine

“His whole schtick is all about being this crazy, reprobate gutter-urchin who runs around stealing and spray-painting cocks on buildings and snorting dirty coke. And he’s celebrated for it... It’s not like he simply had to use piss to get his precious filth out into the world he wanted to use his own piss cause that’s what someone trying to look like a crazy artist would do. It’s contrived, idiotic and indicative of just how fucking stupid we’ve become. Is this what we want from our artists? If so, we’re a bunch of degenerates!”

-The Comics Journal Message Board (TCJ)

“I only wonder if his Japanese prison story’s gotten him laid yet...”

-Dirk Deppey (TCJ)

“Choe is Basquiat. He will be Warhol and he will be Picasso. He’ll be influencing the nubile minds of art school freshman girls in the year 2100 with his fucked up shit. Ejaculating cocks and whatnot. Inspiring!”

-Brian Wood, comic book artist & writer

“From what I understand the guy was a complete asshole in every way imaginable, and had it coming for him (regarding David’s Tokyo incarceration).”

-www.milkandcookies.com

“The work looks labored yet reckless—so fast but so densely detailed it’s as though he drew frantically as events unfolded; or as if he were fighting to keep up with his stream of consciousness...”

-*Wired Magazine*

“I like how you use macaroni in your art.”

-Leelee Sobieski

“Stories of urban heartbreak, obsession and absurdity are frenetically sketched and written. They suck you in and make you laugh out loud.”

-*JANE Magazine*

“Secretly romantic.”

-*Urb Magazine*

“He doesn’t seem genuine at all. Unless being a genuine asshole counts...”

-Barry Rodges (TCJ)

“Watching that documentary just makes me want to smack him like a red headed step-child. He’s a walking living ‘extreme Mountain Dew’ commercial.”

-Aeron Alfrey (TCJ)

“If you’re a fan of David Choe then you have to check out this video trailer for an upcoming full-length documentary that Harry Kim is putting together. It’s absolutely amazing, and captures David’s spirit and energy to a tee. We can’t wait to see the completed film. If it’s 1/10th as good as this trailer, it may well be one of the best graffiti-related films ever made.”

-The Wooster Collective

“A real live genius... vomiting over everything around him.”

-www.neverhappened.org

“I equally pity him and am annoyed by him... has he done anything near the level of Kabuki? Anything remotely close? No? Then shut the fuck up. Done anything with the emotion of *ULTIMATE SPIDERMAN*? No? Then shut the fuck up! Six months from now when he’s sitting around wondering what happened, [to his failed art career] I hope he sees the Trent D’arby segment of MTV’s one hit wonder special and goes: oh shit... that’s me!”

-Brian Bendis, writer of *Spiderman*