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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Charlie James Gallery is delighted to present the exhibition:

WILLIAM POWHIDA – *POSSIBILITIES FOR REPRESENTATION*

APRIL 17TH – MAY 22, 2021

OPEN BY APPOINTMENT

Charlie James Gallery is delighted to present *Possibilities for Representation*, William Powhida's fifth solo show at the gallery, opening April 17th, 2021.

Partially conceived for *Twenty Twenty*, an exhibition at the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, *Possibilities for Representation* is a large-scale installation of over 70 paintings organized along the fault lines of U.S. electoral politics. Over the course of six months the artist revised the installation in response to the outcome of the U.S. general election and the subsequent events following Biden-Harris victory that shape potential trajectories for future outcomes as imagined by writers and film-makers.

For this iteration of the installation the artist has added a new introductory acknowledgments text-panel that reflects on the change of venue from a non-profit museum setting to a commercial gallery along with several new portraits and landscapes drawn from the media and film. The installation and its photographic references blur the lines between perception and reality by drawing analogies around the idea of performance. As a timeline from the colonial era to the far future, chronological continuity is interrupted by representations from different eras that point to the continuous revision of history relative to changing conditions in the present.

During the first iterations of the installation, all of the paintings were made explicitly-available for sale during the course of the exhibition at the Aldrich, which made literal the role of campaign finance and money on the long primary season, which ended just as the pandemic upended social norms and routines. The onset of the pandemic delayed the original exhibition date by six months, which the artist incorporated as spatial distortion of time. As the George Floyd/Breonna Taylor protests erupted against countervailing forces of white supremacy in Michigan and conservative states, Powhida organized his selection of images relative to a centrist imaginary of bipartisanship that perhaps functions more as a visualization of what whiteness looks like as a cultural and political narrative. Issues of class, race, gender, and political allegiance have continued to define competing and oppositional national media

narratives that cast political ideologies along radical axes relative to the core of whiteness that dominates U.S. politics and society.

Possibilities for Representation isn't a map of what the choices presented to the American people actually are, but rather how they can feel in a deeply divided country grappling with its historical foundations as a settler-colonial state founded on individual liberties and private property laws with an ever changing idea of what representational democracy is, or who it actually represents. The exhibition also includes a new diagram that expands on the artist's initial studio sketches about the political narratives developing around Democratic primary against the backdrop of the emerging pandemic. It is less rooted in rigorous research than the artist's imperfect and subjective understanding of the flow and drifts of power throughout history that inform present decisions, which in the moment can feel consequential until they aren't. The drawing speculates on where our political choices might lead through popular culture depictions of the future.

Also included in the exhibition are reproductions of two of Powhida's previous works from his 2019 exhibition, *Complicities* at Postmasters. The two prints, *Koch Industries* and the *Sackler Family Tree*, are representative of a less subjective, and more rigorous approach to reporting on the connections between capital and culture. The exhausting research and detail of these works provide another way of thinking about the role art can play in society, while the larger installation takes a step back to examine the dichotomies, parallels, and roles individuals play in the cultural narratives that shape our understanding of society. Included among the reproductions are prints of portraits that were sold prior to and during the exhibition that will be available as a durational edition, and possibly another form of referendum on the popularity of political figures as cultural icons that become disengaged from their reality to effect change through policy.

William Powhida (b. 1976 NY) earned his BFA from Syracuse University and his MFA from Hunter College, NY. He has exhibited nationally and internationally in New York, Los Angeles, Seattle, London, Madrid, Miami, Chicago, Copenhagen, Mexico City, Dublin and other locales. His work has been discussed in a wide range of publication including The New York Times, Artforum, Art in America, The Brooklyn Rail, Art News, Art Info, Artnet, Hyperallergic, and others. Residencies include The Lower East Side Printshop, the John Michael Kohler Art Center, the Headlands Center for the Arts, and Casa Maauad in Mexico City. Powhida's work resides in the permanent collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Henry Art Gallery Seattle, the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, the Orange County Museum, the Crocker Art Museum, the 21c Museum, and the JP Morgan & Chase Collection, among others. He is represented in NY by Postmasters Gallery and in Los Angeles by Charlie James Gallery. He lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.