



## VISITOR GUIDE

### DISCOVERING AYN: RAMMELLZEE & GOTHIC FUTURISM

Rammellzee (stylized RAMM:ΣLL:ZΣΣ, which for him it was an equation, not a name; 1960–2010) began his artistic practice in the mid-1970s as a teenage graffiti writer on the New York City subway, becoming part of the emergent street culture of hip-hop, alongside pioneers like Basquiat, Keith Haring, and Lee Quinones. Rammellzee was also a painter, performance artist, art theoretician, sculptor and a hip hop musician. *The Private Collection of the Magistrate* (1982) is a 10 part installation of “resin frescos”. The work was originally made by the late Gothic Futurism visionary for his exhibition at New York’s Gallozzi-La Placa Gallery in 1984. For these 10 cases, Rammellzee used acrylic, spray paint, epoxy resin, and ink on wood. Rammellzee used fluorescent yellow paint that glows when using black light.

Ramm -as he became known- created a personal mythology, drawn from philology, astrophysics, and medieval history. In 1979, the artist created his own philosophy and published *IONIC TREATISE: GOTHIC FUTURISM* which outlines a new “wild style” alphabetic system derived from gothic lettering. Inspired by an order of medieval monks whose mission was to subvert the hierarchy of those seeking to control language, Rammellzee’s text similarly attempts to democratize the process of communication.

Inside each of *The Private Collection*’s ten cases is one letter of the word *magistrate*, written in Rammellzee’s own script. It was primarily through graffiti tagging that Rammellzee aimed to empower those who had traditionally been ignored.

This setting is part of the AYN Foundation at Mana Contemporary, in partnership with Monira Foundation.

### ART & LANGUAGE. GOTHIC FUTURISM THEORY BY RAMMELLZEE

Rammellzee also created mixed-media compositions such as *The Only Way* (1982) and *Gothic Futurism Ikonoklast Panzerism Riddle Approach Reproach* (1983), which suggest cosmic maps of an imagined universe. He pursued this iconography throughout most of his career, employing fluorescent color paint, black light and found objects. This universe he created through mythological characters and theories, aimed

to subvert the power structures around the use of written language & language literacy through iconoclastic writing and futuristic narrative.

The term *Gothic Futurism* makes reference to medieval scribes, hip-hop and comic books, which influenced his work and ideas. Through his paintings, he challenged conventional methods of written communication, adding new meaning to it through visual compositions.

His application of storytelling began with the lettering style he used, called 'Wildstyle'. This was a form of graffiti that relates to the writing styles of Gothic monks, which Rammellzee referred to as "so unintelligible that their rulers could no longer read it". He then created his own mythological characters, which suggest new narratives around his ideas of linguistic domination and written communication.

## ABOUT DISCOVERING AYN



Learn more about the program and upcoming Discovering AYN events by scanning the QR code below using a mobile device:

Discovering AYN is a monthly program presented by Monira Foundation that welcomes the public into AYN Foundation long term presentations at Mana Contemporary to further learn and experience the practice of their featured artists through the scope of other artists and the multiple languages of art.

## MONIRA FOUNDATION

Monira Foundation, an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit institution, functions as a radical experimental laboratory, working in close collaboration with artists, curators, musicians, dancers, producers, and writers to conceive, realize, and present innovative projects in all media. Its aim is to spark, intensify, and promote an evolving cultural and social dialogue between creators, audiences, and institutions. Focusing on the unique potential of interdisciplinary work in a context distinct from the distracting pressures of academia and the market, Monira Foundation advances the practices and products of today's foremost artists, amplifying their contributions to communities both local and distant.