

POMONA COLLEGE MUSEUM OF ART

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The Pomona College Museum of Art Receives \$40,000 Grant from the Mike Kelley Foundation for the Arts for “Todd Gray: Euclidean Gris Gris”



Todd Gray, *Euclidean Gris Gris 3*, 2019, Three archival pigment prints in artist's frames and found frames, 58 ¼ x 69 ¼ x 4 ¼ in.
Courtesy of Todd Gray and David Lewis, New York

Claremont, Calif., April 18, 2019 – The Pomona College Museum of Art (PCMA) is one of 10 recipients to receive the 2019 Artist Project Grants from the Mike Kelley Foundation of Arts. The \$40,000 grant will support the Museum's fall 2019 exhibition, "Todd Gray: Euclidean Gris Gris" and the accompanying program series curated by Dr. Nana Adusei-Poku, "Longing on a Large Scale." The exhibition will be on view from September 3, 2019 to May 17, 2020.

The 2019 Artist Project Grants marks the fourth year of the organization's initiative. The grants reflect artist Mike Kelley's longstanding commitment to inventive and groundbreaking work and support dynamic collaborations in any medium between artists and Los Angeles nonprofit organizations—including projects by under-recognized artists or those that have proven difficult to undertake or fund due to their content, complexity, or other factors.

“This year’s recipients of the Artist Project Grants exemplify the innovation, rigor, and daring that the Mike Kelley Foundation for the Arts supports,” says Mary Clare Stevens, executive director of the Foundation. “It will be exciting to see the culmination of multi-year efforts from artists such as... Todd Gray, who will be mining his archives of photographs from West Africa and Europe for a large-scale exhibition.”

“It is an incredible honor to be the recipient of a Mike Kelley Foundation grant,” says Kathleen Howe, director of the Pomona College Museum of Art. “We felt that this exhibition and the associated programming resonated with Kelley’s protean artistic process and further that the Todd Gray project reflects our commitment, as an academic museum, to artists who address the compelling issues of our times.”

“I am thrilled that the Todd Gray exhibition was recognized by the Mike Kelley Foundation, a preeminent funder of visual arts in Los Angeles,” says Rebecca McGrew, PCMA senior curator. “Todd’s powerful work deserves this notice, and the series conceived by Adusei-Poku aligns with our focus on our community and creativity.”

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The project—exhibition, programming and publication—activates the Pomona College Museum of Art’s largest gallery throughout the 2019-2020 academic year. The exhibition, “Todd Gray: Euclidean Gris Gris,” consists of a site-specific wall drawing and an evolving selection of photographs from Gray’s ongoing artistic examination of the legacies of colonialism in Africa and Europe. A series of monthly programs, “Longing on a Large Scale,” expands the scope of the project. Both are documented in a publication.

Serving as a year-long artist residency, Gray’s project opens the space of his exhibition to introduce other artistic and creative voices. Inspired by Gray’s work, Dr. Nana Adusei-Poku, visiting professor in art history of the African diaspora at The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art in New York, is curating the “Longing on a Large Scale” programming. The nine monthly events originate from Gray’s techniques of deconstructing images, rupturing the body/mind and nature/culture binaries, and examining the intimacies of Black sociality. Gray’s work provides the catalyst for the series which explores contemporary creative, social, and artistic issues, including the possibilities of Black Liberation, the relationship between institutional politics and systemic exclusion, and the tension between performativity and performance in relationship to race and gender. “Longing on a Large Scale” invites artists, poets, activists and thinkers to unpack colonial paradigms and explore strategies of resistance.

Los Angeles-based artist Gray is known for photography, performance and sculptural works that explore contemporary and historical examinations of power in relationship to the African diaspora. His work consists primarily of photographs from his own archive juxtaposed with one another, and mounted within found frames as a structuring device. In recent installations, he pairs images of Michael Jackson (Gray was Jackson’s photographer in the 1980s) with

photographs of rural scenes in Ghana (where Gray maintains a studio) and formal gardens in Europe.

The exhibition is curated by McGrew and is accompanied by a publication designed by Kimberly Varella of Content Object, Los Angeles. It includes new essays by Nana Adusei-Poku and Neelika Jayawardane, and a conversation with Todd Gray and Carrie Mae Weems.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Todd Gray (b. 1954, Los Angeles) received both his BFA and MFA from the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts). Gray's work has been featured in solo and group exhibitions internationally. Gray's work will be included in the Whitney Biennial 2019, opening May 19. In 2018, his work was included in the major group exhibition "Michael Jackson: On the Wall" at London's National Portrait Gallery, which travels in 2019 to the Grand Palais, Paris; the Bundeskunsthalle, Bonn; and the Espoo Museum of Modern Art, Finland; and "Public Fiction: The Conscientious Objector" at the MAK Center for Art & Architecture in Los Angeles, where he directed a new durational performance. In 2017, Gray had two solo exhibitions: "My Life in the Bush with MJ and Iggy" at the Museum of the African Diaspora in San Francisco and "Pluralities of Being" at Gallery Momo in Johannesburg, South Africa. Gray has presented performance works at the Roy & Edna Disney Cal/Arts Theater, REDCAT, and as part of the 2016 Hammer Museum biennial exhibition "Made in LA: a, the, though, only" in Los Angeles. He is a 2018 John S. Guggenheim Fellow.

ABOUT THE MIKE KELLEY FOUNDATION FOR THE ARTS

The Mike Kelley Foundation for the Arts seeks to further Kelley's philanthropic work through grants for innovative projects that reflect his multifaceted artistic practice. The Foundation also preserves the artist's legacy more broadly and advances the understanding of his life and creative achievements. The artist established the nonprofit foundation in 2007. For additional information about the Foundation, please visit www.mikekelleyfoundation.org.

About Mike Kelley

The work of artist Mike Kelley (1954-2012) embraced performance, installation, drawing, painting, video, sound works and sculpture. Kelley began his career in the late 1970s with solo performances, image/text works, and gallery and site-specific installations. He came to prominence in the 1980s with a series of sculptures composed of common craft materials. The artist's later work addressed architecture and filmic narratives using the theory of repressed memory syndrome coupled with sustained biographic and pseudo-biographic inquiry into his own aesthetic and social history. Regarded as one of the most influential artists of our time, Kelley produced a body of deeply innovative work in dialogue with American popular culture as well as both modernist and alternative traditions.

ABOUT THE POMONA COLLEGE MUSEUM OF ART

The Pomona College Museum of Art, in Claremont, California, is the primary visual art facility of Pomona College. By presenting contemporary and historic works of art for exhibition and study, and placing those works in context, the museum engages, instructs and delights visitors from a range of audiences. For more information, call (909) 621-8283 or visit

www.pomona.edu/museum.