

POMONA COLLEGE MUSEUM OF ART

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POMONA COLLEGE MUSEUM OF ART PRESENTS "TODD GRAY: EUCLIDEAN GRIS GRIS"

September 3, 2019 – May 17, 2020



Todd Gray, *Euclidean Gris Gris (Gifty Versailles)*, 2019, Three archival pigment prints in artist frames and found frames, UV laminate, 48.5 x 38.5 x 3.5 in. Courtesy of the artist, David Lewis, New York, and Meliksetian Briggs

Claremont, Calif., June 11, 2019 – The Pomona College Museum of Art (PCMA) presents the exhibition "Todd Gray: Euclidean Gris Gris" on view from Sept. 3, 2019 to May 17, 2020. A public reception will take place from 3-5 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 14 and will be preceded by a conversation with artist Todd Gray and scholar Dr. Nana Adusei-Poku, moderated by Pomona College Professor of Art History Phyllis Jackson at 2 p.m. in the Museum Gallery.

“Todd Gray: Euclidean Gris Gris” is a year-long exhibition and residency at Pomona College that includes an evolving selection of new sculptural photographic works derived from Gray’s exploration of the legacies of colonialism in Africa and Europe and a site-specific wall drawing that abstractly evokes a relationship to African deities.

Based in Los Angeles, Gray is best known for photography, performance and sculptural works that address histories of power in relationship to the African diaspora. In the work at Pomona College, he combines photographs from his own archive—sembled over decades—and reconfigures and stacks the framed images on top of each other, resulting in layers that both reveal and conceal. The works include photographs of individuals and rural scenes in South Africa and Ghana (where Gray maintains a studio), formal imperial gardens in Europe, constellations and galaxies and images of rock and pop musicians Gray worked with in the 1970s and 1980s.

In a recent conversation with artist Carrie Mae Weems that will be published in the exhibition catalog, Gray notes his desire for the audience to locate themselves within the multidimensional aspects of his work:

“I wanted to make the viewer conscious of how they are active players in constructing meaning. We tend to think of the veracity of photography, and that it does not lie,” says Gray. “I wanted to shift that and bring attention to the frame, to ask what’s outside of this frame? Because this other frame is covering something up. Then, you are given the task to reconstruct and bring in your narrative, your history, your understanding of what you’re looking at, and then, to name and create a narrative.”

The title “Euclidean Gris Gris” references Gray’s examination of the historical constructs of the “logical” and geometrical gardens of Europe—an aesthetic manifestation of the idea of disembodied reason—and the “unpredictable” nature found in African landscapes. Gray deconstructs and layers images in order to rupture the body/mind and nature/culture binaries and examine the intimacies of Black sociality.

Gray’s exhibition and residency also includes a public program series curated by Nana Adusei-Poku, “Longing on a Large Scale.” This series invites artists, poets, activists and thinkers into a dialogue with intellectual and artistic discourses raised in Gray’s work including the possibilities of Black Liberation, the relationship between institutional politics and systemic exclusion, the role of art and the imaginary and various attempts to build communities beyond the notion of resistance. Guests include Tina Campt, Jeff Chang, Gabrielle Civil, Bridget R. Cooks, Ntone Edjabe, NIC Kay, Kevin Quashie, and Christina Sharpe, among others.

The PCMA exhibition is organized by senior curator Rebecca McGrew with assistant curator Hannah Grossman. It is accompanied by a publication designed by Kimberly Varella of Content Object, Los Angeles. It includes new essays by Dr. Nana Adusei-Poku, Visiting Professor in Art History of the African Diaspora at The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art; and Dr. Neelika Jayawardane, Associate Professor of English at the State University of New

York-Oswego, and a Research Associate at the Visual Identities in Art and Design (VIAD), University of Johannesburg (South Africa); and a conversation between Todd Gray and Carrie Mae Weems.

Major support is provided by The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, The Mike Kelley Foundation for the Arts and the Pasadena Art Alliance.

About Todd Gray

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, including the Whitney Biennial 2019. In 2018, his work was included in the major group exhibition "Michael Jackson: On the Wall" at London's National Portrait Gallery, which traveled 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 Pomona College Museum of Art

The Museum collects, preserves, exhibits and interprets works of art; and houses a substantial permanent collection as well as serving as a gallery of temporary exhibitions. Important holdings include the Kress Collection of 15th- and 16th-century Italian panel paintings; more than 5,000 examples of Pre-Columbian to 20th-century American Indian art and artifacts, including basketry, ceramics and beadwork; and a large collection of American and European prints, drawings and photographs, including works by Francisco de Goya, José Clemente Orozco and Rico Lebrun.

Admission

All exhibitions and programs are free of charge and open to the public.

General Information

Pomona College Museum of Art

330 North College Avenue Claremont, CA 91711

Tuesday through Sunday, 12-5 p.m., Closed Mondays

Closed Nov. 28, 29, 2019; Dec. 21, 2019-Jan. 21, 2020

Art After Hours: Thursday, 5-11 p.m., Sep. 3-Dec. 5, 2019 and Jan. 23-Apr. 30, 2020

For more information, please call 909.621.8283 or visit www.pomona.edu/museum.