

Kelly Akashi

Mood Organ

February 27 – April 18, 2020

Tanya Bonakdar Gallery is pleased to announce Kelly Akashi's first solo exhibition with the gallery, *Mood Organ*, on view at our New York City location from February 27 – April 18, 2020.

In this exhibition of all new work, Akashi challenges the ideological underpinnings of Western structures of knowledge, history, and time in a series of sculptures that formalize alternative models of genealogy and emotional connective currents. The title of the exhibition makes tangible the emotional being in all people, giving it a substance, or an organ, of its own. It also draws from a fictional device, the 'Penfield Mood Organ', which questions what we would do if we could control, direct, or utilize our feelings.

Rendered in the artist's evocative vocabulary, works in the exhibition include *Weep*, a human-sized bronze sphere that slowly emits water, as if softly shedding tears. As a physical embodiment of collective sorrow, this major sculpture also suggests compassion and comfort through its primordial shape and cyclical movement of water.

Undulating from the ground, a series of walnut pedestals congregate around the tearful fountain. The curves and fluctuations of these hand-carved wood formations are based on the rhythm of the artist's heartbeat, as recorded on an electrocardiogram. Intricate sculptures featuring hand-blown glass, stainless steel and bronze casts of the artist's own hands connect these objects to a human scale. Together, the sculptures and pedestals evoke instinctive bodily features and gestures, carrying them into perpetual existence. In her work, Akashi draws attention to the fluidity and interconnectedness of the media she uses. Incorporating the body, both as a form and as a medium, the artist captures the tension and complexity of materials, and emphasizes both the impressionability and physicality of objects.

On the second floor, Akashi's references to geology, the body, and the natural world are rendered through a series of hand-blown glass branches suspending from the ceiling, sprouting from a rooted pedestal, and emerging from the ground. Like sets of growing limbs, these twisted and thorny forms are draped with rope, intertwining their delicate offshoots with knots and tangles.

In the next room, a collection of eight sumptuous glass vessels are arranged on a black stone surface with a quartz bell hanging above. Reminiscent of the female body and inspired by pre-Colombian urns, the sculptures allude to the mystical origins and instinctual knowledge of humanity encoded in all living people today. The curvilinear shapes graft past onto future, serving as a lacerated portal to the history of our most basic inclinations.

The stone table and the quartz bell ground the works to a geological infrastructure. When struck, the bell emits a low frequency sound that envelops the viewer and penetrates the body through a set of vibrations. Originally used as a timekeeper, the bell serves as a physical and sensual manifestation of time.

Through an ingenious use of materials, this new body of work continues Akashi's investigation of materiality, tactility, and time. Here, the formal exploration is expanded into an emotional dimension that traces the evolution of sentiment and instinct. In *Mood Organ*, Akashi unveils sets of connections and connotations previously overlooked. Together, the works on view refer to our roots and origins, questioning the fundamental ideas of progression and complicating our relationship to the Western construct of advancement and growth.

Born in 1983 in Los Angeles, Kelly Akashi currently lives and works in Los Angeles, California. The artist graduated with a MFA from University of Southern California in 2014. Akashi studied at the Staatliche Hochschule für Bildende Künste - Städelschule in Frankfurt am Main and received her BFA at Otis College of Art and Design in 2006.

Akashi was commissioned to create a new outdoor sculpture for the Aspen Art Museum's Crown Commons, opening on March 20, 2020. Winner of the 2019 Carolyn Glasoe Bailey Foundation Art Prize, the artist had a residency and exhibition at the foundation in Ojai, California. Other recent residencies include ARCH Athens, Greece (2019) and Headlands Center for the Arts, Sausalito, CA (2019), both of which concluded with a solo exhibition. Among Akashi's important solo exhibitions are *Long Exposure* curated by Ruba Katrib at the SculptureCenter, New York (2017). The artist's work was featured in the Hammer Museum's biennial, *Made in L.A.* (2016); *Brave New Worlds*, Palm Springs Art Museum, Palm Springs (2019); *99 cents or less*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Detroit (2017); *LA: A Fiction*, Musée d'art contemporain de Lyon, France (2017); *Take me (I'm Yours)*, curated by Hans Ulrich Obrist, Jens Hoffmann, and Kelly Taxter, Jewish Museum, New York (2016); and *Can't Reach Me There*, Midway Contemporary Art, Minneapolis (2015).

Kelly Akashi's work can be found in the permanent collections of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; CC Foundation, Shanghai; M WOODS, Beijing; The Perimeter, London; David Roberts Art Foundation, London; and Sifang Museum, Nanjing, among others.