

**GBE**  
**429 WEST 127<sup>th</sup> STREET**  
**NY NY 10027**

**BRIAN BELOTT**  
**DR. KID PRESIDENT JR.**

**MAY 4 – JULY 1, 2017**  
**OPENING RECEPTION: MAY 4, 6 – 8 PM**

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, children's art has been vital to any understanding of modern and contemporary art. A child's ability to ignore the constructs of external reality allows them to interpret an internal state of mind through simplified and direct forms and compositions. Artists like Chagall, Picasso, Pollock, Kandinsky, Gorky, and Rothko looked to children's art as a pinnacle of creative development – a primal and spiritual language that could represent the world without pictorial conventions. How do we then properly situate children's art in the contemporary art world of today? What responsibility, if any, do we hold in the upkeep and understanding of these works? And how do we judge artwork that has no monetary value in our current market? These are some of the questions we will be provoked to ask when entering Brian Belott's exhibition, *Dr. Kid President Jr.*, opening at GBE on May 4, 2017.

The exhibition will come to life in three unifying components, the first of these being approximately 300 works of children's art selected by Belott from the Rhoda Kellogg International Children's Art Collection. The installation at GBE will be the first time this large of a selection from the massive but little known archive has been presented to the public. Rhoda Kellogg (1898-1987) was a nursery school educator and psychologist specializing in early childhood development, whose seminal investigations culminated in an archive comprising over one million drawings by children aged two to eight. Kellogg sourced a majority of her material from the Golden Gate Kindergarten in San Francisco where she worked, often inviting neighborhood children with her chants and drumming into the school to create and play. Her creative spirit can be felt in her wildly unique manner of analysis and archiving that highlights a child's artwork while simultaneously leaving her own distinct mark. Kellogg's studies culminate in a Gestalt classification system; shaped as a mandala, the sequence traces the consistent evolution of basic shapes, forms and their configurations, through the visual developmental stages of children from all over the globe. This mandala attests to the central and fundamental role visual language plays in the emergence of consciousness. Also included from the archive is *Early Expressionists* (1965), a 16mm film by Kellogg never before viewed by an audience, as well as an unpublished book titled, *How One Three-Year-Old Girl Taught Herself to Draw* (1959), that has been printed here as a zine for viewers to take away with them.

The second aspect of the exhibition will feature fifty works on canvas by Belott that recreate drawings and paintings by children. Sourced from different books and works taken from the Kellogg archive, the paintings are part of an ongoing series, a smaller selection of which was exhibited under the same title in 2015 in Los Angeles with Darren Romanelli and in New York with 247365. Expanding upon his fervent fascination with collecting, archiving, and exhibiting art that has been labeled as amateur, Belott's replications simultaneously document and re-contextualize their original source. Like Kellogg, Belott digests this information through the act of handling the work, collaging, copying, and organizing, so that we can come to see it in a new light. Accompanying these paintings will be Belott's copy of Kellogg's mandala, refitted as a light-box, as well as collected recordings of children. Borrowing from Kellogg's language, Belott has labeled these compilations "sound scribbles."

The final element of the show will take the form of an art classroom in the center of the gallery space. Each week GBE will provide a new material for students from New York City schools to make art. Channeling the style of Kellogg, these art sessions will be open-ended, allowing the children to engage with the materials and let spontaneity and uninhibited imagination guide them. The finished works will be installed in the gallery, culminating in a final exhibition to which the participants and their families will all be invited.

This exhibition comes at a time when the appreciation of self expression in education, particularly early education, is more imperative than ever. The retelling of Kellogg's narrative by Belott actively pursues a different idea of worth and beauty. What viewers will be offered in the end is a value system for art based on sincere collaboration, radical inventiveness, and creative originality.

