

## *never free to rest*

mark bradford  
charles gaines  
rodney mcmillian  
julie mehretu  
kara walker  
lynette yiadom-boakye

nov. 11— dec. 16, 2017

performance by  
charles gaines with agustín  
bernal, federico hülz and  
tomás trumm coordinated  
by alexander bruck

saturday, nov. 11 – 1 pm

#neverfreetorest

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kurimanzutto is proud to present *Never Free to Rest*, an exhibition that brings together works by six artists who utilize the radical language of abstraction to destabilize black representation and systems of control, conjuring new possibilities of perception, imagination and liberation. Works by Mark Bradford, Julie Mehretu and Rodney McMillian mark a new school of 'American' abstraction that is conceptual and physical, formal and impetuous. Interrogating figuration, works by Kara Walker and Lynette Yiadom-Boakye defy systems of racialization and the certainty of representation through pure painting. Manifestos and musical scores serve as material for Charles Gaines' consideration of systems of communication, order and control. Here, rigorously worked surfaces, disrupted historical documents and fantastical juxtapositions rescue the marginal and repressed to secure their right to ascend in full, visceral complexity.

The title of the exhibition, *Never Free to Rest*, comes from a quote by the late African-American writer and activist James Baldwin. Baldwin's lament transcends defeat to promise resistance, dedication and persistence and presage the vigilance these artists maintain to protect their work, person, and right to live and practice art.

### about the artists

**Mark Bradford** (b. 1961, Los Angeles, California) received his BFA (1995) and MFA (1997) from the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia. He transforms materials scavenged from the street into wall-size collages and installations that respond to the impromptu networks—underground economies, migrant communities, or popular appropriation of abandoned public spaces—that emerge within a city.

Mark Bradford has been included in major exhibitions at Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington D.C. (2017); Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (2017); Rockbund Art Museum in Shanghai (2015); The Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston (2010); REDCAT, Los Angeles (2004); Whitney Museum of American Art in New York (2003); and the Studio Museum in Harlem (2001). He represented the United States pavilion with *Tomorrow is Another Day*, at the 57th International Art Exhibition of the Venice Biennale (2017), and participated in the Sharjah Biennial 12: *The past, the present, the possible* (2015), the 27 Bienal de São Paulo (2006) and the 2006

Whitney Biennial in New York. Bradford lives and works in Los Angeles.

All the works in the exhibition are courtesy of the artist and Hauser & Wirth, New York.

**Charles Gaines** (b.1944, Charleston, South Carolina) received a BA from the Jersey City State College (1966) and an MFA from the Rochester Institute of Technology (1967). His photographs, drawings, and works on paper investigate how rule-based procedures construct order and meaning. Working serially in progressive and densely layered bodies of work, Gaines explores the interplay between objectivity and interpretation, the systematic and the poetic.

In 2013, he received a fellowship from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation and presented the solo exhibition *Notes on Social Justice* at Paula Cooper Gallery in New York. His work belongs to the collections of the Hammer Museum and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, as well as the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Museum of Modern Art in New York, among others. He has participated in the Sharjah Biennial 12 in the United Arab Emirates (2015); *All the World's Futures* in 56th International Art Exhibition of the Venice Biennale (2015); Sharjah Biennial 12: *The past, the present, the possible* (2015); La Biennale de Montréal (2014) in Canada; and the 52nd International Art Exhibition of the Venice Biennale (2007). Gaines has published several essays on contemporary art, including *Theater of Refusal: Black Art and Mainstream Criticism* (University of California, Irvine, 1993) and *The New Cosmopolitanism* (California State University, Fullerton, 2008). He is based in Los Angeles and has been a full-time faculty member in the School of Art at the California Institute of the Arts since 1989.

All the works in the exhibition are courtesy of the artist and Paula Cooper gallery, New York.

**Rodney McMillian** (b.1969, Columbia, South Carolina) received a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (1998) and an MFA from the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia (2002). His artistic practice embodies a wide range of media and techniques. An overarching concern in his work is the relationship between language, aesthetics, and content. Provoking questions about class and identity, as well as gender and sexuality, McMillian's work also suggests relationships between inner and outer space.

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Rodney McMillian recent solo exhibitions have been hosted by the Art Institute of Chicago (2017); MoMA PSI in New York (2016); the Aspen Art Museum in Colorado (2015); the Institute of Contemporary Art in Pennsylvania (2016); the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston (2015); and Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects (2013). His work has been included in biennials such as the Sharjah Biennial 12: *The past, the present, the possible* (2015); the 2008 Whitney Biennial in New York; and the 2008 California Biennial in Newport Beach. McMillian lives and works in Los Angeles.

All the works in the exhibition are courtesy of the artist and Susanne Vielmetter gallery, Los Angeles.

**Julie Mehretu** (b. 1970, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia) studied at Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar (1990–91), earned a BA from Kalamazoo College in Michigan (1992) and an MFA from Rhode Island School of Design (1997). Mehretu's paintings and drawings refer to elements of mapping and architecture, achieving a calligraphic complexity that resembles turbulent atmospheres and dense social networks. Architectural renderings and aerial views of urban grids enter the work as fragments, losing their real-world specificity and challenging narrow geographic and cultural readings. Her work engages the history of nonobjective art—from Constructivism to Futurism—posing contemporary questions about the relationship between utopian impulses and abstraction.

Mehretu's awards include the Berlin Prize Fellowship (2007) from the American Academy in Berlin; a Fellowship from John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation (2005); and the American Art Award from the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York (2005). Her work has appeared in major exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art in New York (2007); Detroit Institute of Arts Museum (2006); REDCAT, Los Angeles (2004); Walker Art Center in Minneapolis (2003); and the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo (2003), among others. Mehretu has participated in the Sharjah Biennial 12: *The past, the present, the possible* (2015); the 15th Biennale of Sydney (2006); the 54th Carnegie International (2004); the 26 Bienal de São Paulo (2004); the Whitney Biennial (2004); and the 8th International Istanbul Biennial (2003). Julie Mehretu lives and works between New York and Berlin.

All the works in the exhibition are courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery, New York, London, Paris.

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**Kara Walker** (b. 1969, Stockton, California) received a BFA from the Atlanta College of Art (1991) and an MFA from Rhode Island School of Design (1994). Walker is best known for exploring the raw intersection of race, gender, and sexuality through her iconic, silhouetted figures. With one foot in the historical realism of slavery and the other in the fantastical space of the romance novel, Walker's nightmarish fictions simultaneously seduce and implicate the audience.

Walker's major survey exhibition, *Kara Walker: My Complement, My Enemy, My Oppressor, My Love*, was organized by the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis (2007) and subsequently presented in the Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris, the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, and the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth. Her work has also been exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art and The Guggenheim Museum in New York, and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art among others. Kara Walker was the United States representative to the 25 Bienal de São Paulo in 2002. In 2012, Walker became a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Her work can be found in numerous museums and public collections including the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, Museum of Modern Art, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, as well as the Tate Gallery in London. Walker currently lives and works in New York, she is the Tepper Chair in Visual Arts, Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University in New Jersey.

All the works in the exhibition are courtesy of the artist and Sikkema Jenkins & Co, New York.

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**Lynette Yiadom-Boakye** (b. 1977, London) attended Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design (1997), Falmouth College of Arts (2000) and the Royal Academy Schools (2003). In her paintings, she assembles images from scrapbooks, drawings, and her imagination into lush compositions of human figures. She is equally focused on the history of painting, the material qualities of oil on canvas, and her particular subject matter.

Yiadom-Boakye has had several important solo museum shows, most recently at the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York (2017); Kunsthalle Basel in Switzerland (2016–2017); the Haus der Kunst in Munich (2015); and the Serpentine Gallery in London (2015). Her work is part of institutional collections such as the Tate, Victoria and Albert Museum, and The Arts Council Collection in London; Pérez Art

Museum Miami; Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago; Museum of Modern Art in New York; and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Her recent biennale participations include the Sharjah Biennial 12: *The past, the present, the possible* (2015); *The Encyclopedic Palace* at 55th International Art Exhibition of the Venice Biennale (2013); *The Ungovernables: the 2012 New Museum Triennial* in New York (2012); and the 11th Biennale de Lyon (2012). Yiadom-Boakye is currently based in London.

All the works in the exhibition are courtesy of the artist, private collections and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

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