

Kevin Francis Gray

November 25, 2020 – March 27, 2021
 6 Burlington Gardens
 London



Image: Kevin Francis Gray, 2020 © Kevin Francis Gray, courtesy Pace Gallery

London – Pace Gallery is delighted to present an exhibition of new work by Kevin Francis Gray at 6 Burlington Gardens. On view from 25 November 2020 to 27 March 2021, the exhibition will run concurrently with a solo exhibition of his work at the Museo Stefano Bardini, Florence, Italy.

At the core of Kevin Francis Gray's practice is an interrogation of the intersection of traditional sculptural techniques and contemporary life. Rather than working towards classical ideals of beauty, Gray relies on textural surfaces as opposed to facial or bodily expressions to imbue his sculptures with psychological realism. Furthering Gray's decade of working with marble, this new work pushes the possibilities of the artist's sculptural practice into new territories of physical and psychological expression. These works are intimately linked to a period of intense self-reflection in the artist's life, which imbues them with a sense of both serenity and fragility.

This exhibition showcases a shift in Gray's techniques and modes of representation as he moves from creating figures in highly polished finishes to those with rough-hewn surfaces. On display for the first time, Gray's latest series, the Breakdown Works, introduce a wide variety of new materials into his sculptural praxis—green onyx, bronze, rough concrete, steel and ebonised wood come into play with marble. In balancing several colours, textures and shapes within a single composition, Gray eschews the distinction between sculpture and plinth to create a unified entity. Envisaged to interact with one another within the space, the Breakdown Works serve as the framework of this exhibition, creating formal resonances between themselves and the larger sculptures. Drawing on the energy and block forms of Futurist sculptors, each unique piece sits atop its own custom pedestal and indicates a different moment in the evolution of Gray's practice.

Many of the materials used to create the sculptures in this exhibition were salvaged or repurposed by Gray. Forgotten tree trunks from Cambridgeshire and decades-old waylaid marble blocks were brought to the artist's London studio, where he set to work uncovering their potential. In Gray's *Moondancer*, a totemic marble form sits atop an ancient elm burl which itself becomes an intrinsic part of the work's potency. The wood grounds the marble in nature, providing a contrast between the two elements that resonates throughout the space.

In pieces such as *Moon Dancer Standing (2020)* and *Sun Worshipper Standing (2020)*, the characters are heightened to celestial bodies, echoing modern spirituality and Pagan traditions with literal representations of the sun and the moon.

Indeed, in these new iterations of Gray's long-term Gods series, his figures are now young, anonymous, and notably more elaborate, as with *Striding Youth (2020)*. Paired with the Breakdown Works, these characters present traits brimming with vulnerability and strength, anger and hope, dedication and combativeness. The viewer is in turn faced with this complexity, as they bear witness to the raw materials and their sculptural transformations.

Gray's solo exhibition at the Museo Stefano Bardini, Florence, Italy, on view until 21 December 2020, includes new work presented amongst the illustrious collection of Stefano Bardini, the 19th century antiquarian who bestowed his collection and palazzo to the city of Florence (exhibition organised by Eduardo Secci Contemporary and MUSE).

As part of the Sculpture in the City trail, Gray's *Reclining Nude I* remains on view in London. The work is located at St Botolphs without Bishopsgate Churchyard.

Kevin Francis Gray (b. 1972, South Armagh, Northern Ireland) addresses the complex relationships between abstraction, figuration and portraiture through sculpture. Crafting human figures in varied scales that align with classical styles of representation, his work treads the boundary between contemporary society and classical history, reverberating with the aesthetics of Neoclassicism.

His work has been included in exhibitions at the Royal Academy, London, UK; Sudeley Castle, Winchcombe, Gloucestershire, UK; Museum of Contemporary Art of the Val de-Marne, Paris, France; Nieuw Dakota, Amsterdam; Palazzo Arti Napoli, Naples, Italy; Musee d'art Moderne, Saint-Etienne, France; ARTIUM, Centro-Museo Vasco de Arte Contemporáneo, Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain; Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Tel Aviv, Israel; and Art Space, New York, USA.

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