

PACE

For Immediate Release

Kevin Francis Gray

537 West 24th Street, New York
March 30 – April 22, 2017

Opening Reception:
Thursday, March 30, 6–8 p.m.

New York—Pace Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of new works by Kevin Francis Gray. This new body of work focuses on his commitment to marble and the exploration of its materiality, presenting a clear departure from his earlier veiled figures and neoclassically inspired ballerinas. *Kevin Francis Gray* will be on view from March 30 to April 22, and an opening reception will be held on Thursday, March 30 from 6 to 8 p.m. *Kevin Francis Gray* is the artist's first solo show at Pace New York.



Originally from Northern Ireland, Gray's personal background and artistic development inform the new works exhibited. The jagged, asymmetrical physicality of the works references de Kooning's *Clamdigger*; the smooth, circular shapes echo Hepworth's oval sculptures; and the trope of the reclining nude is reminiscent of Matisse's iconic nudes. Moving beyond this historic threshold, Gray's exhibition showcases his drive to further make contemporary the traditional material of marble. The works boldly recall the first steps of Gray's process, which begins in clay-work: the marks of the artist's hands, fingers and tools are visible and palpable, giving the illusion that the stone is as malleable as the initial clay sculpting.

The striking quality of these works lies in the tension between aggressive movement imposed on the material and the confidence emanating from the figures. Gray's youth, spent in a politically turbulent Northern Ireland informs the intensity of the movement—forceful, expressive gestures; thick gouges at the eyes; and claw marks in the spines of the nudes. The male and female figures that come out of this vigor emerge stronger than before, and stronger than Gray's earlier introspective sculptures. Evolved from his obscured, veiled characters, the artist introduces to his audience these vehement, intense, and fervent figures that exude life and voraciousness from every gouge. Here are the works of an artist entering a new era—one of boldness and assertiveness, ready to challenge his own understanding of the stone's possibilities.

Throughout most of his career, Gray has worked closely with the Giannoni family, among the oldest and most respected marble artisans in Pietrasanta, Tuscany. Previously known for producing replicas of seminal

Vatican sculptures, the artisans are deeply rooted in tradition, and before Gray, had never extensively worked with a contemporary artist. Using sculpting techniques going back centuries (the Giannoni studio uses no machinery, despite advances in robotic technology), the artisans and Gray meticulously block out, carve and polish each work by hand, from start to finish. Canova said, "Clay is life, plaster the death and marble the resurrection of sculpture." The painstaking manual labor and dedication to exceptional quality give the artwork its due resurrection. But Gray's thoughtful and risk-taking growth with the medium offers it longevity.

Kevin Francis Gray (b. 1972, Northern Ireland) has generated bodies of work which address the complex relationship between abstraction and figuration. 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.

Kevin Francis Gray has been represented by Pace since 2014. This is the second solo exhibition of his work with the gallery.

Seated Nude, 2017, Carrara marble, 43-5/16" x 48-1/16" x 59-7/16" (110 cm x 122 cm x 151 cm). Photograph by Camilla Maria Santini
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