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For Immediate Release

Release Date:
July 27, 2009

Exhibition:
A Voyage of Growth and Discovery
Exhibition Dates:
September 13 – November 30, 2009

Opening Reception:
Sunday, September 13, 5-7pm

Gallery Hours:
Thursday–Monday, 11am-6pm

Admission:
\$5 suggested donation

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MIKE KELLEY AND MICHAEL SMITH: A VOYAGE OF GROWTH AND DISCOVERY

SCULPTURECENTER AND WEST OF ROME PRESENT THE FIRST COLLABORATION BETWEEN
MIKE KELLEY AND MICHAEL SMITH



New York – SculptureCenter, New York and West of Rome, Los Angeles, are pleased to present **Mike Kelley's** and **Michael Smith's: *A Voyage of Growth and Discovery***, a collaborative video, sculpture, and sound installation. The exhibition will include a six-channel video featuring Michael Smith's character **Baby IKKI** filmed at a festival in the Black Rock desert in 2008. Related sculptures fill the 3000 square foot space surrounding a 30-foot tall junk sculpture of Baby IKKI. The project premieres at **SculptureCenter in NY from September 13–November 30, 2009**, with an opening reception on **Sunday, September 13, 5–7 pm**, and travels to Los Angeles where it will be presented by **West of Rome in Spring 2010**.

A Voyage of Growth and Discovery centers on Baby IKKI, a character that artist Michael Smith has been performing for over thirty years. Pre-lingual and of ambiguous age, Baby IKKI is both comedic and melancholy. The six-channel video follows the existential journey of the Baby over several days at a festival of “radical self-expression” held in the remote Black Rock Desert of Nevada. The Baby, alone in his journey despite being surrounded by thousands of revelers, negotiates the rave-like festival environment while also exploring the primal natural elements of fire, water, earth, and wind. Michael Smith offers a masterful tragicomic performance that exhibits extreme physical endurance. The two-and-a-half hour multi-channel video, culled from hours of raw footage, is the result of an intensive editing process between Mike Kelley and Michael Smith. The video's six-part narrative structure mirrors that of the event: four days and nights of festival preceded by an introductory travel section and followed by a post-festival day. In the introductory section Baby IKKI is shown “on the road” in his mobile home, where he is bombarded and inculcated with televisual material that presage his experiences in the desert. En route, the Baby busies himself with candies, cushions, and matches, while watching scenes from B-movies and cartoons replete with pyrotechnics and themes of infantilism. The festival itself is a carnivalesque event where IKKI is subsumed in raves, faced with erotic encounters, and surrounded by multitudes of costumed party-goers. The culmination of the event is the massive public “burn,” after which the Baby is left alone to ponder his “voyage.”

The installation presented at SculptureCenter reflects the fantasy-oriented environment of the festival, which is both grand and folksy—an odd mixture of fairground, playground, hippie commune, and the futuristic architectural aesthetics of R. Buckminster Fuller. Resembling an abandoned festival site of the post-“new age” era, the structure circles a 30-foot tall junk sculpture representing Baby IKKI himself. Surrounded by video projection screens, the viewer is invited into this world of regression and tactile experience—to share in Baby IKKI's journey. The installation features music from ***Dance Beats for Baby***, a

new CD of music related to *A Voyage of Growth and Discovery* produced by Mike Kelley, with vocals by Baby IKKI.

PERFORMANCE

Camp Kid Friendly

Sunday, November 8, 5 pm

Malcolm Stuart's hoop dance troupe, Color Wheel, performs with Baby IKKI, within Mike Kelley and Michael Smith's video installation. This performance is presented in conjunction with Performa 09. Visit sculpture-center.org in September for a full schedule of events.

About the Artists

Mike Kelley, born in Detroit in 1954, lives and works in Los Angeles, CA. Kelley's work embraces performance, installation, drawing, painting, video, sound works, and sculpture. Referencing both high art and vernacular traditions, his works draw from historical research, mass cultural references, and psychological theory. He has had recent solo exhibitions at WIELS Centre d'Art Contemporain, Brussels Belgium (2008); Musée du Louvre, Paris (2006); Tate Liverpool (2004) and his work has been included in numerous important international exhibitions including the Carnegie International (2008); Skulptur Projekts Munster (2007); the Venice Biennale (1988) and five Whitney Biennials.

Kelley has published several volumes of critical writings and a collection of the artist's interviews with notable contemporary figures. Mike Kelley received a BFA from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor (1976) and a MFA from the California Institute of the Arts (1978). His awards include The Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Grant, National Endowment for the Visual Arts Fellowships, and a Guggenheim Fellowship, among others.

Michael Smith, born in Chicago in 1951, lives and works in Brooklyn, NY and Austin, TX. Smith's artistic career includes live performance, video works, commercial and cable television skits, puppet shows, exhibition installations, comic publications, and drawings. He has performed and exhibited at venues as varied as Franklin Furnace, The Kitchen, Caroline's Comedy Club, Dance Theatre Workshop, Henson International Puppet Festival, Cinemax, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Whitney, the New Museum, and the Centre Pompidou. He was included in the 2008 Whitney Biennial. A retrospective of his work, *Mike's World: Michael Smith and Joshua White (and other collaborators)* was presented at the Blanton Museum of Art at the University of Texas at Austin and traveled to the ICA Philadelphia in 2008.

Smith has received numerous awards including fellowships from the NEA, The Guggenheim Foundation, New York Foundation for the Arts and The Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation. Smith is an Associate Professor at the University of Texas @ Austin.

About SculptureCenter

Founded by artists in 1928, SculptureCenter is a not-for-profit arts institution dedicated to experimental and innovative developments in contemporary sculpture. SculptureCenter commissions new work and presents exhibits by emerging and established, national and international artists. Based in a former trolley repair shop in Long Island City, New York, SculptureCenter has traveled its commissions and exhibitions to museums internationally. Recent exhibitions have included *We Burn, We Shiver* by Martin Boyce and Ugo Rondinone and *Grey Flags*, a group exhibition curated by Anthony Huberman and Paul Pfeiffer.

About West of Rome

West of Rome, founded and directed by Emi Fontana and based in Los Angeles, produces contemporary art projects. West of Rome, the first organization of its kind in Los Angeles, is not anchored to a specific location, but explores a diversity of urban spaces that engender a sense of community and collective experience that is often lost in traditional venues, and offers an alternative to museum and gallery programs. The initial project produced by West of Rome Public Art was part one of the exhibition *Women in the City*, LA, 2008. www.westofrome.org

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