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A major survey of the work of Paul Mpagi Sepuya explores race, sexuality, and identity within intimate photographic portraits.



Paul Mpagi Sepuya, *Mirror Study (0X5A1317)*, 2017. Archival pigment print. Courtesy the artist, Document, Vielmetter Los Angeles, and Team Gallery.

March 5, 2019 (St. Louis, MO) - The Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis presents the first major museum survey of Paul Mpagi Sepuya's photography, 2005 to the present day. Through his portraiture, Sepuya invites viewers to consider the construction of subjectivity, both in photography and in ourselves. He challenges the history of photography and deconstructs traditional portraiture by way of collage, layering, fragmentation, mirror imagery, and the perspective of the black, queer gaze. Covering multiple periods of Sepuya's life and career, the exhibition reveals a profound intimacy between artist and sitters and reflects personal relationships—friends, partners, and lovers—over the years. In one sense, the exhibition works as a kind of photographic reunion of queer histories within the intimate setting of the artist's studio. *Paul Mpagi Sepuya* will be on view at the Museum, May 17 through August 18, 2019, and will be accompanied by Sepuya's first museum exhibition monograph.

The studio is an important element in Sepuya's photography, both as a production site and as an aperture into where his personal and artistic worlds intersect. The studio serves as a workplace, stage, and an isolated, safe yet complicating space. Sepuya allows glimpses of the studio setting and the photographic apparatus, a Brechtian exposure of the structures upon which the artifice is built, including tripods, backdrops, lighting, camera, lenses, and the photographer himself. Although little is hidden, much is obscured and fragmented, with narratives left to conjecture.

Paul Mpagi Sepuya (b. 1982, San Bernardino, California, lives and works in Los Angeles) has been selected for the 2019 Whitney Biennial. He has participated in residencies at Hyde Park Arts Center, Chicago, 2014; Fire Island Artist Residency, -more-



Contemporary Art
Museum St. Louis

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2013; Studio Museum in Harlem, 2010; Center for Photography at Woodstock, 2010; and Workspace, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, 2009. Sepuya was the recipient of the 2017 Rema Hort Mann, Los Angeles Emerging Artist Grant. His work has been featured in numerous exhibitions including at the Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles; The Studio Museum in Harlem; Franklin Art Works, Minneapolis; and the Artist Institute, New York. Public collections featuring Sepuya's work include Museum of Modern Art, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; International Center of Photography, New York; Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin; and the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh. Sepuya received his MFA from the University of California Los Angeles in 2016 and a BFA from New York University Tisch School of the Arts in 2004.



Contemporary Art
Museum St. Louis

The exhibition and monograph are generously supported by the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation, Hedy Fischer and Randy Shull, and Hunt R. Tackbary. The Artist Talk is generously supported by the Robert Lehman Foundation.

Paul Mpagi Sepuya is organized for the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis by Wassan Al-Khudhairi, Chief Curator, with Misa Jeffereis, Assistant Curator.

Related Events

Press & Patron Preview

Friday, May 17, 10:00–11:00 am
Join artists and curators for an exclusive introduction to the exhibitions. RSVP to Eddie Silva at 314.535.0770 x313 or esilva@camstl.org

Opening Night

Friday, May 17
Member Preview 6:00–7:00 pm
Public Reception 7:00–9:00 pm

Artist Talk: Paul Mpagi Sepuya

Thursday, June 27, 6:30 pm

All programs, dates, and times are subject to change.

About the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis

The Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis (CAM) presents, supports, and celebrates the art of our time. It is the premier museum in St. Louis dedicated to contemporary art. Focused on a dynamic array of changing exhibitions, CAM provides a thought-provoking program that reflects and contributes to the global cultural landscape. Through the diverse perspectives offered in its exhibitions, public programs, and educational initiatives, CAM actively engages a range of audiences to challenge their perceptions. It is a site for discovery, a gathering place in which to experience and enjoy contemporary visual culture. CAM is located in the Grand Center Arts District.

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