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Contemporary Art
Museum St. Louis

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The ninth Great Rivers Biennial features new work by St. Louis artists

February 19, 2020 (St. Louis, MO) - The Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis (CAM) presents the ninth Great Rivers Biennial (GRB) featuring new works by St. Louis artists Kahlil Robert Irving, Tim Portlock, and Rachel Youn, on view May 8 through August 16, 2020. The Great Rivers Biennial Arts Awards Program, a collaborative initiative between CAM and the Gateway Foundation, recognizes talented emerging and mid-career artists working in the greater St. Louis metropolitan area, providing each award recipient with a \$20,000 honorarium and a major exhibition at CAM. Three distinguished jurors—José Carlos Diaz, Chief Curator at The Andy Warhol Museum and a 2018 fellow at the Center for Curatorial Leadership; Christopher Y. Lew, the Nancy and Fred Poses Curator at the Whitney Museum of American Art and co-curator of the 2017 Whitney Biennial; and Amanda Ross-Ho, multidisciplinary artist, participant in the 2008 Whitney Biennial, and an associate professor and the University of California, Irvine—selected the 2020 winners from among more than eighty submissions.

2020 Great Rivers Biennial Projects



Kahlil Robert Irving addresses cultural rules set by colonialism and white supremacy in his installation *At Dusk*, challenging those constructs through form, material, and performance. The artist conflates history and the contemporary moment through a gathering of multiple images and forms. Drawn from diverse sources with varied, complicated histories, the images and materials present issues that may go overlooked or passed by through the speed at which we

engage with technology and social media. Within the space of *At Dusk*, Irving offers a recontextualization of images and materials, derived from his own social media and physical explorations, his personal biography, and the social context of Black life in the Midwest and more broadly within the U.S.



Tim Portlock's images are based on construction and demolition sites in various American cities. He applies compositional conventions derived from 19th-century American landscape painting for his large-scale prints. These specific techniques were used to construct realistic landscapes that embodied notions of American identity—a feral, bountiful land to be tamed by rugged, virtuous people. Through this imagery, Portlock explores ideas of optimism, displacement, and social visibility, with a particular interest in drawing a contrast between that which is being constructed and that which is being replaced. The artist asks: What kind of community is being imagined through the form and function of new buildings as they supplant the constructions of the past?

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CAM is free. Visit often!



Museumgoers encounter a feverish atmosphere that vacillates between a lively dance party and a booming evangelical church service in a sculpture installation by **Rachel Youn**. The artist transforms materials found on Craigslist and Facebook Marketplace—electric massagers, artificial plants, speaker cabinets—into kinetic sculptures that dance with joy and thrash in agony. Youn seeks to reconcile opposing worlds through these

swinging, shaking, flailing forms. Raised in a conservative Christian household, they felt at odds within the open prayer and song of church, and alienated within safe spaces made for queer dance parties. Youn's figures, devoid of judgment, move freely and ecstatically to an all-inclusive soundtrack.



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GATEWAY FOUNDATION

The exhibition is made possible by the Gateway Foundation.

The *Great Rivers Biennial 2020* is organized for the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis by Misa Jeffereis, Assistant Curator.

Kahlil Robert Irving (b. 1992, San Diego, CA) completed his first institutional solo exhibition, *Street Matter – Decay & Forever / Golden Age* at Wesleyan University, Connecticut in 2018. His work has been part of exhibitions at Matthew Marks Gallery, Los Angeles; Thomas Erben Gallery, New York; Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Overland Park, KS; and the Arizona State University Art Museum, Phoenix. Irving's work is in the collections of JP Morgan Chase Art Collection, New York; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; RISD Museum, Providence; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, among others. His work is included in the current exhibition *Making Knowing: Craft in Art, 1950–2019* at the Whitney Museum, through January 2021. Irving received his MFA from the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts at Washington University in St. Louis in 2017, and a BFA from the Kansas City Art Institute in 2015.

Tim Portlock (b. 1969, Chicago) is an associate professor in the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts at Washington University in St. Louis. A 2019 Regional Arts Commission Fellow and a 2011 recipient of a Pew Fellowship in the Arts, his exhibitions include *SPRING/BREAK Art Show*, PULSE, New York; *Ruffneck Constructivist*, curated by Kara Walker at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia; Broadstone Studios in Dublin as part of *Photo Ireland*; the Tate Modern as a member of the artist collective Vox Populi; and *This is Not a Gateway*, a group exhibition of outdoor video projections in London. Portlock has also exhibited at the 404 Festival in Argentina and Italy, the ISEA electronic arts festival in Japan, and Ars Electronica, Austria. Portlock joins sixty-one artists selected for the *State of the Art 2020* exhibition, held jointly at Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art and its new contemporary art space, The Momentary, on view February 22 through May 24, 2020, in Bentonville, Arkansas.

Rachel Youn's (b. 1994, Abington, PA) solo exhibitions include *WILD WILD*, Monaco, St. Louis; *Pleasantries*, Porch House, Fayetteville; and *Bounty*, Erica Popp Studios + Gallery, St. Louis, in 2019. Their work has been included in group exhibitions at the Truman State University Art Gallery, Kirksville, MO; Gallery 210, University of Missouri-St. Louis; Oui.Gallery, Central, Hong Kong; Flood Plain, St. Louis; Granite City Art and Design District, Granite City, IL; Tiger Strikes Asteroid, Los Angeles; Here/There, Portland, OR; Open House, Kansas City, MO; and CICA Museum, Gyeonggi-do, South Korea, among others. Youn is a recipient of the Regional Arts Commission Artist Support Grant and the Vermont Studio Center Fellowship. They received a BFA from the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts at Washington University in St. Louis in 2017.



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Related Events

Press & Patron Preview

Friday, May 8, 10:00–11:00 am
Join the artists, curators, and GRB jurors for an exclusive introduction to the exhibitions. RSVP to Eddie Silva at 314.446.7496.

Opening Night

Friday, May 8
Member Preview 6:00–7:00 pm
Public Reception 7:00–9:00 pm

Panel Discussion: Great Rivers Biennial

Artists & Jurors
Saturday, May 9, 11:00 am

About the Gateway Foundation

The Gateway Foundation strives to enrich St. Louis life and culture by supporting efforts to acquire, create, and improve tangible and durable art and urban design. The focus of Gateway is to foster and support cultural and artistic activities and, on occasion, related to educational activities devoted to improving the quality of life in the St. Louis metropolitan area. Visit the Gateway Foundation's website at gatewayfoundation.org and Twitter feed @CitygardenSTL.

About the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis

The Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis works to enrich lives and inspire curiosity, creativity, and learning through experiences with contemporary art. Focused on a dynamic array of changing exhibitions, the Museum reflects and contributes to the global cultural landscape while engaging thousands of visitors through a wide array of public programs. CAM nurtures the creative minds of our city's youth through free, in-depth art education, making a long-lasting impact on the community. We are a site for discovery, a welcoming space, free and open to all.

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