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## **JET SET SATURDAYS: FROM MY UNIVERSE: OBJECTS OF DESIRE PART II AT SEE LINE GALLERY**

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Todd Gray installation detail from My Universe: Objects of Desire Part II Curated by Janet Levy.

One of the pleasures of the life of a Jet Setter is that rare moment of discovery when you hear or see something that is so beyond chic, it's transcendent. During the Art Los Angeles Contemporary Fair I had the opportunity to hear Todd Gray, a well-known as a photographer and conceptual artist, talk about his work at See Line Gallery, unbeknownst to him. Among various gems of vocational regalia recounted as I sat there in my anonymousness was a story of how he met Michael Jackson and worked as his personal photographer when Jackson was a young star. Jackson, by Gray's account, was clearly his own creation – like Elvis or Liberace, a cultural phenom, paralleling the role of the visual artist. Gray, aware of the Jackson associations, has brilliantly raided his own historic

photographs in order to create associations that resonate as both conceptual and poignant.

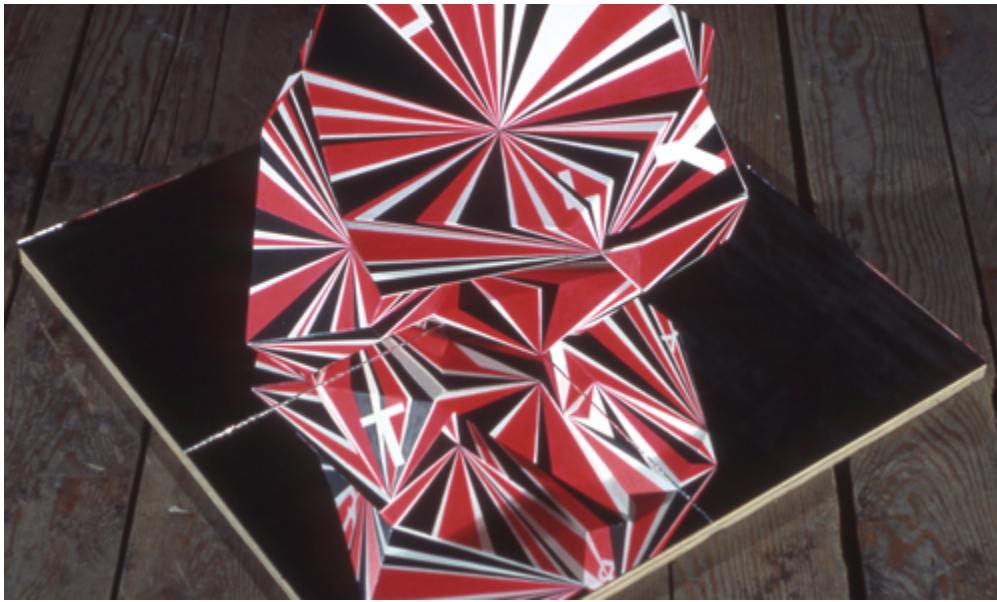
In the group show, "From My Universe: Objects of Desire Part II" at See Line Gallery in the Pacific Design Center, Gray has created a mysterious installation featuring among others, photographs of himself covered in shaving cream as a white-faced monster. The photographs have been cut out higgledy piggledy along the contours of his creamy white form creating ghosts that hover in the gray gallery space in juxtaposition to his photographs of Michael Jackson and African ceremonial masks. Gray has sublimated the notion of race here by creating a "gray" context signed for by the painted gray walls.



Todd Gray installation from My Universe: Objects of Desire Part II Curated by Janet Levy

All of the referents here are mixed up in each the other and are directly or indirectly implicated as participants. The African ceremonial masks stand nobly in front of the photographs as they would in a private home. The masks reference modernism with their obvious appropriation of the genre by "modern masters" such as Braque and Picasso. Then there is the spirit of Gray himself, his billowy shaving cream portraits hovering in the dim room, ghost-like and highly personal, the parallel "white face" to Jackson's cream bleached skin tone. Because Gray has personalized the experience of viewing the masks and Jackson with his own image, the whole history of art and popular culture is animated in a palpable and interesting way. See Line Gallery director Janet Levy had a direct role in facilitating Gray's experience of the space, encouraging him to take risks like hanging on a gray wall and including the African art.

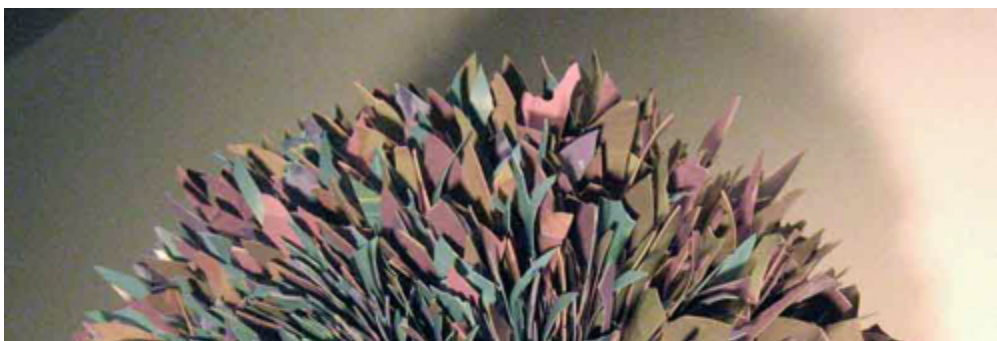




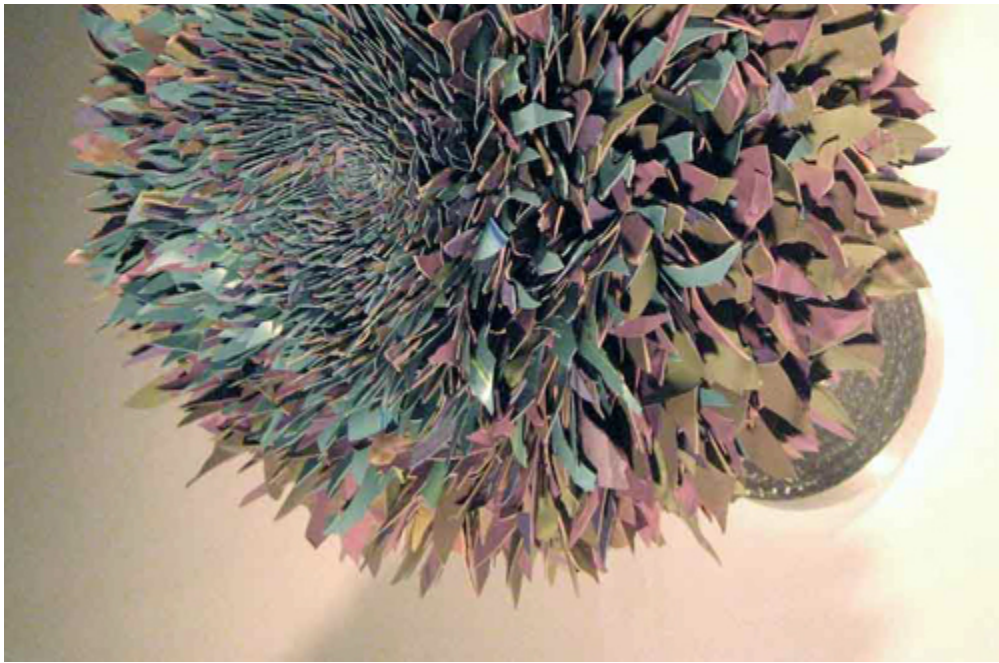
Keith Walsh, *Meditation Stone (Larry Flynt)*, 2004–2007. Cel vinyl acrylic, gesso, wood, masonite. Approximate dimensions: 17 x 11 x 10".

Keith Walsh sculptures double as abstract portraits of controversial public figures. Op-art vectors fragment the holistic sculptural object, thereby commenting upon public and private realms, the perception of the surface versus substance, and the propositional nature of the abstract and conceptual art. The sculptures function as meditation stones that have no beginning or end, nor intended up or downside for display.

The Objects of Desire theme is strictly from Levy's imagination as an artist who likes to create radical associations between disparate practices in order to create drama and poignancy in her gallery space. The show is all over the place. Included are graphic and abstract sculptures from Keith Walsh's portraits of controversial figures, Michael Dee's delicate and glowy Murano glass inspired plastic sculptures, and Eamon O'Kane's sweet little oil paintings of architectural monuments which peek out of a corner. Augusta Wood's photographs pay respect to the spiritual qualities latent in modernism while Seth Kaufman's gorgeous paint chip sculptures and faux wooden bronzes greet viewers with their own transformative magic.







Seth Kaufman, *Sucker*, 2009. Paint, adhesive, metal. 11.5 x 14.5 x 11.5".

Zoe Crosher's gorgeous digital prints of a high class call-girl sit charmingly next to sparkly views of swimming pool surfaces juxtapose Ebony G. Patterson's uncomfortable portrait of a Caribbean youth with a bleached white face looms ominously in the background inserting levity and drama.





Ebony G. Patterson, *Untitled Souljah*, 2009. Mixed media. Variable dimensions.

Kendell Carter's tufted and mirrored milk crates sit in their own corner surrounded by his airbrush shoelace paintings, fitting into the Pacific Design Center showroom and adding their own critical discourse to an experience of the building. Brenna Youngblood and Yasmin Than's photos get a little lost here because of their intimate nature — they call out for their own independent space. Sherin Guirguis, on the other hand, has seized the opportunity to dominate two walls with her massive combination paintings and Islamic cut paper designs. Almost lost in its own corner but nobly holding its own is a brilliant design for a transformation of the Guggenheim museum by Ball Nogues Studio with Jessica Fleischmann, *Contraption for the Production of Cultural Confection*. The drawing depicts the floors of the museum transformed into a candy factory where the art is secondary and the candy is all-powerful. The Ball Nogues/Fleischmann collaboration is imaginative and witty, and is beautifully topped by a rendering in plastic of the candy itself stuck to the surface of the printed proposal.





Sherin Guirguis, *Untitled(Scorpion)*, 2009. Watercolor, ink, gold leaf on hand cut paper. 49 x 69"

There is little holding the show together except for Levy's love and devotion to each object and artists in the show – really the whole point of the show.

Gallery says: *"The individual perspective is often confused as an all-encompassing view of the world or universe at large. Because the individual perspective is the only medium in which we can access the world, humankind has developed the subconscious notion of 'my universe,' which is shaped from each individual's experience, used as a convention in order to make sense of the otherwise chaotic stimulus that the greater universe harbors."*

Levy's universe is a vast and meandering experience of the artist and aesthete, that of the true Jet Setter. Her devotion to the creative process is evidenced by both her own stunning body of artwork and work as a gallerist, both clearly labors of love. Levy posits herself among many contemporary emerging artists who see themselves not as operating in isolation, but as artists making art within a historic time frame that they must shape in order to enter as relevant and poignant makers[.]

From My Universe: Objects of Desire Part II Curated by Janet Levy is on view at See Line Gallery until February 25, 2010.

Artists include: Ball Nogues, Kendell Carter, Zoe Crosher, Michael Dee, Sherin Guirguis, Todd Gray, Seth Kaufman, Eamon O'Kane, Ebony G. Patterson, Yasmin Than, Keith Walsh, Augusta Wood, Brenna Youngblood

For more information please visit: [www.seelinegallery.com](http://www.seelinegallery.com)

This post was contributed by Mary Anna Pomonis.

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