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**THE SHELLEY & DONALD RUBIN FOUNDATION  
AT THE 8<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR ANNOUNCES**

***Reality Reframed: Recent Works by Todd Gray***

**Curated by Anjuli Nanda Diamond and George Bolster**



Todd Gray, *the hidden order of the whole*, 2021. Five archival pigment prints in artist's frames, UV laminate.  
Courtesy of the artist and David Lewis Gallery, NY.

**The 8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
17 West 17<sup>th</sup> Street, NYC  
February 22 - April 13, 2024**

**New York, NY – December 13, 2023** - The Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation is pleased to present a new solo exhibition, ***Reality Reframed: Recent Works by Todd Gray***. The show will feature recent photo assemblages constructed from Gray's extensive archive of photography from the last forty years.

Throughout his photographic practice, Gray frequently defies the conventions of photography, destabilizing the primacy of the image and the traditional construction of pictorial narrative. Combining seemingly disparate or dissociated images into a single work, he leads the viewer to question or construct the story he poses. Gray's formal and metaphorical methodology steps beyond text-driven historical storytelling through his use of oval and rectangular frames of varied scales and historical periods, depicting rich built environments.

Gray's work often opens with beauty and closes with the dark, inherently grisly histories of global colonial subjugation, human trafficking, and ideological manipulation that enabled the aestheticization of the Old World, which was paid for by the New. Ostentatious and meticulously manicured European gardens, such as the Versailles gardens depicted in his work, contrast the more discreet legacy of forced displacement for "othered" humans created through colonization. Western cultural and religious projection onto these populations is still being corrected, explored, and readdressed. In Gray's own words, "it is so important to wrestle the narrative away from art history and re-channel it."

Collectively, the assemblages, or "photo-sculptures," feature postcolonial narratives that, while sited both historically and politically, retain a poetic quality, allowing the audience to enter the work and engage with its myriad subjects. Each particular piece, the artist writes, is "the consequence of my embrace of a polymorphous, shapeshifting mental construct that is at the foundation of my art."

***Reality Reframed: Recent Works by Todd Gray*** will be on view at The 8<sup>th</sup> Floor from **February 22 - April 13, 2024.**

### **About Todd Gray**

Todd Gray (b. 1954, Los Angeles, CA, lives and works in Los Angeles, CA and Akwidaa, Ghana) is a photo-based artist whose work aims to destabilize assumptions about the veracity of photography and provoke reconsiderations of long-accepted norms and beliefs surrounding the medium, including the role of the viewer in constructing meaning. Gray received both his B.F.A and M.F.A from California Institute of the Arts, Valencia, CA in 1979 and 1989, respectively.

Solo exhibitions of his work have been organized at Lehmann Maupin, London, U.K. (2023); Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, Kalamazoo, MI (2021); Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT (2021); David Lewis, New York, NY (2021); Pomona College Museum of Art, Pomona, CA (2019); Palm Springs Art Museum, Palm Springs, CA (2018); Meliksetian | Briggs, Los Angeles, CA (2018); Museum of the African Diaspora, San Francisco, CA (2017); Gallery Momo, Johannesburg, South Africa (2017); Lightwork, Syracuse, NY (2016); Samson Projects, Boston, MA (2015); California State University, Los Angeles, CA (2004); Pasadena City College, CA (2003); and Cal Poly Pomona, State University, Pomona, CA (2002).

Select group exhibitions of his work include *NGV Triennial*, National Gallery of Victoria (NGA), Melbourne, Australia (2023); *Inheritance*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY (2023); *Afro-Atlantic Histories*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), Los Angeles, CA (2022); *Claiming the Narrative*, Visual Arts Center of New Jersey, NJ (2022); *Black American Portraits*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), Los Angeles, CA (2021); *Photo Flux: Unshuttering LA*, The J. Paul Getty Museum at the Getty Center, CA (2021); *TELL ME YOUR STORY: Storytelling in African American Art, From the Harlem Renaissance to the Present*, Kunsthal KAdE, Amersfoort, the Netherlands (2020); *Whitney Biennial*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY (2019); *Mapping Black Identities*, Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis, MN (2019); *A Brilliant Spectrum:*

*Recent Gifts of Color Photography*, Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Santa Barbara, CA (2019); *Michael Jackson: On the Wall*, National Portrait Gallery, London, UK; Paris, France; Bonn, Germany; and Espoo, Finland (2018); *a, the, though, only, Made in LA 2016*, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA (2016); *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, California African American Museum, Los Angeles, CA (2013); *The Bearden Project*, Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, NY (2011).

He is the recipient of several awards and fellowships, including the Rome Prize Fellowship, Visual Arts, American Academy in Rome, Rome, Italy (2022-23); John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship for Fine Arts (2018); Bellagio Creative Arts Fellowship, The Rockefeller Foundation (2016); and the Hermitage Artist Retreat Fellowship, Englewood, FL (2015). In 2007, Gray was commissioned to create a public artwork for the Los Angeles International Airport.

### **About the Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation**

The Foundation believes in art as a cornerstone of cohesive, sustainable communities and greater participation in civic life. In its mission to make art available to the broader public, in particular to underserved communities, the Foundation provides direct support to, and facilitates partnerships between, cultural organizations and advocates of social justice across the public and private sectors. Through grantmaking, the Foundation supported cross-disciplinary work connecting art with social justice via experimental collaborations, as well as extending cultural resources to organizations and areas of New York City in need. [sdrubin.org](http://sdrubin.org)

### **About The 8<sup>th</sup> Floor**

The 8<sup>th</sup> Floor is an independent exhibition and event space established in 2010 by Shelley and Donald Rubin to promote artistic and cultural initiatives. Inspired by The Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation, the gallery is committed to broadening the access and availability of art to New York audiences. Seeking further cultural exchange, The 8<sup>th</sup> Floor explores the potential of art as an instrument for social change in the 21st century, through an annual program of innovative contemporary art exhibitions and an events program comprised of performances, salon-style discussions, and those organized by external partners. [the8thfloor.org](http://the8thfloor.org)

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#RealityReframed #ToddGray #RubinFoundation #The8thFloor #ArtandSocialJustice

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**Image description:** Photography and picture frames are assembled on top of and beside each other to create a fairly flat sculpture. A tall wooden rectangular frame is affixed to the left of a square wooden frame. Inside the rectangular frame, an oval-shaped framed photograph of a Black woman in profile sits on top of another oval-shaped framed photograph of the bark of a palm tree, which sits on top of a photograph looking up at an ornate castle. Inside the square frame, another oval-shaped framed photograph of the bark of a palm tree is layered on top of a photograph of a French garden and pond.