

# WHITNEY

# PRESS RELEASE

Whitney Museum  
of American Art  
Press Office

99 Gansevoort Street  
New York, NY 10014

pressoffice@whitney.org  
(212) 570-3633



Dave McKenzie, rehearsal of *Disturbing the View*, Whitney Museum of American Art, 2020. Photograph by Alex Munro

## THE WHITNEY DEBUTS NEW PERFORMANCE WORK BY DAVE MCKENZIE ON MAY 1

Video survey of McKenzie's past performances will also be featured in the Museum's Susan and John Hess Family Gallery

**NEW YORK, March 29, 2021** – Multidisciplinary artist Dave McKenzie (b. 1977, Kingston, Jamaica) prompts observers to reconsider seemingly familiar feelings, settings, and actions. On May 1, the Whitney Museum will debut *Disturbing the View*, a commissioned performance by McKenzie, and present *Dave McKenzie: The Story I Tell Myself*, a survey of his performances for the camera and documentation of live art alongside works by artists from the Museum's collection who have informed his practice. Performances of *Disturbing the View* take place from May 1 to June 13 on Fridays and Saturdays during Museum hours. The installation is on view in the Museum's third floor Susan and John Hess Family Gallery from May 1 through October 4.

McKenzie's new performance, *Disturbing the View*, draws inspiration from the entrepreneurial window washers prevalent in many American cities. McKenzie choreographs a circuitous path around the Museum, at times perched on a ladder or hidden from the sightlines of visitors. As he progresses, he momentarily inserts himself into the Museum's daily rhythms, disrupting the expected views and prompting observers to consider labor that is often invisible, yet essential, and the extent to which institutions can be transparent.

This performance is accompanied by a focused presentation on the Museum's third floor, *Dave McKenzie: The Story I Tell Myself*, in which McKenzie's performances for video as well as documentation of live events are contextualized alongside works by artists who have informed the concepts, gestures, and sensibilities in his work. McKenzie references and responds to these artists – Trisha Brown, Chris Burden, Felix Gonzalez-

Torres, Gordon Matta-Clark, Bruce Nauman, and Pope.L – connecting his engagement with performance to theirs. By invoking these figures and artworks, McKenzie calls attention to a shared awareness of a voyeuristic audience, as well as their incorporation of architecture, risk, and public intervention.

Adrienne Edwards, the Engell Speyer Family Curator and Curator of Performance, noted, “I am thrilled the Whitney is presenting such an ambitious project with Dave that is as multifaceted as his art. Through this two-part endeavor, which includes McKenzie’s first solo museum exhibition in New York City, we are engaging him to realize a new work that activates the Museum’s architecture and partners with our staff in new and unexpected ways, raising urgent questions about institutions today. Having worked with Dave over the years, it is gratifying to consider his art over a twenty year period alongside artworks from our permanent collection to reveal its depth and variety in performance as well as to suggest their striking relationship to Dave, a singular figure in experimental performance today.”

Scott Rothkopf, Deputy Director for Programs and Nancy and Steve Crown Family Chief Curator, remarked, “Together the performance commission and exhibition span twenty years of McKenzie’s creative output and reflect key themes of McKenzie’s art: endurance, exhaustion, repetition, and his signature brand of humor. His principal tool is his own body, which he uses to raise questions, create powerful images, and to pursue the seriousness of play in artmaking.”

### **Performance**

Commissioned by the Whitney, *Disturbing the View* will take place May 1 – June 13 on Fridays and Saturdays during Museum hours. McKenzie choreographs a circuitous path around the Museum, activating the building’s architecture and partnering with the Museum’s staff in new and unexpected ways to raise urgent questions about institutions today.

### **Exhibition**

*The Story I Tell Myself* will be on view from May 1 to October 4 in the Museum’s third floor Susan and John Hess Family Gallery. The installation features a survey of McKenzie’s performances for the camera and documentation of live art contextualized alongside works drawn from the Whitney’s collection by artists Trisha Brown, Chris Burden, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Gordon Matta-Clark, Bruce Nauman, and Pope.L.

### **About the Artist**

Brooklyn-based artist Dave McKenzie (b. 1977, Kingston, Jamaica) is a multidisciplinary artist who utilizes performance, photography, objects, video, and installation to reveal complex layers of meaning. His performances and activations push beyond the expectations of onlookers and the limits of the body and often respond to environment and architecture to incorporate a sense of site specificity.

In 2004, while an artist-in-residence at the Studio Museum in Harlem, he presented *It’s a date!*, a 10 x 9.75 x 10-inch plexiglass box placed on a pedestal with an incision on top that invited visitors to the museum to fill out a card and insert it into the ballot box for a chance to win a dinner with the artist. During the residency, McKenzie also commenced a year-long project in which he walked the streets of Harlem wearing a suit and tie, and a mask featuring the likeness of former President Bill Clinton. In 2007, he returned to the Studio Museum in Harlem for *All Together Now*, a series of four performances that were presented as part of PERFORMA07.

His work has been featured in numerous solo and group exhibitions, including *Soft Power*, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA (2019); *Speeches Speeches Speeches*, Galerie Barbara Wien, Berlin, Germany (2018); *Pants Full of Hope, Pockets Full of Adventure, or...Don't Call Me Cheesuz*, Wien Lukatsch, Berlin, Germany (2015); 2014 Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2014); *The Ungovernables: New Museum Triennial*, New Museum, New York (2012); *30 Seconds Off an Inch*, The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York (2009); *On Premises*, Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects, Los Angeles (2009); and *Black Is, Black Ain't*, The Renaissance Society, University of Chicago, Chicago

(2008). McKenzie's performances include *Darker Than the Moon, Smaller Than the Sun*, at The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York (2014) and *All the King's Horses...None of His Men*, at Third Streaming, New York (2013) for the Performa 13 Biennial.

McKenzie is the recipient of a States Artist Fellowship Award (2009) and was a fellow at the American Academy in Rome (2014-2015). He received a B.F.A. from the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, and has taught and lectured at several colleges and universities throughout the United States. He teaches at Bard College in the studio arts department, and also serves as a faculty member at the School of Visual Arts.

### **Curatorial Credit**

The exhibition and performance commission are organized by Adrienne Edwards, the Engell Speyer Family Curator and Curator of Performance, with Mia Matthias, curatorial assistant.

### **Exhibition Support**

*Dave McKenzie: The Story I Tell Myself* is supported by generous funds provided by the Manitou Fund and a major endowment from the Jacques and Natasha Gelman Foundation, which supports Outside the Box programming at the Whitney Museum.

### **Performance at the Whitney**

The Whitney Museum of American Art has a uniquely rich history of presenting performance within its programming and exhibitions. From presentations in the 1920s and '30s of music by Edgard Varèse and Carlos Salzedo, who also in turn programmed Igor Stravinsky and Alban Berg, to the 1960s and '70s with landmark performances by Laurie Anderson, John Cage, Ornette Coleman, Duke Ellington, Philip Glass, Meredith Monk, Steve Reich, Terry Reilly, Sonny Rollins, Cecil Taylor, and many others, the Museum has embraced performance in its many iterations as an integral part of its mandate to nurture and support American artists, and to commission and present new work. In the 1980s, the Museum's Performance on 42nd series at its midtown branch featured multidisciplinary programs, works-in-progress showings, and many commissioned works by performers including Olu Dara and the Okra Orchestra, Ethel, Savion Glover, Cynthia Hopkins, Joan Jonas, Christian Marclay, Dean Moss, The Wooster Group, Stephen Vitiello, John Zorn, and others.

Over the past two decades, the Museum has reaffirmed its commitment to presenting a program that crosses the boundary between visual and performing arts. Notable presentations have included, in the Breuer Building, the Whitney Live series (inaugurated in fall 2006), which included a landmark reprisal of *Steve Reich @ the Whitney*, *Christian Marclay: Festival* (2010), exploring the artist's approach to the world around him with a particular focus on his "graphic scores" for performance by musicians and vocalists; and *Off the Wall: Part 2: Seven Works by Trisha Brown* (2010), featuring the Trisha Brown Dance Company performing iconic works from the 1970s on the occasion of the company's fortieth anniversary.

Since its move downtown to the Meatpacking District, multidisciplinary presentations have included *Open Plan: Cecil Taylor* (2014), a retrospective exhibition and series of live performances featuring the artist and over twenty of his collaborators; *Nick Mauss: Transmissions* (2018), a work exploring the relationship between modernist ballet and the avant-garde visual arts in New York from the 1930s through the 1950s and accompanied by daily performances by four dancers made in collaboration with the artist; *Sudden Rise* (2019), a boundary-defying series of performances by Moved by the Motion, an ensemble formed by Wu Tsang, boychild, and collaborators including Patrick Belaga, Josh Johnson, Asma Maroof, and Fred Moten; and *Jason Moran* (2019), the first solo museum exhibition by the celebrated jazz pianist, composer, and visual artist, which also featured *Jazz on a High Floor in the Afternoon*, a series of live in-gallery performances.

### **About the Whitney**

The Whitney Museum of American Art, founded in 1930 by the artist and philanthropist Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney (1875–1942), houses the foremost collection of American art from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Mrs. Whitney, an early and ardent supporter of modern American art, nurtured groundbreaking artists at a time when audiences were still largely preoccupied with the Old Masters. From her vision arose the Whitney Museum of American Art, which has been championing the most innovative art of the United States for more than eighty years. The core of the Whitney’s mission is to collect, preserve, interpret, and exhibit American art of our time and serve a wide variety of audiences in celebration of the complexity and diversity of art and culture in the United States. Through this mission and a steadfast commitment to artists themselves, the Whitney has long been a powerful force in support of modern and contemporary art and continues to help define what is innovative and influential in American art today.

### **Current and Upcoming Exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art**

The Whitney’s Collection: Selections from 1900 to 1965	Through May 2022
Making Knowing: Craft in Art 1950–2019	Through February 2022
Salman Toor: How Will I Know	Through April 4, 2021
Nothing Is So Humble: Prints from Everyday Objects	Through Spring 2021
Andrea Carlson: Red Exit	Through Fall 2021
Julie Mehretu	March 25–August 8, 2021
Madeline Hollander: Flatwing	March 25–August 8, 2021
Dawoud Bey: An American Project	April 17–October 3, 2021
Public Art Project: David Hammons: Day’s End	Spring 2021
Dave McKenzie: The Story I Tell Myself	Opens May 1, 2021
Jasper Johns: Mind/Mirror	September 29, 2021–February 13, 2022
Martine Gutierrez	On view September 2021
My Barbarian	Opens October 22, 2021
2022 Whitney Biennial	Opens Spring 2022

The Whitney Museum of American Art is located at 99 Gansevoort Street between Washington and West Streets, New York City. Adults: \$25. Full-time students, visitors 65 & over, and visitors with disabilities: \$18. Visitors 18 years & under and Whitney members: FREE. Current public hours 10:30 am – 6 pm Thursday through Monday; with members-only hours on Monday from 5 – 6 pm and Saturdays and Sundays from 10:30 – 11:30 am. Pay-what-you-wish admission will be offered on Thursdays from 1:30 – 6 pm. Reserve timed-entry tickets in advance at [whitney.org](http://whitney.org). For more information please call (212) 570-3600 or visit [whitney.org](http://whitney.org).

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