

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Rudy Shepherd**  
*Everything in the Universe is My Brother*

**January 13 – February 25, 2018**  
**Opening Reception: January 13, 6-8pm**



Rudy Shepherd, *Limousine burned by the Black Bloc during the presidential inauguration, 2017*, watercolor on paper, 38 x 42 in. (courtesy of the artist)

Rudy Shepherd's solo exhibition curated by Smack Mellon's Curator and Director of Exhibitions, Gabriel de Guzman, features several bodies of work that are part of the artist's ongoing investigation into the nature of evil. His portrait series depicts the faces of criminals and victims of crime. Making no visual distinctions between the two, the artist explores the complexity of their stories and the gray areas between innocence and guilt. In this way, Trayvon Martin, Kim Jong-un, Heather Heyer, and Steve Bannon are all depicted in the group. By presenting the individuals first and their stories second, Shepherd attempts to create a space for humanity to be reinserted into the lives of people who have been reduced to mere headlines in the press.

Another recent painting series draws heavily on poignant moments from news sources, attempting to reconsider fleeting, sensational images in our collective consciousness in a more

nuanced, complex way. Examples include a limousine set ablaze by the Black Bloc during Donald Trump's inauguration, a car plowing into a crowd of protesters in Charlottesville, Virginia, and Alan Kurdi, a three-year-old Syrian refugee found dead on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea.

Shepherd's monumental *Black Rock Negative Energy Absorber* sculpture and his small-scale ceramics, called *Healing Devices*, serve as a counterpoint to what can seem like vast unsolvable problems by offering a spiritual solution. However, their unknown application questions the belief in art and the power of belief. *The Healer*, an outgrowth of the sculptural work, is a mystical being who appears in a series of videos. The figure moves through the world in a state of detachment, leading the viewer to contemplate intermediate spaces—those that lie between binaries such as good and evil—and serves as a surrogate for the artist, enabling him to explore feelings of social and political frustration, isolation, and impotence.

A new cycle of paintings, *The Holy Mountain Project*, portrays revered peaks as symbols of humankind's journey toward a heightened form of spiritual awareness. Inspired by the final chapter of Alejandro Jodorowsky's 1973 film *The Holy Mountain*, Shepherd's group of paintings is another portrait series of sorts, depicting singular landforms from all over the world.

The title of Shepherd's exhibition, *Everything in the Universe is My Brother*, also reflects the sense of spiritual investigation in his work. It is the title of a poem by Sun Ra, the jazz composer, musician, poet, and philosopher. Considered a pioneer of Afrofuturism, Sun Ra is cited by Shepherd as an important influence. Indeed, Shepherd's wide-ranging body of work represents an ongoing search for deeper associations. It reveals an artist who sees that all beings, objects, landscapes, and matter are interconnected in the universe.

*Rudy Shepherd received a BS in Biology and Studio Art from Wake Forest University and an MFA in Sculpture from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He has had solo exhibitions at Mixed Greens Gallery, New York; Regina Miller Gallery, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh; and 1708 Gallery, Richmond, VA. Shepherd has also been in group exhibitions in New York at P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, The Studio Museum in Harlem, Bronx Museum of the Arts, Art in General, Triple Candie, and Socrates Sculpture Park, as well as nationally and internationally at Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; Cheekwood Museum of Art, Nashville; Contemporary Museum, Baltimore; Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, Ridgefield, CT; Southeastern Center of Contemporary Art, Winston-Salem, NC; Museum of Science and Industry, Chicago; Tart Gallery, San Francisco; Analix Forever Gallery, Geneva, Switzerland; Chert Gallery, Berlin, Germany; and Vanessa Quang Gallery, Paris, France. He has had artist residencies at P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, Long Island City; Jacob Lawrence Institute for the Visual Arts, New York; Emerging Artist Fellowship, Socrates Sculpture Park, Long Island City; Location One, New York; and Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's Process Space on Governors Island, New York.*

# S m a c k M e l l o n

92 Plymouth Street @ Washington Street, Dumbo, Brooklyn, NY 11201  
Tel: 718.834.8761 | [www.smackmellon.org](http://www.smackmellon.org) | Hours: Wednesday-Sunday, 12-6pm  
Contact: Angela Cruz [acruz@smackmellon.org](mailto:acruz@smackmellon.org)

Smack Mellon's exhibitions are supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, in partnership with the City Council, New York City Council Member Stephen Levin, and the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature, and with generous support from The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, The Robert Lehman Foundation, Iorio Charitable Foundation, Select Equity Group Foundation, many individuals and Smack Mellon's Members.

Smack Mellon's programs are also made possible with public funds from the National Endowment for the Arts and with generous support from The New York Community Trust, The Roy and Niuta Titus Foundation, Jerome Foundation, The Greenwich Collection Ltd, Milton and Sally Avery Arts Foundation Inc., and Exploring The Arts.

Space for Smack Mellon's programs is generously provided by the Walentas family and Two Trees Management.

The artist thanks the Pennsylvania State University College of Art and Architecture for their financial support of his exhibition.

---

**Press Contact:**

**Angela Cruz - [acruz@smackmellon.org](mailto:acruz@smackmellon.org)**