

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Contemporary presents *The Ground*, a project by artist Michael Jones McKean at the historic Hutzler Brothers Palace Building opening February 18.

CONTACT

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PROJECT RUN: February 18 - May 19

ON VIEW: Thursdays-Saturdays, 10am-4pm

OPENING RECEPTION: Saturday, February 18, 6-9pm

ARTIST TALK: Monday, February 27, 6-8pm

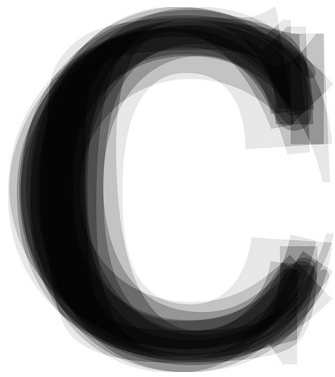
PERFORMANCE (*Sonic Meditations*): Saturday, March 25, 11am-4pm

CURATORIAL TOUR: Saturday, April 1, 12-2pm

Baltimore, MD—The Contemporary presents *The Ground*, a solo commission by New York and Richmond-based artist Michael Jones McKean, at the historic Hutzler Brothers Palace Building, located at 200 North Howard Street. The project is free and open to the public from February 18 through May 19, 2017.

Hutzler's Brothers Palace, erected 1888, and originally advertised as a "museum of merchandise" was the first department store of its kind in Baltimore. In the shell of this former emporium, McKean has fabricated a massive, multi-room, two-story structure, an architectonic labyrinth enfolding diverse aesthetic languages and multiple modes of representation. He merges the museological, the domestic, the store display, the geological, the theatrical, and the digital. In its totality, he has created an extended metaphor on "place". Not place as a stagnant reality fixed in time, but as an emergent, fecund, and evolving set of conditions metabolizing past histories into the present.

With *The Ground*, McKean proposes longer overlapping and diverging timelines where actants, human and non-human, live in close, nonhierarchical proximity with their time scales flattened and enmeshed. Here, a handmade replica of the human brain co-mingles casually with that of a wolf, whale, cat, and elephant. An out-of-time cave diorama shares a wall with twelve heads, possibly those of costumed members of some undetermined, future leaning, pan-cultural cult. A mise-en-scene built of clay and dirt depicting people participating in a water birth of a new human conflates the contemporary and historical, creation myth and quotidian, abject realism and magic realism.



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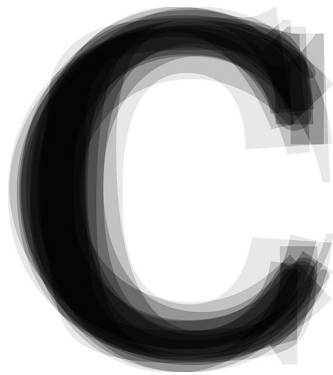
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As Hutzler's slips with each passing year into more hazily remembered regional folklore, it also cements its historical status in a complex and problematic continuum of socio-commercial spaces—the marketplace—where substances and objects from eyeliner to boom boxes, handbags to frying pans, chocolates to wristwatches, were crafted to elicit various degrees of human desire. In this way, McKean conceives of the building as a filter through which materials and objects, each existing within complex global supply chains, have traveled to be displayed, browsed, and purchased before finally dispersing into the community-at-large. Today, nearly thirty years after Hutzler's has closed, the building houses a vast internet server farm, where information streams into homes, phones, and businesses. Noting that the building sits atop roughly 25% of the earth's data flow—tweets and texts, selfies, emails, merchandise orders, Skype calls, and search queries—*The Ground* projects a world slipping into phantom being, matter flattening into proto-screen realities—stoic back-lit voids.

The Ground indexes the mysterious and ungraspable space below us—the mantle where all earthbound creation rises from and will return to—carbon to rare earth minerals, platinum to silk, 64GB USB drives to arrowheads. The project also speaks to the complex history of the site stretching from the Holocene, to Anthropocene, to pre-industrial, to 4th wave postindustrial—a testing ground for the successes, challenges, and failures of modernity. McKean offers timelines and sedimented realities, which archive the facades of a crumbling past and future. Expanding a temporal understanding of site, *The Ground* transmutes artifacts, relics, and talismans, to be discovered again as harbingers of a new time.

Throughout his career, McKean has explored the nature of objects in relation to folklore, technology, anthropology, and mysticism. His complex installations and sculptures have merged expansive but highly specific orderings of materials, processes, and substances. McKean was born in Micronesia in 1976 and lives and works in New York City and Richmond, Virginia where he teaches in the Sculpture + Extended Media Department at Virginia Commonwealth University. He has been the recipient of many awards including a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Nancy Graves Foundation Award and an Artadia Award. Additionally he has received fellowships and residencies at The Core Program at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, The MacDowell Colony, The International Studio and Curatorial Program in New York City, The Provincetown Fine Arts Work Center, The Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts and the Sharpe-Walentas Studio Program in New York City among many others.

The Ground is free and open to the public—additional information can be found at contemporary.org.



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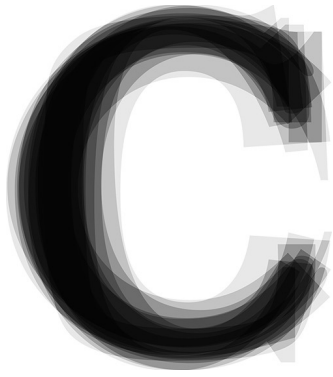
The Ground is made possible with lead support from The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts and in partnership with AiNET, a Maryland-based leader in data center and network solutions that is conscientiously working to improve communities in Baltimore through technology infrastructure and civic engagement. This project is the result of many sponsorships, including the University of Maryland Baltimore, Downtown Partnership of Baltimore, Baltimore Museum of Art, Walters Art Museum, Jewish Museum of Maryland, James E. Lewis Museum of Art, Maryland Archaeological Conservation Lab, Smithsonian, Open Works Baltimore, and McCormick Paint. The Contemporary is funded through the generosity of its Board of Trustees, foundations, government agencies, corporations, and individuals. Major institutional support has been provided by The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Robert W. Deutsch Foundation, Aaron & Lillie Straus Foundation, William G. Baker, Jr. Memorial Fund, creator of the Baker Artist Awards, and Jacob and Hilda Blaustein Foundation. The museum also gratefully acknowledges an ongoing partnership with the Baltimore School for the Arts. The official graphic designer of The Contemporary is The Office of Kristian Bjørnard (OOKB), and the hotel sponsor is Hotel Indigo.

ABOUT MICHAEL JONES MCKEAN

Michael Jones McKean (b. 1976, Micronesia, lives / works New York City) is the recipient of numerous awards including a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Nancy Graves Foundation Award and an Artadia Award. McKean has been awarded fellowships and residencies at The Core Program at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, The MacDowell Colony, The International Studio and Curatorial Program in New York City, The Provincetown Fine Arts Work Center, The Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts and the Sharpe-Walentas Studio Program in New York City. McKean's work has been exhibited extensively nationally and internationally. Recent exhibitions include the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY: Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston: Parc Saint Leger Centre d'art Contemporain, Nevers, France: Horton Gallery, New York, NY: The Quebec Biennale, Quebec City, Canada: Gentili Apri, Berlin, Germany: The Art Foundation, Athens, Greece: Inman Gallery, Houston, TX: Parisian Laundry, Montreal, Canada: Project Gentili, Prato, Italy: Shenkar University, Tel Aviv, Israel: The Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art, Winston-Salem, NC and The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX among many others. McKean is currently an Associate Professor in the Sculpture + Extended Media Department at Virginia Commonwealth University where he has taught since 2006 and is Co-Director of ASMBLY based in New York City. www.michaeljonesmckean.com

ABOUT AINET

Since 1993, it has been AiNET's mission to deliver world-class data centers and cloud environments so customers can benefit from innovation, agility and efficiency that help them grow. Based in Maryland, we have a deep commitment to Baltimore and the communities it fosters. As part of our commitment to our community, AiNET has partnered with



the Contemporary to present this exhibit. Our vision is for a Baltimore in which all needs are met, and we believe the technology solutions and the community engagement we provide can be part of that vision.
www.ai.net

ABOUT THE CONTEMPORARY

The Contemporary is a nomadic, non-collecting art museum in Baltimore, Maryland. Our mission expands the idea of a museum as an incubator that commissions site-specific and subject-oriented projects. We engage diverse audiences and advance contemporary art through projects and educational programming. Our work is inspired by three guiding principles: *artists matter, collaboration is key, and audience is everywhere.*
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