

# Graham Foundation

For Immediate Release

***Brendan Fernandes: The Master and Form***

**Installation in collaboration with Norman Kelley**

**January 25–April 7, 2018**

Thursday, January 25, 2018, 6–8:00 p.m.

Opening Reception and Performance

*Chicago, IL (December 5, 2017)* — The Graham Foundation is pleased to present *The Master and Form*, a new installation and performance series by artist Brendan Fernandes that explores themes of mastery and discipline within the culture of ballet through the use of designed objects that enable dancers to perfect and extend iconic positions. The culmination of Fernandes' fall 2017 performance artist residency at the Graham Foundation, the project engages the Foundation's historic Madlener House and features collaborations with designers Norman Kelley and dancers from the Joffrey Academy of Dance.

In contrast to the grace and apparent ease of ballet as seen on stage, this project seeks to investigate the nature of the discipline's idealized poses, acknowledging and challenging the depth of training necessary to achieve these forms. Working in collaboration with Norman Kelley, Fernandes developed a series of sculptural devices designed according to the ideal proportions of dancers' bodies and serving as a site for intense, endurance-based practice. In rehearsals and performances throughout the run of the exhibition, Fernandes directs dancers as they perform with and within these structures, allowing the dancers to push closer to ideal forms on the edge of their physical abilities. Responding to the intense culture of perfectionism within ballet, Fernandes assumes the role of ballet master, using this authority to examine the complex power dynamics between designer and producer. Close enough to see dancers strain and sweat, this intimate and candid exhibition offers a safe space to consider the paradoxical appeal of the physical and psychological stresses embedded in the pursuit of perfect form.

Occupying the first and second floor galleries, the installation is activated by Fernandes' choreography as he moves dancers through variations on daily barre work that alternates between the fixed training objects and room-scale environmental interventions. While the sculptural objects act as supports for the dancers' bodies as they strive for ever longer extension and lengthy holds within each pose, the open scaffolding system consisting of rigid forms and suspended ropes simultaneously provides a space for counter stretches, self-care, and physical and psychological release. Delineated by the lines and proportions of the dancers, the installation repeats and draws out the house's existing architectural elements that relate closely to the body—such as thresholds and windows—creating an acute awareness of the body moving through space for both dancers and spectators alike. The choreography, in which Fernandes is both present, but physically absent, seeks to queer the space of ballet, openly exploring dancers' complicity in a demanding practice and the perverse pleasure of sacrifice in the name of form.

## Events:

Thursday, January 25, 2018, 6–8:00 p.m.  
Opening Reception and Performance

Thursday, February 1, 2018, 6–8:00 p.m.  
Talk by Jaffer Kolb

Saturday, February 10, 1–3:00 p.m.  
Performance followed by Brendan Fernandes in conversation with Zachary Whittenburg

Thursday, February 15, 6:00 p.m.  
Talk by Hendrik Folkerts followed by Q&A with Brendan Fernandes

Saturday, March 10, 1–3:00 p.m.  
Performance

Thursday, April 5, 6–8:00 p.m.  
Performance

The Graham Foundation performance residency program invites practitioners working in a wide range of disciplines to expand architectural discourse and work directly with the physical spaces of the Foundation's historic Madlener House. Now on its second year, Fernandes' project follows Chicago-based ATOM-r's development and presentation of *Kjell Theory* during the fall of 2016.

**Brendan Fernandes** is a Chicago-based Canadian artist of Kenyan and Indian descent. He completed the Independent Study Program of the Whitney Museum of American Art (2007) and earned his MFA from the University of Western Ontario (2005) and his BFA from York University in Canada (2002). Fernandes has exhibited widely domestically and abroad, including exhibitions at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museum of Art and Design, New York; Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal; The National Gallery of Canada, Ontario; The Brooklyn Museum, New York; The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; Mass MoCA, North Adams, MA; The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, PA; Deutsche Guggenheim, Berlin; Bergen Kunsthall, Norway; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; The Sculpture Center, New York; The Quebec City Biennial; and the Third Guangzhou Triennial in China. Additionally, Fernandes has been awarded many highly regarded residencies around the world. Recent exhibitions include *Lost Bodies*, which originated at Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen's University, Ontario (2016) and traveled to the Textile Museum of Canada, Toronto (2017); and *Free Fall*, which originated at Monique Meloche Gallery, Chicago (2017), and resulted in an expanded version of the performance, *Free Fall 49*, at the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles in summer 2017. His recent monograph *Still Move*, was published by Black Dog Press, London, fall 2016. Upcoming solo projects include *The High Line*, New York (summer 2018), and *DePaul University Art Museum* (fall 2018). He is currently artist-in-residence and faculty at Northwestern University in the Department of Art Theory and Practice, and is represented by Monique Meloche Gallery, Chicago.

**Norman Kelley**, a New York and Chicago-based design collaborative, was founded by Carrie Norman and Thomas Kelley in 2012. Over the past five years, Norman Kelley's work has sought to explore architecture and design's limits between two- and three-dimensions. Results have varied in scale and medium, from object design to interiors. Along this spectrum, their work re-examines architecture and design's relationship to vision, prompting its observers to see nuance in the familiar. The practice has contributed work to the 14th Venice Architecture Biennial (2014) and the first and second Chicago Architecture Biennials (2015, 2017). The practice was a recipient of the Architecture League of New York Young Architect's Prize (2014). Their collection of American Windsor chairs is currently represented by Volume Gallery in Chicago.

**The Joffrey Academy of Dance, Official School of The Joffrey Ballet**, is committed to providing students of all ages, levels and backgrounds who have a desire to dance with a world-class education built on a foundation of classical ballet. With the talents cultivated at the Joffrey Academy, students can pursue careers as professional dancers at companies throughout the world, higher education opportunities in dance, or success in other fields. Through the Joffrey Academy's programs, students develop a diverse set of skills including artistry, creativity, discipline and confidence, among others. The Joffrey Academy's high-quality, educational programming forms future audiences and support for the Joffrey and builds the organization's reputation worldwide.

**Jaffer Kolb** is a designer based in New York and co-founder of the architectural practice N/A. He sometimes writes, sometimes curates, and often teaches (currently at Pratt Institute, and most recently at Princeton University's School of Architecture). He was the 2015 Muschenheim Fellow at the University of Michigan, and before that worked as a designer in New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles. His work has appeared in numerous exhibitions and has been published internationally. Previously he worked on the 13th Venice Architecture Biennial under David Chipperfield, and before that served as the US Editor of the *Architectural Review*. As a design journalist and critic, he has written for numerous publications internationally. He holds a Master of Architecture from Princeton University, a Master's in Urban Planning from the London School of Economics, and his Bachelor of Arts in Film Studies from Wesleyan University.

Colorado native **Zachary Whittenburg** spent ten years as a professional dancer with companies including Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, BJM Danse Montréal, Pacific Northwest Ballet, and Charlotte Ballet. Since then, he has collaborated with Lucky Plush Productions, Same Planet Performance Project, and Molly Shanahan / Mad Shak on performance and choreographic work; and has lectured and led workshops nationally and internationally. From 2009-12 he was the dance editor at *Time Out Chicago* and has written for numerous print and online publications including regular contributions to *Dance Magazine*. Formerly the associate director of marketing and communication at Hubbard Street Dance Company, he currently serves as the communications and engagement director at Arts Alliance Illinois. Whittenburg remains engaged with dance as a founding member of the executive committee for the Chicago Dance History Project, and serves on the artistic advisory council for High Concept Labs.

**Hendrik Folkerts** is the Dittmer Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at Art Institute of Chicago and one of the curators of documenta 14, which will take place in Kassel and Athens in 2017. He studied Art History at the University of Amsterdam, specializing in contemporary art and theory, feminist practices, and performance. From 2010 until 2015 he was curator of Performance, Film & Discursive Programs at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. Prior to this,

Folkerts was co-ordinator of the Curatorial Program at De Appel arts centre in Amsterdam from 2009 until 2011. He frequently publishes in journals and magazines such as *South as a State of Mind*, *Mousse Magazine*, *Artforum*, *The Exhibitionist*, *Metropolis M*, *The Journal for Art and Public Space*, *Afterall Online*, as well as monographs and exhibition catalogues. Folkerts is (co-) editor of *Shadowfiles: Curatorial Education* (Amsterdam: de Appel arts centre, 2013) (with Ann Demeester) and *Facing Forward: Art & Theory from a Future Perspective* (Amsterdam: AUP, 2015) (with Christoph Lindner and Margriet Schavemaker). He is one of the founding editors of the peer-reviewed journal *Stedelijk Studies*.

*The Master and Form* is organized by Graham Foundation director Sarah Herda and managing director of public programs Ellen Alderman.

#### ABOUT THE GRAHAM FOUNDATION

Founded in 1956, the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts fosters the development and exchange of diverse and challenging ideas about architecture and its role in the arts, culture, and society. The Graham realizes this vision through making project-based grants to individuals and organizations and by producing exhibitions, events, and publications.

#### THE MADLENER HOUSE

Since 1963, the Graham Foundation has been located in the Madlener House, a turn-of-the-century Prairie-style mansion designed by Richard E. Schmidt and Hugh M. Gardner. Built 1901–02, it was later renovated by prominent modern architect Daniel Brenner. The 9,000 square-foot historic home now hosts galleries, a bookstore, an outdoor collection of architectural fragments, an extensive non-lending library of grantee publications, and a ballroom where the foundation hosts a robust schedule of public programs.

#### BOOKSHOP

The Graham Foundation's bookshop, designed by Ania Jaworska, offers a selection of new, historically significant, and hard-to-find publications on architecture, art and design, many of which have been supported by grants from the Graham Foundation.

#### GALLERY HOURS AND VISITOR INFORMATION

The galleries and bookshop are open to the public Wednesday through Saturday, 11 a.m.–6 p.m. Admission is free. Group tours are available by request.

#### ACCESSIBILITY

The second-floor galleries and the third-floor ballroom, where events are held, are only accessible by stairs. The first-floor galleries and bookshop are accessible via outdoor lift. Please call ahead to make arrangements.

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High-resolution digital images are available on the press section of our website; email Ellen Alderman for the press login or additional information. Press tours welcome by appointment.



Images (clockwise from top) View of *Brendan Fernandes: The Master and Form*, in development, 2017, Graham Foundation, Chicago. dancer: Leah Upchurch, photo and rendering: Norman Kelley; Brendan Fernandes, Graham Foundation performance artist in residence, 2017, photo: Milo Bosh; View of *Brendan Fernandes: The Master and Form*, in development, 2017, Graham Foundation, Chicago. dancer: Leah Upchurch, photo: Norman Kelley