

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Paul Mpagi Sepuya
Figures, Grounds and Studies
 February 2 – March 18, 2017



Mirror Study (_Q5A3505), 2016
 Archival pigment print, 51 x 34 in. Edition of 5

Yancey Richardson is pleased to present *Figures, Grounds and Studies*, Paul Mpagi Sepuya's debut exhibition with the gallery. While deeply engaged with ideas about studio portraiture, the exhibition frames the photographic process as an ongoing conversation and negotiation between the viewer, the artist, the subject and the work. Simultaneously, Sepuya investigates the role of desire as a productive and critical force in the medium of photography.

Referencing artistic tropes of homoerotic studio photography, Sepuya comments on the medium as a process of constructive desire: the desire to photograph, to look and to touch. Using drapes or framing to partially obscure the sitter, the studio or the camera, he engenders in the viewer a longing to see what is hidden and implicates the viewer in the looking. Sepuya inserts himself into the images, appearing alternately in a

fragmented self-portrait, obscured behind a camera or drape, or reaching into the frame to arrange a sitter, adjust a cloth, or point to the model. His presence is mediated through a self-conscious play of presentation and concealing, exploring surface and reflection, lens and mirror, touch and trace.

Sepuya's photographs often contain images of previous work that is fragmented, conjoined, overlapping the camera lens or taped to the studio mirror into which he is shooting. He states that this approach "...allows me to hold, within the studio, all material as potential. Each enters into the frame of another within a chain of productions, revision, destruction and re-production." Eschewing digital technology, Sepuya uses the mirror to collapse the studio space into one plane, allowing him to integrate the subject, the camera tripod and prints of earlier images into a single layered, collage-like composition. Sepuya's sitters are friends, lovers, writers and other artists who occupy a charged intersection of the creative, social and sexual spheres in the queer community. The relationships that exist across these "shared subjects," as Sepuya calls them, and the resulting images serve as an organizing principle for the editing and configuration of their exhibition.

Paul Mpagi Sepuya (b. 1982) lives and works in Los Angeles. He received his M.F.A. from the University of California Los Angeles in 2016 and a B.F.A. from New York University Tisch School of the Arts in 2004. Sepuya's work has been featured in numerous exhibitions including at the Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles, The Studio Museum in Harlem, Franklin Art Works and The Artist Institute, New York. Public collections featuring Sepuya's work include The Whitney Museum of American Art, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, and the Carnegie Museum of Art. Sepuya's work is also on view in the exhibition *DEANA LAWSON, JUDY LINN, & PAUL MPAGI SEPUYA* at Sikkema Jenkins Gallery (January 13 - February 18, 2017) and *Compassion Protocols* curated by Moyra Davey and Jason Simon at Callicoon Fine Arts, New York (January 12 – February 19, 2017).

For press inquiries, please contact Dane O'Sullivan at dosullivan@yanceyrichardson.com



Self-portrait Study with Roses at Night (1709), 2015
Archival pigment print, 45 x 35 inches, Edition of 5