

BILL LOWE GALLERY PRESENTS:

Todd Murphy: *Wink*

October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2022 to November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Opening Reception, October 7<sup>th</sup> | 6 – 9pm



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**



*Wink* | Todd Murphy | 2017-2019 | UV Print on Diabond | 124 x 200 inches

**Atlanta, GA. September 13th 2022** – Bill Lowe Gallery is pleased to present the first exhibition devoted to Todd Murphy since announcing the representation of his estate in May 2022. This is also the first exhibition of the artist's work since his passing in 2020.

In the essay to accompany the exhibition, Seph Rodney writes: "The paintings in Todd Murphy's *Wink* series tell a particular story about the African-American jockey James (or Jimmy) Winkfield, whose riding career began at age sixteen and who is perhaps most well known in the United States as the last Black jockey to win in the Kentucky Derby — which Winkfield accomplished in 1902. But in the exhibition this essay accompanies, Murphy's depictions of Winkfield astride various horses have aims beyond representing this one heroic competitor. Instead, there is an entire history of Black jockeys that Murphy refers to in the painting *Untitled Jockey*, 2012 -2019 by deliberately leaving the rider's face featureless. He is meant to stand in as a composite

of several of these exceptional athletes, among them: Oliver Lewis, who in 1875, set a new American record time for a mile-and-a-half race; William Walker, who was born into slavery and went on to become the leading rider at Churchill Downs for several seasons; Garrett Davis Lewis, winner of the 1880 Kentucky Derby; Babe Hurd, winner of the Kentucky Derby in 1882; and Isaac Murphy, the first jockey to be inducted into the National Museum of Racing and Hall of Fame upon its opening in 1955."

As Seph Rodney remarks, Murphy does not present any of the jockeys without their horses. Perhaps they are inseparable and attached by default, and their identities dependent on this deep human-animal alliance. Indeed, at no point does Murphy disregard the greatness of the horse itself, and his fascination with its physiology is evident across various works in the series such as the photograms and sculptures on view. Between the horses and the jockeys, it is often difficult to recognize who Murphy truly views to be the stars of the derbies. This uncertainty comes as no surprise considering the artist's lifelong fascination with the animal, a recurrent motif in his works since the earliest days of his career in the 1990s. The bell-shaped skirt, best remembered from the artist's *Murmurations* series (2013-2019), once again makes an appearance. A horse's foreleg bone is placed at its base; a stark reminder of the physical role of the co-champion, thus mitigating the Thoroughbred's status from dispensable tool to chief accomplice. The use of animal bones is another motif in the artist's oeuvre and archival research that solidifies a deep, and often macabre, curiosity for the natural world.

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalog featuring essays by Seph Rodney, adjunct faculty member at Parsons School of Design, USA, and an editor and writer for the Hyperallergic art and culture blog. He was born on the island of Jamaica, grew up in New York City, and obtained his PhD in Museum Studies from Birkbeck College, University of London, UK and Peter Frank, art critic, curator, and poet who lives and works in Los Angeles. Frank is known for curating shows at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in the 1970s and 1980s. He has worked curatorially for Documenta, the Venice Biennale, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, and many other national and international venues.

## **TODD MURPHY**

For more than three decades, Todd Murphy (1962-2020) has explored a practice that combines sculpture, painting, and photography. With the inquisitiveness of a 19th-century naturalist, Murphy has traveled to the far reaches of the world, collecting, photographing, and fastidiously cataloging everything from melting glaciers, to aviary species, to exotic fruit. His photographic studies of curiosities become sources for complex narratives based on philosophy, mythology, and the supernatural. In his work, Murphy often goes beyond these classical prototypes to include subtexts of bigotry, Southern history, and fantastic literary stories. In the end, his recurring protagonists — horses, birds, dresses, and boats — are poetic vehicles for a humanistic discourse.

## **ABOUT BILL LOWE GALLERY**

For almost three decades, Bill Lowe Gallery has served as a portal to global visual culture for art enthusiasts around the world. Our unique juxtaposition of style and substance is articulated in exhibitions that embrace universal and eternal considerations with great visual drama. This has earned the gallery recognition as a sanctuary for the cross-cultural intersection of beauty and meaning.

([www.lowegallery.com](http://www.lowegallery.com))

**For additional press information please call or send inquiries to:**

[donovan@lowegallery.com](mailto:donovan@lowegallery.com)