

Media Information: Friday 26 August 2011

# BALTIC

## MIKE KELLEY AND MICHAEL SMITH ***A VOYAGE OF GROWTH AND DISCOVERY***

Thursday 20 October 2011 – Sunday 15 January 2012

After its great success in New York and Los Angeles, **BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art**, Gateshead is delighted to announce the UK premier of ***A Voyage of Growth and Discovery***, a remarkable collaboration between renowned American artists and longtime friends **Mike Kelley and Michael Smith**.

***A Voyage of Growth and Discovery*** centres on **Baby IKKI**, a character developed by Smith for over thirty years. Here the pre-lingual man-child, dressed in a nappy, sunglasses and baby's bonnet, visits the Burning Man festival in the remote Black Rock Desert of Nevada. Infamous for its carnivalesque atmosphere and existence beyond wider societal norms, the annual event is an "*experiment in temporary community dedicated to radical self-expression and radical self-reliance.*" Alone in his journey, yet alongside thousands of revellers, the part-comedic, part-forlorn IKKI navigates ravers, erotic encounters and basic human survival, while exploring the primal elements of earth, air, fire and water.

Gathered from hours of raw footage and meticulously edited by **Kelley and Smith**, a six-channel video projection at the centre of the installation replays the baby's 'voyage', as performed by Smith, at the festival over five days and five nights. The narrative begins with IKKI travelling to the desert in his mobile home, distracted by sweets, water, matches, B-movies and cartoons that mirror his infantilism. At the festival he waddles and dances, interacts with bizarrely costumed party-goers and finally, after days of physical endurance and basic human survival, witnesses the culmination of the event in its mass public 'burn'. The film concludes with a day of post-festival wind down.

The screens of the film are enveloped by a fantasy stage-set evocative of the tents and towers of the eclectic festival. Stuffed toys in oversized cages, a burnt-out VW camper-van, bunting, coloured lights and portaloos are all included, along with a 30ft incarnation in metal junk of IKKI himself. We are invited to contemplate IKKI's existential journey in this multi-sensory environment. Part-crèche, part-hippy commune, it coaxes a moment of our own regression.

***A Voyage of Growth and Discovery*** is curated by **Emi Fontana** and was co-produced by **West of Rome, Los Angeles** and the **Sculpture Center, Long Island City, New York**.

END

For further information and image please contact:

Ann Cooper, Head of Communications T: 0191 440 4915 E: [annc@balticmill.com](mailto:annc@balticmill.com)

Nikki Johnson, Communications Assistant T: 0191 440 4912 E: [nikkij@balticmill.com](mailto:nikkij@balticmill.com)

## NOTES TO EDITORS:

**Mike Kelley** was born in Detroit in 1954 and lives and works in Los Angeles, California.

Recent solo exhibitions include: West of Rome, Los Angeles and Sculpture Center, New York (2010); at WIELS Centre d'Art Contemporain, Brussels Belgium (2008); Musée du Louvre, Paris (2006); Tate Liverpool (2004). His work has been included in numerous important international exhibitions including the Carnegie International (2008); Skulptur Projekts Munster (2007); the Venice Biennale (1988) and five Whitney Biennials.

Mike Kelley received a BFA from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor (1976) and a MFA from the California Institute of the Arts (1978). His awards include The Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Grant, National Endowment for the Visual Arts Fellowships, and a Guggenheim Fellowship, among others.

**Michael Smith** was born in Chicago in 1951 and lives and works in Brooklyn, New York and Austin, Texas.

Smith's artistic career includes live performance, video works, commercial and cable television skits, puppet shows, exhibition installations, comic publications, and drawings. He has performed and exhibited at venues as varied as Franklin Furnace, The Kitchen, Caroline's Comedy Club, Dance Theatre Workshop, Henson International Puppet Festival, Cinemax, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Whitney, the New Museum, and the Centre Pompidou. He was included in the 2008 Whitney Biennial. A retrospective of his work, Mike's World: Michael Smith and Joshua White (and other collaborators) was presented at the Blanton Museum of Art at the University of Texas at Austin and traveled to the ICA Philadelphia in 2008.

Smith has received numerous awards including fellowships from the NEA, The Guggenheim Foundation, New York Foundation for the Arts and The Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation. Smith is an Associate Professor at the University of Texas @ Austin.

**BALTIC** is a major international centre for contemporary art situated on the south bank of the River Tyne in Gateshead, England. BALTIC presents a constantly changing, distinctive and ambitious programme of exhibitions and events, and is a world leader in the presentation, commissioning and communication of contemporary visual art. BALTIC has welcomed over 4 million visitors, since opening to the public in July 2002.

## GALLERY INFORMATION:

BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art  
Gateshead Quays  
South Shore Road  
Gateshead  
NE8 3BA  
UK

Admission: FREE

Opening hours:  
Monday - Sunday 10.00 - 18.00  
Except Tuesdays 10.30 – 18.00

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

Tel: +44 (0) 191 478 1810  
Fax: +44 (0) 191 478 1922  
Email: [info@balticmill.com](mailto:info@balticmill.com)

**BALTIC is supported by:**



Supported by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**

