

MIT List Visual Arts Center

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Kenneth Tam, *Breakfast in Bed*, 2016
Installation view. *Made in L.A. 2016: a, the, though, only*, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles. Photo: Brian Forrest.

List Projects: Kenneth Tam

Bakalar Gallery

April 18 – May 21, 2017

(March 9, 2017) Cambridge, MA—For his first institutional solo exhibition, the List Center presents Kenneth Tam’s recent video installation *Breakfast in Bed* (2016). Tam’s work considers interpersonal power dynamics and physical intimacy, particularly between men, as a point of departure in investigating broader themes around private and social boundaries. Often recruiting participants online via websites like Craigslist and Reddit, the artist instigates situations that call into question traditional patterns of masculinity, and function somewhere between social experiment, performance art, and absurdist theater.

The 32-minute video *Breakfast in Bed* features seven men of varying ages and social backgrounds participating in what Tam advertised on Reddit as a “men’s group.” The group met weekly over the course of a few months and engaged in team-building activities centered around role-playing and touch, inside a domestic-looking set, which, replete with carpet and wood-panel siding, resembles a basement rec room. Variouslly droll, earnest, and bizarre, the exercises range from playing tag with paint, gluing Cheerios onto one another’s torsos, and games of silent Marco Polo. Tam’s work poignantly reveals and pushes the boundaries of heteronormative male ritual and bonding.

Tam's probing into the structure of male intimacy gathers particular urgency against the backdrop of the recent election fueled by class, racial, and gender resentment and the perceived loss of male privilege. Conducted in the interior space of Tam's studio, the men's theatrical interactions are simultaneously hilarious and heartfelt, awkward and sincere.

Kenneth Tam's (b. 1982, New York, lives and works in Houston) works encompasses sculpture, video, and photography. Tam received an MFA from the University of Southern California and a BFA from Cooper Union. His work has been featured in exhibitions at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2016); Galerie Xippas, Paris (2015); Weingart Gallery, Occidental College, Los Angeles (2014); Night Gallery, Los Angeles (2013); and Pauline, Los Angeles (2012). His films have screened at Favorite Goods, Los Angeles (2014); loisiada, New York (2011); and The Box, Los Angeles (2010). He has been awarded a California Community Foundation Fellowship for Visual Artists (2015); the Core Program Fellowship at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (2015); and an Art Matters Foundation Grant (2013).

[List Projects: Kenneth Tam](#) is curated by Henriette Huldish, Curator, MIT List Visual Arts Center.

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About the MIT List Visual Arts Center

The List Visual Arts Center is a creative laboratory that provides artists with a space to freely experiment and push existing boundaries. As the contemporary art museum at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), the List Center presents a dynamic program of six to nine special exhibitions in its galleries annually, a program of exhibitions by emerging artists known as the List Projects, as well as a broad range of educational programs, events, and publications. The List also maintains and adds to MIT's permanent art collection; commissions new works through the MIT Percent-for-Art program, a collection of more than 50 site specific artworks throughout the campus; and oversees the Student Loan Art Program, which lends more than 600 works of art annually to MIT undergraduate and graduate students.

Originally named the Hayden Gallery, MIT established this center for the visual arts in 1950 to provide a dedicated structure upon which to build the Institute's existing relationship to the arts. It was renamed the List Visual Arts Center in 1985 in recognition of a gift from Vera and Albert List, and relocated to its current expanded location in the Wiesner Building on the campus of MIT, which was designed by MIT alumnus I.M. Pei (B.S. Architecture 1940) and Partners Architects.

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