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Left: Commonfield Clay, Performance by Chris Kallmyer, Pulitzer Arts Foundation, St. Louis, MO, 2015. Photograph by Carly Ann Faye.  
Right: Chris Kallmyer, Ensemble: Preparatory Sketch, 2019. Image courtesy of the artist.

## Chris Kallmyer: Ensemble

On View May 19 – September 15, 2019

March 27, 2019 — Ensemble is the title of a new multimedia installation by Los Angeles-based, sound and performance artist Chris Kallmyer. The exhibition centers around a sculptural instrument created specifically for the exhibition comprised of raw timber and handmade bells that functions as a communal bell-ringing instrument, or carillon. The instrument, activated by a group of individuals, employs a method of making music by non-musicians that blends collective listening with lively communal rituals and meditation practice. Presented in SBMA's Preston Morton Gallery and including a selection of musical scores developed by the artist, related drawings, and a video projection documenting the inaugural staging of the instrument, Ensemble serves as an oasis for contemplation and exploration. Accompanied by a series of sound and meditation workshops, the exhibition functions as a production and rehearsal space—part laboratory and part sanctuary—to be staged throughout the exhibition's duration. The exhibition serves as an active studio for Kallmyer to further explore the post-Fluxus poetics of everyday objects, what happens when audience-turns-performer, and what the visitor seeks from the experience of listening.



Ensemble rises from a series of projects by Kallmyer that explores site-based, shared music-making with public audiences. In a month-long project titled A Paradise Choir (2016) at the San Francisco Museum of Art, the artist engaged thousands of volunteer visitor-enactors into an impromptu choir that explored the aural architecture of the newly opened Snøhetta-designed expansion. Through a series of actions, impromptu concerts, and guided tours, amateur choirs and zealous visitors donned robes to yell, sing, and move through the spaces of the museum. In 2015, the artist

A Paradise Choir, Performance by Chris Kallmyer, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 2016. Photograph by Charles Villyard.



presented *Commonfield Clay* at the Pulitzer Arts Foundation in St. Louis, creating what he termed “a future folk music” through regional materials and mutually-authored music. The project’s earthenware bells were made, in collaboration with ceramicist Dan Barnett, out of refined clay from the banks of the Mississippi River—alluding to the traditional brick architecture of St. Louis. Informing this series is another earlier project, *Everyone in a place* (2010/2011), that Kallmyer produced with the LA-based art collective Machine Project, with whom he created over 100 projects between 2009 and 2018. Presented at the UCLA Hammer Museum and Museum of Contemporary Art Denver, the project was staged through the participation of hundreds of museum visitors, who, wearing bells issued to them, created an ambulatory sound-work that permeated the spaces of each institution.

Chris Kallmyer was born in Washington D.C. He completed his MFA at CalArts in 2009 where he studied with improviser Vinny Golia, trumpet player Wadada Leo Smith, north-Indian musician Aashish Khan, and sound artist Sara Roberts. Kallmyer is inspired by the international, interdisciplinary Fluxus movement of the 1960s and 1970s, and is committed to the notion of active listening. In a 2017 interview with Catherine Womack in the *LA Weekly*, he stated, “I’m interested in how the context around music changes its meaning or changes how we value it.” Implicit in his multi-faceted work is a strong sense of

experimentation and audience participation, which has led him to commissions, not only by major art museums, but also significant music institutions, such as the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the San Francisco Symphony. With Ensemble, Kallmyer brings to SBMA and its constituents a fresh opportunity to engage with art, with sound, and with others in innovative and evocative ways.

This page: *Commonfield Clay*, Performance by Chris Kallmyer, Pulitzer Arts Foundation, St. Louis, MO, 2015. Photograph by Carly Ann Faye.

### Related programming:

Ensemble is accompanied by an **interactive guide** for all ages.

### **Sunday, May 19**

#### **Ensemble Free Day, 1– 4 pm**

Enjoy free admission, art activities in the Family Resource Center, pop-up events, and refreshments.

**1 – 2 pm** Chris Kallmyer stages a special performance with special guest artists, musicians, and activists.

### **Thursdays, June 6; August 1; September 5**

#### **1st Thursdays**

Special guests perform, speak, and engage visitors within and around Ensemble.

Visit [www.sbma.net/events](http://www.sbma.net/events) for updated information.

**#ChrisKallmyer #Ensemble**

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**Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 1130 State Street, Santa Barbara, CA.**

**Open Tuesday – Sunday 11 am to 5 pm, Free Thursday Evenings 5 – 8 pm**

**805.963.4364 [www.sbma.net](http://www.sbma.net)**