

For Immediate Release

**ZERO**

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**Michael Joaquin Grey: Life, the universe, and everything**

*Using “computational cinema” and snap-together plastic toys, this artist and inventor teaches us how we learn at San Jose’s ZERO1 Garage*

**SAN FRANCISCO, February 6, 2013** — Throughout his career, the multidisciplinary artist Michael Joaquin Grey has explored life, learning, and language through his works, which have ranged in style from the highly conceptual to the playfully down-to-earth. These two extremes meet in his one-man exhibition opening on February 6 at the ZERO1 Garage, the nonprofit arts organization’s beachhead in San Jose’s downtown cultural district. (The first solo show to be held at the ZERO1 Garage kicks off the 2013 post-biennial program, which is dedicated to exploring the relationship between artists and invention.)

Anchoring the show is a hypnotic work of computational cinema entitled “Umwelt Belt” (2012). The large-scale projection features a monochrome parade of 100 manmade objects floating in deep space—an asteroid belt made up of historic forms that have mediated our view of the world. Not burned permanently into film but instead generated continuously by software designed by Grey, the items—the Gutenberg press, a Hasselblad camera, or a USB flash drive—float in an endless Mobius strip, passing by one another like ghosts of our physical past to the sound of the original Sputnik signal slowly and steadily repeating.

(Umwelt means, literally, “environment” or “surrounding world,” although in the field of semiotics, it carries the connotation of being only the things with which you interact, and which shape your sense of the world—much as these objects do for humankind, once serving as extensions of ourselves and now acting as a cultural fossil record.) For Grey, the “Umwelt Belt” offers a sanctuary to meditate on the historical passage of the objects, each within their own limits of awareness and consciousness.

The Sputnik signal soundtrack of “Umwelt Belt”, similar to the sound of dripping water, provides a transition to the second part of the exhibition, the “ZOOB Zone,” which is rooted in Grey’s award-winning building and creativity tool, ZOOB. Part of the permanent design collection at MoMA—and also commercially available through Infinitoy—ZOOB consists of 2.5 inch-long molded plastic units, produced in five different shapes and colors, that can be snapped together to create moveable,

biomorphic shapes. ZOOB helps children (and adults, including animators at Pixar) intuitively understand how organic systems evolve by creating such complex structures with their own hands. (This is where the drips come in: The instructions for each box of ZOOB pieces includes a storyboard explaining the ZOOB “creation myth,” in which droplets of liquid play a starring role.) The ZOOB Zone will be stocked with more than 10,000 ZOOB pieces, where visitors can build their own creatures; it will also host a display of ZOOB creations, some made by Grey and others by engineers participating in a rapid-prototyping event that Grey will lead at the Adobe Tech Summit (February 3–6).

This exhibition is presented with support from Adobe Systems Incorporated.

### **About the Artist**

Drawing upon his background in genetics and fine arts, Michael Joaquin Grey has for the past twenty-five years been investigating the development of life, language and form in complex and natural systems. His artistic exploration led to the invention of the Citroid System and ZOOB, a new modeling paradigm and pedagogic tool and toy. Grey’s work has been exhibited and collected internationally: Museum of Modern Art, New York; Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art; Whitney Museum of American Art; The New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York; Serpentine Gallery, London; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Fundación Privada Sorigué, Spain; Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Miami; Milwaukee Art Museum; Walker Art Center; Tel Aviv Museum of Art; Norrtalje Konsthall, Sweden; Nordic Art Center, Helsinki; Kunstverein Hannover; Berkeley Art Museum; California and the New Art Trust (TATE Modern, San Francisco Modern, New York MoMA). His computational cinema works were highlighted at the Sundance Film Festival 2010, and more recently at Botticelli | Grey, and Gemaldegalerie Berlin – National Museum, Germany.

### **CALENDAR LISTING**

What: Michael Joaquin Grey exhibition  
When: February 6 – March 23, 2013; opening reception Wednesday, February 6, 6–8 p.m.  
Where: ZERO1 Garage, 439 South 1st Street, San Jose 95113  
Website: [www.zero1.org](http://www.zero1.org)

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### **For more information, images, or interviews contact:**

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### **About ZERO1: The Art & Technology Network**

ZERO1 is where art meets technology to shape the future. As a 21<sup>st</sup> century arts nonprofit, ZERO1 works with some of the world's most fertile and creative minds from the fields of art, science, design, architecture, and technology to produce the ZERO1 Biennial, an international showcase of work at the nexus of art and technology. ZERO1 is also the force behind the ZERO1 Fellowship program, where principles of artistic creativity are applied to real world innovation challenges. Part incubator, part research lab, part think tank, the ZERO1 Fellowship program informs strategies for research, development, and creativity.

Visit [www.zero1.org](http://www.zero1.org)

### **About the ZERO1 Garage**

Through the lens of art and technology, the ZERO1 Garage informs strategies for research, development, and creativity by provoking challenges that address the complex world in which we live. The ZERO1 Garage is a platform for creative risk-takers from the arts and culture, business, science and academic sectors to interact, engage, and spur innovative change.