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How artist Todd Gray fashioned another loving tribute to his friend, Doors keyboardist Ray Manzarek

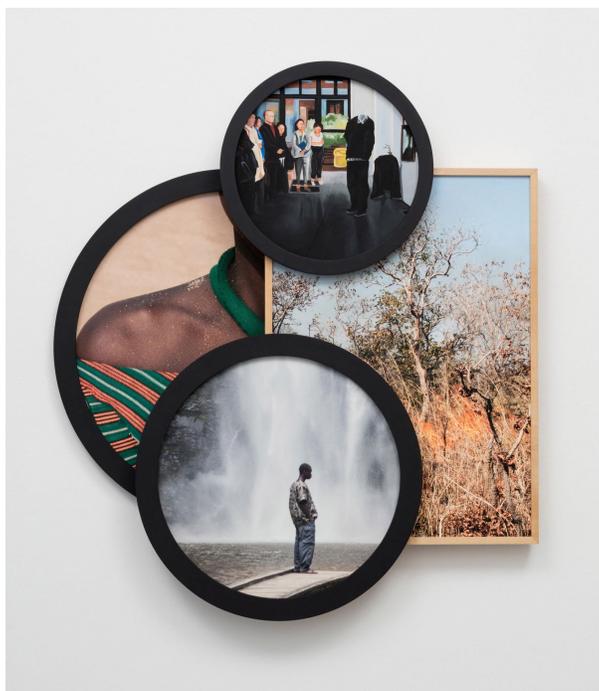
by Sharon Mizota
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Installation view of Todd Gray's "Time Machine / Hippy Dandy," 2016, at Meliksetian Briggs gallery in Los Angeles. (Michael Underwood)

Todd Gray's latest exhibition at Meliksetian Briggs is a touching tribute to his friend Ray Manzarek, keyboardist for the Doors, who died in 2013.

In 2014, Manzarek's widow let Gray borrow the musician's wardrobe for a yearlong performance in which Gray wore Manzarek's clothes every day. He refused to document the piece; the only way to experience it was to interact personally with Gray. The artist is reenacting the work as part of the Hammer Museum's "Made in L.A." biennial.



Todd Gray's "Time Machine No. 5," 2016, at Meliksetian Briggs gallery. (Michael Underwood)

The show at Meliksetian Briggs consists of layered collage-like constructions that combine snapshots (taken by friends) of Gray wearing Manzarek's clothes with images from Ghana, where he has a studio, and paintings based on the snapshots that he commissioned from Ghanaian sign painters.

These constructions clearly have autobiographical significance, although they are less powerful than a group of canvases created by the sign painters that hang in a corner of the gallery. In these works, the painters removed Gray's body, leaving only Manzarek's empty clothes standing in various places: an airport, a gallery, a bookstore. The clothes become a kind of ghost of Manzarek, extending his presence while underscoring his absence.



Todd Gray's letter to Dorothy Manzarek

In a letter to Dorothy, contained in a vitrine with one of Manzarek's jackets, Gray describes how at the end of the project his own clothes didn't feel like they belonged to him. By inhabiting the space that Manzarek had occupied, Gray embodied the process by which those we have lost become part of us.