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Forest Kelley: *Michael*

May 4 - June 9, 2018

Richmond - **1708 Gallery** is pleased to present *Michael*, a solo exhibition by Forest Kelley.

Michael imagines the history of gay men living in rural New England in the era between the Stonewall Uprising in 1969 and the death of Rock Hudson by AIDS in 1985. Specifically Kelley imagines the history of his uncle, Michael, an artist and gay man who was found dead at the base of a rock ledge—a presumed suicide—on June 14th, 1985, shortly



after the first test for HIV antibody was licensed by the Food and Drug Administration.

Kelley uses found film strips, writings, and interviews to visualize the memories, dreams, speculations, hopes, and fears that continue to resonate throughout the Kelley family and LGBTQ community. Kelley combines symbolism, ephemera, and cultural references to emphasize difficulties Michael faced while attempting to reconcile inner conflict and social stigmatization. By revisiting history, Kelley speaks to the desire to visualize the unknowable and explore another's cognitive subjectivity, while seeking to understand the groundwork laid in the struggle of gay and lesbian rights. He engages in speculative experiences and the reenactment of known events, memories, and parallel histories.

Forest Kelley's practice includes subjective documentary photography and video-based installations. His work considers the discord between subjectivity and culture - how personal psychology lives within a social ecology. Kelley received an MFA in Photography from the Rhode Island School of Design and a BA in Social Economics from the University of

Massachusetts, Amherst. For the last three years Kelley has taught photography, digital art, and time-based media at several institutions including Virginia Commonwealth University, the University of Rochester, and Syracuse University. He is currently the Photography Fellow at the Lamar Dodd School of Art at the University of Georgia.

The opening reception for the artist will be Friday, May 4th, from 6 - 8 pm, and the artist talk will be Saturday, May 5th at 11am.

For more details, visit 1708gallery.org.

Image: Forest Kelley, *Untitled*, 2017, Photograph, Image courtesy of the artist.

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