

THIS PAGE Kevin Francis Gray in his Hackney studio, surrounded by works in progress including *The Young God Study* in black Marquina marble  
OPPOSITE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT  
A selection of clay-sculpting tools. A glimpse of *Marble Panel XII* (2019) and the plaster model for *Large Wall Relief* (2020), the final version of which is currently on display in Kevin's solo exhibition at the Museo Stefano Bardini in Florence. *Crying Janus* (2020), a sculpture combining bronze and marble in various forms. An experiment featuring burl elm and bronze tears in preparation for Kevin's new body of work. The studio is filled with works in progress at various stages of development. A close-up of the plaster model for *Crying Girl* (2020)





Artists in their studio

# KEVIN FRANCIS GRAY

Continuing her series, EMILY TOBIN meets the Irish sculptor whose marble pieces juxtapose the hardness of stone with the vulnerability of the human psyche

PHOTOGRAPHS JOSHUA MONAGHAN

The first marble workshops in Pietrasanta opened their doors in the 15th century. The tiny town, which sits in the foothills of the Apuan Alps north of Pisa, has long been the sculpture capital of the world – and the surrounding quarries have provided source material for an illustrious list of artists and makers. When Kevin Francis Gray found his way to the marble-rich mountains, he was following in the footsteps of Michelangelo, Giambologna, Henry Moore and Joan Miró.

Having spent over a decade working in the area, Kevin recently opened his own studio in Pietrasanta. There, he employs marble artisans to ‘rough out’ the models he makes in his London studio into stone, which Kevin then finishes. This is the same process that has been used for centuries. ‘Stone is a profoundly difficult and challenging material, but the artistic and emotional rewards are huge,’ he says. Recently, Kevin has taken a different tack. ‘We’ve decided not to take any more stone from the mountain,’ he explains. ‘We are trying instead to find pieces that have been left in the marble yard unused or disregarded. It feels ethically right.’

Kevin’s sculptures tread the line between figuration and abstraction. Rooted in neo-classicism and created with the same level of craftsmanship, his work explores themes such as vulnerability. His forthcoming show at Pace Gallery, W1 (now postponed until November) will be populated by fragile, anonymous figures and young gods weeping tears of bronze. ‘Working with stone has a historical bravado I’m trying to question,’ says Kevin. ‘I like the idea of sensitivity. I want to move away from the statement piece of white rock and make something more reflective of both myself and society.’

Kevin Francis Gray’s work is at Museo Stefano Bardini in Florence until later this summer. [museicivicifiorentini.comune.fi.it/en/bardini](http://museicivicifiorentini.comune.fi.it/en/bardini) ▷







▲ ARTEMISIA

Artemisia Gentileschi should be a household name. The 17th-century painter defied the expectations of her era to become a well-known artist despite being brutally raped and publicly shamed. Coronavirus allowing, several of her works will travel from Italy for this show at the National Gallery, WC2, which was due to open in April but has been postponed. Check the website for updates. [nationalgallery.org.uk](http://nationalgallery.org.uk) **Pictured** *Judith Beheading Holofernes*, c1612-1613

EXHIBITIONS



▲ WENDY ROLT: TO THINE OWN SELF BE TRUE

Artist Wendy Rolt is known for her bold use of colour. In her paintings, she often explores ideas relating to self-perception and the relationship between our inner and outer selves. An exhibition at Noho Showrooms, W1, is due to open on May 14. Check the website for updates. [nohovensues.com](http://nohovensues.com) **Pictured** *Adrift*, 2020

▼ LYNETTE YIADOM-BOAKYE: FLY IN LEAGUE WITH THE NIGHT

Lynette Yiadom-Boakye's portraits of enigmatic characters raise questions of identity and representation. The first major survey of her work, is due to open on May 20 at Tate Britain, SW1. Check the website for updates. [tate.org.uk](http://tate.org.uk) **Pictured** From top: *No Need of Speech*, 2018; *A Passion Like No Other*, 2012



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