



Higher Ground: SVA's Kate Gilmore wins ArtPrize 2015 Juried Grand Prize

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Artist and MFA Fine Arts faculty member **Kate Gilmore** (MFA 2002 Fine Arts) was recently named the winner of the ArtPrize 2015 Juried Grand Prize. Gilmore was awarded \$200,000 for her site-specific and time-based installation *Higher Ground*, which was part of the Rumsey Street Project, an urban redevelopment project by SiTE:LAB.



In *Higher Ground*, an abandoned house that was formerly a convent for nuns was painted bright pink on the exterior, while its interior was bathed in red light. Throughout the day for the duration of the competition, women dressed in flowing white gowns and red shoes swung in and out of the house's windows on red swings. "I wanted to make a piece that spoke to the history of the people that lived in the house (nuns) and to the community of Rumsey Street," Gilmore told *SVA Close Up*. "I was trying to resurrect these women in some way—have them emerge from the architecture—making the house alive."



Like several of Gilmore's earlier works, *Higher Ground* involves women performing laborious, repetitive acts. "Repetition emphasizes process and the labor involved with repetition emphasizes the challenge of work and daily existence," Gilmore said. But the women swinging to be seen by passersby not only makes the viewer think of the experiences that were denied to the previous residents but also complicates the nature of these experiences: the pleasurable and carefree activity of swinging is turned into a tedious performance. A further layer was added when the performance was opened up to the community and women of the neighborhood volunteered to wear the gown and swing. ArtPrize's jury members described Gilmore's installation as "magical" and "jarring in all the best ways."



The ArtPrize competition has been taking place annually since 2009 in Grand Rapids, Michigan. “I think it’s pretty great that the whole city becomes alive for this event. The community seemed really invested in what was happening and that’s exciting,” Gilmore said. Steve and Ann Loveless, who form the artist duo Loveless PhotoFiber, won the Public Vote Grand Prize for their work *Northwood Awakenings*, which begins as a photographic print and metamorphoses into a quilt by the end of 25 feet.

Photos courtesy of ArtPrize.