



# John S. Knudsen Prize Awarded to Cyrus Tilton

The artist's first solo museum exhibition opens next year at the Crocker.

The Crocker Art Museum has awarded its inaugural John S. Knudsen Prize of \$25,000 to Cyrus Tilton, an Oakland-based artist whose first solo museum exhibition will take place at the Crocker in 2018.

The John S. Knudsen Endowment Fund at the Crocker Art Museum was established in late 2012 by a gift from the estate of art collector John Knudsen to annually support an emerging or mid-career California artist while also funding programs, exhibitions, acquisitions, and other endeavors related to the artist's work at the Museum.

Artists may use the \$25,000 award to work in the studio, to travel, to purchase materials for a specific body of work, and to pursue other creative projects. Awarded by a committee of review, the prize is open to all artists in California, with priority given to painters, and may be awarded only to artists who have not yet had a solo exhibition at a major art museum. Tilton received the award for his overall body of work, though it is his group of sculptures depicting the life cycle of locusts, called *The Cycle*, that will be shown at the Crocker.

Tilton grew up in a remote river valley northeast of Anchorage, Alaska, where his father worked as a commercial fisherman and his mother became a master gardener. Vast expanses of open Alaskan wilderness were always close at hand. After moving to Oakland at age 21, however, Tilton grew concerned with the world's burgeoning human population, the earth's inability to sustain such continued growth, and the current trend of mass consumerism.

"I believe we are walking a line of human evolution," Tilton says. "We are adapting to population growth and

consciously or subconsciously trying to find a balance within our nature to allow for successful cohabitation."

In *The Cycle*, the locust serves a cautionary metaphor, and Tilton likens the insect to self-sabotaging consumers whose ultimate end will come once their resources are depleted or a massive natural disaster resets the cycle.

"I see many sociobiological similarities between humans and certain species of insects," he says. "For

example, we have figured out ways to cheaply and efficiently produce sugars (in the literal and metaphorical sense) for the public's mass consumption. We have eagerly refined ways of communicating to others in our community with minimal effort and maximum output. As our population grows,

our living situations take on similarities to that of a hive or colony. Our consumption habits are exponentially ceaseless and unrelenting."

In the end, however, Tilton created *The Cycle* with a sense of hope — the hope of changing course. In this too, he finds answers in the insect world, notably those that have evolved to work together for the common good, using only the resources necessary for the survival of the species.

## ON VIEW

*The Cycle* by Cyrus Tilton will be on view at the Crocker March 25 – July 15, 2018.

■ Top: Cyrus Tilton, *Individuals*, 2011. Motorized steel and bamboo mechanism, muslin, steel wire, glue, tulle.

■ Bottom right: Cyrus Tilton, *Lovers*, 2011. Steel, muslin, beeswax, damar varnish.

■ Bottom left: Cyrus Tilton, 2016.

