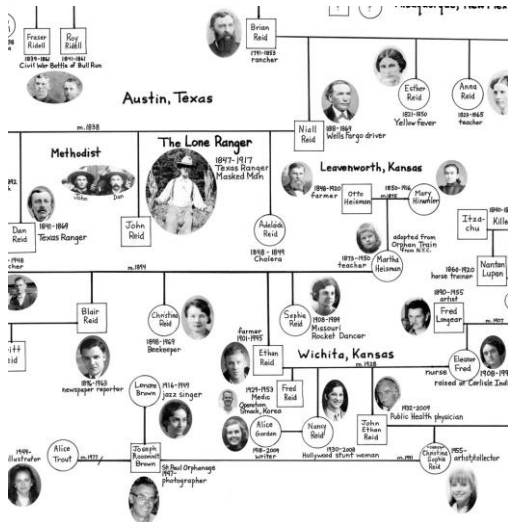


August 17, 2011  
For immediate release  
Contact: Kate Hackman  
Associate Director Charlotte Street Foundation  
816.994.7731 | [kate@charlottestreet.org](mailto:kate@charlottestreet.org)  
[www.charlottestreet.org](http://www.charlottestreet.org)  
\*print quality images available



Charlotte Street Foundation's Urban Culture Project presents

## JUDITH G. LEVY: THE LAST DESCENDANTS



From left: Judith G. Levy, *The Last Descendants: The Lone Ranger Family Tree* (detail), 2011; *The Last Descendants: The Lone Ranger* (video still), 2011, 13:45 min. video. [Click here to view video clip](#) on Vimeo.

***Kansas City/Lawrence-based artist explores the lives and legacies of Huckleberry Finn, The Lone Ranger, and Hansel and Gretel through “documentary” videos and “family trees”***

### **JUDITH G. LEVY: THE LAST DESCENDANTS**

**Opening reception:** Friday, September 16, 6-9pm

**Artist talk:** Saturday, September 17, noon

**Panel Discussion - *Was Huck Finn Black?*** Tuesday, October 18, 6pm

**Location:** Paragraph gallery (a Charlotte Street Foundation Urban Culture Project venue)

**Address:** 23 East 12<sup>th</sup> Street, Kansas City MO 64105

**Exhibition runs:** September 16-November 5, 2011

**Gallery hours:** Wed, Fri, Sat 12-5pm; Thurs 11-6

**Note:** Special visits for school groups are encouraged and may be arranged. Contact [kate@charlottestreet.org](mailto:kate@charlottestreet.org).

Charlotte Street Foundation's Paragraph gallery presents *The Last Descendants*, a solo exhibition of an ambitious new body of work by Kansas City/Lawrence-based artist **Judith G. Levy**.

The show features three faux documentary videos in which the living “descendants” of **Huckleberry Finn**, **Hansel and Gretel**, and **The Lone Ranger** are interviewed. Each video is accompanied by a large-scale, meticulously drawn, extensively researched, multi-generational “family tree” exploring the complex history of each family with reference to far-ranging events and influences.

With this work, several years in the making, Levy presents a distinct and unforgettable gaze into genealogy, history, and family dynamic. In Levy's videos — alternately hilarious, gripping, and tender—the “last descendants” of her iconic fictional subjects offer their own insights into the lives of their ancestors through sharing treasured artifacts and celebrated family stories, revealing family secrets, and, at times, evading probing questions.

With the accompanying family trees, Levy has gone to great lengths to reference both monumental historical events and more subtle social and cultural shifts that would have shaped the lives of those who are portrayed. Throughout, issues central to American history and identity are confronted, including immigration, race, and sexuality, while the very notion of history is infused with imaginative possibility.

“The use of documentary evidence intentionally staged as ‘proof’ for family heritage is part of an overall strategy by Levy to re-imagine history,” writes Kris Ercums, Curator of Global Contemporary and Asian Art at the Spencer Museum of Art, Lawrence, about this body of work.

“Deploying a wide range of research methods from rummaging through junk stores for just-the-right photo to reading broadly on the major issues that have shaped society like war and disease, Levy blurs the distinction between the grand narrative of historical fact and a fictionalized, highly personal imagining of the individual,” Ercums continues. “While seemingly whole and complete, each “fact” is a carefully poised fragment, a carefully constructed ‘lie’ that challenges ‘truth’ as something ultimately subjective and constructed. Thus, the series is far from a Proustian attempt to grasp at the past—that fleeting and unattainable taste of a Madeleine cookie—but instead the work is an elegiac journey through the workings of individual imagination.”

### **PUBLIC PROGRAMS**

**Artist Talk: Saturday, September 17, noon**

**Paragraph gallery / 23 East 12<sup>th</sup> Street**

Judith G. Levy will lead a gallery tour of the works in *The Last Descendants* and answer questions about specific works as well as the project as a whole.

**Panel Discussion: *Was Huck Finn Black? A Conversation about Race, Identity and Culture***

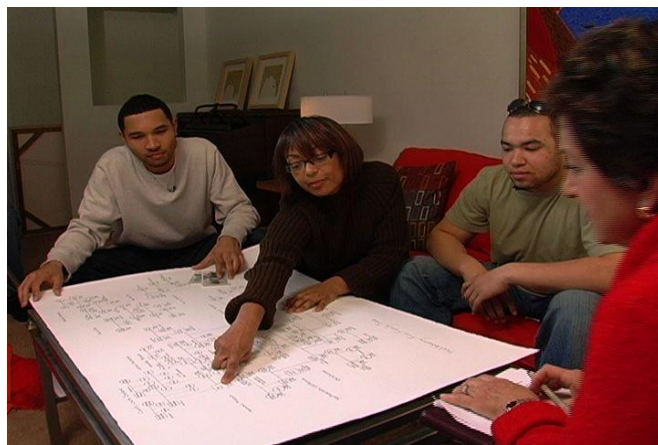
**Tuesday, October 18, 6pm**

**Paragraph gallery / 23 East 12<sup>th</sup> Street**

The artist will moderate a conversation among **Bill Tuttle**, Professor Emeritus Studies at the University of Kansas; **Susan Kumin Harris**, Joyce and Elizabeth Hall Distinguished Professor of American Literature and Culture at the University of Kansas; and **Faye Finn-Cohen**, who Levy describes as the last living relative of Huckleberry Finn and a fifth-grade elementary school teacher in the Woodmere School district, Hopeland, Missouri. Taking Levy's



*The Last Descendants: Hansel and Gretel* (video still), 2011, 6:45 min. video. [Click here to view video clip.](#)



*The Last Descendants: Huckleberry Finn* (video still), 2011, 11:30 min. video. [Click here to view video clip.](#)

work as its point of orientation, which imagines Huck and Jim as mixed-race half-brothers, the panel will explore topics including race and the nature of identity during Huck's lifetime, in the lives of his extended family members, and in present-day America. It will begin with a screening of Levy's Huckleberry Finn video.

### **ABOUT THE ARTIST**

**Judith G. Levy** is a multi-disciplinary artist whose work is primarily about history and remembrance. Her installations, video, two-dimensional work, and performance pieces explore the explicit and elusive nature of private and public memory. Levy's work has been exhibited in numerous museums and art spaces including The Indianapolis Museum of Art and Big Car Gallery, both in Indianapolis, IN; Soo Visual Arts Center, Minneapolis, MN; Kansas City Jewish Museum Epstein Gallery, Overland Park, KS; and NavtaSchulz Gallery and Woman MADE Gallery in Chicago, IL. She was awarded the Creative Renewal Fellowship, Lilly Foundation Grant in 2007, and is the recipient of a 2011-12 Rocket Grant, administered by the Charlotte Street Foundation and the Spencer Museum of Art, and funded by the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. Levy received her BA in Drawing & Painting from Hunter College, NY; her Masters in Social Work from Adelphi University, NY; and attended Minneapolis College of Art and Design, Minneapolis, MN. Levy lives in Lawrence, KS and works in Kansas City, MO. Visit [www.judithglevy.com](http://www.judithglevy.com) for more information.

*Charlotte Street Foundation is dedicated to making Kansas City a place where artists and art thrive. Through its Urban Culture Project initiative, Charlotte Street supports artists of all disciplines and contributes to city's vitality by transforming previously vacant spaces into dynamic venues for multi-disciplinary contemporary arts programming. For more information, visit [www.charlottestreet.org](http://www.charlottestreet.org).*