

Press release
Adam McEWEN
The House of Marlon Brando

May the 7th - June the 18th 2011
opening : Saturday the 7th of May 6 p.m. - 9 p.m.



For his second solo exhibition at art: concept, Adam McEwen presents a new series of sculptures made from graphite. This material is the fundamental element in this new series and creates cohesion amongst the pieces. It is as if the shapes sprouted from a single mould: they share the same color, surfaces and textures.

McEwen selects everyday objects that are more or less emblematic of American consumer culture as well as recent capitalism and he produces identical reproductions down to the smallest details and in the exact scale: an air conditioner, a water fountain, and neon lights, stay with us and raise questions regarding how we manage our fundamental needs. In addition, the artist produced a credit card in graphite and a contemporary vanity that temporarily displays the secret portrait of a collector until its date of expiration.

Today, McEwen shows an ATM made out of graphite. This « ATM Cash Machine» is modeled after the ones seen on any street corner or in corner shops in New York. This work embodies the ultimate transaction where immaterial data is exchanged for another type of good, bills – their value is also representative in nature.

Another work is based on plastic stepladders, which are often used to reach books put away on high shelves. This reproduction functions as a potential prosthetic, heralding a physical change and a desire to grow. A polyptych of imitation wood hangs in the second room. The plywood board simultaneously brings to mind the structure of a virgin painting and the planks used to board up windows and doors of abandoned buildings. It suggests not only the absence of representation, but also the role of the visual and spatial barrier — two criteria which often overlap in public spaces.

The only difference between the ready-mades and McEwen's works is the material: the object's form is translated into a vector-based image then extracted from a block of graphite. Thus, these standardized products become non-functioning objects and operate purely on a sensorial and symbolic level. They have been silenced, like the limits of representation in the socio-economic system, which has suddenly frozen in place. The company that produces the artist's sculptures also manufactures the bottom part of missiles.

McEwen enjoys telling an anecdote about the properties of graphite – a basic material in drawing which he applies to sculpture. This allotropic mineral made from carbon allows us to cultivate several paradoxes. It is at once a waste product (an object that is literally carbonized) and also part of the same chemical class as the precious resource, the diamond.

Here, the value of the material loses all importance because the economy itself has been reduced to nothing – symbolically the objects no longer circulate and their distilled and static states call into question the entire system of exchange value. McEwen moves far beyond pessimism or any kind of cynic commentary and instead juxtaposes our belief in artwork and our skepticism regarding what it can actually deliver. "We want something from art," explains the artist, "the compacted aura of the self-sufficient 'conscious' artwork, which can take us 'out of ourselves.'" McEwen's sculptures are not testimonies to failure but rather anti-nostalgic monuments — forms for a compressed present that is already long lost.

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Opening hours : Tuesday to Saturday 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.