

DAVID KORDANSKY GALLERY

David Kordansky Gallery is pleased to present BORROWED SCULPTURES, an exhibition of new floor- and wall-based bronze sculptures by Ricky Swallow. The show will be on view at the gallery from July 22 through August 29, 2020. David Kordansky Gallery is currently open by private appointment only. Virtual visits are available.

Ricky Swallow transforms familiar objects and materials into bronze sculptures that challenge ordinary perceptions of space, mass, and color. This new group of works includes forms—among them several apparent readymades—that have accompanied the artist, whether literally or figuratively, for extended periods of time, fostering increased intimacy and a pointed, personally resonant surrealism.

Rocking Chair with Rope (Meditation Chair #1), a major sculpture comprised of a cast chair and cast ropes, is the third in a multi-year series of related works, and is notable for its precise sense of balance as well as its narrative intensity. The rocker from which the sculpture was cast served as the artist's studio meditation chair for many years, so that even in its original state it was a generative object integral to processes of making and self-reflection. Subtly narrowing its proportions, as Swallow does here, becomes a poetic act of renewal, as do the processes of casting and finishing that shepherd the work to its final state in bronze. Each step is a relinquishing of the object's previous iteration, and a reckoning with both its familiarity and evolving newness. With the chair resting solidly on the floor and the ropes pointing upward to the sky, the finished work is poised between the metaphysical and the earthbound, the ideal and the actual.

BORROWED SCULPTURES is defined by Swallow's propensity for locating forms in the domestic and studio environments that, when taken apart and recontextualized, pivot their way into dialogues about modernism, minimalism, and the experience of architectural space. Mirrored A's (hinged), a wall-based corner sculpture, consists of cast bronze parts from a deconstructed step ladder. Treated with a red patina, the object's deeply saturated coloration enhances its function as an unknown symbol or mysterious glyph, even as the wood grain maintained on its surfaces keeps its connection to the original ladder intact.

But the exhibition also poses questions about the way that furniture objects, like props waiting for a performance, evoke the presence of the bodies that might eventually use them. In this respect, the works in BORROWED SCULPTURES are part of a conceptually oriented discourse that has animated contemporary art throughout the postwar period. Artists like Richard Artschwager, Scott Burton, and Robert Morris are some of those who have addressed related concerns, demonstrating that movement can become most palpable when seen as an expression of still forms.

A new floor-based sculpture on view sheds particular light on this lineage. It features the cast of an entire step ladder and a tubular length of cast cane that snakes through and around its rungs. Works of and about steps and stairs have figured in Swallow's sculptures for years: graphic, composed of repeated shapes, and rich with metaphorical overtones (up and down, above and below), they provide fertile opportunities for formal investigation. Here he uses bronze to draw out the solidity of things considered to be insubstantial, but also, paradoxically, to show how dense objects have their own ways of defying gravity when activated via contrasting textures or materials.

Internal movement, meanwhile, becomes a key factor in Stringer, a wall-based sculpture produced from a cast of a twisting length of rope. The rope has been gathered into the silhouette of a stair stringer, a template used by builders to facilitate the construction of stairways, and therefore to negotiate a transition from flatness to dimensionality. Organic and fleshy on the one hand, the work also functions as a kind of linear drawing as the eye attempts to follow the course of the rope throughout its total shape. The play between two and three dimensions suffuses it at every level, from concept to final execution.

Swallow transposes this material syntax into a very different register—and a very different notion of scale—in a wall-based work that incorporates casts of four balls of twine installed in a clock-like configuration. While the work's components are small and visually dense, they open up an expansive visual field, tacitly implying that the wall might be opened like a vast cabinet. Swallow brings together two kinds of familiarity: the ubiquitous, handheld tangibility of twine and the abiding presence of the wall itself. In both cases he focuses attention on forms in the periphery, revealing foreground and background to be no more than relative terms.

Throughout BORROWED SCULPTURES, objects seem to emanate psychological charge and come alive from the inside out. In *Duo*, Swallow juxtaposes the cast of one small stool—again, a piece of furniture that has accompanied him through the production of many bodies of work—with the seat of another. Positioned on its side, this "extra" seat is pierced by one of the dowels that join the stool's legs. From some angles, the composition, with its shifting planes and biomorphism, resembles the modernist vocabulary of artists like Barbara Hepworth and Henry Moore. But from others, the sheer emotional resonance of these two embracing forms, inseparable from one another but stubbornly distinct, assumes center stage.

Concurrent with BORROWED SCULPTURES, David Kordansky Gallery will present a solo exhibition of Doyle Lane's iconic weed pots curated by Swallow.

Ricky Swallow (b. 1974, San Remo, Australia; lives and works in Los Angeles) has been the subject of exhibitions at The Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens, San Marino, California (2012, with Lesley Vance); Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin (2007); Kunsthalles Wien (2007); MoMA PS1, Long Island City, New York (2006); and the Australian Pavilion, 51st Venice Biennale (2005). Recent group exhibitions include In Quest of Beauty: Assemblage in the Ahmanson Collection, Ahmanson Gallery, Irvine, California (2019); 99 Cents or Less, Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit (2017); L'esprit du Bauhaus. l'objet en question, Les Arts Décoratifs, Paris (2016); Made in L.A. 2014, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2014); and Whitney Biennial 2014, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Swallow's work is in the permanent collections of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; and UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, among other museums.