

Perhaps An Asteroid Hit

Brian Rochefort

Massimo De Carlo is pleased to present *Perhaps An Asteroid Hit*, Brian Rochefort's first solo exhibition in Milan and the artist's second show with the gallery.

Brian Rochefort is a mixed media sculptor based in Los Angeles, who masters the art of glazed and layered ceramic works with vibrant encrusted surfaces. *Perhaps An Asteroid Hit* is an ideal extension of *Jaguar Jaguar*, the first exhibition of the artist with the gallery, held in London between November 2019 and January 2020. *Perhaps An Asteroid Hit* comprises of a new series of twenty sculptures that resemble 'craters', oozing with vibrant colours mimicking the explosiveness of natural surroundings, nine vessel-like sculptures made of glazed stoneware and earthenware, and a maple wood cabinet consisting of thirty-five cups.

Rochefort's work is often inspired by earth's natural beauty, such as volcanic landscapes, remote tropical rainforests, and protected barrier reefs. *Perhaps An Asteroid Hit's* artworks refer to the artist's travels to remote areas around the world, such as the Bolivian Amazon, the Serengeti in Tanzania, and the Choco Cloud Forest in Ecuador, among many other places, but also recall the protected barrier reefs in Africa and the Galapagos Islands. Chromatically rich in colour, and highly varied in surface structure and finish, these artworks resemble several different natural habitats.

Rochefort titles most of his exhibitions after doomsday scenarios, this one in particular being the future possibility of an asteroid hitting the planet and eradicating all life, in the same manner as the dinosaurs became extinct. His sculptures look alien, exotic, from outer space or from the depths of the ocean. At first glance, the artworks range across the entire colour spectrum, but upon close inspection, each ceramic crater constitutes a world in itself: a rupturing microcosm with its own story to tell. All of his sculptures are titled after places the artist has visited, or lodges, birds and animals he has seen during his travels. And there we find *Supervolcano*, *White Dwarf*, *Stellar Gem*, *Loutron*, and so on.

Unfired clay objects are broken apart, built upon with more material, then fired between each layer of glaze to produce masses or craters overflowing with colour and character. The surfaces of the sculptures are a blend of rough, uneven clumps and smooth, bubbly drips, all suspended in place by the kiln firing. Solid vibrant chunks flow over previously laid gradients while cracked exteriors and painted glass fragments peek from beneath translucent splatters. At the base of each sculpture is pooled glazes and melted glass, mimicking the natural beauty of a cave structure amongst other natural phenomena.

The Paint Can series is based on the famous image of Francis Bacon's studio in disarray, where all his brushes and paint cans are piled up in the middle of the room. The surface of each cylinder references abstract painters that the artist admires such as Joan Mitchell, Albert Oehlen, and Willem de Kooning. Historically, functional vessels were decorated by the maker with narratives depicting everyday life or a story about the owner/maker. In his case, Rochefort glazes the work based on artists who he really admires.

Faced with the artworks by Rochefort, the viewer is capable of experiencing the extraordinary, be it from the future or from the past. The artist is able to create sculptures that look chaotic and broken yet controlled and beautiful with vibrant colours and textures that nod to artists like Franz West and Willem de Kooning.

Through rigorous investigations into process and material, Rochefort's work manifests a level of expertise in ceramic making and a confident sense of colour, yet resisting the formal and technical confines of the medium of tradition-bound ceramics, exploring new territories of freedom, invention, and play.

Brian Rochefort

Brian Rochefort (b. Rhode Island, 1985) currently lives and works in Los Angeles, California. Solo exhibitions include: *Jaguar! Jaguar!*, Massimo De Carlo, London (2019); *Absorption by the Sun*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Santa Barbara (2019); *HotSpots*, Van Doren Waxter, New York (2017). Group exhibitions include: *Artifices Instables. Histoires de céramiques*, Villa Sauber, NMNM, Monaco (2020); *Cool Clay: Recent Acquisitions of Contemporary Ceramics*, Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento (2019); *Melting Point: Movements in Contemporary Clay*, Craft Contemporary, Los Angeles (2018); *Ceramic Biennial*, CAFAM, Los Angeles (2017); *From Funk to Punk: Left Coast Ceramics*, Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, New York (2017); *Regarding George Ohr*, Boca Raton Museum of Art, Boca Raton, Florida (2017).

Rochefort was awarded the Lillian Fellowship from the Archie Bray Foundation for Ceramic Arts in Montana, 2007-2008.