

Freddie Mercury Brian Rochefort From 23.06.2022

MASSIMODECARLO Hong Kong is pleased to announce *Freddie Mercury*, Brian Rochefort's third exhibition with the gallery, and his first solo presentation in Asia.

Let us address the elephant in the room: how did iconic rock star Freddie Mercury make his way into Brian Rochefort's exhibition? Like much of Rochefort's practice, these new works are highly informed by his travels. When discussing the exhibition, Rochefort explains that the starting point for the show came from his 2018 trip to East Africa, notably through Tanzania and Zanzibar. Over the course of those three weeks, Rochefort repeatedly noticed posters, figurines and knickknacks of Freddie Mercury scattered around various towns. At the time, Rochefort was unaware that Freddie Mercury was born in Tanzania and is regarded as a national treasure.

The unexpected connection of Mercury's heritage - and the notion of clash and cluster between apparently distance universes - prompted Rochefort to explore concepts of limit and dissonance, which are associated in his own practice. He picked up listening to the very familiar music of Queen with a different understanding, driven by Freddie Mercury's diverse approach to rock music and tradition - a perspective that Rochefort similarly maintains in his own practice by pushing the limits of a historically developed medium, that of the clay. A 'kindred spirit' is how the artist describes this association.

Each sculpture is a reference to either Zanzibar, or to Freddie Mercury himself, as gestured in the title of each work. The exhibition invites us on an adventure across the lush, natural marvels of Zanzibar, and the extravagant, uninhibited creative force of Freddie - on planet Mercury: *Caudex* - the rough rootstock where growth arises, is presented alongside *Duiker*, a small African antelope. Pemba is an island part of Tanzania's Zanzibar and Unguja is the name also given to Zanzibar today. *Bohemian*, *Darling*, *Zanzibari*, are nods to Mercury's origins. References to natural wonders of the area include mangroves,

protected barrier reefs, and tropical rain forests which are an extension of the artist's ongoing body of work he refers to as craters.

The *Paint Can* sculptures series, presented in the exhibition alongside the craters artworks, are an ongoing body of work based on the photos 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 have nurtured Rochefort's practice. From Joan Mitchell to Albert Oehlen, and Willem de Kooning, each vessel is decorated with narratives alluding to each artist.

Brian Rochefort (b. Rhode Island, 1985) currently lives and works in Los Angeles, California.

Solo exhibitions include: *Perhaps an Asteroid Hit*, MASSIMODECARLO, Milan (2021); *Jaguar! Jaguar!*, MASSIMODECARLO, London (2019); *Absorption by the Sun*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Santa Barbara (2019); *2030*, Van Doren Waxter, New York (2019).

Group exhibitions include: *Contre-Nature, Mo.Co. Montpelleir*, Montpellier (2022); *Artifices Instables. Histoires de céramiques*, NMNM, Monaco (2021); *Cool Clay: Recent Acquisitions of Contemporary Ceramics*, Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento (2019); *Ceramic Biennial, CAFAM*, Los Angeles (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.

The artist's work is represented in private and public collections, including NMAC Foundation, Cádiz, Spain; Zabudowicz Collection, London, United Kingdom; Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, California.