

MARIANNE BOESKY GALLERY

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**William J. O'Brien**

*Wet 'N Wild*

February 23 – March 23, 2013

Marianne Boesky Gallery is pleased to present 'Wet 'N Wild,' William J. O'Brien's second solo exhibition at the gallery.

The playful duality of the title is reflected in resounding themes of control and experimentation. The body's movement and impulse in creating the work conveys a narrative central to O'Brien's practice. The artist continues to develop a personal connection through the impact of the gesture by way of materiality and process. This inherent physicality reveals itself in a variety of media including works on paper, ceramic, powder-coated steel, and stitched felt.

Stemming from formal language of the line and grid, the artist's drawings in the front gallery reflect a discipline within his process and act as the origination of improvisation. This structured method of layering, under- and over-drawing, results in a geometric representation of rhythm that unexpectedly gives way to chance.

The controlled nature within the drawings yields to the freedom of gesture found in an amalgamation of objects -- ceramic heads and mixed-media forms -- arranged upon an artist's table. With a wide range of influences (early modernism to 1970s California funk, ritualistic Eastern religious objects to defiant notions of outsider artists) the ceramics are a study of raw intuition and individuality. The recurrence of forms allows for a collective energy amassed in the gathering and assembly of the work.

In the main gallery, geometric repetition is translated to new means of experimentation, manifesting in the contrasting forms of stitched felt wall works and powder-coated steel sculptures. The grid of felts provides a methodically composed tactility alluding to familiar shapes found within the artist's mosaic of drawings. The stitch-work again reveals the ever-present appearance of the artist's hand while referencing traditions of craft technique. A series of vibrant, totemic steel sculptures flank the grid of felts, their angularity playing off the textile while mimicking the same geometric forms. Fetishistic in nature, the votive-like sculptures evoke ritualistic and spiritual connotations, inviting the viewer to circumambulate their forms.

William J. O'Brien lives and works in Chicago where he is a Professor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. The artist's work is included in the permanent collections of the Cleveland Clinic, Ohio; Miami Art Museum, Florida; and The Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois. O'Brien has exhibited at The Renaissance Society at The University of Chicago (2011) and The Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas (2012). Upcoming solo exhibitions include Almine Rech Gallery, Paris (2014) and The Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (2014), curated by Naomi Beckwith and accompanied by the artist's first monograph.

Marianne Boesky Gallery is located at 509 West 24th Street, between 10th and 11th Avenues. Our hours are Tuesday to Saturday from 10am to 6pm. For further information or images, please contact Veronica Levitt at 212.680.9889 or [veronica@marianneboeskygallery.com](mailto:veronica@marianneboeskygallery.com).