

Mark Dion

Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York

January 8 – February 12, 2026

Tanya Bonakdar Gallery is pleased to present a solo exhibition of new work by Mark Dion. Since the 1980s, Dion's work has addressed the world we live in by adopting, and then subverting, its vernacular forms and institutional systems. The artist uses found objects to create sculptures and installations, and his drawings contain straightforward figural representation and standard graphic didactical formats. The familiar language of his materials and styles disarms and draws in viewers. Many of his projects have involved the artist embedding himself with experts in their respective fields to learn thoroughly their methods and traditions, in order to create new works that depict that field using its own language, conventions, and systems.

The works maintain a delicate balance between deadly seriousness and wicked humor. Dion generally has great respect, interest, and love for the institutions and methodologies he studies and then mimics. Moreover, the themes he examines can be quite heavy, decrying some of society's most significant failings in pointed terms. However, Dion's vocabulary and visuals typically rely on humor, whimsy, and even cuteness. The works are appealing in a way that provokes affection and joy, but their sweetness never fully masks the acerbic wit and wry despair of Dion's message.

In this exhibition, viewers first encounter a series of works on paper. Populated by line drawings of different animals, they are pleasing and familiar, reminiscent of informational books often read as a child, when learning was undertaken in joy and an exuberance of youthful discovery. The artist often explores the representation, or rather misrepresentation, of animals from various artistic or even scientific images from the past, including children's books about dinosaurs, Durer prints of exotic animals, and early scientific drawings. Dion's works on paper appear to be instructional, as they are embellished with words, names, or phrases that label different figures on the sheet or identify various parts of a larger diagram. Upon close inspection, any true meaning behind why particular terms have been paired with any given image remains elusive. The implied taxonomy or logic may not even exist. The artist undermines the initial promise of authority, learning, and truth, and questioning whether the neat logical structures of science and social histories established during the Enlightenment still hold in the present day.

Two new sculptures in the main gallery continue to reference childhood through a lens of fictional animals. In the center of the room is a work comprised by a child-sized bed covered with a mountain of stuffed toys, and on a pedestal sits a well-loved antique teddy bear, morosely resting in a tiny coffin. These works contrast the humorous and the horrifying, the macabre and the cute, as well as sense and nonsense. Smaller sculptures that pair an animal with a hoard of small, shiny found objects suggest that the benign animal instinct of acquiring and collecting has darker undertones. Seeing animals alongside such manmade junk reminds us of the effect humans

have had on the natural world. Images that evoke death, such as the skeleton of the extinct dodo and the tar-covered flamingo, sit side by side with those that evoke childhood; depictions of abundance allude to the scarcity that many fear the future holds. Returning to consider the drawings, we likewise find words and phrases that implicate human behavior, especially political behavior, using the artist's blend of humor and critique.

Mark Dion was born in New Bedford, MA, in 1961, and he lives and works in Copake, NY. He has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions worldwide, including those at Storm King Sculpture Park (2019), the Whitechapel Gallery, London (2018), the ICA Boston (2017), the Academy of Fine Arts Design, Dresden (2014), and the Miami Art Museum (2006). Dion has also presented major site-specific installations, such as the *Tate Thames Dig* at Tate Gallery, London (1999), *Rescue Archeology* at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (2004), and *Oceanomania* at the Musée Oceanographique de Monaco (2011). Most recently, the American Federation of Arts presented a two-person traveling exhibition of Mark Dion's work alongside that of his longtime friend and fellow artist Alexis Rockman, and currently the artist's work can be seen in a solo exhibition at the La Brea Tar Pits & Museum in Los Angeles, as well as on Governor's Island in New York City, where his installation *The Field Station of the Melancholy Marine Biologist*, is on long-term view.

For press inquiries, please contact press@tanyabonakdargallery.com

For additional information on the exhibition, please contact mail@tanyabonakdargallery.com