

**Matthew Monahan**

May 02 – June 21, 2014

Los Angeles-based artist Matthew Monahan's sixth solo show at Anton Kern Gallery presents sixteen sculptures, a set of drawings, two wall-mounted masks, and a single large figure in the back room. Monahan molds his materials, which include aluminum, paper, bronze, plaster, steel, metal leaf, and fibre-reinforced plastic (FRP), in such a way that the viewer can never be sure of its true identity. The artist's deliberate allusions to proto-scientific, or alchemist handling of materials, the mixing of high and low, goes hand in hand with an overwhelming sense of fragmentation that characterizes the works in this exhibition.

The figures, drawn or sculpted, are made up of fragmented limbs, heads and other body parts. Pieces are seemingly broken off, detached and re-assembled, incomplete, with an odd piece here and a scrap there. A sense of disintegration, collapse, or breakdown prevails, only gently allowing in a sense of re-assembled beauty. A single figure articulates an array of disparate elements; a bronze head supported by a plastic chest, inside of which a photocopied image transforms into a three-dimensional sash that extends around the waist and folds to become its own base. Sometimes, a figure's skin seems fleshy, and at other times cold like a metallic shield. Steel frames function simultaneously as cages and as supports, with the sculptures weaving in and out.

Monahan's deliberate use of fragmentation is reminiscent of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's unfinished (but published as a fragment in 1816) poem "Kubla Khan; or, A Vision in a Dream: A Fragment". Coleridge claimed that inspiration for the poem came to him during an opium-induced dream. As the sight of waves and the ocean, of curtains and drapery, can trigger larger visions of fantastic empires, Monahan's hallucinatory folds become further extensions of a sculptor's vocabulary of actions and their resulting geometries; along with the fold comes the crumple, the wrinkle, the shattered piece, the disorderly polygon. Monahan pushes the fold to a breaking point, quite literally, suspending a moment of spontaneous violence in high-tech materials and processes that spark a wealth of associations.

Monahan uses fragmentation as a technique to break up the narrative. It signifies the breaking rather than building up of information, to form a structure that would convey a hidden message rather than the obvious one. The accompanying catalog can be a tool in identifying processes and details of all works, thereby adding a level of critical self-reflection to the exhibition.

Matthew Monahan's work has been featured in solo exhibitions at the Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver, Canada (2012); the Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati (2011); LA MOCA (2007); as well as in a two-person exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia (2010). His work has also been included in the Venice Biennale (2013); at Tate Liverpool and the Museum of Modern Art, NY (both 2012); the Nasher Sculpture Center and LA MOCA (both 2011); Hammer Museum and Bard College (both 2010); MoMA (2009); the Carnegie International and Sonsbeek Sculpture Exhibition (both 2008); the New Museum, NY and the Royal Academy, London (both 2007); as well as the Berlin Biennale and the Whitney Biennale (both 2006).



**Upcoming exhibition: *Displayed*, curated by Matthew Higgs (July 02 – August 15, 2014)**

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