

HAUSER & WIRTH

Press Release

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Exhibition of New Works by Sterling Ruby to go on View in New York City

Sterling Ruby. **SUNRISE SUNSET**

9 May – 25 July 2014

Hauser & Wirth New York, 18th Street

Opening reception: Friday 9 May 2014, 6 – 8 pm

New York, NY... Possessed of a profound material sensibility, Sterling Ruby's art speaks in a language inspired by sub-cultural phenomena ranging from graffiti, urban gangs, and prison systems, to craft and the history of quilt-making. Ruby's work, which encompasses nearly every medium, voraciously cycles through the autobiographical, the art historical, and the sociological, creating layers of reciprocal influence that radiate outward. Ruby exploits tensions within aesthetic and societal systems, recreating and drawing our attention to repressive and liberated states.



Beginning 9 May 2014, Hauser & Wirth New York is pleased to present 'Sterling Ruby. SUNRISE SUNSET', an exhibition of new works by the Los Angeles based artist. Comprised of paintings, cardboard collages, fabric collages, tapestries, ceramics, a mobile, and sculptures in metal, urethane and fabric, the exhibition will be on view through 25 July at the gallery's downtown space at 511 West 18th Street in West Chelsea.

The Exhibition

Sterling Ruby's studio has been described as 'an archive, a vessel' filled with a plethora of art objects and materials, including failures, successes, and pieces that offer the potential to be reclaimed and reanimated as new forms. The works on view in 'SUNRISE SUNSET' represent the many modes of the artist's production but play upon a central motif: a tension between the horizon lines of the artist's monumental paintings, and the circular forms in primary colours that are found in a mobile, the collages, and sculptures. These circles suggest celestial bodies – the rising sun, an orbiting moon. Ruby presents a personal cosmology; his work traces an

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existential timeline, the continual cycle of day into night, a day's production or a lifetime's, from birth to death. Here we find powerful forces in opposition, calibration, and suspension: literal and figurative, representational and abstract, East Coast and West Coast, the permanent and the fleeting, pathos and playfulness, glory and abjection.

On view in the exhibition are massive blood-red urethane sculptures. 'Cup' (2013), tilted at an angle, is caught in the moment between pouring and containing the flowing rivulets of polymer compound that monumentalize the artist's temporal gestures. The sculpture captures the expressive act of a fleeting moment and embodies a process-driven practice that privileges gesture and expression. Also on view is a set of poured urethane 'Pillars'. Reminiscent of the artist's stalagmite sculptures, these are large freestanding columns that transform his dripping geologic forms into architectural columns, a shift from prehistoric to historic time.

Repurposing cardboard pieces covered in debris, footprints, and urethane splatter that were originally used to protect his studio floor, Ruby's 'EXHM' collages reinvent his studio detritus as formal compositions. In these new 'EXHM' works the artist punctuates the dirty cardboard of these collages with rudimentary and colourful circles.

In another variation of the artist's repurposing of cardboard pieces, 'Trough', a bronze sculpture that morbidly resembles a grave, is a cast from one of the makeshift containers built in Ruby's studio for catching the run-off during production of the artist's poured urethane sculptures.

'SCALE/BATS, BLOCKS, DROP', a large mobile hanging from the ceiling of the gallery, transposes the artist's collage works into three dimensions. With its brightly painted wood, engine blocks, a soft sculpture, and aluminium baseball bats hung in equipoise, this sculpture combines the playfulness of Dada with an underlying threat of aggression.

With its bright colour and excessive proportions, 'Big Yellow Mama' (2013), at first presents an innocent origin; this sculpture is reminiscent of the artist's previous geometric works. However, 'Big Yellow Mama' is an enlarged replica of an electric chair used for executions in the state of Alabama from 1927 – 2003. The original chair's yellow colour came from yellow highway paint, and the chair came to be known as 'Yellow Mama'. This work serves as a reminder of the ominous power over life and death that remains at the heart of the American judicial system.

In the new series 'Flags' (2014), Ruby explores themes related to American domesticity, gender relations, and quilting. Measuring up to twenty-two feet in length, these gargantuan dyed backdrops are reminiscent of the American flag. In order to explore the masculine and the feminine in relation to traditional fibre arts and their imperatives, Ruby strips these tapestries of their utilitarian value as hand-crafted domestic objects and transforms them into monumental relics.

Ruby's 'BC' series of bleached collages repurposes rags, fabric scraps, and clothing that are then applied to a ground of bleached or dyed denim. In shades of blazing orange and midnight black, they echo the patterns of traditional Amish quilts and the postmodern compositions of Robert Rauschenberg, inhabiting an interstitial space between painting and craft.

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In his 'Soft Work' sculptures the artist presents menacing and aggressive forms behind a playful, pop facade. 'HANGING FIGURES' is a set of soft sculptural bodies connected at the arms, made from mass-produced patriotic fabrics that hang, entwined, from the rafters of the gallery.

'ACTS/SOME RISE SOME REST' (2014) reprises the sculptural series 'Absolute Contempt for Total Serenity', which saw the artist defacing the perfect and pristine surfaces of minimalism. Set on top is a poured urethane block in which waves of red float frozen in time.

The artist's 'Basin Theology' series consists of large vessels filled with fragments from broken and mis-fired pieces collected from previous ceramic works. Brilliantly glazed in bright yellow, green and red 'Basin Theology/2C-T-XX' (2013) is named for a synthetic hallucinogenic drug with effects similar to mescaline and MDMA.

The oversized 'Debt Basins' (2014) are cast in bronze from clay molds. Pouring metal in smaller sections that are then joined together, Ruby reveals the connecting welds in the final sculptures, scarred reminders of the object's making. Like the ceramic works these basins act as archaeological sites filled with found and broken artefacts, but here they are upended and mounted to the wall, shifting the horizontal to the vertical.

Having grown up in rural Pennsylvania, the artist draws upon his own memories of childhood, when stoves were used as the home's primary source of heat, and speaks to the nostalgic idea of communal life. For 'STOVE' (2013), the artist has created a massive functional wood burning stove that addresses the ideas of functionality and utilitarianism within the artist's practice.

'SUNRISE SUNSET' will also present new spray paintings that hang on the gallery walls like urban murals, astonishing in their sheer monumentality. In 'SP272' (2014), the artist's newest diptych, a smoky haze of black, electric green and blazing neon pinks engulf the canvas. Across the centre of each painting, a smoggy horizon appears and the crescents of glowing light allude to the rising and setting of the sun.

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About the Artist

Sterling Ruby lives and works in Los Angeles. He has recently held major solo exhibitions at the Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, Deurle, Belgium (2013); Fondazione Memmo, Rome, Italy (2013); and the exhibition 'Soft Work', which commenced at the Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Rome, Italy (2013) and travelled to Bonniers Konsthall, Stockholm, Sweden (2013), FRAC Champagne-Ardenne, Reims, France (2012), Centre D'Art Contemporain, Geneva, Switzerland (2012). Major solo exhibitions also include 'Supermax 2008', Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles CA (2008) and 'Chron', The Drawing Center, New York NY (2008). Running concurrently with his show at Hauser & Wirth, Ruby's work is also featured in a solo show at the Baltimore Museum of Art and in the Whitney Biennial 2014. His work will be featured in the Gwangju Biennale, the Taipei Biennial, and the exhibition 'The Los Angeles Project', at the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art in Beijing.

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The Cup
2013
Foam, urethane, wood and spray paint
233.7 x 293.4 x 223.5 cm / 92 x 115 1/2 x 88 in

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