

Robert Melee

Semi-Quasi-Bower Recreational

January 9 – February 13

Opening Reception: Saturday, January 9, 6-8pm, with performance by MADBOOTS dance

Andrew Kreps Gallery is pleased to announce Semi-Quasi-Bower Recreational, an exhibition of new works by Robert Melee.

In new paintings, sculptures, as well as large-scale installation, Melee continues his investigation of the psychology of the everyday. Often incorporating cast-off quotidian items in his works alongside vividly colored poured paint, Melee points towards a melancholy specific to domestic space, one that is derived simultaneously from familiarity, decoration, and otherness.

At the exhibition's center is *Bower Pool*, a new installation that envelops the gallery's architecture. Drawing its name from Bower birds, who construct lavish, colorful nests as part of a mating ritual, Melee's installation employs a commercially available above ground pool, overturned and surrounding a column. Streamers, party favors, lights, and gold decorations spill out on the floor, representing an obsessive accumulation. While these low-budget materials root the installation in kitsch, they also ground it within a compulsion for embellishment, and its failed transformative quality. Initially overpowering in its scale, upon closer inspection, Bower Pool soon reveals its components for what they are, the deflated markers of celebration.

This itself becomes the impetus for a series of photographic sculptures, newly introduced to Melee's practice. A mural size work titled *Portrait of Debs* occupies one of the gallery's walls, and depicts fashion designer David Quinn, aka DEBS painting a room. What begins as a household chore, evolves into a drunken decadence, with DEBS alone, lost in paint, a drop cloth, and garland. Evoking a similar sense of solitude is a series of works composed from images taken by Melee in Atlantic City, that depict decorative elements in hotels and casinos – stacked chairs, endless carpets, artificial plants, and sculpture. Layered and collaged, these additive images begin to blur into forms and painterly marks, wavering between figuration and abstraction. Affixing domestic objects such as ceiling fans and chandeliers to these surfaces, Melee draws attention to a paradox present both by the city itself, as well as in his own practice: a sense of isolation and decay that is built through a repeated attempt at opulence.

Robert Melee lives and works in New York City. Semi-Quasi-Bower Recreational is Melee's seventh exhibition at the gallery. His work has been exhibited extensively at venues including: Milwaukee Art Museum, Milwaukee, (solo), Corcoran Museum of Art, Washington D.C. (solo), The Contemporary Art Museum Houston, New Jersey MoCA, Asbury Park, MoMA PS1, Queens, Sculpture Center, Queens, and the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York. Melee's work is held in the collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, Haifa Museum of Art, Haifa, and the Milwaukee Museum of Art, among others.