

**CONTEMPORARY FINE ARTS**  
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# MARIANNE VITALE

## FAT CITY

17 March – 22 April 2017



**Contemporary Fine Arts** is pleased to present *Fat City*, featuring a new body of work by **Marianne Vitale**.

For her second exhibition at CFA, Vitale presents two series of sculptures: a new iteration of her signature steel 'Common Crossings' and a new group of painted wooden 'Boxers.' The 'Boxers' shape has been appropriated from

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an antique handheld American toy. Arranged in a narrative order, the five sculptures enact a boxing match from first punch to knockout.

The steel works continue Vitale's engagement with a history of American infrastructure, exploring notions of cultural degeneration and subsequent nostalgia.

The exhibition takes its title from the 1969 Leonard Gardner novel, which was adapted into a film by John Huston in 1972. Gardner employs the term "Fat City"—outdated slang describing a state of comfortable prosperity—ironically. He tells the story of Billy Tully, a dejected alcoholic and semi-retired boxer, for whom the arena is at once a space of regret and potential as he begins to train again. Tully drifts through the streets of Stockton in California's central valley, a locale that comes to represent the harsh reality of America's Manifest Destiny with its collapsing front porches, dilapidated dive bars, and trucks carting men to the fields to pick fruit.

The boxing film is a familiar motif to viewers, with many such films culminating in a triumphant knockout. Contrary to this tradition, *Fat City* is a story of dull persistence and mere survival instead of thrilling victory. It traces the fragile masculine identity of Tully and his peers in the context of the hyper-masculine boxing arena. In extracting from this, Vitale continues to destabilize notions of traditionally masculine material and content.

Much like Vitale's 'Worthies' (2014), the new series of 'Common Crossings' repurpose remnants of America's railroads, artifacts of a booming but by-gone industrial past that fueled an American exceptionalism. Their material and imposing, severe form is often characterized as inherently masculine. Vitale's mastery of the material seeks to subvert gendered associations and the conception of sanctified male realms.

Vitale's steel works and antique boxer toys both signify nostalgia while simultaneously tracing the inevitable entropic decay and disuse of objects in changing times.

Marianne Vitale (b. 1973, East Rockaway, NY) graduated from the School of Visual Arts, New York. She lives and works in New York.