

**GBE  
439 W. 127 STREET  
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**ROB PRUITT  
*AMERICAN QUILTS 2018***

**SEPTEMBER 16 – OCTOBER 24, 2018  
OPENING RECEPTION: SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2018 from 4:00 – 8:00 PM**

Gavin Brown's enterprise is pleased to present *American Quilts 2018*, a new exhibition by artist Rob Pruitt.

For his eighth show at Gavin Brown's enterprise, Rob Pruitt has produced a series of new works based on American quilt patterns. Utilizing a diverse range of materials and techniques, Pruitt expands upon the tradition of American Folk handicraft to create works that feel both modern and traditional. Thematically, the quilts speak to a culture in turmoil, roiled by a stark political divide within the US and a decline in democratic values across the globe.

In the late eighties, as half of the artist duo Pruitt-Early, Pruitt's first public project was entitled *Artwork for Teenage Boys*. As the artist speaks of it today, "I was thinking about a culture and society that nurtured male dominance, misogyny and general bad behavior. We actively mined record shops, tobacconists and poster stores for mass-produced imagery that manifested this societal participation. It was amazing how much stuff we were able to purchase and archive to prove this thesis. At the risk of self professing our own prescience, we were creating a visual study of our today's chauvinist culture. Fast forward almost thirty years and as a country we find ourselves being led by a president who is the worst conceivable manifestation of this."

Pruitt first explored quilt patterns in a body of work from 2010 which dealt with the Amish rite of passage known as Rumspringa, in which teenagers are free to experiment with sex, drugs and secular culture. More often than not, Amish youth return to their roots after experiencing the alien practices of modern society. It was this clash of the orthodox and the new that was at the crux of Pruitt's first quilt paintings. These works, rendered in stencil and Montana Gold spray paint, embodied the impetuous immediacy of youth, confined within the framework of geometric folk patterns.

The crisis in American democracy spurred on by today's presidency serves as a backdrop to Pruitt's latest exploration in quilt-making. In a traditional quilt, patterns often have symbolic meaning: visual tropes such as interlocking wedding bands and migrating geese are commonly featured. The use of geometric design is further imbued with a social quality through the customary use of leftover scraps of fabric. This ritual implementing of symbolism and design allows these quilts to tell stories. This is the language that is appropriated by Pruitt to tell new narratives of today's American life.

Several paintings in the show are made with sheets of steel on which patterns have been etched in rust. These works point to the waning of the US industrial era, economic decline in America's Rust Belt, and the false promises jobs returning to the mines and steel mills.



In other works, collages of US currency form traditional patterns such as zig-zag and basket-weave. Areas filled with pennies are juxtaposed with 100-dollar bills, resonant of the country's ever widening economic inequality.

**Rob Pruitt** (b. 1964 in Washington, DC) studied at the Corcoran College of Art and Design in Washington, DC, and Parsons School of Design in New York. His work has been included in numerous museum exhibitions, including a recent exhibition at the Kunsthalle Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland (curated by Daniel Baumann) in 2018; at the Brant Foundation in Greenwich, CT (2015), a 2013 mid-career retrospective at the Aspen Art Museum, solo exhibitions at Dallas Contemporary (2011), Museum of Contemporary Art, Detroit (2015), Freiburg Kunstverein (2012); Le Consortium, Dijon (2002); and group shows such as "Empire State" at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome (2012), "Pop Life" at Tate Modern (2009), and "Mapping the Studio" at Punta Della Dogana/Palazzo Grassi, Venice (2009). In 2009, he debuted the "Rob Pruitt's Art Awards," at the Guggenheim Museum, an award show for the art world fashioned after the Oscars. In 2011, he was commissioned by the Public Art Fund to install "The Andy Monument," a highly polished chrome sculpture of Andy Warhol (replete with shopping bags) in New York's Union Square near the site of Warhol's Factory.

