

SPRÜTH MAGERS

Gary Hume

Gary Hume

Sprüth Magers Berlin september 29 - november 10 2018

Public reception: Friday, September 28, 6-9pm

Monika Sprüth and Philomene Magers are pleased to present a selection of paintings and sculptures by Gary Hume. Thirteen brightly hued sculptures and four large paintings on paper present the viewer with immediate colour and curves. The sculptures, all from the series *Wonky Wheels*, are imperfectly round, wheel-like armatures rendered in steel and brightly coloured enamel. The wheels measure between one and three metres in diameter and are pulled and manipulated into shape by the artist, rendering each unique in form and character. The economy of line and slightness of shape means the wheels appear to balance precariously, vulnerable to the slightest touch or influencing action, teetering on the verge of a bumpy movement that could go back or forth, or result in a fall. Outside in the garden, one wheel is embedded in the ground, impeding its progress. Individually, the sculptures reference an imperfect wheel of life and, collectively, they conceive a carnival of time and a 'wonkiness' of both personal and historical experience whose narrative, though inevitable, is never stable.

In a second space is the single sculpture, *Small Hitch* (2018), a wonky wheel whose lower quadrant is partly encased by a cube of concrete. The wheel is fully stopped, or stable and ready to start. It's a beginning and an end, a punctuation in time. Alongside the sculpture are four brass-framed paintings on canvas, works from the *Modernist Paintings* series, whose formal appearance belies their specific conception. For example the original source of *Carapace* (2015), was a photograph of a dust-covered New York Fire Department jacket and helmet, hung on a hydrant in the aftermath of the attack on the World Trade Centre.

Accompanying the *Wonky Wheels* are four large-scale paintings on paper (all 120 x 361 cm), including two monochromatic paintings in serenely aqueous hues that form part of the artist's new *Water* Series. The expansive blue surface of *Water* (2018) mimics the intrinsically sublime appeal of water in nature as a source for introspection and singularly experienced reverie. The companion painting *Flotsam* (2018), however, shifts suddenly into something public and deeply tragic. The dark surface of the painting is abraded with sandpaper to reveal an ambiguous sequence of life jackets. Hume has discussed the organic appearance of these forms, whilst also acknowledging them as a personal response to news coverage of the deaths of thousands of refugees attempting to cross the Mediterranean in recent times. In *361cm* (2018), the same motif has been subsumed in a pattern that resembles a West African textile print - potentially a shroud.

The exhibition is the latest iteration of a long series of works by Hume that leads us to consider trauma and suffering. His seminal *Door* paintings from the early nineties were explorations in formalism that abstracted the hospital door as an exit route to cure or death. The wheel itself is a recurring motif for the artist that has evolved from an earlier series of sculptures and paintings exhibited in New York in 2013, which referred to the assassination of Osama Bin Laden and the enduring conflict in the Middle East. Hume asserts that his interpretations of the imagery of geopolitical conflict and warfare are highly personal manoeuvres in seeing, creating, and commenting, rather than solving. In light of this, the current exhibition proves a deft, poetic exercise in ambiguity, and the seemingly affable wheels and colourful water paintings belie their inspiration and the tragedy and anguish that linger just beneath the surface.

Gary Hume lives and works between London and New York. He represented Britain at the Venice Biennale in 1999 and the São Paulo Biennial in 1996, the same year he was nominated for the Turner Prize. In 2001 he was elected to the Royal Academy of Arts, London. Recent solo exhibitions include Aspen Art Museum (2016), Tate Britain, London (2013), Modern Art Oxford (2008), Kestnergesellschaft, Hannover (2004), Kunsthau Bregenz (2004), Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin (2003), ICA, London (1999), Fundação La Caixa, Barcelona (2000) and The National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh (1999). Group shows include National Portrait Gallery, London (2018), Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery (2017), Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo (2016), Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg (2014), Pinchuk Art Centre, Kiev (2011), Museum of Modern Art, New York (2006), Tate Britain, London (2004), Louisiana Museum, Denmark (2004), Kunsthalle Basel (2002) and Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2001).

The Berlin gallery is concurrently presenting exhibitions by Robert Irwin and Mika Rottenberg.

For further information and press enquiries, contact Silvia Baltschun (sb@spruethmagers.com).

Public reception: September 28, 6 – 9pm

Opening hours: Tuesday – Saturday, 11am – 6pm