

DEREK ELLER GALLERY

**PROJECT ROOM: STEVE
KEISTER**

BIO MESO

January 5 – February 4, 2023

**Opening Reception: Thursday,
January 5, 6–8pm**

Derek Eller Gallery is pleased to present a solo exhibition of new wall-based mixed media works by Steve Keister entitled *BIO MESO*. Inspired by Mesoamerican architecture and sculpture, Keister makes ceramic collages with glazed ceramic elements adhered to painted plywood panels which explore animal consciousness.

The works in this exhibition were instigated by Keister's discovery of a formal correlation between Styrofoam and cardboard packing cartons for computers and Mesoamerican architecture and sculpture. In order to develop and demonstrate this relationship, he learned the technical specifics of casting and mold-making and settled on slip-casting ceramic slip in plaster molds. The plaster molds were derived from voids contained in the Styrofoam, as well as the exteriors of the Styrofoam cartons. He then was able to accumulate a vocabulary of forms both large and small, allowing increased flexibility. Eventually, these evolved into wall pieces, a kind of ceramic collage on painted plywood.

"I had a mania for Mesoamerican culture," explains Keister, focusing on the "visual & spiritual rituals predicated on psychedelics and bloodletting". As such, the predominate subjects of his works derived from imagery found in the depiction of Aztec myth. Within the imagery often found in ancient ceramics, he noticed a formal device in which a 3-dimensional head protrudes from a 2-dimensional body. He adapted this idea by creating ceramic heads and then attaching them to panels painted with acrylic. He began by depicting a Jaguar, a proper Mesoamerican subject, and then extrapolated this to include breeds of house cats. Interested in interpreting animal consciousness and the variety of ways that different animals sense the world, the works in this exhibition center on the umwelt or worldview of cats and the creatures within their orbit of interest, be it birds or butterflies.

Steve Keister (b.1949, lives and works in New York, NY) earned a BFA and an MFA from Tyler School of Art, Philadelphia. He is the recipient of a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship and a Gottlieb Foundation Grant, among other awards. He has had solo exhibitions at Freddy, Harris, NY; Underdonk, Brooklyn, NY; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Texas Gallery, Houston; Blum Helman, New York; Galerie Rudolf Zwirner, Cologne; Feature, Inc, New York; and Mitchell Algu, New York.