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Silent Retreat

Graham Collins
Em Rooney
Owen Westberg

FEB 18th–MARCH 26th, 2023

Dunes is pleased to announce Silent Retreat, a three person exhibition of Graham Collins, Em Rooney, and Owen Westberg. All three artists deploy containers of material exploration, economies of scale, and fictions of naturalism. Each in their way alludes to an object's assumed identity as seen from a single vantage point, but then asks again to look from another direction.

The frontal minimalism of Collins' paintings counter the muddy depths of Westberg's, yet the thin is thick and the thick is thin. The former, with layers of chaotic ceramic structure supporting them, are a nod to the unseen labor of any given artwork; in particular, more fetishistic finishes with a more removed hand. Westberg, meanwhile, flattens the romantic tradition of plein-air painting onto industrially manufactured aluminum flashing – a gesture to mass production, not to mention the machine-like aspirations of minimalism. Here, the abbreviation of forms and qualities of light can cross somewhat fluidly from observation to invention; the allure of the plein-air tradition feels confined to the indoors as it stares out a window. While for Collins, the reverence for untouched fields of minimalist colors becomes a costume for something abject and complicated.

Contortions occur in service of illusory depths, much like filmmaking. Forced perspectives, 'the scenic', the expanded planes which are flattened, re-expanded, re-flattened, and the props that often exist solely as fictitious simulacra of their real world counterpoints. It is here we may locate Em Rooney's work, with its sense of exaggeration and fantastical state of nature and body appearing in dialogue with filmic architectures and environments.

Across the disparate material strategies and formulations, Silent Retreat opens up a meditation on the expressive capacity and interconnectivity of pictorial and sculptural spaces. All three artists offer a painterly manifestation of the three-dimensional, and each conjures a reimagined sense of our constructed world.

Em Rooney (b. 1983, U.S.) lives and works between Canaan, CT and Great Barrington, MA. Recent solo exhibitions include François Ghebaly, Los Angeles (2020 – 2021); Fons Welters, Amsterdam (2019); Bodega (Derosia), New York (2018 & 2016); and Beeler Gallery at The Columbus College of Art and Design, Columbus, OH (2016). Recent group exhibitions include deCordova Museum, Lincoln, MA (2022); White Columns, New York (2022); Kristina Kite Gallery, Los Angeles (2021); Candace Madey Gallery, New York (2020); François Ghebaly, Los Angeles (2019); Kaviar Factory, Henningsvaer, Norway (2019); Adams & Ollman, Portland, OR (2019); Galerie Crèvecoeur, Paris (2018); Foxy Production, New York (2018); The Museum of Modern Art, New York (2018); Document, Chicago (2018); and Simone Subal, New York (2017). Her work has been reviewed in The New York Times, Frieze, Artforum, Aperture Magazine, i-D, Art in America, and Artnews, among others. Rooney's work is in the collection of the The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Graham Collins was born Washington, D.C. in 1980. Collins received their BFA from Corcoran College of Art in Washington and MFA from Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson, New York. Recent solo exhibitions have been with SE Cooper Contemporary, Portland, OR; Halsey McKay Gallery, East Hampton, NY; Jacob Bjorn, Aarhus, DK; The Journal, Brooklyn, NY; Soloway, Brooklyn, NY; Almine Rech, Brussels, BE; Bugada & Cargnel, Paris, FR; Jonathan Viner Gallery, London, UK. Collins' work has been featured in group exhibitions at 1969, New York, NY; Mitchell Innes and Nash, New York, NY; Anat Ebgi, Los Angeles, CA; Cooper Cole, Toronto, CA; Rachel Uffner, New York, NY; Bjorn and Gundorph, Aarhus, DK; Derek Eller, New York, NY; C. Grimaldis, Baltimore, MD; Marlborough Contemporary, New York, NY and Venus over Manhattan, New York, NY, among others. Collins currently lives and works in New York, and teaches at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts University in Boston, MA.

Owen Westberg is an artist based in Pittsburgh, PA. He received his MFA from Columbia University, and his BFA from Rhode Island School of Design. Group and two person exhibitions include A Minor Constellation at Chris Sharp Gallery, and Outdoor Living, curated by Jenni Crain and Carey Denniston. His first solo exhibition in New York is forthcoming at Laurel Gitlen gallery.



Graham Collins

no title, 2022–2023

marigold dye on silk and cotton ripstop, dimensions variable



Graham Collins

1998, 2022
casein and oil on hemp laid on ceramic



Graham Collins

The dollar menu of the soul, 2023
casein on ceramic



Graham Collins

Map, 2023
casein on ceramic





Graham Collins

Moderator, 2023
casein on ceramic





Graham Collins

Exorcist Stairs II, 2023
casein on ceramic



Graham Collins

Atlas, 2023
casein and oil on hemp laid on ceramic





Graham Collins

Municipal Saplings, 2023
casein and oil on hemp laid on ceramic



Owen Westberg

Window, 2022
oil on aluminum
5 x 7 in.



Owen Westberg

Blossoming Tree, 2022
oil on aluminum
5 x 7 in.



Owen Westberg

Autumn, 2021
oil on aluminum
5 x 7 in.



Owen Westberg

Courtyard, 2021
oil on aluminum
5 x 7 in.



Owen Westberg

Floral Dress , 2019
oil on aluminum
5 x 7 in.



Owen Westberg

Mirrored Fabric, 2021
oil on aluminum
5 x 7 in.



Owen Westberg

Peaches, 2019
oil on aluminum
5 x 7 in.



Owen Westberg

Shepardess, 2021
oil on aluminum
5 x 7 in.



Owen Westberg

Veil, 2022
oil on aluminum
5 x 7 in.



Owen Westberg

Still Life, 2021
oil on aluminum
5 x 7 in.



Owen Westberg
Tennis Shoes, 2022
oil on panel
10 x 12 in



Owen Westberg
Blue Water, 2019
oil on aluminum
5 x 7 in



Em Rooney

Night Philosophy, 2023

cardboard, copper wire, acrylic paint, tulle, rhinestones, waxed canvas, maple, aluminum saw horse



Em Rooney

Blush, Fig, 2023

Cardboard, paper, acrylic paint, lamo housing and bulb copper wire, glass beads, resin, wood, steel, glass,
aluminum saw horse
32x39x24 inches



Em Rooney

The Conversation, 2023

Cardboard, resin, glass beads, copper wire, aluminum saw horse
32x39x24 in