

Tom Burr

10 Mar – 4 May 2023

39 Walker

Bortolami is pleased to present *Tom Burr*, the artist's seventh exhibition at the gallery. The eponymous exhibition features new work and is accompanied by an exhibition text by Blake Oetting.

Once more Burr has assumed his dual role as artist and exhibition maker, relocating the act of making from the traditional studio space into the gallery. An architectural intervention of four walls defines the show, a deconstructed box whose contents have been scattered both in view and out of sight yet remain connected on levels of materiality, memory, biography, and history. Moving through the gallery, the viewer is directly confronted by Burr's work, activating the artworks and the physical space created for them. As the interconnectivity of the different facets of the exhibition comes into view, not only here and now but in its connection to the entirety of Burr's career, we begin to understand this as not merely an assortment of objects as artworks, but on a larger scale as a total artwork.

Four new wooden panels populate each makeshift wall, continuing the signature plywood sculptural series begun in the 1990s. Each painted a different color, the artist loosely utilizes the shipping crate motif, a point of interest for Burr. Adhering stainless steel and brass plates to each panel, the images portray the artist himself as well as his own simulation of stereotypical "faggy gestures," as he refers to them, creating an intersection of public expectations of artistic sensibility, identity performance and exposure.

Also on view in the main gallery are a series of furniture-based sculptures. Set behind the walls, each work draws the viewer into the constructed architectural space as they grapple with themes of legacy, memory, and biography. *Pulse* utilizes various items once belonging to the "lounge" at Burr's project space in Torrington, Connecticut—a disco ball, a couch, a lamp, a wool blanket—the disco ball being a relic from American Fine Arts, the legendary SoHo gallery run by Colin de Land where Burr exhibited throughout the 1990s and early 2000s. Accompanying the work is a wall text listing the various academic definitions of the word "pulse," while the last line, a new addition by the artist, is a reference to the infamous shooting at the gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida, a signal to both the individual and communal meanings associated with the word. Similarly, the artist has gathered various items belonging to his father to create *Johns (my father's chest)*—a chest of drawers, long johns, a metal storage box, and a handkerchief—evoking the same ideas of legacy and biography.

A new photo series entitled *Capricornus I, II, III, and IV* lines the outer walls of the main gallery. Depicting Burr in the three public bathrooms of his Torrington space, he is in the midst of various movements—lounging, laying down, reading. In a string of associations from Bruce Nauman to Francesca Woodman,

as well as nods to his own past work, here the studio becomes a stage as Burr equates the everyday banal and artmaking.

A new photo series entitled *Capricornus I, II, III, and IV* lines the outer walls of the main gallery. Depicting Burr in the three public bathrooms of his Torrington space, he is in the midst of various movements—lounging, laying down, reading. In a string of associations from Bruce Nauman to Francesca Woodman, as well as nods to his own past work, here the studio becomes a stage as Burr equates the everyday banal and artmaking.

Occupying the small gallery space, *Floor Model (adolescent)*, is the most recent continuation of the artist's series *His Personal Effects*, while in the office Burr has installed a series of new collages made in homage to Stefania Bortolami. *The Visit, I, II, III* depicts images of a visit by Bortolami to Burr's space in Torrington, CT, as well as images of plant foliage from Burr's seminal work, *Construction of An American Garden*, currently installed in the Torrington space. In the words of scholar and curator Blake Oetting "the body of the dealer emphasizes the commercial system that supports Burr's work and translates it into exchange-value, a framework, he reveals, that often moves beyond the physical boundaries of the gallery."

Artist Bio

Tom Burr (b. 1963, New Haven, CT) is a conceptual artist who lives and works in New York City and Torrington, Connecticut. His work revisits the formal vocabulary of minimalism and post-minimalism, and explores the themes of homosexuality, public versus private spaces and architecture. Burr has exhibited nationally and internationally at venues such as Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT; Escola De Artes Visuais Do Parque Lage, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Westfälischer Kunstverein, Münster, Germany; Center for Curatorial Studies and Hessel Museum of Art at Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; SculptureCenter, Long Island City, NY; FRAC, Champagne-Ardenne, France; and the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, NY, among others. His work is found in the collections at the Art Institute of Chicago, Society of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL; MOCA, Los Angeles, CA; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, ME; Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT; AÏSHTI Foundation, Lebanon; FRAC, Champagne Ardenne, France; Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, FL; the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA, as well as in many other prestigious public and private collections.