

HENRY BELDEN,
TRAYS

THE MEETING

APRIL 22 – JUNE 3, 2023

Passed between conservator and vandal, one gets the feeling that *Trays* is a deaccessioned series from a delinquent registrar. Trained as a printmaker, Belden has a sustained interest in literature that comes from a study of textual composition, noting that the best of plots are mere skins to the machinations of form.

Trading optical illusion for the real, Belden crafts rewound Trompe-l'oeils, albeit eschewing the fraternity of Picasso, Gris, and Braque in favor of queer love and entrancement—evocative of Peter Hujar and Paul Thek's impressionable 1963 visit to the Capuchin Catacombs, the languid travelogues of André Gide, and the chaotic exploits of Youtube vlogger Lilah Gibney.

In *Trays*, the operative procedure is delimited to the construction of assemblages, each contained within six digitally procured serving trays. Ruined by beauty, restored through violence, these starter objects are submitted to continual infestation from a vast compendium of decorative trinkets, detritus, and raw materials. The exhaustive prostitution of the inorganic tenderly expedites atavism, played out through a curated toolkit of diverse physical procedures: oxidizing, burnishing, sanding, gilding, drilling, sealing, breaking, welding, defiling, cleaning.

Aligned, yet mobilizing Rauschenberg's activation of the horizontal flatbed, and Dieter Roth's *Tischmatten*, the tray emancipates the stationary tabletop, transposing the plane of human activity into a display-vehicle. These utensils of servitude become the serial ground to which each work frames a record of degradation and repair, physically merging the scattered ephemera with sculpted intervention.

Though wrought from a world of interiors, the locus of production and reflection lease only two rooms: the studio and the bedroom. Both equally intimate chambers encourage the willful surrender to states of flow and compulsion. With a tendency towards feigned diarism, Belden's multivalent authorship pathologizes the artist's labor, dramatizing the communicative potential of the inert. Charged with repurposed provenance, each tray gets sublimated into the libido of decorum, aiding and abetting the subversive tension that underlies the inconsolable distance between objects and their owners.

text by Kye Christensen-Knowles



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Henry Belden (b. 1993) lives and works in New York, NY. He received a BFA in Printmaking from the Rhode Island School of Design in 2016.

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Recent Solo Exhibitions include: If It Die, Baader-Meinhof, Omaha (2022).

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Recent group exhibitions include: Under the Volcano II, LOMEX, New York (2022), When the Word Becomes Flesh, Baader-Meinhof, Omaha (2022), Foul Perfection, Neue Alte Brücke, Frankfurt, Germany (2019), When I was a child..., MX Gallery, New York (2018).



CHECKLIST

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1. *Tray*, 2023

charcoal on linen
15 x 21 x 2 ¼ inches

2. *Mortician*, 2023

fiberglass, metal, wire and gilded wood
19 x 16 x 3 ¼ inches

3. *LOVESLAVE*, 2023

fiberglass, wood, brass, wire, acetate, vellum, resin, acrylic, pencil
25 ¾ x 17 7/8 x 1 7/8 inches

4. *Gild the Lily*, 2023

wood, steel, stucco, paper
13 5/8 x 13 5/8 inches

5. *In Brush*, 2023

lacquered bamboo, Japanese maple leaves, butterfly wings, zip ties, 35 MM film, metal, wire,
acetate, vellum, resin
10 ½ x 17 x 2 inches

6. *War*, 2023

wood, military clipboard, archival inkjet print, rifle sling
13 ¾ x 20 ¾ x 2 ½ inches

7. *Silver, Marylins, Scissor*, 2023

pewter, wax, glass, acetate, metal, tape, thread, resin
12 ¼ x 18 ½ x 1 ½ inches

