

Marianne Boesky Gallery is pleased to present the first New York solo exhibition by William J. O'Brien.

William J. O'Brien's multi-disciplinary practice—painting, sculpture, drawing and installation—grows out of a personal, intuitive process. His visual language originates formally out of the grid and encompasses a wide vernacular range, from the very "messy" to the very "clean." For this exhibition, O'Brien pairs a selection of works on paper with ceramic sculptures to create a fluid dialogue between the two media, using the seriality of the works and their repetition of forms to create a tension between order and chaos.

In the main gallery, a display of sculptures sprawls across three large tables creating a tableau of freely rendered vessels and visages. These works function as part sculpture, part preparatory models, landing between the two. A feeling of the corporeal permeates the artist's work, with the loosely-sculpted ceramic forms serving as an external product of a more instinctive process.

The autonomous nature of the ceramic work is repeated in O'Brien's colored pencil drawings with their geometric and florid patterning. In their constantly shifting forms, the drawings evade a sense of continuity, and instead appear as distinct, singular objects. The immediacy of the artist's gesture persists in these works, revealed in both the under- and over-drawing. Forms are tightened and shapes are repeated to complete elaborate matrices, while beneath the vibrant triangles and circles, one still finds "messy" loops and distinctive mark-making within the organized chaos. The abstracted pencil works feel both sculptural and architectural in their construction, as O'Brien organizes space and negative space with each delineated shape. These works feel more internally motivated than the sculptures, carefully structured and pieced together intricately in a manner the artist likens to quilting.

Included in the exhibition is one large pastel on paper work, which alludes to the physicality inherent in O'Brien's overall practice. The swoops of pastel build off the gestural qualities of the ceramics and the fractal shapes of the colored pencil works, altogether creating a result recalling frottage. The pairings of this exhibition highlight the sense of physical memory imprinted upon each of the artist's bodies of work, while their formal differences challenge the viewer to survey the connections between each. Amid abstracted shapes and freely-rendered forms, the artist inserts body and identity, thereby reconfiguring minimalist tendencies in his practice.

William J. O'Brien lives and works in Chicago. He received his MFA in 2005 from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He has been included in group exhibitions at Barbara Gladstone

Gallery, New York in 2007 and Galerie Krinzinger, Vienna, 2008. The artist's work is currently on view at the Art Institute of Chicago as selected by James Rondeau.

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