

David Kordansky Gallery is pleased to announce a solo exhibition of new work by Robert Melee. The exhibition opens on March 13 and runs through April 17, with an opening reception to be held on Saturday, March 13, from 6:00—9:00pm. Melee will show new works that transform elements of modernist and classical formalism into the building blocks for his own irreverent, kitsch-filled language.

Since the beginning of his career, Melee has sought to relocate the formal debates of the Western art historical tradition in the psychological realm of the suburban home. Whether he is honoring and disrupting the integrity of the picture plane, testing the limits of autobiographical reference, or telescoping Warhol's pillage-and-burn regard for culture into an intricately-rendered personal iconography, Melee situates his practice in a place where high and low not only interact but cross-pollinate.

On view in the current exhibition will be examples of Melee's beer bottle cap paintings, in which he builds up a sculpturally activated surface to skew, accentuate and/or undermine compositions (which sometimes include other found objects) and color relationships. These works arose out of a desire to return to the solitude of the studio; after working on short films exclusively for a period in the 1990s, Melee wanted to make physical works that would encompass, abstractly, some of the issues he had tackled in the films: class, obsessive behaviors, nostalgia, and humor. The use of beer bottle caps, found objects that accumulate as a result of drinking, becomes both a formal gesture and a sociological one. The beer bottle caps also lend an element of craft to the paintings, even as compositional strategies borrowed from mid-twentieth century Modernism are used to organize the works' overt physicality. Melee's paintings can also be seen as sites where urban and suburban attitudes enter into both conflict and collaboration.

Such conflation of high and low is not merely an end in itself, but awakens the mind and eye to the possibility of intense aesthetic potential in the suburban environment. In his sculptures, Melee often combines disparate found elements—audio speakers, mannequins, appliances, sections of wall—with painted plaster that appears to be draped like fabric. In some works the plaster elements take on a primary role, and even overtake the found objects altogether. Included in this group is a sculpture in which a mannequin is covered with plaster and paint; here the human form, and its psychological implications, can also be traced back to Melee's earlier film works. Others pieces are wall-based, and seem to resemble sculptures of paintings, their plaster forms like lengths of canvas that have been bunched, rolled or pinned.

Melee's formal experimentation finds its psychological analogues in the blurring of beauty and

grotesquerie, nostalgia and critique. In so doing, Melee's work suggests an underground or alternative narrative of how and why visual ideas develop; because Melee's language draws in such a large part from the private realm of domestic environments, his work elicits emotional responses that are both uncannily familiar and disarmingly strange.

Robert Melee has exhibited internationally in wide range of public and private institutions. In 2008 the Public Art Fund organized an exhibition of his outdoor sculptures at City Hall Park in New York. He has been the subject of one-person exhibitions at White Cube, London; the Corcoran Museum of Art, Washington; the Milwaukee Art Museum; and Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York, among many other galleries and institutions. His work has been included in numerous group shows in recent years, including *Bad Habits*, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo (2009); *Wild Exaggeration: The Grotesque Body in Contemporary Art*, Haifa Museum of Art (2009); *Greater New York*, P.S.1 Contemporary Art Museum (2005); *Make It Now: New Sculpture in New York* at Sculpture Center (2005); and *Adaptive Behavior*, The New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York (2004). He lives and works in New York City and New Jersey.

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