

MICHAEL E. SMITH / 09.12.10 - 10.17.10

Clifton Benevento is pleased to present the New York solo debut of Michael E. Smith.

Michael E. Smith frequently uses degraded materials short-circuited from their immediate social and societal connections to locate a puzzling heterogeneity between form and knowledge, mutability and dislocation.

When installing the paintings and sculptures of this solo exhibition, Smith emptied the gallery's floor-to-ceiling bookshelves of their texts. Not solely preparatory, this gesture is the lynchpin in a network of destabilized object relations. In the evacuated bookshelves Smith installed mlkw/blkvelcro, two altered milk jugs separated by a rough swath of Velcro, one cut in half, the other filled with industrial foam that will degrade and yellow by the exhibition's end. The connotation of sour milk is a provocative stepping-stone between the calcified remains of working-class Western life and starkly emotive objects.

Relationships to the social environment continue to resonate in Untitled, where a mop bucket and surgical gloves rendered in foam and plastic are covered with black cotton and turned upside-down on top of three blinds and the gallery radiator. While certain superficial elements are evocative of canonical sculpture materials like marble, they equally arouse strong associations with the dirt horizons left on the window blinds now visible on the radiator. These material allusions are further complicated by tactility – Smith's use of soft Nerf foam suggests a compelling inversion of the properties of marble.

The surfaces of Smith's pieces are not tidy. This is not equivalent with an absence of a conceptual framework or an aesthetic function but an opaque awkwardness that tempts subjectivity. In Untitled, two animal snouts appear to bubble effervescently in the yellow plastic of a slightly abstract boomerang form. While this work suggests a snuffing-out of man's best friend, it's equally concerned with modes of evasion. The non-traditional boomerang further abstracts the use of mutilated materials, suggesting something hazy yet bound and beyond concise narrative.

Michael E. Smith holds an M.F.A. from Yale University and has recently had solo exhibitions at KOW (Berlin), Susanne Hilberry (MI), and has been included at group shows at Gavin Brown's Enterprise and Zach Feuer (both NY). Upcoming projects include a solo exhibition at Mönchehaus Museum in Goslar, Germany. He lives and works in Detroit, MI where he teaches at the College for Creative Studies (CCS).