



“Powers of 7-8-9” a solo exhibition of new work by Joel Dean
Opening Reception December 17th 6–8pm | On view by appointment through December 31st

Dear Joel,

Jason and I are trudging through your press release text—it’s heavy. All the historical descriptions of the twin towers feels particularly intense given the political climate right now. So much of your text talks about the “balance” between two harmonious architectural entities crumbling to the ground and being replaced by a hegemonic monolith. I can’t help but think about the two-party political system, and this toxic dichotomy that has made such a mess of this country in an acute way since 9/ 11—or how binaries always seem to fail. It’s almost like we’re living in those suspenseful asymmetrical 29 minutes (between the falling of tower 1 and tower 2) before the whole thing crumbles. I love your reflections on the countdown (count up?) to the end of the twentieth century and framing it through this preoccupation with scale and idealism and architecture in reference to the Eames’ “Powers of 10”. I’m not sure how to transform the text you sent into clear and cogent language that helps make your research and references neatly explain the objects you are working on for the show. I think part of why you’re struggling with the text (and why Jason and I are too) is that there feels like a renewed urgency for art to help us locate our humanity and our confusion and our anxiety in a moment when no tweet or talking head or think piece can. Art speak and cleverness and sharp research doesn’t feel right anymore. I want a grunting, stupid, but honest language—a language that tears off our mask of entitlement and separation. So here’s my shot at explaining your show:

Joel is a twin, he grew up in Atlanta during the economic abundance of the 90’s and his childhood was characterized by “you-can-do-anything” directives from the baby boomers that brought our generation into the world; parents who grew up with their own promise of a new liberal social order following the protests and upset of the late 1960’s. Joel was just exiting childhood and entering the abyss of teenage gloom when the twin towers came down. The external event provided a clear break from the innocence of childhood, and set in motion a violent global reorganization more in tune with the chaos of a changing teenage body.

Now Joel is an adult living in New York City, wondering how to ascribe any kind of order to a zoomed out version of his context as the planet buckles under the gigantic ego of productivity and human exceptionalism. A table set to serve its own severed leg, two cities fit into one, a child with an imagination made of wood, two abici, and a split line of communication... “Powers of 7-8-9” is a historical mashup cum art exhibition that playfully turns a value system against itself. Here, a cultural reference, turned riddle, turned allegory replaces Eames’ Powers of 10’s promise of exponential growth towards infinity with, instead, a building set of single digits that might propose a new cadence for indivisibility.

How’s that?

Love,

Erin and Jason

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Joel Dean (born 1986, Atlanta, GA) lives and works in New York City. He graduated from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago with a Bachelors of Fine Art in 2009 and received fellowships from the Yale Summer School of Music and Art (2008), and the Ox-Bow School of Art and Artist Residency (2009). He co-founded Important Projects in Oakland in 2009 and helped to oversee the space’s program through 2014. His work has appeared in exhibitions at the I.S.C.P. (New York), Weekends (London), Princess (New York), Kimberly Klark (New York), Mini Bar Artists Space (Stockholm), Bureau (New York), Lodos (Mexico City), Jancar Jones (Los Angeles), and Bodega (New York). This is his first solo show at the space and in Atlanta, GA.

