

*First Cool Hive*

NICK HOECKER

THE MEETING

Sept 7 – Oct 26, 2024

Nick Hoecker's debut solo exhibition presents new sculptural assemblages of referential objects and photography proclaiming the pleasure of traversing the archives. These permutations of signifiers coalesce across their disparate lineages, reconfiguring codes of masculinity and sexual culture.

In this body of work, Hoecker constructs a diagram of gay identity formation, enacting the readymade as a tool to trace his personal history over cultural artifacts. The nostalgia of erotic iconography and adolescent attachments converge with the tangibility of archival material. However, in their polished and overt executions, these pieces gesture toward what may be an inflated masculine ideal, ready to burst and give way to a broader interpretation of the fantasies and projections of homosexual life.

The Mazda Miata, a miniature two-person convertible sportscar, serves as Hoecker's entry point into this series. In an early memory, the artist recollects his affection for the car's design being thwarted upon learning of its occasional reputation for having an effeminate connotation. Today, Hoecker dissects this memory by dismantling the Miata into individual parts. In *Heritage I*, he affixes a Miata door panel upright over a stretched German blanket. Not discernably an automobile part in this novel context, the panel takes on an insistent sensuality while situated between symmetrical red bars of text within the textile's graphic. Hoecker purposefully seeks out objects with wear and patina—the fraying leather of the panel and minor tears in the blanket bear the physical marks of the past. The slick ensemble conveys an assured physicality that appears programmed to incite an air of eroticism.

Three of the works in the exhibition contain the sculptural pairing of a book and a baseball bat, each broadcasting slogans both loosely and overtly relating to gay culture. In *Meat Head Lite*, a dinged and rusted black and silver-striped bat lined accordingly with "MEAT HEAD LITE" hangs vertically from the cover of a vintage book titled *Mars Without Venus*, featuring a muscular male physique graphic. The intended utility of the texts—the branding of the bat and the actual contents of the book—remain suspended to favor their surfaces, creating a moment of play with gay signifiers. However, the baseball bats—despite the amusement in their campy athleticism and phallic appearances—inevitably suggest the possibility of danger, even violence. In *Wicked Game*, the bat's pronouncement of "WICKED" pairs with a book titled *Homophobia*, a grim, overtly political combination that could well be drawn as a whispered allusion to fag-bashing.

In the treatment of his primary subject—masculinity—Hoecker harkens back to a youthful romanticism by appropriating old J. Crew advertisements that were originally published while he was a teen, undercutting them with joined objects. In *Role Model III* a Matthew Barney in his Yale student modeling days is obstructed by a metallic fire extinguisher; the shirtless male advertisement in *Role Model II* is forcibly fastened within a Miata seatbelt and paired with a flag reading "Up Your Ads." In this context, these handsome jocks donning the appropriate preppy attire become archival objects themselves.

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Their evocation of a certain degree of desire persists, but they begin to take on a sort of etiolated existence as remnants of a former erotic yearning. A similar quality characterizes *Poser V*, in which another appropriated male image sourced from an anonymous photograph--the subject having no face, no name, no identity, merely serving as a stand-in for a sexy ideal.

Hoecker thus creates the conditions for a failure of masculinity that corresponds to a primary struggle of being a gay male—masculinity can represent the climax of attraction but also presents the challenge, or perhaps impossibility, of its full embodiment. But it is arguably through this very dialectic that gay men have invented a sexual culture. And Hoecker's embrace of these pleasures and contradictions embedded in homosexual identity elicits a fulfilled and commemorative image of gay history.

-Evan Lincoln, 2024

**Nick Hoecker** (b. 1990 Miami, FL) Lives and works in New York, NY.  
Education: 2015, BFA, The New School, New York, NY.  
Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2024, *First Cool Hive*, The Meeting, New York, NY, *Last Cool Hive*, Sebastian Gladstone, Los Angeles, CA.  
Selected Group Exhibitions: 2023. Inaugural Exhibition, Elliott Templeton Fine Arts, New York, NY. *The Last Day of Disco* (Curated by K.O. Nnamdie), Fragment Gallery, New York, NY

CHECKLIST

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1. *Poser V*, 2022  
C-print, walnut frame  
24 ½ x 29 x 1 ½ inches

7. *Ball Buster*, 2023  
Twin Gay Courage Books, Youth Baseball  
Bat  
36 x 24 x 7 inches

2. *Role Model II*, 2023  
J. Crew poster, German wool blanket, Mazda  
Miata seat belt, walnut frame, Coors can,  
canvas banner  
45 x 66 x 4 inches

3. *Heritage I*, 2020  
German wool blanket, Mazda Miata interior  
door panel, industrial rubber, steel artist  
frame  
39 ½ x 81 ½ x 4 inches

4. *Meat Head Lite*, 2024  
Mars without Venus book, youth baseball bat  
36 x 6 x 4 inches

5. *Wicked Game*, 2023  
Homophobia book, youth baseball bat  
37 x 6 ½ x 4 inches

6. *Role Model III* 2023  
Aluminum print, chrome fire extinguisher,  
hook hardware  
36 x 24 x 7 inches