

From the beginning of his career, Bickerton has challenged traditional art forms, following the lineage of conceptualists who have considered the potential of readymade objects and images in visual culture. In the early 80's, he embarked on what has become a career-long process of experimenting with the hybridization of forms, materials and methods that blur boundaries between painting, sculpture and photography and the artwork as commodity. He has often oscillated between abstraction and figuration, always with a conceptual base, and increasingly is exploring the differences between representation in western and non-western cultures. In his paintings from the last decade he has turned his attention more specifically to reimagining art historical genres including portraiture and landscape painting, while drawing inspiration from such artists as Willem de Kooning, Andy Warhol, and many others.

The exhibition at Lehmann Maupin will include distinctive, but interrelated bodies of work created over the last two years. Featured is a new series of bold, colorful portraits of women that he refers to as “m-DNA”, a reference to the “Mitochondrial Eve,” a scientific and mathematical theory in the field of genetics that every living human alive today descends from one single woman who lived in East Africa around 100,000 years ago, through the maternal bloodline. Bickerton refers to her as an “atheist Madonna.” These works are based on sculpted figures of women he creates out of clay, marking a significant shift in his practice from working from live models. This decision has enabled Bickerton to begin with a far more abstracted figurative form as the root of his work, resulting in what he refers to as a form of “biomorphic abstraction”. Adorned with globs of paint, seashells, cigarette necklaces, rotting food, flowers, insects and butterflies, the embellished clay busts are photographed from different angles, digitally manipulated using Photoshop, printed on canvas, which is mounted on either wood or fiberglass, and then finally reworked with layers of oil and acrylic paint to create truly hybrid art forms. Here Bickerton's merging of figuration and abstraction comes to new levels: in m-DNA eve 3, for example, he has nearly obscured the image of the figure with impasto strokes of vibrant green, blue and yellow paint, blending the foreground and background until the model's bulging, exaggerated features seemingly emerge from the camouflage.

In conjunction with these figurative paintings, Bickerton is exhibiting a selection of new sculptures for the first time. Like the “m-DNA” paintings, they begin with the artist's clay figurative forms, which here are cast in metal and fiberglass and mounted on concrete bases. The sculptures reference the tradition of immortalizing subjects stemming back to antiquity while taking inspiration from art history, fashion, popular media, cultural anthropology and even pornography. In doing so, Bickerton challenges and complicates accepted standards of beauty across Eastern and Western cultures. Having moved to Bali in 1993, the artist's geographic position has influenced his work in form, content and critical approach. With his unique island perspective, he is at times self-mocking in his

style and often incorporates overtly wild color, as well as references to craft and island culture into his sculpture and painting.

The exhibition also includes a group of new, large-scale abstract “paintings” comprised of layers of paint and photographs merged with three-dimensional forms that highlight the hybridity of materials and processes the artist has come to be known for in his recent works. Here Bickerton incorporates fiberglass molds cast from heavily modeled clay forms, and affixes photographs of the surface of the paintings themselves. Also included in the show are a group of Bickerton’s colorful “landscapes” that are covered by three-dimensional “eyeballs”. These “eyes” are handmade in resin with manipulated digital irises and pupils, based on images found in a range of printed materials, from touristic postcards to representations of artistic masterpieces. These works are displayed in elaborate carved wooden frames with mother of pearl inlay, a reference to the handmade craft typically found in island culture where Bickerton lives and a nod to his ongoing fusion of cultural and artistic sensibilities.

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