

WIL ABALLE ART PROJECTS PRESENTS



Bather at Dusk (Moonburn), 2019

BRIAN KOKOSKA

Long Hole Heart

October 17 – November 30, 2019

ABOUT THE WORKS

Wil Aballe Art Projects is pleased to present *Long Hole Heart*, an installation of new paintings and sculpture by New York-based artist Brian Kokoska. This is the artist's first solo exhibition with the gallery.

Long Hole Heart showcases five new oil paintings by Kokoska, alongside a custom, life-sized wishing well sculpture. A continuum on the artist's previous full-room monochromatic installations, this exhibition revolves around landscape paintings which refer to his youth growing up in rural British Columbia.

His fascination with folklore, sentimentality and horror sensibilities collide with art historical landscape painting references and personal narratives to form a darkly romanticized take on figuration alongside nature.

Renditions of 2 audio works, Adriana Caselotti's "I'm Wishing" (1937) – made popular in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* – and Elvis Presley's "My Wish Came True" (1957), have further inspired Kokoska's mystical portrayal of the wishing well.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

BRIAN KOKOSKA is a New York-based artist working with painting, sculpture and installation. He received his BFA from Emily Carr University of Art & Design in 2010. His work has been exhibited internationally including Foxy Production (New York), Rod Bianco (Oslo), Chateau Du Fey (Burgundy), Vox Populi (Philadelphia), Loyal (Stockholm), Musée des Beaux-Arts (Mons), Arcadia Missa (London), Valentin (Paris) and Frank F Yang Art and Education Foundation (Shenzhen).

briankokoska.com

Dancing for the Ogopogo at Full Moon, 2019
Oil on canvas
66 x 54 in / 168 x 138 cm



Lonesome Highway, 2019
Oil on canvas
30 x 48 in / 76 x 122 cm



When the Smoke Clears (Moose Watchers), 2019
Oil on canvas
30 x 24 in / 76 x 61 cm



Bather at Dusk (Moonburn), 2019
Oil on canvas
36 x 30 in / 91.5 x 76 cm



Intruders at The Doll House, 2019
Oil on canvas
42 x 60 in / 107 x 152.5 cm

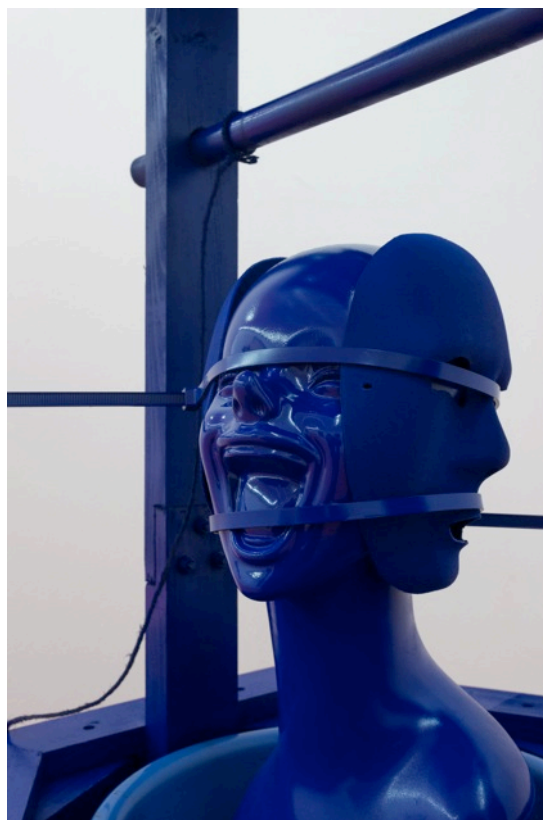


Untitled (Wishing Well No. 1), 2019

Wood, fiberglass, artificial bird, rope, cable ties, metal, artificial rose, masks, plastic, spray paint, Gatorade, plastic barrel

22 x 22 x 60 in / 56 x 56 x 152.5 cm





Untitled (Wishing Well No. 1), 2019 (details)

Campfire, 2019
Oil pastel on paper
15 x 22 in / 38 x 56 cm



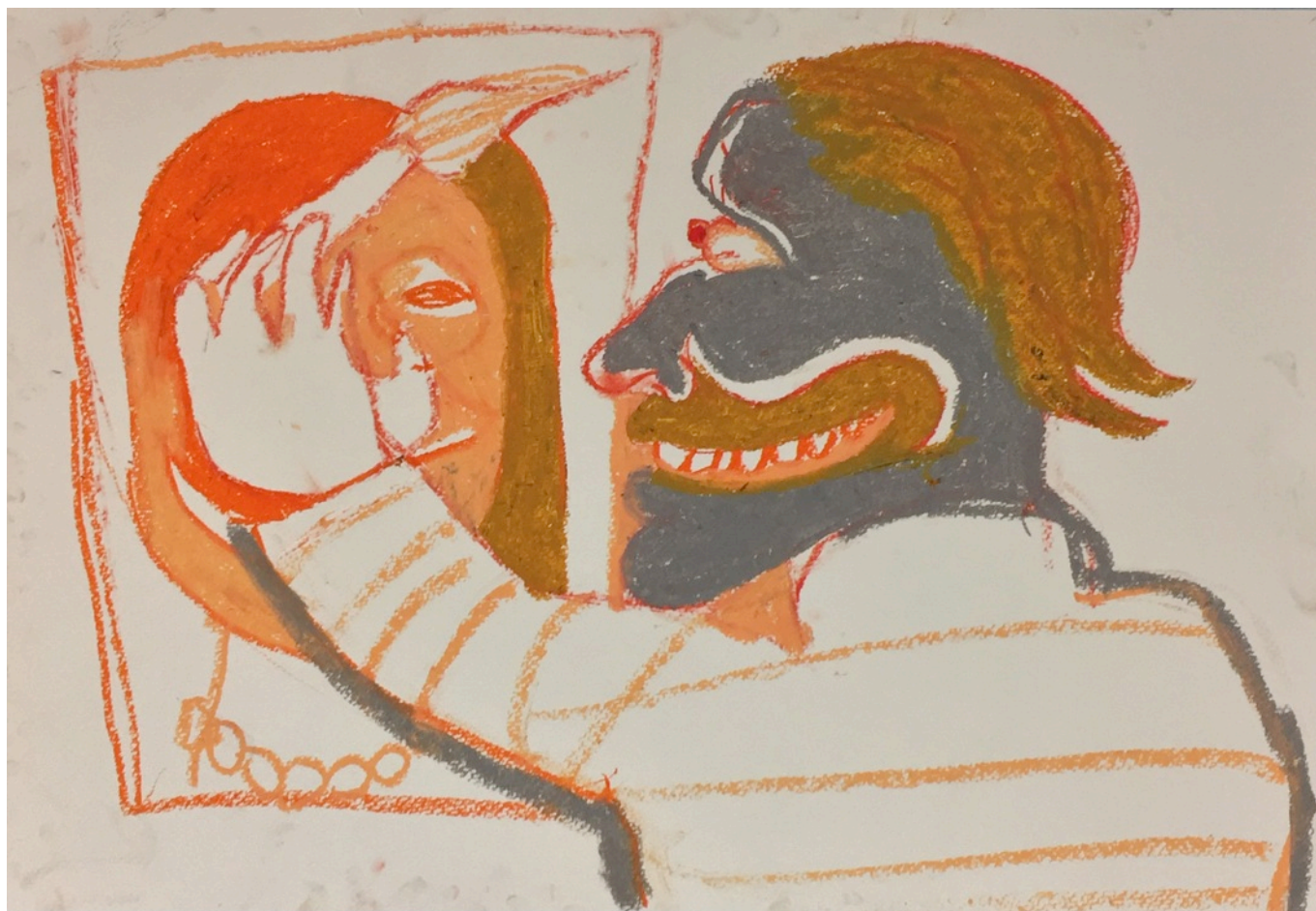
Cowboy Study, 2019
Oil pastel on paper
22 x 15 in / 56 x 38 cm



Dead Tree Composition, 2019
Oil pastel on paper
22 x 15 in / 56 x 38 cm



Self Portrait Painting a Self Portrait, 2019
Oil pastel on paper
15 x 22 in / 38 x 56 cm



Kiss Study, 2019
Oil pastel on paper
22 x 15 in / 56 x 38 cm

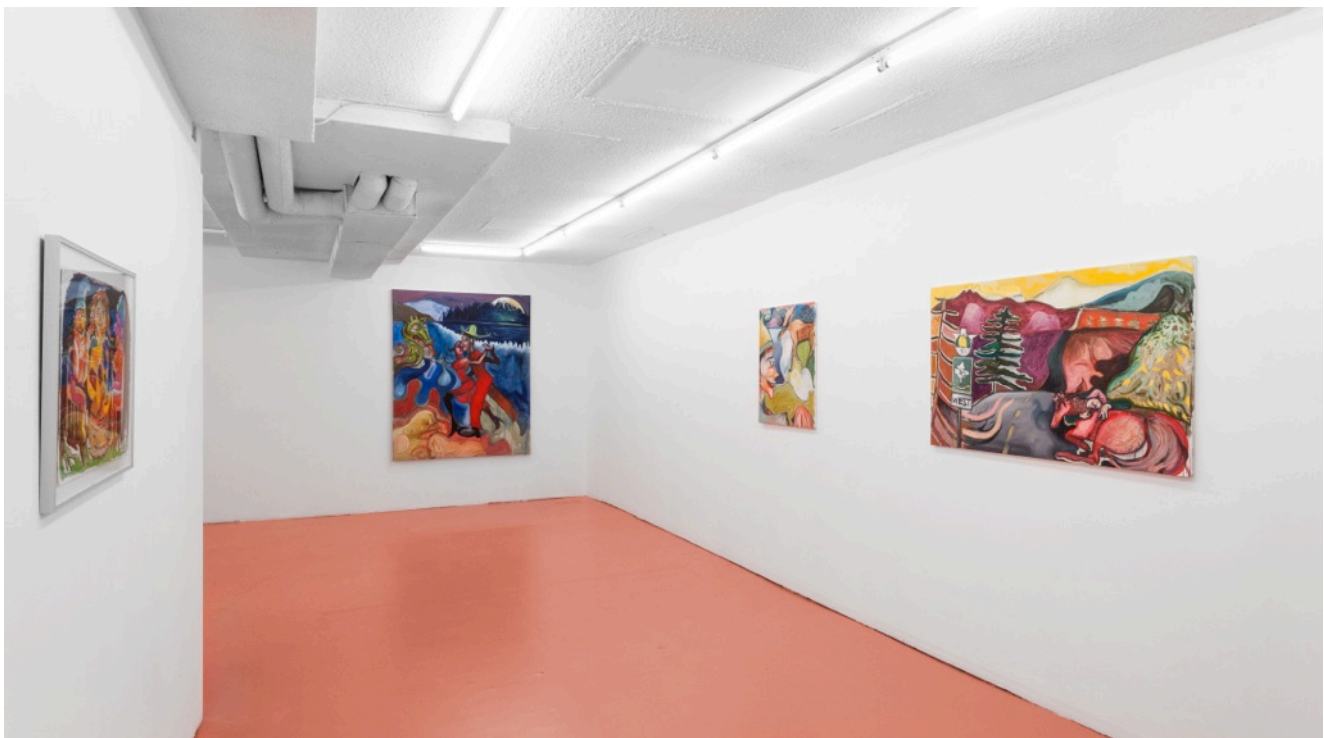


Praying at the Wishing Well, 2019
Oil pastel on paper
22 x 15 in / 56 x 38 cm



Untitled (Curly Hair), 2019
Oil pastel on paper
22 x 15 in / 56 x 38 cm









BRIAN KOKOSKA

CURRENT AND FORTHCOMING EXHIBITIONS

- 2020 *TBD* (group), L21 Gallery, Palma de Mallorca, ES.
 2019 *Long Hole Heart* (solo), Wil Aballe Art Projects, Vancouver, BC.
Scarecrow Show (group), East Hampton Shed/The Green Thumb Farm, Watermill, NY.
TBD (solo), Thumbelina's, Long Island City, NY.
TBD (group), Ashes/Ashes, New York, NY.

SOLO AND TWO-PERSON EXHIBITIONS

- 2019 *Metal Meadow* (solo & curatorial), Camp Eternal Hell Chamber, Cobleskill, NY.
Exit Soul (solo & curatorial), Liberal Arts Roxbury, Roxbury, NY.
 2018 *I Want Your Orange Blood in My Muddy Pockets* (w/ Pablo Picasso & Paul McCarthy), Mirat Projects, Madrid, ES.
The Pony Keeper, Chateau Du Fey, Burgundy, FR.
NADA, New York, NY.
 2017 *Skeleton Veins*, L'inconnue, Montreal, QC.
 2016 *Trauma Sauna* (w/ Chelsea Culprit, Ben Stone, Erik Frydenborg), Ashes/Ashes, Los Angeles, CA.
Granpalazzo, Valentin, Rome, IT.
Material Art Fair, Parallel Oaxaca, Mexico City, MX.
 2015 *Hush Hook*, LOYAL, Stockholm, SE.
Poison IV, Valentin, Paris, FR.
Night Cage (w/ Chloe Seibert), Johannes Vogt Gallery, New York, NY.
Art Brussels, Johannes Vogt Gallery, Brussels, BE.
Fatal Dad (w/ Zack Davis), Brand New Gallery, Milan, IT.
 2014 *NADA*, East Hampton Shed, Miami Beach, FL.
Rare Angel (w/ Debo Eilers), American Medium, Brooklyn, NY.
Blood Reply, Ohmydays, Singapore, SG.
 2013 *Hot Danger Moment*, East Hampton Shed, East Hampton, NY.
Post Hope (w/ Leslie Baum), LVL3 Gallery, Chicago, IL.
 2012 *A Sad Ballad*, Preteen Gallery, Mexico City, MX.
Painting Bitten by a Man (w/ Jonathan VanDyke), Vox Populi, Philadelphia, PA.
Beige Infinity, Blanket Contemporary Art, Vancouver, BC.

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2019 *Commutiny*, Sibling, Toronto, ON.
Flesh and Fantasy, Marvin Gardens, Ridgewood, NY.
Lucky Draw, Sculpture Center, Long Island City, NY.
Les Choses, Valentin, Paris, FR.

- 2018 *Scorpio Rising*, Best Western, Ridgewood, NY.
Moondog, East Hampton Shed, East Hampton, NY.
the little baby show, 315 Gallery, Brooklyn, NY.
You Are Who You Think I Think You Are, American Medium, New York, NY.
Harper's Books at The Beverly Hills Hotel, Harper's Books, Los Angeles, CA.
Mature Themes, Foxy Production, New York, NY.
Documenting Reality, Kunsthalle Wichita, Wichita, KS.
- 2017 *Transitions; Transatlantic Treatments*, Rod Bianco, Oslo, NO.
Nightline, 44th Drive Pier, Long Island City, NY.
- 2016 *Reality Bytes*, Frank F. Yang Art & Education Foundation, Shenzhen, CN.
True Love Over Physics, COMA, Sydney, AU.
NADA, American Medium, Miami Beach, FL.
The Art of The Matter, Contemporary Art Museum, St. Louis, MO.
Goddag Mann! Kuntsamling, Rogaland Contemporary Art Centre, Stavanger, NO.
Project room, Valentin, Paris, FR.
RBC 2016, The Power Plant, Toronto, ON.
True Believer, The Pony Club, Antwerp, BE.
I'm a Horse Now, East Hampton Shed, East Hampton, NY.
Dark Mimes, Ashes/Ashes, Los Angeles, CA.
White Columns Benefit, White Columns, New York, NY.
Face To Face, Palazzo Fruscione, Salerno, IT.
Art Los Angeles Contemporary, Valentin, Los Angeles, CA.
- 2015 *Jerry Bruckheimer Films*, New York, NY.
Bomber, LOYAL, Stockholm, SE.
Key Figures, Adams and Ollman, Portland, OR.
The Armory Show, Valentin, New York, NY.
A Friend Is Only A Human Body, Nicelle Beauchene Gallery, New York, NY.
Material Art Fair, American Medium, Mexico City, MX.
- 2014 *24/7*, Brooklyn Rail Curatorial Projects, Monte Carlo, Miami Beach, FL.
Buying Friends: The Kortman Collection, UICA, Grand Rapids, MI.
Cherry on Top(less), Topless, Rockaway Beach, NY.
Not My Pumpkin, Dateline, Denver, CO.
Saving Face, The Still House Group, Brooklyn, NY.
Paging Yolanda, Johannes Vogt Gallery, New York, NY.
It's Been Four Years Since 2010, Arcadia Missa, London, UK.
Fruit/Flowers/Appliances, LVL3 Gallery, Chicago, IL.
I Wanna Kiss You Like I Kissed You Before, Material Art Fair, Preteen Gallery, Mexico City, MX.
- 2013 *Andy Warhol: Life, Death and Beauty*, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Mons, BE.
Fishing in the Dark, Violet's Cafe, Brooklyn, NY.
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, ON.
Fun Sponge (w/ Alex Da Corte), ICA, Maine College of Art, Portland, ME.
QT Benefit, Peregrine Program, Chicago, IL.
I Don't Know It's an Illusion I Don't Care, Vamiali's Gallery, Athens, GR.
Year of the Snake, Mobil Museum, New York, NY.

- 2012 *Beer Picnic*, Preteen Gallery, Mexico City, MX.
C:\REAM, Miami World IC, Miami Beach, FL.
Numb Nothing Close, et al Projects, Brooklyn, NY.
So Confused LOL, Beo_Project, Belgrade, RS.
I'm Too High to Deal With This Shit Right Now, 72 Truck, Madrid, ES.
White Columns Benefit Exhibition, White Columns, New York, NY.
- 2011 *NADA Art Fair*, Blanket Contemporary Art Inc., Miami Beach, FL.
Nothingness and Being Skinny, Black Cubicle, Mexico City, MX.
SO GAY!, The Apartment, Vancouver, BC.
- 2009 *The Hand of a Stranger* (w/ Barry Doupé), Shudder Gallery, Vancouver, BC.

RECENT PRESS FOR BRIAN KOKOSKA

CULTURED

YOUNG ARTISTS 2017

BRIAN KOKOSKA: YOUNG ARTISTS 2017

KAT HERRIMAN

PHOTOGRAPHY BY FRANCOIS DISCHINGER



<https://www.culturedmag.com/brian-kokoska/>

Brian Kokoska likes to act on instinct. Repeating symbols and scenarios, he has developed a ritualistic approach to both his studio and exhibition practice. His solo shows are often monochromatic (well, at least the walls and floor). These extreme environments seem tailor-made to Kokoska's figurative paintings, which often depict pastel monsters. This fall, Kokoska branched out a bit—painting the walls of his Ashes/Ashes solo show in alternating sherbet colors.

What is the best piece of advice you've received?

"Never let anyone fuck you over"

What are you working towards?

I'll have new work with American Medium at NADA Miami Beach. I'm also in the inaugural show at COMA in Sydney and have a solo project with L'inconnue in Montreal opening January 2017.

If you could trade with anyone who would it be?

Probably Michael Jackson or Mike Kelley. But they are both dead. I really love the pencil drawings that Jackson made throughout his life... They are super beautiful and eerie. Most people don't know about them. I'd also love to have a Mike Kelley frog painting.

If you're not in the studio, where are you?

At my house in Hell's Kitchen or traveling for projects.

In your practice, what comes naturally to you and what do you have to force?

The individual works themselves come naturally but the larger concept or installation as a whole is a little more forced. Well not really forced... I would say, planned out.

How do you know what you've made is good?

You never really know I guess. I always try to put something out there that I'm happy with at the time. Sometimes that feeling stays and sometimes it's fleeting.

Ode to Hans-Ulrich Obrist, do you have any unrealized projects?

I feel like I have a lot of em. I really wanna organize an exhibition in a graveyard. But we haven't found the right one yet.

I've also wanted to do an installation at Kent Institution in British Columbia. It's a maximum security prison that my uncle served a lot of time in. It's in the middle of nowhere and the street it's located on is called "Cemetery Road."

Mousse Magazine

EXHIBITIONS

Brian Kokoska "Poison IV" at Galerie Valentin, Paris

For his first exhibition at Valentin gallery, "Poison IV," Brian Kokoska offers an installation that unfolds like a monochromatic total environment, home to a set of new paintings and sculptures. Initially limited to the plane of a painting, and then gradually extended to the exhibition space, the coloured tonality chosen for each series of paintings—in this case a swampy pale green and a ultimate-black—spreads its colour over the walls, carpet and ceiling, but also through sculptures and assemblages created from found items. All of the elements that make up this environment are merged and homogenised by an all-over chromatic, plunging the viewer into a layout whose spatial informations—depths, perspectives, scales, thickness, volume—are diminished and altered.

On the same principle as his previous projects, "Poison IV" treats the exhibition space like a three-dimensional image in which the viewer circulates more visually than physically. These spaces can by turns evoke the simplified and schematic codes of 3D modelling, TV scenery, or the reassuring symbolism of a child's bedroom, as well as the psychological conditioning strategies of rooms used for testing or detention. This tangle of references defines a fluctuating emotional context, stimulating childhood memories or perceptual constraints, revealing a space that is simultaneously magical or traumatic, warm and/or chilly. These antagonisms cancel each other out to give the feeling of a space that is impersonal, fuzzy and relatively abstract.

The figures that populate (haunt) this environment proceed from the same type of composition strategy, the artist using a repertoire that is just as reduced and schematic: spontaneous gestures, primary shapes, monochrome backgrounds and a deliberately limited lexicon. Tears, flowers, numbers, spiderwebs and crescent moons for example are so many motifs equivalent to eyes, mouths and bodies that attempt to form a "persona". The unity of any identity representation or meaningful interpretation is de-coordinated by the proliferation of possible combinations between contradictory, fragmented signs, motifs and emotional registers. Derived from an effect of interlocked screens, these figures ceaselessly switch between divergent iconographic codifications—male, female, animal, vegetable, when mobilising and combining registers of abstraction, caricature, cartoons, diagrams or psychograms in a morphing structure.

With the aim simultaneously stimulating and arresting viewers' projective automatisms, like their natural tendency to anthropomorphise shapes or translate them into emotions or gender attributes, Brian Kokoska's painting draws its efficiency from its ability to imitate the breakdown of the identification process, to dismantle the attributes of the personality while at the same time redistributing them.

The human figure is treated as a schematic "serial object". If contemporary societies produce identity standards fit for measurement and statistics, by facing/defacing the figure as a set of edgeless, shapeless signs that cannot be harmonised nor formally or symbolically, Brian Kokoska's figures evoke a state of simultaneous destruction and metamorphosis. It is a kind of sensitivity that the artist conceives as "post-human" (that is also "pre-mirror" state), one that shows us our own poisoned reflection.

Clara Guislain

at Galerie Valentin, Paris

until 10 October 2015

<http://mousse magazine.it/brian-kokoska-valentin-2015/>



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Entertainment

The Beast within Brian Kokoska | Studio Visits

A visit inside the painter and provocateur's lair.

By **Kat Herriman**

Sep 7 2016, 5:45am Share Tweet Snap



Monsters attack from all sides at artist Brian Kokoska's studio. The life-sized canvases that ring the room rumble with claws, breasts and maws. Rendered in a shifting palette of pinks, greens, blues and the occasional flash of cadmium, his malformed figures seem to exist in a constant dream (nightmare?) state—suspended between reality and the sublime. Stare too long or get too close, they tend to gobble you up.



Tall with bleached tips and bright eyes, Kokoska looks at home amongst his demons and their organized chaos. The 27-year-old lives in Midtown but commutes daily to Brooklyn, so one doesn't need to guess where he might find disorderly inspiration. Devilishly charming, Kokoska is a living extension of his art. His calamitous compositions land somewhere between Philip Guston, Dana Schutz, and Helmut Middendorf. Like Guston and Schutz, Kokoska's work manages a certain tenderness amidst its satanic overtones.

When I arrive, Kokoska hands me a water bottle. Needless to say, *hell is hot*. A wall of windows turns his studio into an impromptu solarium but also provides the necessary light for the long hours he spends toiling. Unlike his semi-skilled peers, Kokoska doesn't sketch out his paintings beforehand; he completes them over a couple of intensive days or weeks. "These ones happened really naturally, I like that better," he says. Each piece is stretched and worked on solely by Kokoska, so the final piece operates under the same auspices as Abstract Expressionism: action, reaction. The artist's labor, both cognitive and physical, sits on the surface. The work is unabashedly instinctual to emphasize the visceral qualities of oil paint. "I tried to make an acrylic painting on canvas once. It wasn't for me," he says.

Symbols that Kokoska habitually returns to—dice, numbers, bones—appear like constellations out of the gestural strokes. These are the points one uses to orient themselves in a frenetic world. Eights are especially prevalent; sometimes they look like infinity signs. "They are more OCD obsessive things that I think about all the time than about symbolism," he says of the compulsive repetitions.

Trauma Sauna, his upcoming exhibition at ASHES/ASHES gallery in LA, will show these new paintings alongside sculptures by other artists. When conceptualizing an exhibition, Kokoska prefers to keep walls and floors activated even if that means relinquishing a bit of the spotlight. "I like to include other artists when it works. It's absorbing them into my work," Kokoska says. "This time around since the paintings were so figurative that I wanted to find monochromatic sculptures, something simple."

For ASHES/ASHES, Kokoska selected *Neighbor* by Ben Stone, but at his studio, a blackened cast of Popeye's Olive Oyl stands guard—Kokoska decapitated her. Her headless form wears her globular skull like a ball and chain. "The cast comes in the right colors, she was wearing a red dress," he says standing over the body. "I like her face. She looks like she is chewing tobacco or smirking." Olive Oyl isn't Kokoska's first venture into figurative sculpture. He's transformed a handful of pop culture characters into gargoyles and hints that he has many more up his sleeve. Everything that he touches gets remade to fit into his world.

His exhibitions are often conceived of as holistic installations. Sometimes he paints the walls, sometimes he coats the floor. His color schemes are often monochromatic—they treat the white cube like a theater. His cartoonish compositions become the characters in his dark comedies.

Kokoska's black humor is catching on. While he couldn't yet divulge much—not on the record, at least—the young artist has a busy couple of years ahead. In September, in addition to *Trauma Sauna*, Kokoska will be participating in *Reality Bytes*, a group show at the Frank F. Yang Art and Education Foundation in Shenzhen, China, curated by Goedele Bartholomeeusen, alongside other young artists like Meriem Bennani.

The longer I stay in Kokoska's studio the more friendly his beasts become. Their toothy smiles, moon-faced silhouettes and pointy nipples are increasingly appealing. The acerbic greens, muddy blues and meaty pinks are soothing. Like a Barry Hannah short story, Kokoska's gothic relies on the spookiness of the familiar reimagined as the perverse. Waiting for the subway, one favorite story came to mind, Julio Cortazar's *Axototl*, the story of a man whose manic obsession and identification with a curious creature turned him into one.

Brian Kokoska's *Trauma Sauna* opens on September 10th at ASHES/ASHES Gallery in L.A.



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Tuesday – Saturday, 12:00pm – 5:00pm

EXHIBITIONS

Brian Kokoska
October 17 – November 30,
2019

Evann Siebens
November 14 – December
14, 2019

FAIRS

NADA Miami, MIAMI
Nicolas Sassoon
December 5 – 8, 2019

Art Rotterdam,
NETHERLANDS
February 6 – 9, 2020

SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

Evann Siebens
Movable Types
Witte de With,
Rotterdam,
NETHERLANDS
February 7 – 9, 2020

REPRESENTED ARTISTS

Kim Kennedy Austin
Scott Billings
Maegan Hill-Carroll
Ryan Quast
Nicolas Sassoon
Evann Siebens
Patryk Stasieczek

RECENT PRESS FOR WAAP

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reviews

Steven Cottingham: *Heat, Death*
Wil Aballe Art Projects, Vancouver
October 18 – November 17, 2018

by **Wei Yi Chang**

Thermodynamics is a branch of physics that studies the relationship between heat and other forms of energy. As a field of study, it emerged in tandem with the development of the steam engine, the Industrial Revolution and the zenith of European imperialism. In Steven Cottingham's exhibition *Heat, Death*, the first principle of thermodynamic theory—that energy can neither be created nor destroyed but only transformed—becomes a metaphor for reflecting on the developments of these historical moments and their lasting reverberations into the present.

Whereas a decade ago, one might plausibly have argued that climate change was primarily a technocratic problem resolvable through tweaks to existing practices—tougher fuel efficiency standards, say, or more recycling plants—today such approaches feel inadequate. We are confronted with the totality of what is yet to come (or, rather, what is unfolding as we speak). Increasingly, there is a sense that capitalism is fundamentally incompatible with a sustainable planet and furthermore that ecological violence is also a form of human violence, as has been articulated by numerous Indigenous voices over the years. When rising ocean levels displace coastal communities, for example, or when resource extraction industries are given precedence over Indigenous land rights, issues that may have once seemed remote are brought into view as inherently political and social questions of justice.

The exhibition's title, *Heat, Death*, references another thermodynamic theory, this one about the end of the universe. "Heat death" refers to a hypothetical state of maximum entropy in which energy can no longer be extracted to perform work. Working against this imagined end, Cottingham argues in an essay accompanying the exhibition that capitalism is perpetually warding off entropy, recuperating energy by putting it to work for further productivity gains. The title thus has two meanings, equating the death of capitalism with the death of the universe and implying a relationship between heat and death via a strategic comma. Heat is not merely an adjectival modifier but also an allusion to rising global temperatures, warming oceans, burning forests—the equivalence of heat and planetary death we are witnessing today.

Cottingham's work, then, nestles into a rapidly growing field of discourse entwining environmental decay, capitalism and colonialism. How to make sense of the convergence of these issues that are complex unto themselves? For Cottingham, energy and its flows bear the conceptual burden of linking these processes and structures. By relying on thermodynamic theory, he strategically eschews the particular in favour of the general. The metaphor—of all energy being finite and subject to perpetual transformation—evades the weight of concrete circumstances, so loaded as they are with



Steven Cottingham, *Every commodity is inscribed by the mode of its production*, all matter is contiguous with itself, 2016, twin vase sponges on aluminum foil, 28.4 cm x 48.3 cm x 48.7 cm, installation view from *Heat, Death*, 2018, Wil Aballe Art Projects, Vancouver
PHOTO: STEVEN COTTINGHAM; IMAGE COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND WIL ABALLE ART PROJECTS

specific histories and narratives. Instead, thermodynamic principles—unchanging, universal and universally accepted—become a base upon which to re-evaluate the conditions afflicting us.

Formally, this effort manifests as a series of sculptural assemblages made from found objects and industrial materials. Cottingham's object selection, however, isn't interested in the nominative gesture of the artist or in exposing each object's social history. Rather, objects are used metonymically, as signifiers of more complex phenomena. Aluminum stands in as the material embodiment of the workings of capitalism, its heat conductivity analogizing capital's tendency to control, subjugate and strategically dissipate entropy. Throughout the gallery, prefabricated aluminum objects, including baking foil, heat sinks and extruded bars function as display surfaces for seemingly inchoate things like desiccated sea sponges, pyrolyzed bread, antifreeze reductions, a rusty bell-clapper and flat screen monitors displaying Schlieren videographs of hot air. The pristine quality of so much of the aluminum in this show—the delicate fins of the heat sinks, the creaseless foil surfaces, the sleek angles—highlights how seductive and potent capitalism is as a construct. In one work, *No failure but the properties of matter* (2018), molten aluminum has been poured over a sea sponge, collapsing its internal structural integrity and legible as a reflection on the corrosive effects of capital on organic forms of life. Floating like islands or planets in the abyss, each pairing seems to constitute a closed system of endless repetition in which energy flows back and forth between aluminum and object.

An exception to these unyielding dialectics is a mound in a front corner of the gallery, the remnants of *Value form phase transition* (2018), which was at one time a large block of ice flecked with misshapen molten aluminum. Subjected to the heat of the sun through a window and compounded by the body heat of visitors moving around the space during the opening reception, the ice block melted over the course of sev-

eral days, its water seeping beneath the floor tiles and pushing them upwards to form a low mound, a kind of volcanism. Paltry and exposed, the small aluminum lumps that lay scattered atop the mound vacate the material of its slick surfaces, alluding to the distortion of capitalism under environmental and social duress.

Fredric Jameson once said that it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism; judging by the apocalyptic tenor that underscores so much anti-capitalist climate discourse, this remains the case today. What differentiates and refreshes such themes in *Heat, Death* is the metaphor itself. Reducing the immensity of capitalism to a method of energy diversion and control, the work avoids proselytizing as well as the panic and political lassitude that accompanies environmental concerns in the public sphere. Spare, restrained, quiet, it offers no consolation or solution, preferring instead to ask what it means to have capitalism (aluminum) as the base upon which things and persons act, and what conditions may be produced to disrupt its seamless governance of energy.

Welyi Chang is a writer and curator based in Vancouver, B.C.

Mike Goldby: *Silver 35*

Sibling, Toronto

November 17 – January 5, 2019

by Emma Sharpe

I first encountered Mike Goldby's *Silver 35* through Instagram. Being out of town until the final days of Sibling's inaugural exhibition meant that I watched its rollout via social media, catching glimpses of hanging frames and subtle colours in the garage-cum-gallery of Little Sister's newly-branded and relocated project. But the nine photographs hanging in *Silver 35* seemed to elude documentation, as the highly reflective surfaces of their frames created deceptive layers of content. I could never quite tell what the pictured photographs were actually of—what was a reflection and what wasn't—until I was in front of them.

That's because the seven 60 cm x 91 cm and two 91 cm x 121 cm framed digital chromogenic prints that lined the gallery walls were treated with a special film: *Silver 35*, earning the exhibition's title. The 35 refers to the percentage of light let through the UV

protectant film, with the remaining 65 bouncing back. This off-kilter ratio between image and reflection had the two constantly competing for attention. Through the crisp reflections of the gallery space itself, with the frames from the opposing wall creating a sort of infinity mirror effect, we see slices of busy urban scenes. Taken from low vantage points, the photos often centre on an anonymous body, almost always in motion. We see suits and blurs, smartphones and totes, a hand on a weary back.

Goldby often ventured to the downtown core and financial district of Toronto, seeking a sort of chaotic oasis away from his west end home. I couldn't help but romanticize the artist's process: I pictured a broke bohemian floating through the bustling crowds as observer, never participant (other than libation splurges on \$18 glasses of wine). The text that accompanied the

The New York Times

ART & DESIGN | It's the Art Form of the Moment (but It's a Hard Sell)

By Scott Reyburn

Front Page International/European Version: Friday September 11, 2019

Arts National/North American Version: Wednesday September 18, 2019

On-line Version: Monday September 9, 2019



REVIEWS / OCTOBER 1, 2019

Daniel Giordano

Wil Aballe Art Projects, Vancouver, July 25 to August 24, 2019

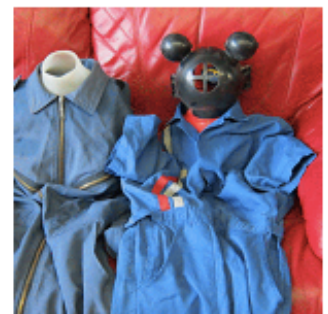


Daniel Giordano, *Self-Portrait 150 Years Ago*, 2017-19. Moisturizing face mask, rabbit, 24 karat gold, Tang drink mix, epoxy, wire hanger, 29.21 x 21.59 x 57.15 cm.



by Meredyth Cole

All summer, the atmosphere in Vancouver seemed about to do one of two things: condense into rain or, as is increasingly common, burst into flame. I too felt on the verge of something: nothing as euphoric as a breakdown, but some kind of unfurling, like a ball of yarn rolling down a flight of stairs. It's slightly painful, anticipation of this weight and texture. Walking into "Even Cowboys Get Caught in the Rain," Daniel Giordano's recent exhibition at Vancouver's Wil Aballe Art Projects, felt like walking into a manifestation of urban summer. The walls were lined with masks: Giordano manipulated common sheet masks used for moisturizing by deep frying or glazing them, adorning them with, among other things, eagle excrement and gold leaf, and encircling them with halos of wire or augmenting them with drips of Murano glass.



<https://canadianart.ca/reviews/daniel-giordano/>

Giordano's materials were, in a way, random—detritus collected from the bank of the Hudson River, where the artist lives. But they were also pointed: Sheet masks are ubiquitous aspects of skin care routines—they exist to plump and moisturize the skin, to slow the aging process. In Giordano's hands, these instruments of beauty became death masks, almost like Dorian Gray portraits, expressing all the withering and grotesqueness that skin care promises to prevent.

Why did this feel like summer? Because summer is a youthful, childish season, one that dimly reminds us that we are no longer children. It is both nostalgic and excruciating. The sun is notoriously aging. Summer is anticipation that never seems to coalesce into what was anticipated. When it does, we have magic on our hands.



Daniel Giordano, *Self-Portrait 150 Years from Now*, 2018-19. Moisturizing face mask, cuttlefish ink, dust, acrylic, polymer emulsion, urinal cake, epoxy, wire hanger, 39.37 x 30.48 x 17.78 cm.

If Giordano's show was summer made manifest, it was fittingly juvenile. This is not a criticism. There were several paintings exhibited alongside the sculptures, featuring people with cartoonish, phallic noses being furiously rubbed. With the sculptures, the artist seemed to work like a child making "science experiments" with kitchen pantry items. The watercolours struck me as hilarious, Freudian dreams.

Something else about summer—everyone looks better slicked in sweat. Sheet masks moisturize and promise the coveted "glow" that verges on greasiness. Giordano's grotesque, face-like sculptures looked organic and infectious; some were singed, others glistened with resin. Summer has always embodied the ineffable balance between dirt and beauty that is, to me, the definition of sexiness. Like summer, the work was also undeniably erotic—"goat skin cock rings" were a material listed. In this case, however, eroticism had a refreshing and joyous, even puerile, glow.

Let me be clear, though: these were sculptures doused in piss, smears of lipstick and resinous goop. It was impossible to ignore that they were composed largely of river garbage. There is a sense that Giordano is revelling in the underbelly of the beauty industry, where it's increasingly hard to ignore the fact that the things that beautify also devastate. By presenting human waste as semi-religious, bodily talismans, Giordano evoked a celebratory, hedonistic fervour. This is what a mystery rite might look like at the end of the world. This is what Dionysus is today, a god of garbage with the sensibility of a magpie. These masks look half-melted, as I often imagine a polar ice cap, these days, must be. It does not seem like an inappropriate response to slather garbage in gold leaf and try to have some fun.

Summer is endless waiting, and Giordano's show reminded me of the glorious nature of going slightly nuts in the heat.



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Daniel Giordano, *Self-Portrait as my Brother as the Weeper Who Weeps Under the Weeping Willow*, 2018-19. Moisturizing face mask, lady bugs, glazed ceramic, iron ore, Murano glass, limestone, strawberry Nesquik powder, debris, epoxy, phosphorescent acrylic, urine, wire hanger, 35.56 x 25.4 x 30.48 cm.



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