DAVID
KORDANSKY
GALLERY

RICKY SWALLOW

born 1974, San Remo, VIC, Australia
lives and works in Los Angeles, CA

EDUCATION

1997 BA, Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne, VIC, Australia

SELECTED SOLO / TWO PERSON EXHIBITIONS
(* indicates a publication)

2020 *BORROWED SCULPTURES,* David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

2018 *Shoulders,* David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
4, Modern Art, London, England

2017 **New Work*, Maccarone, New York, NY

2015 */SKEWS/, David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

2013 *Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney, Australia
*Stuart Shave/Modern Art, London, England

2012 **Lesley Vance & Ricky Swallow*, The Huntington Art Gallery, San Marino, CA

2011 Marc Foxx, Los Angeles, CA
Stuart Shave/Modern Art, London, England

2009 **The Bricoleur,* curated by Alex Baker, Ian Potter Centre, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia
**Watercolors*, curated by Steven Alderton, UQ Art Museum, The University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia; Christchurch, New Zealand; Christchurch Art Gallery, Christchurch, New Zealand
Watercolors – Bearded men – after Picasso, Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney, Australia

2008 Marc Foxx, Los Angeles, CA

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Ballad of a Thin Man, The Suburban, Oak Park, IL
Recent Work, Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney, Australia

2007 **Ricky Swallow*, Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin, Ireland
**Younger than Yesterday,* Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna, Austria

2006 *Ricky Swallow*, PS1/MoMA, New York, NY
Long Time Gone, Stuart Shave/Modern Art, London, England
**The Past Sure Is Tense*, Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth, Australia

2005 **This Time Another Year*, Australian Pavilion, 2005 Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy

2004 *Killing Time,* Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney, Australia
Killing Time, Gertrude Contemporary Art Space, Melbourne, Australia

2003 *Field Recordings*, Tomio Koyama Gallery, Tokyo, Japan

2002 *Tomorrow in Common*, Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York, NY
Wooden Problem, Karyn Lovegrove Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
Sculpture Now, First Floor Artists and Writers Space, Melbourne, Australia

2001 **For those who came in late, Matrix 191,* University of California Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley, CA
Above Ground Sculpture, Harnish McKay Gallery, Wellington, New Zealand
Swallow/Swenson, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia
Individual Ape, Hot Rod Tearoom, Oslo, Norway

2000 *Plastruct*, Karyn Lovegrove Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
Unplugged, Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney, Australia
**Ricky Swallow: Above Ground Sculpture,* Project Room, Dunedin Public Art Gallery Dunedin, New Zealand

1999 *The Multistylus Programme,* Studio 12, 200 Gertrude Street, Melbourne, Australia

1998 *Repo Man*, Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney, Australia

1997 *The Lighter Side of the Dark Side*, Grea Area Art Space, Inc., Melbourne, Australia
Small World, Teststrip, Auckland, New Zealand

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

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2019 **In Quest of Beauty: Assemblage, Assemblage in the Ahmanson Collection*, Ahmanson Gallery, Irvine, CA

2018 *2018 Invitational,* Home@735 Gallery, Redfern, Australia
Wiggle, A sculpture show, Galerie Greta Meert, Brussels
The shape of things to come, curated by Melissa Keys, The Michael Buxton Centre of Contemporary Art (MBCOCA), Parkville, Australia
Bronze Age c. 3500 BC - AD 2018, organized by Dr. Neil Wenman and Mary Beard, Firstsite, Essex, England
Bodies of Art: Human Form from the National Collection, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Australia
Obsession: Devil in the detail, Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery, Mornington, Australia

2017 **Define Gravity: Sculpture in the Ahmanson Collection,* curated by John Silvis, Ahmanson Gallery, Irvine, CA
WORKING/NOT WORKING, curated by Matt Connors, CANADA, New York, NY
Every Brilliant Eye: Australian Art of the 1990s, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia
Australian art and the Russian avant-garde, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia
Works from the Collection, Ipswich Art Gallery, Ipswich, Australia
**99 Cents or Less,* organized by Jens Hoffman, Museum of Contemporary Art, Detroit, MI
Beyond Belief: The Sublime in Contemporary Art, Bathurst Regional Art Gallery, Bathurst, Australia

2016 *Tricking the eye—contemporary trompe l'oeil,* Geelong Gallery, Geelong, Australia
Tempest, curated by Juliana Engberg, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart, Australia
L'esprit du Bauhaus, l'objet en question, curated by Olivier Gabet, Les Arts Décoratifs, Paris, France
Today Tomorrow Yesterday, organized by Natasha Bullock, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia
Theories of Modern Art, Stuart Shave/Modern Art, London, England

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2015 *Blind Architecture*, curated by Douglas Fogle, Thomas Dane Gallery, London
Spring 1883, organized by Darren Knight Gallery, The Establishment Hotel, Sydney, Australia
Business in Front b/w Blue White Red, organized by Three Day Weekend, Blum & Poe, Los Angeles, CA
Other Planes of There, Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago, IL
Hiding in Plain Sight: A Selection of works from the Michael Buxton Collection, Bendigo Art Gallery, Bendigo, VIC, Australia
Technologism, curated by Charlotte Day, Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne, Australia

2014 *Machine Project Field Guide To The Gamble* House, The Gamble House, Pasadena, CA
Quiz: Sur une idee de Robert Stadler, Ensemble Poirel-Nancy, Paris, France
Another Cats Show, 356 Mission, Los Angeles, CA
**Made in L.A. 2014*, curated by Connie Butler and Michael Ned Holte, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA
**2014 Whitney Biennial*, curated by Stuart Comer, Anthony Elms, and Michelle Grabner, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY
Menagerie, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA), Melbourne, Australia

2013 *Future Primitive*, Heide Museum of Art, Melbourne, Australia
Everyday, Murray White Room, Melbourne, Australia
Ten Years, Wallspace Gallery, New York, NY
Mind is Outer Space, Casey Kaplan Gallery, New York, NY
Labour and Wait, Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Santa Barbara, CA
Coconut Water, White Flag Projects, Saint Louis, MO
Notes on Neo-Camp, curated by Chris Sharp, Office Baroque, Antwerp, Belgium; Studio Voltaire, London
A Handful of Dust, Santa Barbara Contemporary Arts Forum, Santa Barbara, CA
Against the Grain, Wood in Contemporary Craft and Design, Museum of Arts and Design, New York, NY
A Personal Choice, by Bruna Aickelin, Il Capricorno, Venice, Italy
Reinventing the Wheel: The Readymade Century, Monash University Museum of Art (MUMA), Melbourne, Australia
Still Life, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Syndey, Australia
Aquatopia, Nottingham Contemporary, Nottingham, England; Tate St

Ives, St Ives, Cornwall, England

2012 *To Hope, To Tremble, To Live: Modern and Contemporary Works from the*
Pale Ontology, Marc Foxx, Los Angeles, CA
The Mystery Trend, Wallspace, New York, NY
Parallel Collisions, 12th Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art, curated by Natasha Bullock and Alexie Galss-Kantor, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Australia
Construct, Mary Mary, Glasgow, Scotland
David Roberts Collection, The Hepworth Wakefield, Wakefield, England, UK

2011 *I Do This, I Do That-Joe Bradley & Ricky Swallow*, curated by Matt Connors, The Taut and The Tame, Berlin, Germany
10 Ways to Look at the Past, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia

2010 *Sculptors Drawing*, The Aspen Art Museum, Aspen, CO
Almanac, the Gift of Ann Lewis AO, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia
Out Of Australia, The British Museum, London, England
Reframing Darwin, evolution and art in Australia, Ian Potter Museum of Art, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia

2009 *Mythologies,* Haunch of Venison, London, England
Soft Sculpture, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Australia
Real Art Road Show, The Viaduct Basin, Auckland, New Zealand

2008 *Lost & Found: An Archaeology of the Present,* TarraWarra Biennial, TarraWarra, Australia
The Ecologies Project, Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne, Australia
Imaginary Thing, curated by Peter Eeley, Aspen Art Museum, Aspen, CO
Tell Tchaikovsky the News, curated by Torbjørn Rødland, Standard (Oslo), Oslo, Norway

2007 *Effigies,* Stuart Shave/Modern Art, London, England
Makers and Modelers: Works in Ceramic, Gladstone Gallery, New York, NY

Sculpture, Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney, Australia
**Red Eye: Los Angeles Artists from the Rubell Family Collection*, Miami, FL
Goth: Reality of the Departed World, Yokohama Museum of Art, Yokohama, Japan
Sculptors Drawing, The Aspen Art Museum, Aspen, CO
Existence – life according to art, Waikato Museum, Hamilton, New Zealand
Snap Freeze: Still Life Now, TarraWarra Museum of Art, Healesville, Australia
Across the board, Wallspace Gallery, Sydney, Australia
DE OVERKANT/DOWN UNDER – DEN HAAG SCULPTUUR 07, The Hague, Netherlands

2006 Stuart Shave/Modern Art, London, England
Reboot – The Jim Barr and Mary Barr Collection, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, Dunedin, New Zealand
Memento Mori, Mireille Mosler Ltd, New York, NY
Red eye – LA artists from the Rubell Family Collection, Los Angeles, CA
Multiplicity: Prints and Multiples, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia
Nigel Cooke, Barnaby Furnas, Barry McGee, Matt Greene, Steven Shearer, Ricky Swallow, Stuart Shave / Modern Art, London, England
swell – the art in contemporary beach culture, Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery, Booragul, Australia
Long Live Sculpture!, Middelheim Museum, Antwerpen, Belgium

2005 *Kiss of the Beast*, Queensland Art Gallery, Australia
Lapped, Campbelltown Art Centre, Campbelltown, Sydney, Australia
Living together is easy, Art Tower Mito, Mito, Japan; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia
Getting Emotional, The Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA
Before Night – After Nature, Monash University Collection, Monash University Gallery, Melbourne, Australia

2004 *Strange Weather*, Modern Art, London, England
Sticks & Stones, Academy Gallery, University of Tasmania, Sandy Bay, Australia
Living Together is Easy, Contemporary Art Center, Art Tower Mito, Japan; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia
The Ten Commandments, curated by Klaus Biesenbach, Deutsches

Hygiene-Museum, Dresden, Germany

2003 *Still Life*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia
Variations on the Theme of Illusion, Emily Tsingou Gallery, London, England
Guided by Heroes, curated by Raf Simons, Z33, Hasselt, Belgium
The Fourth Sex, curated by Raf Simons, Pitti Uomo, Stazioni Leopalda, Florence, Italy
Home Sweet Home: Works from the Peter Fay Collection, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Australia
A Modelled World, McClelland Gallery and Sculpture Park, Victoria, Australia
Fair Game. Art + Sport, NGV Response Gallery, Melbourne, Australia
Arcadia: the other life of video games, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth, New Zealand; The Gus Fisher Gallery, University of Auckland, New Zealand
See here now: Vizard Foundation Art Collection of the 1990's, The Ian Potter Museum of Art, The University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia
The future in every direction: Joan Clemenger Endowment for Contemporary Australian Art, Ian Potter Centre, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia
Art + Film, Centre for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne, Australia
Possible Worlds, Artspace, Auckland, New Zealand
Some Things We Like, Asprey Jacques, London, England
Extended Play: Art Remixing Music, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth, New Zealand

2002 **Remix: contemporary art & pop*, Tate Liverpool, Liverpool, England
Gulliver's Travels, College of Fine Arts, Sydney, Australia; Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne, Australia; Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, Australia; Canberra Contemporary Art Space, Canberra, Australia; Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia, Adelaide, Australia; and Perth Institute of Contemporary Art, Perth, Australia
1st Floor Final Exhibition, 1st Floor, Melbourne, Australia
People, Places + Ideas, Celebrating Four Decades of the Monash University Collection, Monash University Museum of Art, Australia
Half The World Away, Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center, Buffalo, NY
Big Bang Theory: Recent Chartwell Acquisitions, Auckland Art Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand
Possible Worlds, Artspace, Auckland, New Zealand

2001 **Casino 2001*, S.M.A.K., Ghent, Belgium
Good Work, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, City Gallery, Wellington, New Zealand
**Swallow Swenson*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia
Utopia / ROR, Kiasma, Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki, Finland; Kunsthalle zu Kiel, Kiel, Germany; Skulpturens Hus, Stockholm, Sweden
None More Blacker, 200 Gertrude Street, Melbourne, Australia; Geelong Gallery, Geelong, Australia; Shepparton Art Museum, Shepparton, Australia; Wollongong City Gallery, Wollongong, Australia; Global Arts Link, Ipswich, Australia
Multistylus Programme: Recent Chartwell Acquisitions, Auckland Art Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand
So you want to be a rock star: Portraits and rock music in Australia, National Portrait Gallery, Canberra, Australia
Bootylicious, Ian Potter Museum of Art, Melbourne University, Melbourne, Australia
A person looks at a work of art…, The Michael Buxton Contemporary Art Collection, Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne, Australia
Low-down: Recent Acquisitions, Monash University Collection, Monash University Gallery, Melbourne, Australia
Rubik, Sarah Cottier Gallery, Sydney, Australia

2000 *Keith Edmier, Ricky Swallow, Erick Swenson*, Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York, NY
**Uncommon World*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Australia
**Brand New Master Copy*, UKS Gallery, Oslo, Norway
Rent, Overgaden Gallery, Copenhagen, Denmark; ACCA, Melbourne, Australia
The Retrieved Object, Linden Art Gallery, Melbourne, Australia
Are You Experienced?, The Physics Room, Christchurch, New Zealand
**Spin Me Round*, Metro Arts, Brisbane, Australia
Drawn From Life, Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York, NY
Terra Mirabilis: Wonderland, Centre for Visual Arts, Cardiff, Wales

1999 **Contempora 5*, The Ian Potter Museum of Art, The Melbourne University, Melbourne, Australia
Signs of Life, Melbourne International Biennial 1999, Melbourne, Australia
Walkmen, Synaethesia Music, Melbourne, Australia
Spellbound, Karyn Lovegrove Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

Make it yourself, 200 Gertrude Street, Melbourne, Australia
Hamish McKay Gallery, Wellington, New Zealand
Multiples, Ivan Anthony Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand
Fifty Bucks - a benefit show, Gallery 19, Sydney, Australia
No Jokes, Stripp Gallery, Melbourne, Australia

1998 *Rubik 3*, Video versus Watercolour, 36 Wellington Street, Melbourne, Australia
**All This And Heaven Too*, Adelaide Biennale Exhibition, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Australia
Misty V's City Lights 2000, City Lights, Hosier Lane, Melbourne, Australia
Institutional Transit Lobby, 200 Gertrude Street Gallery, Melbourne, Australia
Injection/Acquisition, Performance Space, Sydney, Australia
Video Soup, Collective Gallery, Edinburgh, Scotland
Taken, curated by Jon Cattapan, RMIT Project Space, Melbourne, Australia
Beaux Arts Art in The World '98, Passage de Retz, Paris, France
Metamorphosis, Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery, Mornington, Australia
Wild Kingdom, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, Australia

1997 **Diorama*, curated by Charlotte Day, 200 Gertrude Street, Melbourne, Australia
Going Nowhere, curated by Julia Gorman, Grey Area Art Space Inc., Melbourne, Australia
Ear to the Ocean, Grey Area Art Space Inc., Melbourne, Australia

1996 *Before My Eyes A Bedroom Monster*, Stop 22, Melbourne, Australia

GRANTS AND AWARDS

2018 Honoree, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden Fall Gala, New York, NY

1999 Contempora 5 Art Award, Victoria, Australia

1998 Emerging Artists Grant, The Australia Council

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RESIDENCIES

2015 Artist in Residence, The Chinati Foundation, Marfa, TX

2000 Dunedin Public Art Gallery, Dunedin, New Zealand
Centre of Visual Arts, Cardiff, Wales

CURATORIAL PROJECTS

2020 *Doyle Lane: Weed Pots,* David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

2013 *GRAPEVINE~, Magdalena Suarez Frimkess, Michael Frimkess, John Mason, Ron Nagle, and Peter Shire, David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

2003 *Roll Out*, Karyn Lovegrove Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

1998 *Hobby Core*, Stripp Gallery, Melbourne, Australia

1997 *Gathering*, Platform 2, Melbourne, Australia

BIBLIOGRAPHY
(* indicates non-periodical book, catalog, or other publication)

2020 Jensen, Emily, “David Kordansky Gallery Imbues Virtual Art Basel Booth With Intimate Portraiture,” *HYPEBEAST.com*, June 16, 2020
Hong, Catherine, “Nate Berkus and Jeremiah Brent Transform an NYC Town House Into a Family Home,” *ArchiteturalDigest.com*, April 15, 2020

2019 Adam, Georgina, "Collector Jarl Mohn: ‘Anyone who buys any art is a hero!’," *FT.com*, February 8, 2019
Clement, Tracey, "Obsession: Devil in the detail," *ArtGuide.com.au*, January 24, 2019

2018 Campbell, Andy, “Ricky Swallow,” *Artforum.com*, Critics’ Picks, December 5, 2018
"Ricky Swallow at David Kordansky," *ArtWritingDaily.com*, November 28, 2018

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Sims, Amanda, “Inside the Home of an L.A. Sculptor Finding Magic in the Familiar,” *ArchitecturalDigest.com*, November 8, 2018
Miranda, Carolina A., "Datebook: L.A. rendered in surreal ways, a multimedia duo's new video and maps inspired by a colonial codex," *LATimes.com*, November 2, 2018
Armstrong, Annie, "Carry That Weight: Sculptor Ricky Swallow, Alchemist of Everyday Objects, on His New Show at David Kordansky in Los Angeles," *ARTnews.com*, October 17, 2018
Lasserre, Guillaume, "Don't Sit Down," *The Steidz*, September 2018, pp. 108-115
Morris, Kadish, "A Guide to Brussels Gallery Weekend," *Frieze.com*, September 6, 2018
"Ricky Swallow," *DrawingRoomPlay.com*, July 2018
McDonald, John, "Visual Arts Review: John McDonald on celebrity and the Art Basel Hong Kong fair," *SMH.com*, April 2, 2018
Offenhartz, Jake, "CHELSEA IS MORE THAN JUST HYPERGENTRIFICATION," *VillageVoice.com*, April 2018
“Makers’ Way of Living,” *Popeye,* Issue 850, February 2018, pp. 52-53, 56-57
Rus, Mayer, “West Coast Editor Mayer Rus Picks His Favorites from FOG,” *ArchitecturalDigest.com*, January 17, 2018

2017 **New Work*, Los Angeles: Canyon Rats, 2017
Griffin, Jonathan, “Zusammen Für Sich,” *Blau*, October 2017, pp. 54-61
Ramade, Bénédicte, “Le Motif Picasso,” *Picasso-Sculptures.fr*, May 2017
Bacon, Alex, “Ricky Swallow,” *Artforum.com*, Critics’ Picks, April 7, 2017

2016 **SKEWS +*, Los Angeles: Canyon Rats, 2016
Strzelecki, Gloria, “Bones Brigade,” *fineprintmagazine.com*, 2016
Colacello, Bob, “The Lure of LACMA,” Vanity Fair, December 2016, pp. 138-139
Bagley, Christopher, “Creative Coupling,” *W*, October 2016, pp. 62-65
Muñoz-Alonso, Lorena, “See What Dealers Are Bringing to Frieze London,” *Artnet.com*, Art Fairs, September 29, 2016
“The art net News Index: The World’s Top 100 Art Collectors for 2016, Part One,” *Artnet.com*, People, June 13, 2016
Martain, Tim, “Tas Weekend: Perfect storm,” *TheMercury.com.au*, June 11, 2016
Okamoto, Hitoshi, “art for all: Ricky Swallow and Lesley Vance,” *relax*, February 2016, no. 116, pp. 38-43

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O'Sullivan, Jane, "Why Australian artists find it so hard to get international recognition," *AFR.com*, February 25, 2016

2015 Wagley, Catherine, "Ricky Swallow: /SKEWS/," *LAWeekly.com*, October 7, 2015
de Gunzburg, Laura, "The Season in Art," *Cultured Magazine*, Fall 2015, p. 104
Miranda, Carolina A., "Datebook: Art that Skewers the art world, an installation about dance, abstractions of L.A.," *LATimes.com*, October 22, 2015
Fournier, Frédéric, "Ricky Swallow: David Kordansky Gallery," *artaddict.net*, September 18, 2015
Whalen, Danielle, "5 Shows Not to Miss in Los Angeles," *BlouinArtInfo.com*, September 13, 2015
Miranda, Carolina A., "Datebook: A Frank Gehry retrospective, art of death and rebirth, images from YouTube," *LATimes.com*, September 11, 2015
Stephens, Andrew, "Wealthy Melbourne collector offers a glimpse of his gallery to come," *TheAge.com.au*, July 31, 2015
Beradini, Andrew, "Rain Dance," *Artforum.com*, Diary, July 20, 2015
Greenberg, Kevin, "Ricky Swallow," *The Last Magazine*, Issue 14, Spring 2015
O'Brien, Mary, "My secret Melbourne: Michelle Mackintosh relishes the city's modernist architecture and a small slice of Tokyo," *SMH.com.au*, April 10, 2015
"No art gallery for Docklands," *DocklandsNews.com.au*, March 5, 2015
Nelson, Robert, "ACCA's new exhibition Menagerie turns the gallery into a cage," *SMH.com.au*, February 3, 2015
Rule, Dan, "In the galleries," *SMH.com.au*, January 16, 2015
Scott, Rebecca, "Major Buxton art donation to Melbourne," *TheAge.com.au*, January 7, 2015

2014 **Whitney Biennial 2014*, New York: Whitney Museum of American Art and New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014, pp. 310, 372-374, 388-389
*Swallow, Ricky, GRAPEVINE~, Los Angeles, New York, and Sydney: David Kordansky Gallery and Rainoff
Swallow, Ricky, "Robert Therrien 'No Title (1984)'," *Frieze Masters*, 2014, p. 103
Sherlock, Amy, "A Potted History: Contemporary artists and ceramic traditions," *Frieze Masters*, 2014, pp. 27-29

Forrest, Nicholas, “Interview: Juliana Engberg on “Menagerie” at ACCA, Melbourne,” *BlouinArtInfo.com*, December 18, 2014
Williams, Maxwell,” This Powerhouse Agent’s Impressive Art Collection Includes A Massive Portrait Of Tilda Swinton,” *HollywoodReporter.com*, December 4, 2014
Indrisek, Scott, “The Definitive Top 11 Booths at Art Basel Miami Beach,” *BlouinArtInfo.com*, December 3, 2014
“Michael Buxton’s $26 million art gift to University of Melbourne will create new gallery,” *SMH.com.au*, December 3, 2014
“Melbourne property developer donates $26 million worth of art to university,” *ABC.net.au*, December 2, 2014
McGarry, Kevin, “Made in L.A., Hammer Museum,” *Art in America*, Exhibition reviews, October 2014, pp. 181-182
Marfil, Lorelei, “Frieze Art Fair Thrives Amid Slowdown,” *WWD.com*, October 21, 2014
Miranda, Carolina, A., “Machine Project’s art treasure hunt at the Gamble House,” *LATimes.com*, September 21, 2014
Griffin, Jonathan, “The New Dealer,” *T Magazine*, September 14, 2014
Farago, Jason, “Whitney Biennial 2014,” *Frieze*, June/July/August 2014, pp. 190-191
Finkel, Jori, “Biennial’s Bright Young Things, Age 77 and 84,” *The New York Times*, July 16, 2014, p. C4
“The Los Angeles Biennial,” *Art in America*, June/July, 2014, p. 31
Ollman, Leah, “Ricky Swallow in the Studio,” *Art in America*, May 2014, pp. 148-157
Cuthbertson, Debbie, “Enberg draws flak in Sydney,” *SydneyMorningHerald.com*, April 19, 2014
Schumacher, Mary Louise, “Michelle Grabner’s Whitney Biennial is a grand ‘curriculum’,” *JSOnline.com*, March 14, 2014
Singer, Jill, “What We Saw,” *SightUnseen.com*, March 6, 2014
Fairley, Gina, “An easy one to Swallow,” *Visual.ArtsHub.com.au,* February 26, 2014
Forrest, Nicholas, “Australian Artist Ricky Swallow’s Whitney/Hammer Double,” *BlouinArtInfo.com*, February 25, 2014
Finkel, Jori, “Artists Named for Hammer Biennial,” *The New York Times,* February 19, 2014, p. C3

2013 **Ricky Swallow: Bronzes*, text by Michael Ned Holte, London and Sydney: Stuart Shave/Modern Art and Darren Knight Gallery, 2013
**Labour and Wait*, exhibition catalogue, texts by Julie Joyce, Britt Salvesen, Glenn Adamson, and William Gibson, Santa Barbara Museum

of Art, Los Angeles: RAM Publications, 2013, pp. 78, 142-45
Milne, Robert, "Los Angeles Wednesday," *The Blackmail*, issue #2, 2013
Holte, Michael Ned, Best of 2013, Artforum, December 2013
Smith, Roberta, "Art Review: Mind is Outer Space," *The New York Times*, July 25, 2013
Pym, William, Julian Dashper & Ricky Swallow, *Art Asia Pacific*, issue 83, May/June 2013, pp. 168-169
Drohojowska-Philp, Hunter, "Lesley Vance and Ricky Swallow at the Huntington," *KCRW*, Art Talk, January 10, 2013

2012 Myers, Holly, "Review: Ricky Swallow's modern sculpture feels right at home at Huntington," *Los Angeles Times*, December 23, 2012
"Huntington presents exhibition of works by contemporary artists Lesley Vance and Ricky Swallow," *ArtDaily.org*, November 1, 2012
Finkel, Jori, "Huntington mansion to house works from Lesley Vance, Ricky Swallow," *Los Angeles Times*, August 10, 2012
Smith, Roberta, "Art Review: The Mystery Trend," *The New York Times*, July 26, 2012
Sharp, Chris, "Camp + Dandyism = neo Camp?," *Kaleidoscope*, issue 14, Spring 2012
**Lesley Vance & Ricky Swallow at The Huntington*, The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens, texts by Catherine Hess, Suzanne Hudson, Christopher Bedford, and Steven Koblik, Seattle: Marquand Books, Inc., 2012

2011 Ollman, Leah, "Art Review: Ricky Swallow, Marc Foxx," *Los Angeles Times*, December 8, 2011
Byrt, Anthony, "Ricky Swallow," *Artforum*, May 2011, pp. 297-298
Swallow, Ricky, "500 Words," *Artforum.com*, 2011
Wallin, Yasha, "Sharing is Caring at Independent," *Art in America*, March 8, 2011
*Coppel, Stephen, *Out of Australia: Prints and Drawings from Sidney Rover to Rover Thomas,* London: British Museum Press, 2011

2009 *Bywater, Jon, *Vitamin 3-D: New Perspectives in Sculpture and Installation*, London: Phaidon Press, 2009, pp. 298-299
*Baker, Alex and Michael Ned-Holte, *Ricky Swallow: The Bricoleur*, Melbourne, Australia: National Gallery of Victoria, 2009
Allen, C., "Ricky Swallow: The Bricoleur, Ian Potter Centre, National Gallery of Victoria," *The Australian*, November 14, 2009
Allen, C., "Object Lesson," *The Weekend Australian*, November 14-15,

2009
Backhouse, M., “Ricky Swallow: The Bricoleur,” Art Guide, November/December 2009
Gill, H., “Carving a Reputation,” *Herald Sun*, October 19, 2009. p. 48
Quinn, K., “Take a deep swallow and taste the deadly art of killing time,” *The Age*, October 16, 2009, p.11
Stephens, A., “Everyday ecstasies,” *The Age*, October 17, 2009 p. 17

2008 **GOTH: Reality of the departed world*, Yokohama: Yokohama Museum of Art, 2008
**Younger Than Yesterday*, Vienna: Kunsthalle Vienna, 2008
**Red Eye: Los Angeles Artists from the Rubell Family Collection*, Miami: Rubell Family Collection, 2008
Themsen Kjaer, Maria, “The Afterlife of Dead Wood,” *FAT Magazine*, issue A, Denmark, 2008
Gavin, Francesca, “Hell Bound,” *New Gothic Art*, London England: Laurence King Publishers, 2008
Grabner, Michelle, “Makers and Modelers: Works in Ceramic at Gladstone Gallery, New York,” *X-tra*, vol. 10, no. 3, 2008
Stunda, Hilary, “Contemporary Still Life: A Conversation With Ricky Swallow,” *Sculpture Magazine*, vol. 27 no. 5, June 2008

2007 **Ricky Swallow*, Dublin: Douglas Hyde Gallery, 2007
*Gerald, Matt, *Interviews Volume 1*, Kunsthalle Wien, Cologne: Buchhandlung Walther König Publishers, 2007
*Collins, Judith, *Sculpture Today*, London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 2007
Kimura, Eriko, *Goth,* Yokohama Museum of Art, Tokyo: Sangensha Publishers, Inc., 2007
*Tufnell, Rob, *Ritual de lo Habitual*, Ricky Swallow, Dublin: Douglas Hyde Gallery, 2007
*Zuckerman, Heidi Jacobson, *Sculptors and Drawing*, Aspen Art Museum, Aspen: Aspen Art Press, 2007
Mesdon, Randall, *Exit Magazine*, vol 2, number 2, London, England, 2007
*Schmidt, Jason, *Artists*, edition 7L, Paris, France, 2007
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GALLERY

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ARTFORUM

Ricky Swallow, *(0)*, 2016–18, bronze and oil paint, 45 x 29 x 6 1/4”.

Los Angeles

Ricky Swallow

DAVID KORDANSKY GALLERY
5130 West Edgewood Place
November 2 - December 15

Following the tangle of rope comprising Ricky Swallow’s sculpture *(0)*, 2016–18, is both a demanding and rewarding task. Twenty-six feet of the braided cotton material, cast in bronze and painted the light wheat color of ship rigging, functions like a portal onto Swallow’s meticulous process. Look in the tiny crevices of the twisting rope and sense (see would be too strong a word) the bronze underneath—a dark jumble under a light exterior. The work’s casting is as convincing as its disavowal: Rope? Nope. In *Floor Sculpture with Pegs #1* and *#2* (both 2018) cast bronze Shaker pegs are lined up on their rounded points and attached to coursing, curvilinear banisters; the sculptures’ monochrome treatments formally suggest that these two handily recognizable domestic embellishments are a new, quixotic thing. Installed on the floor, they relay a centipede-like energy (each has close to a hundred pegs)—playfully recalling Louise Bourgeois’s many-legged wooden composite, *The Blind Leading the Blind*, 1947–49/1989.

Swallow’s most rewarding and confounding sculpture here is *Cap #2*, 2018—a coffee cup cast in bronze, patinated silver, and installed with its base flat to the vertical wall. Four perfect spheres are affixed like compass points inside the cup’s rim. A small, shallow abstract diorama in the midst of much larger gestures, *Cap #2* calls attention to the artist’s signal material substitutions via the linguistic transit from *cup* (vessel) to *cap* (costume), leveraging the doubt inherent in acts of sculptural and linguistic representation.

—Andy Campbell

Wheless, Avery, “IVAN MORLEY & RICKY SWALLOW,” *ArtilleryMag.com*, November 8, 2018

ARTILLERY

IVAN MORLEY & RICKY SWALLOW

at David Kordansky Gallery

By Avery Wheless

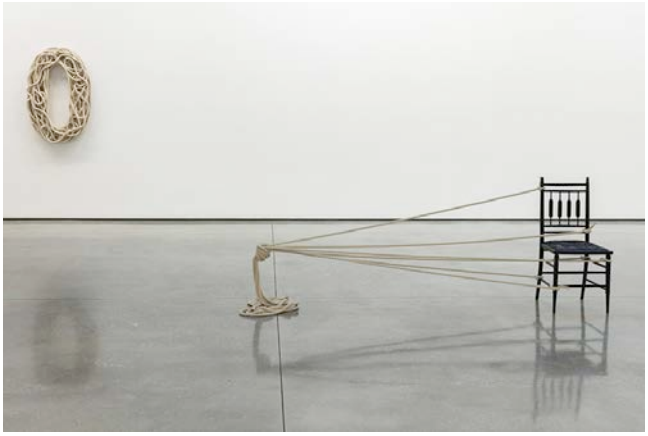
Ivan Morley, *Olvera St.*, David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, Installation view

David Kordansky Gallery’s opening this past Saturday featuring the work of Ivan Morley and Ricky Swallow was a full house–and well worthy of the audience.

A line of cars built up to the gallery, making it clear from the get-go that Kordansky was an anticipated stop for many. Strolling through doors, we were enveloped in a bustling crowd, all of whom were excited to see Morley’s paintings in “Olvera St.,” and Swallow’s exhibition of sculptures for his show “Shoulders.”

Morley’s paintings drew us into the first room with their intrinsically appealing color, texture and narrative. Most of the paintings in were not merely paint on canvas, but rather extended into use of materials such as leather, glass and embroidered canvases. An eclectic array for sure, but together the works weaved a narrative alluding to cultural shifts in Los Angeles over the last 200 years. The actually DTLA Olvera Street served as the artist’ main inspiration as it was considered the first street of downtown and where artists such as Philip Guston and Jackson Pollock resided. Morley utilizes symbols of social life, food and color from imagined stories from the street’s early years as well as personal anecdotes. This combination of playful storytelling, allows us to consider how streets of the past have led into ours today. Morley’s personal investment in the intricate pieces was obvious. This became even more evident when I talked to the artist about his process for the embroidered work, which fluctuated between drawing and working on a sewing machine. When asked if these woven works were paintings the artist was certain, reflecting that although some consider them to be tapestries, once stretched and pulled together, they truly become paintings. Morley’s work contained as much ornamental quality as subtle intricacies, allowing us to consider how memories are stitched together and inevitably distort over time. In the mind’s eye, a past moment may exist as a vibrant mapped-out picture, but when reflected upon deeper, one remembers that more lies underneath, just as in Morley’s paintings.

The next room of Swallow’s whimsical, yet intentionally curated sculptures invited viewers into a display of poetic and animated composition. The cast bronze works remained static yet were displayed in a nuanced way that alluded to movement. The negative space between the works and the wall or the floor created a tension which hinted at a calm before the storm—an inhale before a fall. The theme of suspension of gravity extended beyond the work as I witnessed a mesmerized viewer whose attention was absorbed by one piece on the wall, almost trip on a piece in front of him on the floor—thankfully an attentive gallery monitor saved him and the piece. Swallow’s challenge of sculptural presentation through lack of pedestals was my favorite element of the show. The mysterious objects existed as if holding themselves rather than a need for traditional display support. I briefly engaged with the popular artist who graciously took a moment to talk about the work’s connection to Shaker culture as well as the sculptures’ tensions between movement and stillness, which became heighten when relocated from studio to gallery.



Ricky Swallow, *Shoulders*, David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, Installation view

The opening remained occupied throughout the evening with a continuous energy. Invested gallerygoers seasoned in the art world remained stimulated by the work and merriment as well as those just beginning, such as a young girl who remained settled on the floor in front of one of the works with a set of markers and a sketchbook, inspired to conduct her own masterpiece.

Sims, Amanda, “Inside the Home of an L.A. Sculptor Finding Magic in the Familiar,” *ArchitecturalDigest.com*, November 8, 2018

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

Inside the Home of an L.A. Sculptor Finding Magic in the Familiar

Where Ricky Swallow’s art meets life

Text by Amanda Sims with photographs by Tim Hirschmann | November 8, 2018

Ricky Swallow at home.

When Ricky Swallow moved to Los Angeles from his native Australia back in 2002, the landscape reminded him of home. “The flora, the fauna—it has this immediate appeal of feeling familiar, but it’s also radically different,” the sculptor explains. The same could be said of someone encountering his work for the first time.

Enter David Kordansky Gallery in L.A., where Ricky’s *Shoulders* show will be on exhibit until mid-December, and you’ll see some shapes you know: a black dining chair at center stage, a mass of rope woven into an oblong ring. In his earlier works, it might have been a simple tube with the exact texture of a cardboard biscuit can, right down to the crease you’d dig your thumbs into to pop it open.

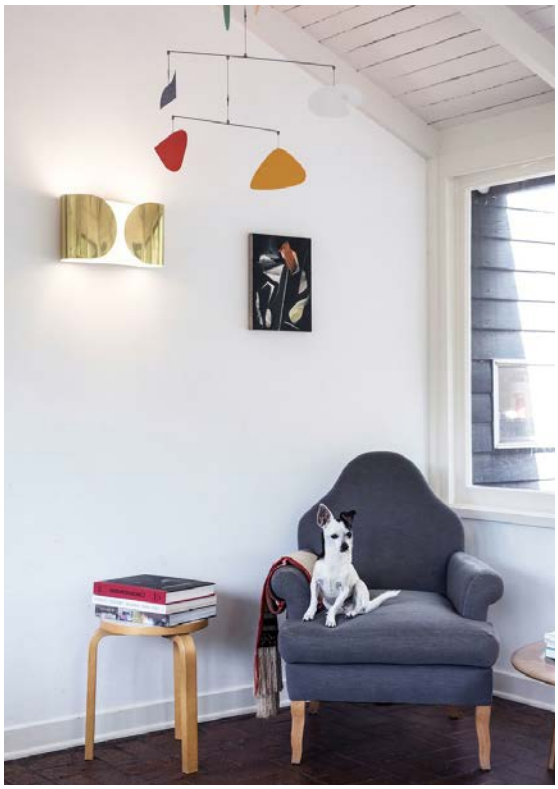
It takes a moment to realize that none of it’s real. The sculptures are actually painted bronze castings, what Ricky calls “permanent ephemeral gestures” of the original recognizable shapes. The rope, the chair—at one point they existed, readymade objects that he found, took a liking to, and brought to the Burbank studio he bought and renovated with his wife, artist Lesley Vance. There they are disassembled, collaged together in gravity-defying arrangements, and then burned to ashes during the casting.

“It is a reconstitution of an object, in a way,” Ricky says. Look a little closer and you’ll also find weightlessness, even magic, despite the heft of the cast pieces. Long pieces of rope—okay, bronze replicas of rope—are tied to that chair, as if tugging it to one side, and end in a big knot, suspended midair. A snaking floor installation reflects against the polished concrete, an aqueduct above a waterway at 40,000 feet. “You know, it’s an intense time,” says Ricky when asked about what current events have propelled his work. “I think that one of the rewards of being an artist is to make works that give people some escape.”

Sims, Amanda, “Inside the Home of an L.A. Sculptor Finding Magic in the Familiar,” *ArchitecturalDigest.com*, November 8, 2018

Ricky’s own personal getaway from the studio is the Hollywood Hills home he’s lived in with his family for a decade. He renovated it himself. “The only time in 20 years I stopped work, I started working on the house,” he recalls. “I did a lot of demo work and then, rather than hire a contractor, I was the contractor. That was budgetary and also [for] control.” In its present state, the home is bright white inside. Artwork covers the walls and every ledge, much of it swaps from friends in the artist community.

Ricky describes the structure as an elongated cabin with a bank of windows across the back wall, the feeling of being in it akin to being in a treehouse.



Squint and you’ll see faint pencil marks beside a measuring stick in the doorway—proof positive there’s a growing kid in the house.

On the neighboring wall hang two Hopi Tabletta works above an Alvar Aalto coffee table, which is topped with a David Gilhooly vessel. The small bronze work above the growth chart is by the London-based artist David Musgrave, a friend.

Throughout the house are a few rugs from Chimayo, New Mexico, that are modeled after Bauhaus designs; Ricky and Lesley use them as accents on furnishings.

When Ricky first came to L.A., he noticed that many artists and collectors he met had furniture by Roy McMakin. “It was so bizarre to me why everyone had this furniture,” he says, but then a number of years went by and he had the opportunity to buy some pieces—now it’s all over his house. “Some of it’s like a biomorphic form. Weirdly, when you sit in them, they make perfect sense.” The mobile is by their friend, artist Peter Shire, a gift upon the birth of Ricky and Lesley’s son.

Sims, Amanda, “Inside the Home of an L.A. Sculptor Finding Magic in the Familiar,” *ArchitecturalDigest.com*, November 8, 2018

Artwork dots the walls above a Roy McMakin rocker and ottoman. From left to right: painting by Walter Swennen, *Tiger Tail* by Richard Tuttle, *Symbols* by Ree Morton (the latter a gift from Ricky to Lesley on her 40th birthday).

Even at home, Ricky is sculpting. What is now an “ongoing family sculpture project” on the brick wall outside began as a playdate in the sandbox with his son: Objects from their home are pressed into the sand, removed, and then plaster is poured into the relief.

They’ve been doing this periodically over the years, taking inventory of their favorite items. There’s his son’s rubber snake, and a piece they did for Lesley one Mother’s Day. “I consider them folk art or something…the crude version of sand casting,” he says. The chairs in front were designed with help from a book called *How to Construct Rietveld Furniture*.

Sims, Amanda, “Inside the Home of an L.A. Sculptor Finding Magic in the Familiar,” *ArchitecturalDigest.com*, November 8, 2018

Ricky and Lesley got the idea to do small open shelves under the upper cabinets from an early Alvar Aalto summer house kitchen, and then painted it all—plus the bookshelves, baseboards, and trim in other rooms—in Fine Paints of Europe’s Hollandlac finish oil paint, a material known for its super-pigmented, deep sheen. “If I could make sculptures out of that paint, I would,” Ricky says. “You could paint anything in that and it would be good.” The piece above the range is a Peter Shire relic, and all the ceramics in the cubbies are Akio Nukaga from Mashiko in Japan.

A photograph by Torbjørn Rødland—yet another artist friend whom Ricky traded work with—hangs above a large ceramic basket by Ruby Neri. The rabbit bowl is by Karin Gulbran.

Sims, Amanda, “Inside the Home of an L.A. Sculptor Finding Magic in the Familiar,” *ArchitecturalDigest.com*, November 8, 2018

A rug on the couple’s bed was also sourced in Chimayo, New Mexico, on their first trip there. Ricky traded his friend Jimi Lee a sculpture for these Alvar Aalto sconces from Paimio.

“They are perfect sculptures,” he says, “and perfect bedside table lamps, the illumination being so dim.”

This dresser is by Peter Shire—one of his first pieces of furniture that Ricky traded a sculpture to acquire.

Like so many surfaces in the Swallow-Vance household, it serves “as a pedestal for many other objects,” Ricky points out.

Here more art from friends like Magdalena Frimkess and Michelle Grabner.

When standing in as their contractor, Ricky designed this corner cabinet with a carpenter to fit in his son’s room. The drawing is *Pianissimo*, by John Wesley, a gift from David Kordansky.

As for the statuettes? “Boys love dinosaurs,” says Dad.

Armstrong, Annie, "Carry That Weight: Sculptor Ricky Swallow, Alchemist of Everyday Objects, on His New Show at David Kordansky in Los Angeles," *ARTnews.com*, October 17, 2018

ARTNEWS

Carry That Weight: Sculptor Ricky Swallow, Alchemist of Everyday Objects, on His New Show at David Kordansky in Los Angeles

By Annie Armstrong | October 17, 2018

Ricky Swallow, *Corner Burst (after F.B.)*, 2018. FREDRIK NILSEN / DAVID KORDANSKY GALLERY

Most galleries are white cubes—clean, spotless spaces—and Los Angeles's David Kordansky Gallery is no exception, save for the ivy crawling up the exterior of its concrete walls. But artist Ricky Swallow aims to add some pizazz to the gallery's interior with his new solo show, "Shoulders," which opens November 2. The artist thinks of the works in the exhibition as little exclamation points, he said in a phone interview from his studio in Burbank, California. "When I do a show, it's very much like adding some punctuation to the walls or the floor of the space."

The Kordansky exhibition will present eight works by the 44-year-old artist, who has become known for rendering everyday objects—a shoe, an umbrella, a flashlight—in materials like wood, metal, and cardboard. His new pieces—including a ball of rope suspended, and tubular lengths of rattan cane that lie on the floor—will be made with a favorite medium, bronze, and will also involve more humble ingredients, like rope and and tape. Of his choice to use that metal alloy, Swallow said that wood is sometimes too lightweight for what he wants to achieve in his sculptures. It's "almost related more to furniture in its scale and weight," he explained. "When it's cast into bronze, it's a very different thing: it becomes more industrially weighted."

Weight is central to Swallow's latest works. *Corner Burst (after F.B.)* (2018) was made by the artist using patinated bronze. The sculpture, which constitutes eight spokes that hold the abstract, structural piece in a corner through tension, is an unnatural cerulean blue because Swallow has added oil paint. Using patinated bronze, he said, "is my way of locking [materials] down into some kind of permanence, because a

Armstrong, Annie, “Carry That Weight: Sculptor Ricky Swallow, Alchemist of Everyday Objects, on His New Show at David Kordansky in Los Angeles,” *ARTnews.com*, October 17, 2018

Ricky Swallow, *Double E (with pegs)*, 2015–18. FREDRIK NILSEN / DAVID KORDANSKY GALLERY

lot of the pieces are made really rapidly in the studio, and they do have a kind of ephemeral or scratched-built quality.” The bronze “can sort of formalize” such materials “into more realized things or resolved things.”

Bronze naturally has all sorts of art-historical connections, from ancient Greek statues to the curving forms of modernist Henry Moore, and that legacy appeals to Swallow. “I like the challenge of working in very traditional techniques in unconventional ways,” he said, adding that, for him, it also refers to the earliest stages of his career.

Swallow got his start in sculpture when he was a child living in a town just outside of Melbourne, Australia, which has a strong fishing industry. He would often watch his father, a fisherman, pouring molten lead into molds for boat weights, and sewing fishing nets. Ropes and other industrial elements appear frequently in the artist’s work. (Representing Australia at the 2005 Venice Biennale, he showed *Killing Time*, a wooden table with tools to clean a day’s haul of fish that was strewn atop it, all alchemized into the same wood.) “It was very much a craft-based upbringing,” he said. “I always was making things.”

Though Swallow’s new pieces may not be useful for fishers, he does want them to serve a purpose within a gallery setting by activating the bones of the space. None of the sculptures appear on pedestals or mounts; instead, they are anchored directly to the wall or floor. In this way, Swallow sees them as communicating directly with the space in which they’re installed. Because of the way they’re situated in the Kordansky show, lodged in corners, they come to resemble furniture that isn’t for human use.

Other pieces in “Shoulders,” which runs through December 15, play with the history of readymades. One is a new untitled work, which was made by casting a chair in bronze and combining it with groups of braided ropes to make it impossible to sit on. When speaking about his technique, Swallow often refers to his work in terms that recall interior design. “Some of the finishes I’m trying to give to the pieces are more related to furniture finishes or ceramic glazes,” he said. “There’s a kind of warmth and domesticity to the material.”

Griffin, Jonathan, “Zusammen Für Sich,” *Blau*, October 2017, pp. 54-61

BLAU

ZUSAMMEN

Griffin, Jonathan, “Zusammen Für Sich,” *Blau*, October 2017, pp. 54-61

Griffin, Jonathan, “Zusammen Für Sich,” *Blau*, October 2017, pp. 54-61

Bitte sag jetzt nichts!

Die Malerin LESLEY VANCE und der Bildhauer RICKY SWALLOW teilen sich Haus, Bett, Kind und Kunstsammlung. Selbst im gemeinsamen Studio herrscht Harmonie – solange sich beide an die Regeln halten. Ein Besuch bei einem Paar, das den Schlüssel zur perfekten Künstlerbeziehung kennt.

Von *Jonathan Griffin*

Direkt vor dem neuen Atelier von Ricky Swallow und Lesley Vance im kalifornischen Burbank steht die größte Ikea-Filiale der USA. Der blau-gelbe Gigant war im Oktober 2015, als die Künstler die ehemalige Greenscreen-Fabrik kauften, noch nicht da – aber jetzt, wo die beiden endlich die Renovierungsarbeiten beendet haben und die Kisten voller Werkzeuge, Materialien und Kunstwerke ausgepackt sind, zieht das Möbelhaus die Massen an.

Vance ist Malerin. Sie kocht, wenn sie Zeit hat, am liebsten ihr eigenes Mittagessen. „Aber nun“, erzählt sie, „laufen unsere Mitarbeiter rüber zu Ikea und kaufen diese billigen Fleischbällchen.“ Swallows Bronzeskulpturen leiten sich von Tassen, Krügen, Uhren, Stühlen, Lampen und allerlei Alltagszeugs wie Stöcken, Seilen und Pappverpackungen ab – auch das gibt es bei Ikea im Überfluss. Doch der Künstler hat sich geschworen, nie auch nur einen Fuß in den Megastore zu setzen. „Es wäre doch viel zu einfach, alles mit Ikea auszustatten.“

RICKY SWALLOW, *DOUBLE ZERO WITH ROPE (DOUBLED)*, 2016, PATINIERTE BRONZE UND ÖLFARBE, 41 × 23 × 6 CM

Auftaktseite: LESLEY VANCE und RICKY SWALLOW, FOTOGRAFIERT VON EWAN TELFORD; SKULPTUR: RICKY SWALLOW, *SPLIT #1, PATINIERTE BRONZE UND ÖLFARBE*, 27 × 38 × 29 CM

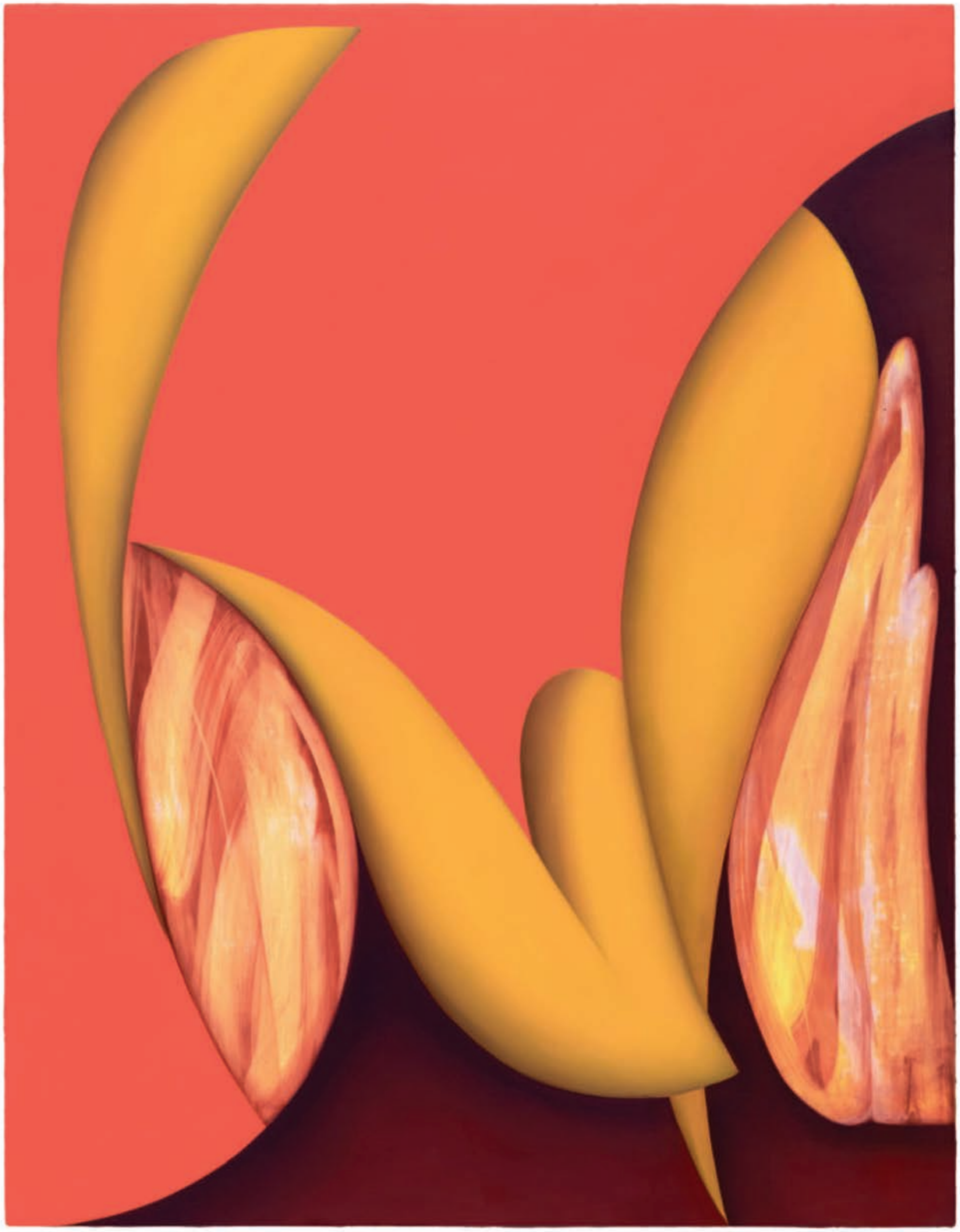
Rechte Seite: LESLEY VANCE, *UNTITLED*, 2017, ÖL AUF LEINWAND, 79 × 61 × 2 CM

RICKY SWALLOW, *SPLIT CONE WITH BALLS*, 2015, PATINIERTE BRONZE, 27 × 19 × 13 CM

Besucht man die beiden in ihrem Wohnhaus im Laurel Canyon mitten in den Hollywood Hills, wird klar, dass sie dem Design ihrer häuslichen Umgebung genauso viel Aufmerksamkeit und Sorgfalt widmen wie ihrer Kunst. Das klassische Holzhaus, das sie 2009 als „Wrack“ kauften und weitgehend selbst renovierten, sitzt auf einem steilen Hügel an einer gewundenen Sackgasse. Durch eine lange Fensterreihe geht der Blick auf ein Meer aus Eukalyptusbäumen und Eichen. Kolibris schwirren im Garten, Falken kreisen unter dem klaren, blauen Himmel. Das Haus ist einfach eingerichtet, voller Bücher, Kunst und mit all den Dingen, die die beiden seit ihrer ersten gemeinsamen Wohnung angehäuft haben.

Ricky Swallow und Lesley Vance arbeiten seit gut zehn Jahren Seite an Seite. Kennengelernt haben sie sich 2002, als

Griffin, Jonathan, “Zusammen Für Sich,” *Blau*, October 2017, pp. 54-61



Griffin, Jonathan, “Zusammen Für Sich,” *Blau*, October 2017, pp. 54-61

Der Weg vom kreativen Chaos zum Denkmuster an der Wand führt über einen akribischen Auswahlprozess: Ricky Swallows Seile, Bleche und Farbtöpfe bilden das Fundament für seine bunt leuchtenden Skulpturen. Deren spielerische Abstraktion passt ziemlich gut zu den Bildern seiner Frau – und zum handlichen Kunsthandwerk, das die beiden zu Hause sammeln

Vance, die damals am CalArts studierte, Swallow zu einem Vortrag über seine Arbeit einlud. Sie blieben in Kontakt, auch als Swallow von Los Angeles nach London zog. Im Jahr 2005 erhielt Vance eine Künstlerresidenz im französischen Giverny, wo Claude Monets Haus und Garten stehen. Und Swallow nahm den Eurostar nach Paris, um sie zu treffen. „Das war ein guter Anfang für eine Liebesgeschichte“, sagt Vance. Sie hatte einen Schlüssel zum Garten – und die Frischverliebten konnten hinein, wenn die vielen Touristen abends verschwunden waren. 2008 heirateten sie.

Auch beruflich war 2005 für beide ein bedeutendes Jahr: Swallow repräsentierte sein Heimatland Australien auf der Biennale von Venedig, mit 30 Jahren war er der Jüngste, dem diese Ehre jemals zuteil wurde. Und Vance zeigte in Los Angeles ihre erste Einzelausstellung bei der aufstrebenden Galerie David Kordansky. Sie wurde die erste offizielle Künstlerin im Programm. Swallow folgte ihr 2014.

Als Swallow ein Jahr später von London nach Los Angeles zurückkehrte, zogen die beiden sofort zusammen. Ihre erste Wohnung lag im Highland Park im Osten der Stadt und war zugleich Atelier, sodass die beiden sich schnell daran gewöhnten, nah beieinander zu arbeiten. Doch auch die engste Partnerschaft hat ihre Grenzen. Jahrelang teilten Swallow und Vance ein Atelier, in das sie eine Wand eingezogen hatten – wenn auch nur etwa so hoch wie ein Tennisnetz –, über die sie einander Kommentare und Fragen zuspielten. „Lesley musste durch mein Atelier, um in ihres zu gelangen“, sagt Swallow. „Es fühlte sich ein bisschen an wie in einer WG.“

Als Vance und Swallow dann Pläne für ihr neues Domizil in Burbank mit einem Architekten besprachen, war Vances erste Frage, wie es sich wohl mit zwei getrennten Atelierräumen lebe. Heute hat jeder einen

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eigenen Eingang, und da die Studios durch einen Flur getrennt sind, können sie einander weder sehen noch hören. Sie haben sogar getrennte Waschbecken für die Reinigung ihrer Arbeitsutensilien.

„Es dauerte Jahre, bis wir wussten, wie wir miteinander im Atelier leben wollen“, sagt Lesley Vance. Als Erstes erließ sie die Regel, dass Ricky ihre Arbeit nicht kommentieren darf, außer sie bat ihn darum. „Ich weiß, in welche Richtung ein Bild geht“, sagt sie. „Aber er nicht.“ Früher begann sie ein Bild, indem sie ein Stillleben komponierte, das sie dann immer weiter abstrahierte, bis nur noch das Gefühl räumlicher Tiefe und atmosphärischer Leuchtkraft blieb.

Vance ist stark beeinflusst von Barockmalern des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts wie Francisco de Zurbarán und Juan Sánchez Cotán, auch wenn ihre abstrakten Bilder in ihrer grafischen, zeitgenössischen Schärfe am Ende mehr mit Kubismus oder dem Bauhaus gemein haben. Neuerdings durchlaufen sie eine Reihe mehr intuitiver Transformationen: Improvisierte Gesten und Texturen sind in die Bilder hineingearbeitet, die nun aussehen, als seien sie in- und übereinandergefaltet.

Hinzu kommt, erzählt Vance, dass die Kommentare ihres Mannes eigentlich immer ermunternd waren – was bedeutete es aber, wenn er zufällig vorbeikam und nichts sagte? „Heute frage ich ihn nur nach seiner Meinung, wenn ich das Gefühl habe, etwas in einem Gemälde funktioniert nicht.“ Swallow erwidert: „Sobald ich meine, dass eine bestimmte Ecke falsch oder unnötig ist, antwortet Lesley sofort: ‚Ich wusste es! Ich wollte es nur noch mal prüfen!‘“ Vance nickt: „Das passiert oft.“

Ihre Arbeitsweisen sind total verschieden. Während Vance in dünnen Schichten Ölfarbe aufträgt, die innerhalb von ein oder zwei Tagen trocknet, also unter Zeitdruck zahllose Entscheidungen treffen muss, sind Swallows Skulpturen meist aus Pappe, Seil oder Holz geformt, die er dann in einzelne Bronzestücke gießt und mit Farbe überzieht. „Ich fertige meine Konstruktionen sehr schnell und intuitiv an“, sagt Swallow, „wenn etwas nicht funktioniert, wird eben keine Skulptur daraus.“

„Wenn Lesley im Atelier abtaucht, freut sie sich, wenn jemand das Essen unter der Tür durchschiebt“, sagt Swallow. „Ich lasse mich schneller ablenken“

Auch im Temperament unterscheiden sich die beiden Künstler. „Wenn Lesley im Atelier abtaucht, freut sie sich, wenn jemand das Essen einfach unter der Tür durchschiebt“, sagt Swallow. „Sie kann locker zwölf Stunden arbeiten, ohne den Raum zu verlassen. Ich lasse mich schneller ablenken.“ Allein der akribische technische Prozess des Gießens und Lasierens seiner Skulpturen in der Gießerei, die einige Kilometer vom Atelier entfernt liegt, zwinge ihn zur Konzentration.

Bekannt wurde er mit sorgsam geschnitzten Holzskulpturen, darunter jener großen Arbeit, die er in Venedig zeigte – *Killing Time* (2003/04), ein Esstisch, auf dem Fische und andere Meerestiere arrangiert waren. Alles aus Jelutong, einer Art Oleanderholz, und aus Ahorn geschnitzt. Als das Paar 2009 das Haus im Laurel Canyon kaufte, gab Swallow seine Arbeit für ein paar Monate auf, um sich der Renovierung zu widmen. Das aufwendige Schnitzen erschien ihm plötzlich wie eine Einschränkung, und die Pause erlaubte es ihm, in eine neue Richtung zu denken. Neidvoll blickte er auf die Maler, die er kannte. „Ich wusste nicht, dass ich meine Kunst verändern will“, sagt Swallow. „Aber ich merkte, dass ich mich im Atelier anders verhalten und glücklicher sein wollte. Es ist wie bei einem Tennisspieler, der sich verletzt und dann fitter als vorher zurückkommt.“

Zu behaupten, Swallow verwirkliche seine künstlerischen Interessen nun in ehrgeizigen Bauprojekten, klingt

RICKY SWALLOW, *RECLINING SCULPTURE (OPEN) #4*, 2016, PATINIERTE BRONZE, 12 × 42 × 23 CM

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LESLEY VANCE, *UNTITLED (AFTER GELBE FORM)*, 2010, ÖL AUF LEINWAND, 31 × 23 CM

LESLEY VANCE, *UNTITLED*, 2017, ÖL AUF LEINWAND, 79 × 61 × 2 CM

vielleicht ein wenig platt. „Aber ich sehe das neue Atelier tatsächlich als Verlängerung meiner bildhauerischen Praxis. Es ist, was die Baustoffe angeht, ein sehr lebendiger Raum“, sagt er und deutet auf die geriffelten Stahldächer, das Sperrholz, die polierten Betonböden und die frei stehenden Stahlbalken des alten Industrielofts. „Das Gebäude verändert unsere Arbeitsweise. Daran führt kein Weg vorbei.“

Und es beeinflusst die Größe ihrer Arbeiten, die Ateliers sind dreimal größer als ihre Vorgänger. „Es gibt diese Erwartungshaltung der Kunstwelt, dass dein Werk immer größer werden muss“, sagt Swallow. „Ich glaube, ich habe das unbewusst immer vermieden. Es muss schließlich einen guten Grund geben, etwas auszudehnen. Nicht jede Skulptur ist für Innenräume gedacht, aber alles, was ich mache, so hoffe ich zumindest, hat einen häuslichen Bezug – in seiner Materialität geradeso wie in seiner Maßstäblichkeit.“ Auch Vance hielt ihre Leinwände früher stets in bescheidenen Formaten, selten wurden sie größer als 40 mal 60 Zentimeter. Dieses Jahr haben beide Künstler in größeren Galerien ausgestellt – Swallow erstmals bei Maccarone in New York, Vance in David Kordanskys neuen Räumen in Los Angeles. Prompt wurden auch ihre Arbeiten größer.

Die Frage des Maßstabs ist für Vance gekoppelt an den Blick auf ein Gemälde oder ein Objekt. Je größer es ist, desto weiter geht der Betrachter zurück; je kleiner, umso einladender wirkt es. „Ricky und ich fühlen uns von Dingen angezogen, die man in der Hand halten oder in die man hineinbeißen kann.“ Nirgendwo sonst wird das deutlicher als zu Hause, wo überall Keramiken, Webarbeiten und Designstücke stehen, zum Beispiel Bronzen des österreichischen Kunsthandwerkers Carl Auböck. Auch eine große Kollektion von „Grastöpfen“ des afroamerikanischen Keramikers Doyle Lane zählt dazu, der bis 2002 im Osten von Los Angeles arbeitete. Diese Töpfe – meist kaum größer als eine

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Mandarine – sind mit ganz verschiedenen Farben und Texturen überzogen und wie eine Ansammlung seltsamer Steine auf einer Kommode drapiert.

Swallow und Vance sind auch große Enthusiasten von Magdalena Suarez und Michael Frimkess – ein Ehepaar in seinen Achtzigern, das in Venice Beach Keramiken herstellt. Michael töpfert und Magdalena überzieht seine Gefäße mit wilden Zeichnungen, deren Muster von präkolumbischen und indigenen Traditionen inspiriert sind, aber auch von Werbung und Cartoons (vor allem von Popeye und Olive Oyl). Um den Kamin im Wohnzimmer haben Swallow und Vance Kacheln ausgelegt, die Magdalena gestaltet hat.

„Wir lieben eigentümliche, idiosynkratische Dinge mit persönlicher Ausstrahlung“, sagt Vance. Tatsächlich fühlt es sich so an, als gehörte zu jedem Stück im Haus eine eigene Geschichte, sei es eine Gruppe Keramikkameras des blinden Melbourner Künstlers Alan Constable oder das winzige gedrehte Bündel aus Plastik und Metall des rätselhaften Outsiderkünstlers Philadelphia Wireman. Auf Marmor montiert ist eine Bronze, aus der hölzerne Eisstiele herausstechen – Vances and Swallows Sohn Marsden fertigte sie mit zwei Jahren aus Knete, der stolze Vater goss sie in Bronze. Inzwischen ist Marsden drei, und seine künstlerischen Fähigkeiten seien den Bach runtergegangen, konstatiert Vance trocken.

RICKY SWALLOW, *SKEWED OPEN STRUCTURE WITH ROPE #3 (TURQUOISE)*, 2015, PATINIERTE BRONZE UND ÖLFARBE, 17 × 36 × 23 CM

Der Sammeldrang der beiden nahm eine entscheidende Wende, als sie begannen, weniger und dafür bedeutendere Dinge zu sammeln. Eine Konstruktion aus Pappe, Holz und Draht von Richard Tuttle mit dem Titel *Tiger Tail* von 1983 ist die wertvollste Anschaffung. „Es ist nicht nur das teuerste Teil im Haus, sondern auch das zerbrechlichste!“, sagt Swallow und meint die Fragilität der Konstruktion. Laut Tuttle soll die Arbeit niedrig hängen, etwa auf Brusthöhe. Das gefiel den Künstlern, die von ihrer Statur her beide kleiner als der Durchschnitt sind.

„Wenn ein Sammler sagt, er wusste nicht, dass wir verheiratet sind, ist das das beste Kompliment“, sagt Swallow

„Ich glaube, dass sich *Tiger Tail* auf unsere Arbeit ausgewirkt hat“, sagt Vance über das räumliche Rätsel, das sich wie die Spirale einer Orangenschale windet. „Ein Kunstwerk hat eine unglaublich kraftvolle Wirkung in einem Haus. Schließlich sieht man es jeden Tag.“ Vielleicht ist es das, was die Künstler am ehesten verbindet: die Art, wie sie die Einflüsse ihrer alltäglichen Umgebung miteinander teilen. Und das gilt auch, wenn sie es stets abgelehnt haben, im Doppel aufzutreten, und sich zu diesem Gespräch entsprechend durchringen mussten. „Wenn ein Sammler zu uns sagt, er wusste gar nicht, dass wir verheiratet sind, dann ist das das beste Kompliment“, sagt Swallow. Vance lächelt ihm zu und nickt.

ÜBERSETZUNG: GESINE BORCHERDT

LESLEY VANCE, XAVIER HUFKENS, BRÜSSEL, 27.10.-16.12.2017

RICKY SWALLOW, STUART SHAVE/MODERN ART, LONDON, MÄRZ 2018

Bacon, Alex, “Ricky Swallow,” *Artforum.com*, Critics’ Picks, April 7, 2017

ARTFORUM

New York

Ricky Swallow

MACCARONE | 630 GREENWICH STREET
630 Greenwich Street
March 3–April 17

For his first solo exhibition in New York since his 2006 survey at MoMA PS1, Los Angeles–based Australian sculptor Ricky Swallow embraces an unprecedented degree of abstraction. The artist has made bronze casts of configurations of studio scraps—cardboard, rope, leather, wood—that could be called a kind of found or incidental abstraction. On several occasions, Swallow has talked about his “built-in moral resistance” to abstract modes, yet his folk version of the genre, for lack of a better term, complicates our understanding of what abstraction can do. Swallow is, above all, most interested in the beauty and emotional charge everyday objects can carry, as he elevates their humble functions and properties aesthetically and empathically.

Ricky Swallow, *Split (with ball) #5*, 2017, patinated bronze, oil paint, 14 1/2 x 17 x 10 1/2”.

The verisimilitude and craftsmanship of his painted and patinated bronze pieces invite careful and extended looking. Swallow’s newer works here play with balance, weight, and tension. In *Split (with ball) #5* (all works cited, 2017), for instance, white rope has been looped through what look like four small sections of red tubing. The object, a soft parallelogram, stands on a pair of rounded corners and a gold-colored ball bearing. The whole composition is bound by a single piece of taut string. Such considerations of physics are also present in *Bow/Drop #2,* which asks us to contemplate a length of rope that does not slacken from the pull of gravity—a force that has been neutralized by the bronze. Throughout the exhibition we constantly question how these sculptures came to take on these particular arrangements. Perhaps it is because Swallow is a bricoleur—an uncommon mind with the unique skill to cull the marvelous from the ordinary through playful and surreal transmutations and juxtapositions.

—Alex Bacon

Strzelecki, Gloria, “Bones Brigade,” *fineprintmagazine.com*, 2016

fine print

Ricky Swallow, b.1974, Australia, The exact dimensions of staying behind, 2004-05, laminated lime wood, Art Gallery of South Australia, courtesy of the artist and Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney

Bones Brigade

by Gloria Strzelecki

The passage of time is at the heart of Ricky Swallow’s The exact dimensions of staying behind (2004-2005). Meticulously carved out of a single piece of lime wood, a lone skeleton sits on a chair. It holds a staff in one hand and a carving knife in the other. Its skull balances precariously from its neck, raised upward to the heavens awaiting spiritual enlightenment, like a saint. A hooded jumper, strewn across the chair’s back, cushions the shoulder and spine, while the left foot rests on a mound that protrudes from the base of the wooden surface.

The skull and skeleton are quintessential signifiers and constant reminders of death. They appear throughout the course of history in classical memento mori images surrounded by fruit, time pieces and extinguished candles, and cross over and saturate contemporary culture, appearing in abundance in heavy metal posters through to Powell-Peralta skateboards. By drawing on all these influences The exact dimensions of staying behind becomes a life-sized vanitas, announcing that everything in life is transient and perishable. The work reminds us of our mortality.

This preoccupation with time is not only a universal statement, but a personal one looming over Swallow. Merged together with the classical symbols, of the skull and skeleton, is reference to the artist’s personal items, the hooded jumper and the carving knife. This work is a self-portrait. It presents a moment in time, Ricky Swallow’s time. By placing himself into the work, Swallow reflects on his own existence as well as our collective presence.

Reinforcing this fleeting nature of life is Swallow’s careful and painstaking method of creation. Intricate woodcarving takes time. Lots of time and ultimately, time is not on our side. The sands of time pass quickly by. We are born, we live, and we die. As we know it, death is finite. Even the word death, with one syllable, sounds abrupt and final. The end.

Gloria Strzelecki is a writer and curator in Adelaide, South Australia.

Wagley, Catherine, “Ricky Swallow: /SKEWS/,” LAWeekly.com, October 7, 2015

Ricky Swallow: /SKEWS/

by: Catherine Wagley

Ricky Swallow made five posters for his current show at David Kordansky Gallery. They’re all lined up on the shelf along the front desk, so you’ll seem them when you walk in. One shows a brick wall with a messily organic, odd red shape embedded in it, another an unkempt front lawn with alligator figurines lining the walkway. The sculptures in the show that work best have the same unexpectedly compelling awkwardness as these images. A black patinated bronze shape that waves like a flag hangs unusually close to the ground. A small sculpture called Bulb (open), also made of bronze, emulates the shape of a light bulb and leans on its side.

Ollman, Leah, “Ricky Swallow sculpture: Where zero plus zero equals eight,” *LATimes.com*, Critic’s Choice, September 27, 2015

Los Angeles Times

Critic’s Choice Ricky Swallow sculpture: Where zero plus zero equals eight

By LEAH OLLMAN
SEPTEMBER 27, 2015

“Double Zero With Rope,” bronze sculpture by Ricky Swallow at David Kordansky Gallery. (Fredrik Nilsen / Courtesy of David Kordansky Gallery)

The 10 sculptures in Ricky Swallow’s show at David Kordansky occupy their spacious gallery quietly but potently, releasing their force and intelligence over slow deliberation rather than at a glance.

Swallow works in bronze, casting objects he has fashioned from cardboard, wood and rope. The casual, utilitarian nature of the original materials lingers in these handsome forms (all from 2015) like a fondly regarded past life and spurs the frisson of illusion, the tactile ventriloquism of one surface passing as another.

In “Double Zero With Rope,” Swallow stacks two mustard yellow block numerals, joining them with humble twine to form a figure 8, empowering the zeros to add up to more than the sum of their parts: Nothing plus nothing now equals something. The coy play of signs mimics the play of materials. Swallow patinates the surfaces to appear worn, aged, suggesting the sculpture as an assemblage of found cast-offs, raised, synergistically, to elegant significance in enduring metal.

The L.A.-based Swallow engages in serious mischief again and again here. A stretch of cherry-red molding cast from conjoined cardboard tubes of different diameters registers as a long italicized dash, punctuation scaled to the room.

In three tabletop sculptures that give the show its name -- “/SKEWS/” -- he sends fat white rope meandering through structures that slant open. The pieces induce a shiver of art historical resonance, back to one of the milestones of art incorporating “the real,” Picasso’s 1912 cubist collage encircled by actual rope. There is also a tinge of the surreal to these semi-wrapped fetishes, as well as straightforward association with the nautical. Swallow works fairly small, but his sculptures never stop expanding in the mind.

David Kordansky Gallery, 5130 W. Edgewood Place, Los Angeles, (323) 935-3030, through Oct. 31. Closed Sunday and Monday. www.davidkordanskygallery.com

Berardini, Andrew. “Rain Dance,” Artforum.com, Diary, July 20, 2015

ARTFORUM

Rain Dance

Andrew Beradini

7/20/2015

A RUMBLE SHUDDERED across the sky and lightning set fire to palm trees as the hot wet spatter of a tropical storm washed over a startled Los Angeles this past weekend. It hardly seemed to discourage the hordes that capered across the city for a deluge of openings and performances. Dave Muller began the weekend early on Tuesday with the inauguration of a year’s worth of his legendary Three Day Weekends at Blum & Poe. Muller manned the turntables, spinning records so strange it felt like he invented them. “This one’s psychedelic reggae,” he said. Inside, posters from Muller’s collection angled in weird places, Ricky Swallow sculptures sat next to the bathroom sink, a green glow courtesy Julian Hoeber covered the office fluorescents, and poems by seventy-one-year-old poet Aram Saroyan were painted by Muller behind the DJ booth. CRICKETS CRICKETS CRICKETS . . . flowed down the window, over and over. “This is thrilling,” said Saroyan. “It’s my Los Angeles debut, and right at the top!”

Swallow, Ricky, *GRAPEVINE~*, 2014, p. 49-50

GRAPEVINE~ was conceived as way of exhibiting a group of artists who have all worked in clay, in California, for more than 40 years. Throughout that time these artists have always sought to contradict the limitations of the medium in terms of its craft parameters. It might sound obvious, but there is something about this work brewing on the West Coast. I can't imagine it surfacing anywhere else with its strangeness paired with such dedication to finish and quality. The show is intended to reflect a fan's perspective rather than an exhaustive attempt to chronicle the history of the ceramics movement in California, as the Pacific Standard Time exhibitions recently performed this function perfectly.

It's revealing to consider the works on view in light of the current state of ceramics in the contemporary art world. Though clay is drawing new attention among younger artists, these 'visitors,' as one ceramics elder described them to me, seem to be focused on bringing out the medium's malleable qualities. Meanwhile the 'permanent residents' are very much still exceeding themselves in the studio, their contributions deserving of a renewed focus. The specific agendas put forward by publications like Craft Horizons in the 1960s and 1970s, calling for the promotion of new directions in ceramics, could today seem like a fence, limiting any cross-pollination between craft and contemporary practices. The work in GRAPEVINE~, much of it created during the extended 'lost weekend' the medium experienced over the previous decades, resonates more than ever right now as a retroactive influence.

Historically the very nature of the ceramic medium implies the tradition of setting up a studio (or pottery), building the appropriate kilns, and constantly performing glaze and clay body tests in order to attain the desired effect. To me, this romantic (some might say dated) discipline is the thing that separates the work of the permanent residents from that of the visitors. For instance, John Mason still mixes his own clay body in an archaic industrial bread mixer, and Michael Frimkess develops latex gloves with stainless steel fingernails in order to throw his large vessels to the desired thinness. This rigor results in specific families of forms that can be identified throughout each artist's body of work—in many cases recurring motifs span decades of object-making—and a sense of serious play is always checked by technical discipline. With Mason, for example, we see the 'X' motif evolve from an applied compositional graphic on early vessels, through to the monolithic form of Red X (1966), and then into a more spatially open plan in his slab-built geometric crosses and orbs of recent years, which function as turnstiles directing space, cycling back to the rotational roots of pottery.

Perhaps even more surprising is the range of cultural information that makes appearances in so many different ways: I'm thinking about how art deco, custom car culture and vernacular architecture inform Peter Shire and Ron Nagle's work; how popular staples of American comic imagery adorn the classically-inflected pots of Michael Frimkess and Magdalena Suarez Frimkess; or the way Mason's work has such a Jet Propulsion Laboratory-engineered vibe. The more familiar gestural 'abstract expressionist' style of the 1950s and 1960s, which for many defines ceramics-based work from California, is only a small part of the story. In subsequent decades these artists found their own specific languages, a natural evolution as the medium was applied toward more purely sculptural ends and technical developments expanded possibilities. At the same time, they were crossing paths in studios and universities, influencing each other and the course of the ceramics movement at large. For instance, Nagle was in San Francisco paying close attention to the gang surrounding Peter Voulkos (who is represented in the exhibition by a small work gifted to Mason during their time as studio mates); this gang eventually became the group of ceramicists associated with Ferus Gallery here in Los Angeles, though I was surprised to learn how influential Michael Frimkess' early works were for Nagle at the time.

Revered by other artists working with clay, Frimkess never received the same ongoing exposure as Ken Price, Billy Al Bengston and Mason, who were his peers studying under Voulkos in the mid 1950s at the Los Angeles County Art Institute (later Otis College of Art and Design). Whilst Frimkess, or 'Frim' as he was known back then, would describe himself as a 'bonafide kook' in his formative years, Mason recalls him possessing an uncanny ability

on the potter's wheel from the day he arrived in Voulkos' class. (He had requested entry in the class after receiving the vision of a perfect pot being thrown during a peyote trip.) Michael's paper-thin pots are thrown from hard clay without water and high fired in just under an hour. In solo pieces from the late 1960s and 1970s, scenes of satire, American family values and race politics are depicted in a cartoon narrative format, played out around the contours of the pots.

Though Magdalena Suarez Frimkess came from a sculpture background, studied in Chile, and never trained formally as a potter, her indifference to her talents, and her incidental predicament within the medium, are refreshing. She began by working collaboratively, glazing Michael's pots from the time they met in the early 1960s in New York, before starting to make her own sculptures and hand-formed pots in 1970. Arriving a few thousand years after the Greek and Chinese vessels they resemble, and a few decades before the pictorial pots of Grayson Perry, these objects occupy a place between many genres and continue a rich tradition of narrative storytelling through pottery. In doing so they collapse any rational expectation between the pot's form and its glazed design; in one pot, Dizzy Gillespie is paired with the repeated font for the stomach medication Tagamet, and Disney characters pose alongside Magdalena's own family members in another.

Peter Shire, some years younger than the others in the show, was also a keen observer, later becoming friends with Nagle and Mason —it was Peter who first introduced me to John. Interestingly, there was already an existing connection between Shire and Frimkess, as their fathers were acquainted through labor unions in Los Angeles in the 1940s and 1950s, and both artists were raised in creative households infused with progressive politics, modernism, and craftsmanship. Since the mid-70s his brightly colored, blocked-assembled vessels and abstracted teapots have allowed him to funnel an encyclopedic passion for design from every angle: automotive, Bauhaus, and Russian Constructivist aesthetics all inform his own mediations of functional domestic forms.

Furthermore, one can perhaps trace connections between Shire's Memphis-associated work and the moment when Nagle's earliest, more malleable cup variations gave way to a pre-Memphis form of architecture. (To fully appreciate the extremity of both Shire's and Nagle's aesthetic is to locate its influence—and humor—in the experimental forms of American potter George Ohr [1857–1918]. 'The Mad Potter of Biloxi' had the weirdness dialed in 70 years before the public was ready to receive it.) More recently Nagle's work has featured stucco-like, spongy, ikebana-core tableaux, and 'archimetric' structures made with a model maker's precision; parts are shaped, adjusted and fitted together, and glazed with multiple firings to wizardly effect. Indeed, they are 'things' that have an abstract pulse, a distilled temperament, asserting themselves with an authority beyond their scale.

The fastidious steps behind all of the works in GRAPEVINE~ remain available to the viewer as tight information, yet always with enough variation and nuance to locate them within the studio environment as opposed to more familiar traits of outsourced fabrication. The formal training of a potter (a skill which is now weeded out of the few ceramics programs still in place) is visible in all of this work: proportion, the lift provided by a well-trimmed foot, and the energy and circulation of the clay itself are still defining factors.

For the most part all included works have come directly from the artists, and I am grateful to have been allowed such a degree of physical searching and selecting during studio visits. The privilege of this access has both shaped the show in a very tactile and subjective manner, and allowed a greater understanding of the historic, technical, and conceptual conditions that inform each artists work.

Whitney Biennial 2014, New York: Whitney Museum of American Art and New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014, pp. 310, 388-389

Ricky Swallow

Chair Study/Relief (seat), 2013. Patinated bronze, 25 × 8 ¾ × 2 ½ in. (63.5 × 22.2 × 6.4 cm)

Born 1974 in
San Remo, Australia

Lives in
Los Angeles, CA

Whitney Biennial 2014, New York: Whitney Museum of American Art and New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014, pp. 310, 388-389

RICKY SWALLOW speaks with MATT CONNORS

Matt Connors: I was pondering your recent work last night, while making a cup of tea with my sort of ritualized hot-beverage setup (favorite teakettle, favorite mug), and it got me to thinking about how the body and (its) perception (vision, touch, taste, etc.) can relate to proportion and material (real or idealized), like how the weight or shape of an object (when held) can determine an emotional reaction or attachment to it. I feel like your recent sculptures play with these ideas. For one, you're taking on actual vessels (cups, vases) and other kinds of very human-shaped forms that immediately elicit a kind of muscle memory in the viewer's brain. In a way you are reducing them to pure form and proportion, radically limiting material and color. Do you feel like you are playing with a kind of semiotics of forms, shapes, and colors? Especially since most viewers are not able to touch the works, they become almost signs or ciphers . . .

Ricky Swallow: Proportion and a series of reductions seems key; perhaps "abbreviation" is the right term because it proposes a type of editing of the object, without forfeiting a comprehension of that object. I really like this idea of a viewer's mental/emotional "muscle memory" in relation to certain objects. I see my process in part as a means of *returning* objects, so that the object can assert itself in an autonomous way, have its own singular logic, yet retain some associations of use or function, and at times historical references. The subjects themselves arrive riddled with narrative histories and I think remaking the thing, that abbreviation, redirects the object into more formal territory. When a sculpture isn't working, sometimes it's falling too heavily on a reference or function. In approaching certain subjects you have to be aware that you're a guest, and for me personally there is a predetermined freedom in that, as well as some responsibility to act/make/behave well. The material change from cardboard into bronze seems like a way to finalize the form without losing its studio-built logic . . . despite the industrialized process they go through, they are still rooted in a very personal or *individual* place. I'm glad, too, that you mentioned color. It's still the most stressful thing for me ("I'm new here"), specifically because it can change the associations of the sculptures so much, or, to take a hit from Robert Morris, increase the "intimacy-producing relations."

MC: I think this seesawing between visual representations and indications of function, zooming in and out from a concrete sense of scale to a ridiculous disjointedness, contributes to an overall sense of destabilization—of logic, of form, of narrative, even. There's a certain sense of authority that one immediately feels when encountering a beautifully made, well-proportioned object that gets sort of derailed when its sense of function is contradicted. The result, for me, has a hyperpersonal, sometimes dreamy logic. Do you think this puts you into some sort of relationship with Surrealism?

RS: A useful way for me to think about Surrealism is to relax any understanding we have toward an object or subject, to allow for transformation. I think of the work of Christina Ramberg, Robert Therrien, Konrad Klapheck, Domenico Gnoli, or Roy McMakin, for example. Each has produced experiential works rooted in a certain amplification of daily materials, forms, and imagery, with a sense of transformation and peculiar material tightness that I admire—a "dreamy logic," as you put it. I started practicing Transcendental Meditation this year, and one of its strangest effects happens when looking at objects as you come out of the rest period following meditation. For a brief moment you have absolutely no associations with these things. You just see the structure, form, and color with an accentuated materiality that's more alien than abstract.

MC: I like the idea of a sustained, defamiliarized focus—it's telling of the evolution your work has undergone over the years. It seems like you experienced a moment of permission, allowing barriers between your personal and professional fascinations to disappear. Even though, for artists, these barriers are pretty amorphous to begin with. In the bronzes, I can feel the impulse that we share as obsessed lookers and collectors, a kind of taxonomy of fascinations, all being fed into the process of making. In a way this permission is also a realization that there are no unworthy avenues for artistic inquiry—the humorous, the narrative, the surreal, not to mention teacups, pinch pots, chair backs, or kachinas . . . Does this moment of synergy between private and professional strike a chord at all?

Whitney Biennial 2014, New York: Whitney Museum of American Art and New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014, pp. 310, 388-389

RS: I'm drawn to objects that are rudimentary in form and color, things that "say it simple." Many of the objects I collect have either been made with a type of material economy related to the maker's familiarity with the form through a repetitious practice, say, a potter's, or due to a reliance on limited materials and palette, as in earlier Navajo and Pueblo jewelry. The aesthetic produced by such conditions, the authenticity and magic of the forms, is awesome, and so is their energy. Functional items of ritual—used for ceremony, healing, sitting, drinking—appear so free of any prescribed ego or extraneous design. Occasionally there's a sculpture I can see coming out of a specific form at home. This black flag relief I'm working on relates to a Tobia and Afra Scarpa brass sconce in our entrance—its curve, the way it hugs the wall with grace and weight equally. The first vessels I cast from collated pieces of cardboard into bronze were literally formed around cups, bottles, and crucible forms I had collected. The patinas I've developed often approximate a ceramic glaze I like or the pigmented quality of mineral paint evident in Native American artifacts, specifically Hopi. Collecting things is a habit, and making things is another, and I treat them as equally instructive rituals. I really believe in learning an object: its identifiable characteristics, provenance, and chronology, especially via dialogue with those more familiar with the material. Within the crowd of veteran vendors at flea markets and Native American antique shows, which I frequent, there's a generosity of information buzzing around. The history behind these artifacts often goes unrecorded, so there's a constant reassessment of physical characteristics, an obsessive object reading.

MC: I see this transparency in your bronzes, revealing a process and materiality, as a kind of generosity, similar to what you referred to in communities defined by their elective affinities (which ideally would be true among artists and art audiences, right?). It makes these pieces really legible, referring to objects or functions in the physical world. But at the same time they are quite mysterious and incredibly fluid. How do you think such a determined clarity leads to the undefined, multivalent presence of the finished pieces? Do you think your work gains mysterious steam, so to speak, from reading the pieces over time, or as sequences in an exhibition constructing their own formal vocabulary or grammar? Or do you think "Ours is not to wonder why"?

RS: I always aim for clarity in the sculptures, but never a clarity that could occlude any subjective "walkabout" the object could take. So much of the success of any work is intuitive, it's exciting when improvised behavior produces a form that can be further developed into a sculpture or series. I hope there is a developing formal vocabulary to what I do, and as far as gaining "mysterious steam," who could hope for more, right? I really dig it when someone responds to the work in a way outside of my own logic, or makes a connection to another artist's work or tradition of objects I'd never considered. I like this line from the psychotherapist Adam Phillips: "We are always too daunted by who we are." I think by making things, making art, you get to offer something that's so connected to yourself, yet ultimately has the capacity to form an identity beyond your control.

Farago, Jason, "Whitney Biennial 2014," *Frieze*, June/July/August 2014, pp. 190-191

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1
Sheila Hicks
Pillar of Inquiry/Supple Column, 2013–14, installation view

2
Zachary Drucker & Rhys Ernst
Relationship (Zackery Drucker and Rhys Ernst, 2011), 2011, c-type print, from the series 'Relationship', 2008–13

3
Elijah Burger
Portrait of John Balance as Talisman Against Suicide, 2013, coloured pencil on paper, 48 × 61 cm

Whitney Biennial 2014

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART, NEW YORK

Reviews of the Whitney Biennial usually start by invoking the impossibility of the exhibition form and all the failed editions that came before, but here's the tricky thing: three of the last four were good. The 2006 edition, curated by Chrissie Iles and Philippe Vergne, was the best-received of the last two decades and gave us one of the truly great art works of the age: Mark di Suvero and Rirkrit Tiravanija's Iraq-vintage *Peace Tower*. Francesco Bonami's quietly intense 2010 biennial, my favorite of recent years, made a case for modesty and introversion in a frame that usually prefers bombast. The 2012 biennial, organized by Elisabeth Sussman and Jay Sanders, garnered wide acclaim for its Occupy spirit and attention to performance, which took up a full floor of the Whitney's soon-to-be-vacated Marcel Breuer-designed HQ on Madison Avenue. (The 2008 edition, curated by Henrietta Huldisch and Shamim M. Momin, was an overly busy, installation -besotted washout.)

So, in assessing the all-over-the-shop 2014 Whitney Biennial, I feel that I can apply at least a degree of critical leverage. Blame has to start with the museum's curatorial department and the biennial's curators – Stuart Comer of the Museum of Modern Art across town, Anthony Elms of Philadelphia's Institute of Contemporary Art and the Chicago-based artist Michelle Grabner – though the relative fault of each varies. Unlike previous editions, this time around the three curators did not collaborate on a single exhibition but took one museum floor apiece. The Whitney tried mightily to spin this curatorial renunciation as three shows in one, three views of one art world, or whatever excuse came to mind, but the original sin of the 2014 biennial could not be expiated, even if the resulting show was only substandard and not catastrophic. Like my colleague Andrew Russeth noted in his *Gallerist NY* review, my initial reaction when I heard about the one-floor-per-curator wheeze was dread, while on opening day my fear had subsided into mere disappointment, perhaps because the biennial's scale and wildly divergent quality made it seem pointless to have any strong view at all.

The 2010 edition had 55 artists. The 2012 version had 51. This year's included a whacking 103 artists and collectives, spilling out into the staircase (Charlemagne Palestine's sound work *haunttedd!! n hunttedd!! n dauntlessss!! n shunttedd!!*, 2013, recorded on site), the elevator (a taxonomic, muzak-backed video loop, *Metapoetaestheticism*, 2013, by Jeff Gibson), the lobby, the basement, the sunken courtyard, the entrance bridge, a park on the Hudson River (hosting a 400,000-name *Artists Monument*, 2014, by Tony Tasset, which was one of the strongest works in the show) and the apartment of a tarot card reader. A big biennial can work when it has a tight, cogent argument behind it; 2006 was large, but it hung together thanks to its Bush-era, midnight-in-America

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oppositionality. 2014 had no such through-line, and it's hard not to conclude that the exhibition came out at literally double the size of the previous two versions precisely because the curators did not work together, and some fraction of the poor art on display might have been edited out had they had a system of checks and balances. The result was a whirligig biennial, with dizzying variations in quality and relevance, though with so many artists included, even a much lower percentage of talent results in an acceptable number of hits. There's at least a little safety in numbers.

Elms's section was the weakest. Do not look for guidance to his obscurantist catalogue essay, larded with sentence fragments and non sequiturs ('At this moment, am I shitting or am I shit?'), unfunny and off-key jokes ('What's wrong with capitalism is we're all like Rihanna'), and a truly scandalous apology for Breuer's architecture via the teenage soap opera *Gossip Girl*. You had to be there to experience the timid selection that diminished the stronger works and made no case for the feebler ones. For every nice surprise – such as Susan Howe's terse letterpress prints of poetry, footnotes and marginalia – there were just as many strikeouts from gifted practitioners (small provisional sketches for works from Allan Sekula, minor collages from the usually excellent Charline von Heyl) and twice as many bland archival projects. One such was the musical archive of an anti-war activist, assembled by the Chicago collective Public Collectors – freighted with self-justifying texts that imputed some innate criticality to what was, in large part, just show-and-tell. Elms also commissioned one of the biennial's largest works, *945 Madison Avenue* (2014), a camera obscura designed by Zoe Leonard (for which she won the museum's Bucksbaum Award) that was installed in the Breuer building's trapezoidal bay window in the middle of Grabner's fourth floor section of the exhibition.

If you're feeling up for a little Judgement of Paris, Comer, by some margin, produced the best exhibition of the three, a pessimistic affair featuring many works that traced the contours of this post-American century. Yet it felt disjointed, due in part to an exhibition design with too many walls and, even here, far too little art generated sufficient heat. Fine works on paper from Etel Adnan (nearly 90 years old) and Channa Horwitz (dead) overpowered younger artists' efforts. One notes especially the paucity of moving images from a curator who spent nearly a decade running the Tate's film programme, despite an outstanding contribution from Harvard's Sensory Ethnography Lab documenting the Melvillian intensity of industrial fishing (*Leviathan*, 2012). At least Comer got Bjarne Melgaard, stealing the show with *Ignorant Transparencies* (2013), a nightmarish funhouse of sex dolls and rutting chimpanzees. Thank heavens there is still at least one artist in New York who goes for broke with every single outing. Indeed, there was an almost comic preponderance of dick in this exhibition, offered up by Melgaard but also Elijah Burgher, Miguel Gutierrez, Gary Indiana, Keith Mayerson, Jacolby Satterwhite and others. This is not something I usually protest, but it's striking how vocal the show was about sexuality

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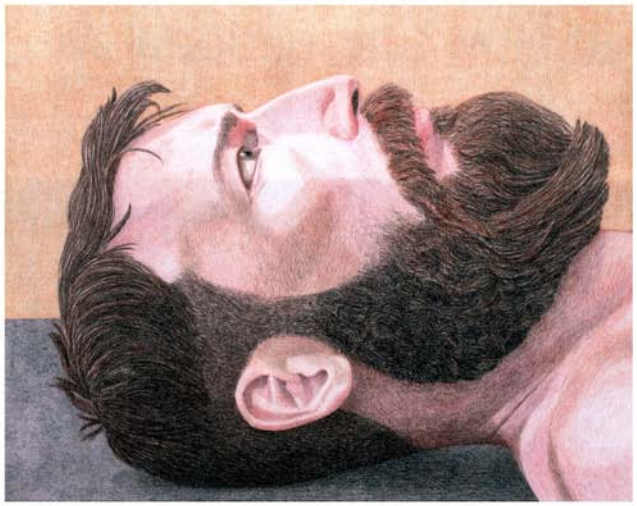

3

and how quiet it remained about race and gender – less than a third of the artists across the biennial were women, as critic Jillian Steinhauer astutely noted on the website Hyperallergic. The site also broke the news, two weeks before the exhibition closed in May, that the collective HOWDOYOUSAYYAMINAFRICAN? would be withdrawing its work. The group, whose members are mostly black, objected to the biennial's inclusion of the fictional character 'Donelle Woolford' – an African-American, female avatar of the artist Joe Scanlan, who is white. Whatever the merits or faults of Scanlan's racial drag, a biennial with a dismal historical record of minority and female representation is perhaps ill-equipped to handle the questions it raises about the fixity of the culture industry's power structures.

Though Comer's floor was the clear winner, the paradox of the 2014 Whitney Biennial was that Grabner, despite a much lower hit rate, produced the more memorable results. With 53 of the show's artists – almost as many as Bonami included in his entire biennial – her overstuffed fraction included numerous women working in abstract painting or fabric, notably a knockout Sheila Hicks tower that was, hands down, the best work in the show (*Pillar of Inquiry/Supple Column*, 2013–14). (Sheila Hicks, people! Richard Serra wishes he could make anything this totemic, this sensitive to medium, this poised between noun and verb. If anyone at the Whitney is still reading, give her a solo show *now*.) Grabner's section also contained the most misfires, including an extraneous display of David Foster Wallace ephemera described in the wall text as 'a vital inclusion', but whose relevance was known only to the curator. What's more, Grabner exhibited some very bad manners, writing in the catalogue that 'as an artist, I am liberated from the stratagems girding today's curatorial industry, so in short, I am attempting to assemble an exhibition that is principally for me and other artists'. Besides insulting Elms and Comer, and sidelining the vast majority of non-artists who make up the biennial's audience, her statement also short-changes her own exhibition, reducing the overshadowed women and lesser-known Chicago figures in her section of the biennial to mere 'artists' art'. All the same, New York has not seen a show like Grabner's all-on-her-own biennial in a while. If I didn't truly like it, at least I remember it.

After multiple visits to the biennial, I became adept at averting my eyes from its worst errors and found, within its incoherence, a few moorings to cling to: Adnan, Hicks, Howe, Melgaard and some younger folk such as Ricky Swallow, whose modest and provisional bronzes took me by surprise, and Uri Aran, whose installations incorporate lovely drawings, hermetic symbolism and sheet music. I realized, not soon enough, that I long ago became gifted at such selective, superficial engagement. It's too big; the quality varies wildly; there's a lot of abstract painting and some performance, to make you feel like it matters; I liked a few things but don't recall much of it … What does that response remind me of? It sounds like an art fair – and why shouldn't it, really, when the hallmark of contemporary art in 2014 is its fractal reproduction, directly or through disavowal, of the inescapable and insatiable market? The biennial's curators and artists may bridle at this point, and insist that the show's archival projects 'contested' hierarchies of value, that the performances 'problematized' notions of the self or the body, that the politically oriented works 'contested' the dominant order. The truth, however, is that there is no evidence that such practices have the impact they purpose, as Andrea Fraser insisted in her excellent essay in the catalogue of the 2012 Whitney Biennial. There she decried 'an ever-widening gap between the material conditions of art and its symbolic systems: between what the vast majority of art works *are* today (socially and economically) and what artists, curators, critics, and historians say that art works […] *do* and *mean*.' Such a gap is understandable, in psychological terms, to justify the galling contradictions we all labour under in the art world today. But they cannot last forever, and the 2014 biennial suggests that this illusion is very close to cracking. If you haven't already, I'd recommend reading Fraser's essay in the catalogue of the last edition, if you can find a copy. Biennial catalogues go out of print very quickly.

JASON FARAGO

"The Los Angeles Biennial," *Art in America*, June/July, 2014, p. 31

The Los Angeles Biennial

This month sees the opening of "Made in L.A. 2014" (June 15-Sept. 7), the Hammer Museum's second biennial focused on artists working in the Los Angeles area. Organized by independent curator Michael Ned Holte and the Hammer's chief curator, Connie Butler, the exhibition will present some 35 artists, including Ricky Swallow, Samara Golden and Wu Tsang. While the inaugural edition of the biennial spanned the nonprofit space LAXART and the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery as well as the museum, "Made in L.A. 2014" takes place only at the Hammer.

In addition to an emphasis on emerging and underrecognized midcareer artists, "Made in L.A. 2014" also features a number of artist-run collective endeavors, such as KCHUNG, a radio station based in Chinatown; Public Fiction, an exhibition space and publishing venture; and the Los Angeles Museum of Art (not to be confused with the Los Angeles County Museum of Art), which operates a hand-built, 13-foot-long gallery in the artists' enclave of Eagle Rock. "We didn't set out to focus on artist collectives, but as we moved along we realized that they seem to be characteristic of the L.A. scene," said Butler in a phone interview with *A.i.A.* "With all these artists coming together and working collectively, we wanted to examine what constitutes a community, which became a sort of framework for the show."

Three prizes will be granted, including the juried Mohn Award, the Career Achievement Award and the Public Recognition Award, given to an artist selected by exhibition visitors.

"3 Questions with Ricky Swallow," *Hammer.UCLA.edu*, July 25, 2014

HAMMER

3 Questions with Ricky Swallow

JULY 25, 2014

Why L.A.? Why did you choose to work in this city in particular?

I moved to Los Angeles in 2002, initially it was going to be a 6 months stay to complete the final works for my first solo exhibition here… I got hung up on the place without any hesitation. I was renting a live/work space in Highland Park, Liz Larner was my next door neighbor, and Jason Meadows had a studio a few doors down, it seemed like a pretty inspiring strip of geography to be making objects. Around the corner was Mr T's bowl and these sisters-identical twins from Wisconsin had reopened the diner there as "The Gutter", the first time I went there Lux Interior (R.I.P.) and Poison Ivy were having breakfast….I needed no more signs.

How has your time in L.A. shaped your work?

Indelibly… the very nature of this city keeps you in the studio for stretches of time, the distractions require slightly more effort, more planning-which is a good thing for an artist… hard to be a flaneur in L.A.

Favorite place in L.A. Go.

Laurel Canyon's County Store-esp the annual photo day for residents…Bob's Doughnuts in the Farmers Market on Fairfax and South Willard just around the corner on 3rd….Rose Bowl and Long Beach Flea Market, Freak Beat records in studio city, El Pique taco truck on York followed by Permanent records across the street, Leo Carrillo state beach and fire trails for hiking off Mulholland….the L.A. book fair once a year-and proof bakery daily (receipts filed under "materials").

“3 Questions with Ricky Swallow,” *Hammer.UCLA.edu*, July 25, 2014

Ricky Swallow

“3 Questions with Ricky Swallow,” *Hammer.UCLA.edu*, July 25, 2014

Ricky Swallow
Magnifying Glass with Rope No. 1
2014,
Patinated bronze and oil paint. 9 3/4 x 8 1/2 x 5/8 in. (24.8 x 21.6 x 1.6 cm). Photography by Fredrik Nilsen.
Magnifying Glass with Rope No. 1
2014,
Patinated bronze and oil paint. 9 3/4 x 8 1/2 x 5/8 in. (24.8 x 21.6 x 1.6 cm). Photography by Fredrik Nilsen.

“3 Questions with Ricky Swallow,” *Hammer.UCLA.edu*, July 25, 2014

Ricky Swallow
Flag (soot)
2013,
Patinated bronze. 10 x 11 1/2 x 3 1/2 in. (25.4 x 29.2 x 8.9 cm). Courtesy of the artist; David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles; and Stuart Shave/Modern Art, London. Photography by Fredrik Nilsen.

“3 Questions with Ricky Swallow,” *Hammer.UCLA.edu*, July 25, 2014

Ricky Swallow
Chair Form with String
2014,
Patinated bronze and oil paint. 10 1/2 x 5 x 6 in.(26.7 x 12.7 x 15.2 cm). Courtesy of the artist; David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles; and Stuart Shave/Modern Art, London. Photography by Fredrik Nilsen

Ollman, Leah, “Ricky Swallow in the Studio,” *Art in America*, May 2014, pp. 148-157

RICKY SWALLOW

CURRENTLY ON VIEW
Works by Ricky Swallow appear in the Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, through May 25.

Interview by Leah Ollman
Studio photography by Jay Hanna

LEAH OLLMAN is *A.i.A.*'s corresponding editor for Los Angeles and San Diego.

IN THE STUDIO

Ollman, Leah, “Ricky Swallow in the Studio,” *Art in America*, May 2014, pp. 148-157

Ollman, Leah, “Ricky Swallow in the Studio,” *Art in America*, May 2014, pp. 148-157

Ricky Swallow: *Red Pipe with Smoke*, 2011, patinated bronze, 8 by 7½ by 1¾ inches. Courtesy Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney. Photo Fredrik Nilsen.

Ollman, Leah, "Ricky Swallow in the Studio," *Art in America*, May 2014, pp. 148-157

"QUIET SCULPTURE" reads a sheet of paper on the wall of Ricky Swallow's studio in Los Angeles. The words, stacked one atop the other and encircled by lightly drawn dashes, double as a declaration of intent and a wry, cautionary plea. They add their charge to the wall's dense collage of images, notes and objects, a continually circulating pool of source material that currently includes two beaded panels that Swallow guesses are the unsewn sides of a Sioux tobacco pouch; a dozen sculptural sketches in bare and painted cardboard; a newspaper article on Donald Judd; several small Hopi Kachinas; postcards of work by Duchamp and Picasso; pages of rhythmic patterns (featuring letters, circles, tadpoles, variations on the shapes of wooden chair backs) painted by Swallow in bold gouache.

Beyond the fertile clutter, the rest of the studio is white-cube-gallery spare. A few pedestals hold humbly vibrant sculptures, cast in bronze from objects "scratch-built" in cardboard and tape. Several other pieces are mounted on the walls. One, a broad, undulating ribbon of black, about eight inches high, unfurls like a makeshift flag. Another, in white, riffs on a pair of staggered arches and hints at de Chirico.

The alteration of familiar, everyday forms (from guitars to cups to clocks) has been a through-line in Swallow's work since 1996, when he graduated from the Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne, in his native Australia. He learned to work with wood from a how-to book on carving realistic birds, but is weary of telling the story, however amusing and unlikely it is as an introduction to the refined still-lifes in wood that followed. He has long used cardboard, initially as an end material in itself, and later as the basis for bronzes alluding to Cubism's fracturing of space and time, Futurism's exaltation of motion, Surrealism's unlikely marriages. Smoke in the form of a French curve rises from a pipe in one recent bronze sculpture. In another, a hammer meets the body of a guitar with a surprisingly gentle kiss.

Swallow moved temporarily to Los Angeles in 2002 and ended up staying, interrupted only by a 2004-05 sojourn in London. He's emboldened, he says, by the prolific history of small-scale sculpture in L.A., citing work by Ron Nagle, Ken Price and the early Robert Therrien. He will be included in the Hammer Museum's "Made in L.A. 2014," opening in June.

On a warm, late February afternoon, Swallow, 39, sat down for a conversation in the Eagle Rock studio adjacent to that of his wife, painter Lesley Vance. He had just returned from New York, where he installed his work in the Whitney Biennial. On our way to his broad worktable, stacked with books and paintings on paper, we passed the cardboard genesis of *Stair with Contents*, which, at 22 by 35 by 22 inches, is the largest and most complex of his five pieces in the show. Perched upon the four-step, angular cascade are variants of shapes basic to Swallow's visual lexicon—a multi-spout pitcher, an abstracted cross form that he calls "a spinning P," and a zigzag snake with three hissing S's resting between its jaws. The setup, he says, falls somewhere between a flea market display, a tableau and an altar.

Stair with Contents, 2014, patinated bronze, 22 by 35 by 22 inches. Courtesy Stuart Shave/ Modern Art, London, and David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles. Photo Brian Forrest.

Ollman, Leah, “Ricky Swallow in the Studio,” *Art in America*, May 2014, pp. 148-157

Opposite, *The Days Aren't Different Enough #1*, 2009, bronze, 8½ by 6½ by 1 inches. National Gallery of Victoria. Photo Simon Hewson.

LEAH OLLMAN *Stair with Contents* is a relatively large piece for you. You tend to work on a more intimate scale.

RICKY SWALLOW I arrived at working small fairly intuitively, but it feels like a position in some way, to not pander to scale. Inherent in sculpture is an expectation of monumentality. Working smaller provides a concentration of looking. There is some reciprocal relationship between the concentration of making at that scale and how you receive the piece, or how you hope an audience receives the piece. In all the art that I admire and that I'd say was an influence, it's all about the energy an object or painting can give off. Much of that work is on a smaller scale, what I'd call a Morandi scale of things.

OLLMAN What was the visual landscape like in the small coastal town of San Remo, in Victoria, where you grew up?

SWALLOW Now that I live in a bigger city, where everyone is a stranger, I think of the town that I grew up in as almost a folkloric place. It was a narrative-rich town, everybody knowing everybody. My father was a fisherman. His father was a fisherman. A lot of the colors I've been introducing into the bronzes in the last couple of years, a combination of white, black and red, which can be read through the lens of Russian Constructivism or modernism, also relate to the heavy gloss enamel used on fishing boats and fishing equipment.

My dad was always managing or maintaining his fishing boat, and those projects seem now like my first idea of sculpture. You weld rope baskets from stainless steel tubing and they kind of look like Sol LeWitt forms. Pouring lead into molds to make anchor weights in the backyard or upkeeping the nets through weaving—I was around a lot of that craft. There's an honesty or accountability in it that I like and is related to the kind of work I chose to pursue in the studio.

OLLMAN In art school, you majored in drawing. Were you also working in three dimensions then?

SWALLOW I happened to enroll in the drawing department, because that was the focus of my portfolio when I began. You could opt to do one other subject once a week and that subject for me was sculpture, so more and more I'd introduce sculpture into the drawing process. It was fun to learn in that backdoor way, having access to materials but not necessarily the lectures or techniques. That was an important step in terms of learning to be self-sufficient, or realizing that sometimes it's important to approach materials more intuitively.

OLLMAN The language you use in talking about your work usually has to do with change in status or identity, transformation, even alchemy.

SWALLOW I've always been involved in a process of object translation. Before I started making the wood carvings, I was making replicas out of cardboard much the same way an architect would make a model of a building. They were of first-generation handheld computer games, old stereos—things I took for granted, that I was feeling some nostalgia for as technology was changing. I thought of the finished things still existing as a proposal. I like that space of the industrial prototype or the monument, where something is being suggested or remembered—not being used, but looked at as a form.

OLLMAN When, in 2008, you discovered some cardboard archery targets cratered with arrow punctures, you started working with them, casting the panels in bronze and also casting vessels and masks fashioned from fragments of the targets. What was it about that material that resonated with you?

SWALLOW The cardboard I was using before was dense. It was like a mat board you'd use for framing. It was chosen specifically for how uncharacteristic the surface was. When I found the first few archery targets, they were the opposite. They were these very active, abstract panels—of a texture and materiality that I was completely not responsible for. Something felt nice about that. I wasn't really attracted to them as objects that had been produced through weaponry. It was more their abstract, [Lucio] Fontana quality.

OLLMAN For the last several years, you've been building forms—cups, pitchers, notebooks, human fig-

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Cup with Mounts, 2013, patinated bronze, 3½ by 6 by 5 inches. Courtesy Darren Knight Gallery. Photo Fredrik Nilsen.

ures—mainly out of cardboard tubing of different scales and gauges. You've referred to these pieces as "bootlegs." Is there something illicit about them? What are you trying to smuggle?

SWALLOW I never think of a bootleg as an unauthorized thing, but as a private rendition of something. I collect what I consider a lot of bootlegs, like Native American Zuni Disney character pins, for example, which are weird, crude, messed-up versions of cartoon characters. I like when versions become more and more removed from their origin but they still stubbornly hold on to a source image or a source object. Sometimes I'm even bootlegging my own things.

OLLMAN You also collect pottery, and many of your patinations derive from ceramic glazes. What other points of intersection are there between your work and work in clay?

SWALLOW One of the things that's been instructive about looking at wheel-based ceramics or pottery is how inherently abstract the technique is, as a meditative or ritualistic, repetitive task. You learn to throw a cylinder or tube and from that you pull everything. It's the mother form, this singular form from which you're able to produce an array of objects or vessels. That's how I treated the cardboard tubing form, not as limited, but as malleable, despite its being an industrial readymade material.

OLLMAN "Grapevine," the show you curated for L.A.'s Kordansky Gallery in 2013, was an homage of sorts to a constellation of ceramic artists in Southern California [Ron Nagle, Magdalena Suarez Frimkess, Michael Frimkess, John Mason, Peter Shire]. Each of them, you wrote in your catalogue essay, approached clay with an irreverence toward tradition.

SWALLOW There's something about ceramics as a material that can both acknowledge itself and disguise or contradict itself. All the artists in the show dealt with that in different ways. In their work, there's a respect for and technical understanding of what clay can do. They don't use clay to make pottery but to make sculpture, which seems very much a straightforward proposal now, but it's easy to forget how radical a lot of that work once was.

Like bronze, ceramics goes through a process where you start with an earthen or natural substance. You try to micromanage all the steps in order for the firing to produce a certain effect, but there's all this stuff you can't control, and those embellishments, those subtle fluctuations in color and material, end up being part of the success of the finished object. You succumb to them. Each of those artists really followed through with an object's conception and finishing, and that's a dated idea that I like. You're not surfing while something's being made. You're staying up all night watching the kiln.

OLLMAN What is shared by the sculptures you make and the objects you collect, including basketry and furniture, is a strong sense of visual integrity. You seem very committed to the culture of artifacts, the ritual objects of everyday life, and, ultimately, to William Carlos Williams's notion "no ideas but in things."

SWALLOW I've always believed that the ideas your art contains should extend from the making of them and what the object is doing, not something that's overlaid. Meaning should be extrapolated out of the thing, rather than an object extrapolated out of meaning.

Opposite, *Retired Instruments with Disc (yellow)*, 2012, patinated bronze, 10¼ by 6¼ by 5½ inches. Courtesy Stuart Shave/ Modern Art and David Kordansky Gallery. Photo Fredrik Nilsen.

Ollman, Leah, “Ricky Swallow in the Studio,” *Art in America*, May 2014, pp. 148-157

Ollman, Leah, "Ricky Swallow in the Studio," *Art in America*, May 2014, pp. 148-157

John Mason sculptures in the exhibition "Grapevine," 2013, curated by Swallow. Courtesy David Kordansky Gallery. Photo Fredrik Nilsen.

I have a romantic notion of what the studio is as a place and what it's capable of. There's a famous Coco Chanel quote: "Look in the mirror and remove one accessory." It's to do with elegance and removing anything that is extraneous to your successful look. That can be applied in sculpture, too. Ron Nagle and Ken Price had this saying, "TMT," which means "too much touching," if they felt something wasn't working and was being fussed with too much, or if you went too far. I think with sculpture it is also about removing stuff and knowing when to stop.

OLLMAN You're avid about music, and certain players crop up in your conversations—[the English guitarist] Derek Bailey, especially. But what about the underlying affinities in your work to structural elements in music—repetition, for instance, and rhythm?

SWALLOW That's a tough question. Music to me is so abstract. I'm such an absorber of it. It's almost inhaled in the studio, but it's not something I understand. I think all artists ultimately envy the effects of music, the indelible effects. That would be the ultimate compliment, for a sculpture to stick in somebody's head in the same way that a song does, for someone to associate a sculpture with a particular time or event or vacation or something like that.

OLLMAN In *Looking at the Overlooked*, Norman Bryson's 1990 book about still-life painting, he discusses the distinction between rhopography, the depiction of so-called unimportant things, and megalography, the depiction of grand events—history with a capital H. Rhopography, he writes, has the "potential for overturning the scale of human importance." That rings true of your work with mundane subjects.

SWALLOW I don't see any limitations in humble objects. A lot of the things that I've remade in sculpture are things of ritual to one person, a small personal reading lamp or one cup. Something you have a direct relationship to, that you use in a daily way. There's something about selecting those things that have a one-to-one relationship with someone and then having a one-to-one relationship with the making of them. There is a meditative quality to overlooked things that allows them a different kind of energy or power.

The guitar, or certain cup forms—they're veterans of art in terms of still life. They are forms that have been pushed through every strainer. That makes them durable. They're not exhausted, they're not closed. To me, the most natural way of participating in art-making is to accept that you are a visitor to all this material, you're reinterpreting standards.

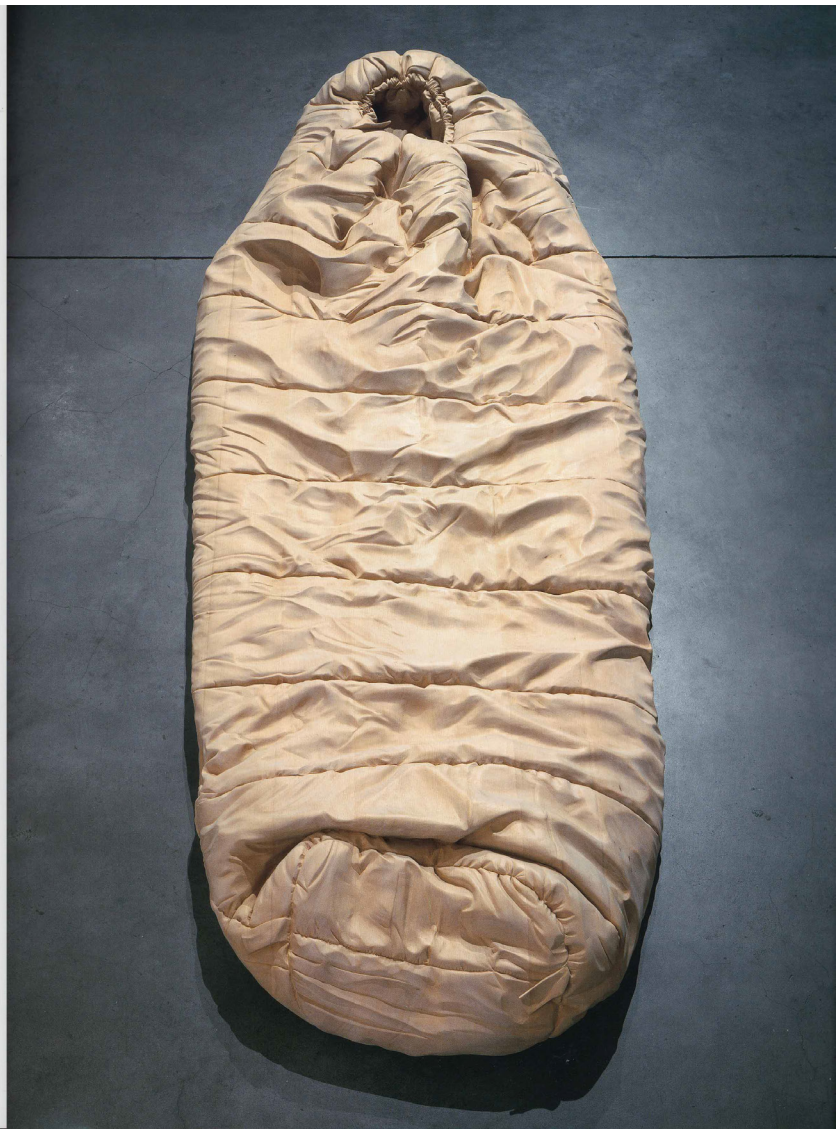
Opposite, *Twin Pots/After P.S. (malachite)*, 2011, patinated bronze, 6 by 5 by 4 inches. Courtesy Darren Knight Gallery. Photo Fredrik Nilsen.

OLLMAN Your most recent work strays confidently from familiar, recognizable referents to more fragmentary, less functional subjects. But you're wary of the A word. You're on record as having a "built-in moral resistance to abstraction" that you've tried for years to overcome. Where did that resistance come from and why the need to transcend it?

SWALLOW Some of my older work is so narratively drunk. To go completely cold turkey was impossible. I've always been attracted to abstraction but never thought it was something I was supposed to do or the work that I was supposed to make. Part of the new pieces becoming more formal or abstract is about enjoying and accepting the terms of what the pieces want to do, or appreciating a different way they can lean.

It's an abstraction I feel OK about, because it comes from manipulation of tactile materials in the studio. It's not preordained. It's a cause-and-effect thing—nurture, not nature. As abstract as some of the recent things are, they have a vulnerability to the surface; they have creases or dents; they're not quite hard-edged. They look like used abstraction. Like abstract sculptures that have been badly treated. ○

Labour and Wait, exhibition catalogue, Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 2013, pp. 142-145



Ricky Swallow, *Sleeping Range*, 2002

Labour and Wait, exhibition catalogue, Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 2013, pp. 142-145

Ricky Swallow

BORN 1974, SAN REMO, AUSTRALIA
LIVES AND WORKS IN LOS ANGELES

Ricky Swallow began working with wood in part by chance, when he stumbled upon a copy of *Carving Realistic Birds* (1996) by David Tippey. Following the manual, he taught himself to carve his namesake, a swallow. At the time the artist had been exhibiting sculptural works made from cardboard and other found materials, but the slow and sustained process of working with his hands appealed to his interest in making time palpable. For Swallow, "the time dedicated to making an object is as much of a mechanism or conceptual tool as the medium itself."[1] His devotion to his craft is manifest in the naturalistic quality of his wooden sculptures, which he refines during hours of work logged daily in his studio.

While his work ethic aligns him with the tradition of the master woodcarver, Swallow plays with the medium's typical subject matter by incorporating mass-produced and pop-cultural references. *Come Together* (2002), for example, is a precise carving of a beanbag chair and alludes to domestic space, leisure, and 1970s "drop-out culture."[2] Modeled after a beanbag chair in the artist's studio, it fits Swallow's vision of what a completed work should accomplish: "Like a really good record, a work should say something about the room and the conditions in which it was recorded, it's a sign of that time."[3] Permanently petrified in the folds of the wooden cushion—and made from the same singular piece of wood—is a much more timeless object of contemplation: a human skull. Here the artist draws upon the artistic tradition of *vanitas*, in which objects such as flowers, fruits, and skulls symbolically address mortality, the fleeting nature of time, and the ephemerality of worldly possessions. While he cultivates themes of time passing in much of his sculptural work, Swallow also sees his wood-carvings working against such inevitability: his sculptures are distinct objects in which time "is somehow contained or embalmed."[4]

In *Sleeping Range* (2002), similar allusions are made to death or departure. The wood carving of an empty sleeping bag evokes bodily absence or a wooden casket. Indeed, the style of sleeping bag featured is often referred to as a "mummy bag" for its shape and tight containment of the body. The traces of a body seem to linger in the ripples of the hard wood that Swallow so dexterously renders as a soft, nylon material.

For the ghostly *Rehearsal for Retirement* (2008), the artist carved two disembodied feet and a desert rose out of English limewood and placed them on a wooden plinth. The name of the work comes from the title of a 1969 Phil Ochs album, which includes songs that many believe foreshadowed the singer's death. For Swallow the title more readily relates to "the act of carving itself," a hobby he associates with men of retirement age.[5] The implied body of the sculpture is severed at the ankles, recalling ancient sculptures of which only fragments survive. In this turn toward the historical past and in looking ahead toward retirement and death, we see Swallow's preoccupation with the ways in which the passage of time is essentially carved into a sculptural work.

1. Charlotte Day and Ricky Swallow, "An Interview with Ricky Swallow," in *Ricky Swallow: This Time Another Year* (Sydney: Australia Council for the Arts, 2005), 45.
2. Swallow, email to the author, April 10, 2013.
3. Day and Swallow, "An Interview with Ricky Swallow," 45.
4. Michael Ned Holte, quoted in *Ricky Swallow: The Bricoleur* (Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, 2010), 31.
5. Swallow, email to the author.

Labour and Wait, exhibition catalogue, Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 2013, pp. 142-145

Labour and Wait, exhibition catalogue, Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 2013, pp. 142-145

Rehearsal for Retirement, 2008

Labour and Wait, exhibition catalogue, Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 2013, pp. 142-145

Holte, Michael Ned, "Cardboard Age," *Ricky Swallow: Bronzes*, London and Sydney: Stuart Shave/Modern Art and Darren Knight Gallery, 2013, pp. 3-6

CARDBOARD AGE

MICHAEL NED HOLTE

A tall, bone-white candle with a matching white flame; a black top hat doubling as a spouted pot; a red pipe issuing smoke in the shape of a French curve; a turquoise vessel, patchworked and porous: all visual conundrums assembled from corrugated cardboard sheets and shipping tubes in varying sizes, then cast in bronze and patinated to arrive at compact but densely-layered objects Ricky Swallow has referred to as "bootlegs". The term implies duplicitous behaviour, and indeed, the artist's recent sculptures in bronze eagerly await viewers with complex interplay between the second and third dimensions, sly allusions art historical and otherwise, and other sleights of hand: Sometimes, as Magritte emphasised, a pipe is not actually a pipe.

Despite the presumptive historical references – the Deco-ish curves of a yellow "lamp", for example, or the "candle" that inevitably recalls one of Richter's *Kerzen* – these bootlegs are not appropriations, but approximations. And for a material as reliably stable as bronze, Swallow's bootlegs are remarkably unreliable proxies for originals that may have never existed. Material misapprehension has always been central to Swallow's concerns, regardless of material. In his near-hallucinatory wood sculptures, which comprised most of his output from 2002 to 2009, blocks of limewood or jelutong were intricately carved to imitate the forms and surfaces of a diverse range of substances – animal, mineral, and vegetable – and often in startling juxtaposition. The artist's transition from wood to bronze was largely pragmatic and gradual, with the earliest bronzes, including a trio of balloons covered with barnacles, following closely from the logic of the wood works.

However, a significant shift in his work occurred circa 2008 when cardboard was introduced into the process with a punctured archer's target found by the artist – a ready-made that he cast in bronze and titled *Bowman's Record*. A commonplace but versatile material, cardboard is as important to the resulting bronze sculptures as is the bronze, weird as that may sound. In an ongoing series of targets (each is titled "Plate" and numbered), the transition from cardboard to bronze exemplifies the makeshift quality of the former, which also provides each work with a readymade texture and detail – representing a significant shift from the artist's fastidious (and laborious) fabrication of detail and texture in the earlier wood sculptures.

Casting also affords the artist an opportunity to produce individual sculptures in multiple, but many of Swallow's bronzes (including each "Plate") are in fact unique objects, with the cardboard originals lost in the process – "burnouts", in the jargon of the foundry – though the textural quality of cardboard is maintained. These cast bronze sculptures activate a complex exchange between endurance and ephemerality, between past and present – and, presumably, the future.

The artist also repurposed fragments and scraps of the tattered targets to form patchworked cups, jugs, and crucibles: Literally, none of these "utilitarian" vessels, cast in bronze, holds water. In their archetypal simplicity of form and seeming fragility, these vessels suggest antiquity – occasionally emphasised with a blue or turquoise patina – and reveal the artist's extensive working knowledge of the vernacular traditions of folk pottery as well as design objects. *Field Crucible (turquoise)*, 2010, indirectly calls attention to the process of casting – specifically, to the vessel that holds bronze ingots as they are heated to the melting point, with the crucible and liquid metal glowing orange. At the foundry, on an industrial stretch in Burbank, California, Swallow notes the homely charms of several of these silicate objects, encrusted with evidence of daily use – not to mention a sculptural appeal he likens to a crater-glazed pot by Gertrude and Otto Natzler.

If you have occasion to lift one, you'll find that Swallow's bronzes are heavier than they look – in large part because they immediately read as cardboard or, more specifically, *painted* cardboard, with the familiar rhythm of corrugation or the coiling seamline of a shipping tube left plainly intact. "Cardboard" is a lay term apparently dating to the end of the 17th Century and generically referring to a wide variety of industrial products made from densely compressed paper pulp. As art material, cardboard entered the picture relatively late and is closely associated with the development of Cubist collage and sculpture, with Picasso's *Maquette for Guitar*, 1912, as apogee. This assemblage is strung as if an actual instrument, with its strings leading to a sound hole constructed from a cardboard cylinder – an important precedent, one can safely assume, for the younger artist's use of the shipping tube. Not coincidentally, Swallow's bronze *Reclining Guitar with Dials* [pp.102–103] and *Retired Instruments with Disc (yellow)* [pp.94–95] – the latter recalling Man Ray's *Gift*, 1921, as much as Picasso's guitar – arrived exactly a century later.

But art history is a point of entry, rather than a landing. In the modernist paradigm, collage and assemblage afforded the potential for radical material juxtaposition; for Swallow, a material (wood, cardboard, bronze) acts as unifying agent

Holte, Michael Ned, "Cardboard Age," *Ricky Swallow: Bronzes*, London and Sydney: Stuart Shave/Modern Art and Darren Knight Gallery, 2013, pp. 3-6

for abutting unlikely pairings of objects (barnacle to skull, hammer to guitar body) in order to arrive at a new sculptural presence that transcends the sum of parts.[1] In Swallow's bronzes, cardboard provides continuity, but also versatility. In its everyday plenitude it offers the prospect of modular play and scalability – witness, for example, the stepped, matryoshka doll-like scaling of *Staggered Hats (soot)*, 2011 [p.23].[2] If evidence of weighty bronze is skilfully hidden in these works (or lightened, visually), their cardboard origins are in plain sight, present in their absence.

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In his earlier carved wood sculptures, the human skull played a significant recurring role, positioned in unexpected, provocative juxtaposition with familiar objects – stuffed into a beanbag chair, or swaddled in a folded sheet of paper, or besieged by barnacles. In his transition from wood to bronze, the skull has all but disappeared. The clock – a haunting figure of time, in its relentlessness – might now be said to stand in its place, and unnervingly, these clocks are "faceless", too.

Still, the figure is constantly conjured in Swallow's bronzes, most often via metonymic signs: hats, masks, a splayed book, a pipe issuing "smoke", cups and other vessels – a world of objects, all calling attention to utility and, hence, the absent body of the user. Many of these sculptures are full-scale, which is to say scaled to the human body, and particularly to the hands, offering haptic points of entry for a viewer.[3] "There is something so simple and ritualistic to the making of the sculptures, and they often refer to forms of personal ritual, or portable activities", notes the artist on the intimate scale of these works. "The lamps, for example, are scaled to personal reading lamps as opposed to a room lamp, the jugs imply a kind of pouring oneself, drinking oneself, or handling… the small clock being an alarm clock, to alert-awake oneself."[4]

At this scale, each of Swallow's bronzes seems to address – isolate – an individual viewer. In *Magnifying Glass with Pipe*, 2011 [p.22], a lens appears to magnify the red tube on the other side of it when viewed frontally; viewed from the side, the illusion crumbles quickly when it becomes clear that the "magnification" results from the use of a thicker tube. The simple effectiveness of the trick recalls Roy Lichtenstein's 1963 canvas *Magnifying Glass*, which takes advantage of two sizes of Ben-Day dots. (And perhaps I should add that Lichtenstein's painting is black and white, whereas Swallow's *Magnifying Glass*, with its red "pipe", marks a relatively dramatic shift to applied colour for an artist previously given to sculpture expressing only the inherent "colour" of a given material.) Both works call attention to the viewer, exacerbating the act of looking. *Binder with Magnifying Glass*, 2011 [p.31], works according to the same principle, with two sizes of binder rings fashioned from cardboard.

More recently, a series of pedestal-based figures have emerged, assembled from "castoffs" used in other sculptures (top hats, the magnifying glass, French curves) along with sections and scraps of otherwise unaltered paper tubes. The artist has referred to these as *sculptures of figures*, rather than figurative sculptures, and the difference is more profound than it might sound. Swallow's bronzes veer ever so slightly toward abstraction without quite crossing that imaginary categorical boundary: A "figure" that is obvious from one angle suddenly collapses into a precarious jumble of parts from others. With the reduced scale of these figures, the viewer's body is not reflected, yet it is – *we* are – still implicated, as with the magnifying glasses or cups. The fragments of these figures, maquette-like "studies", seem barely held together, provisional, as if we might easily reach in and rearrange the parts.

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Circa 2010, Swallow moved into a house in Laurel Canyon, Los Angeles, and the gradual renovation and furnishing of the residence became, by all appearances to those familiar with the process, a full-time occupation. The artist is a diligent, studious, and perhaps obsessed, collector of objects – chairs by Hans Wegner and Walter Lamb; light fixtures by Alvar Aalto; weed pots by Doyle Lane; dusting brushes by Carl Auböck; turquoise inlay jewelry by Zuni metalsmiths; hand carved bird decoys; a pair of paintings by friend Richard Aldrich, and so on.[5] The continual circulation of these objects, both physically and virtually, undoubtedly informs not only the artist's domestic realm but also the development of sculptures in the studio. But beyond an obvious and overwhelming attention to detail, from (mere) fastidiousness to "wizardry" (a term of respect), it would be difficult to immediately put one's finger on exactly how the inlay on a Zuni bolo tie or a glazed ceramic snake made by a blind artist finds its way into one of Swallow's sculptures – if it indeed does. On the other hand, a found candelabra constructed from modified cattle branding irons – loosely resembling a David Smith sculpture, intentionally or not – might have a more obvious influence on the artist's own genetic coding.

Likewise, Swallow has confided that his bronze patinas tend to follow these bootlegging instincts, whether approximating the "dull manganese blacks of Hans Coper" or the "whites of these Aalto sconces we have – it's a white that seems warmed up by years of light or dried out-brittle-matte".[6] The introduction of colour, usually as a mono-chromatic patina arriving at the end the process, is crucial to the success of these bronze sculptures. Whether bone white, deep cadmium yellow, or "antique" turquoise, colour not only completes each work but activates and structures the whole bootlegging enterprise: Swallow's patinas are alchemical disguises, transforming bronze back to cardboard or even suspending a sculpture ambiguously between such definitive categories.

The full transition to bronzes from wood also coincides with a shift in working methodology entirely appropriate to the medium in question. If Swallow's wood sculptures represent a slow and steady realisation of a predetermined form – say, a prone backpack, emerging from a block of jelutong wood through laborious carving and filing – his bronzes reflect a process closer to the speed of thinking: an additive, accumulative process, hinting at trial and error. While there is still plenty of work that goes into each bronze, the labour happens in fits and starts rather than as

Holte, Michael Ned, "Cardboard Age," *Ricky Swallow: Bronzes*, London and Sydney: Stuart Shave/Modern Art and Darren Knight Gallery, 2013, pp. 3-6

a sustained hum. In multitasking, sculptures often emerge simultaneously, evidenced by fragments and details migrating from one sculpture to another – not unlike Wegner chairs, Aalto lamps, Navajo blankets, books, records, and Inuit figurines ceaselessly circulating around the Laurel Canyon house. See, for example, *Standing Figure with Pockets & Buttons*, 2011 [p.24–25], with its negative space of a French curve in a scrap of cardboard, deployed as a female figure's flowing hair, or the cardboard rings of comb binding that reappear, somewhat incongruously, to bridge to folded planes in the otherwise abstract *Binder Form (turquoise)*, 2012 [p.98].

Exactingly composed, these sculptures often imply a similar temporal (and stylistic) multiplicity – each a circuitous journey from one time to another. When visiting a museum I am similarly reminded of the coexistence of multiple temporal realities. Not the contemporary art museum or modern museum but the comprehensive museum – the *musée imaginaire* – where a room of ancient Korean pottery gives way to Arts and Crafts furniture which sits unexpectedly across the hall from a gallery of still-fresh photorealist paintings, and so on. The flea markets Swallow haunts are surely just another kind of "museum without walls".[7]

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"What is done is done", Dorian Gray tells Basil Hallward, referring to the mysterious death of actress Sibyl Vane.

"What is past is past". The incredulous artist replies to his unaging muse, "You call yesterday the past?"

That question, divorced from its context in Oscar Wilde's gothic novel, becomes the subject of Swallow's wall-mounted *Font Study*, 2011, which deploys the text in four lines of rounded "type" fashioned from sections of whole and split cardboard tubes, all in white:

YOU CALL
YESTER-
DAY
THE PAST?

The text seemingly marks an unexpected appearance of language in the artist's sculptural work, though for some close observers of the artist's broader output the arcing typography of *Font Study* surely echoes the bronze house numbers ("2461") Swallow designed for his Laurel Canyon house, by "freewheeling" dowels of red wax and casting the numbers in bronze. Of course the temporal theme borrowed from *The Picture of Dorian Gray* fits perfectly alongside clocks, lit candles, and dapper accoutrements of a bygone era: A small top hat hangs from a hyphen projecting from the "R" in the second line. The aging portrait of an eternally young Dorian Gray will likely unnerve any artist eager to create timeless works of art.

The relentless work of time is a consistent refrain in Swallow's sculpture, particularly as the artist transforms ephemeral cardboard into the timeless bronze, and comingles past and present: A patina is the visible effect of time, as in aging or weathering, but also the chemical reaction used on bronze and other metals to simulate the visible effect of time – a surface treatment that exists on the surface and somewhat below it, too.

Font Study, 2011

The labour involved in realising Swallow's carved wood sculptures is so immediately apparent–perhaps even hyperbolic – I have wondered if the amount of work invested in the more recent bronzes has become practically invisible. After a trip to the bronze foundry, where the artist maintains a dedicated workstation dubbed the Swallow's Nest, I have no doubt there's plenty of work to be done, though much of the "heavy lifting" has become sublimated in the resulting objects. In fact, I've become convinced that Swallow is never not working, which is to say the swirl of his activity – from the foundry to the studio, from late night eBay scrolling to predawn flea market cruising – is, indeed, all work. When I reluctantly advanced the term "tinkering", a word I can relate to one but some might shun, Swallow replied, "I think part of being a tinkerer is that there is never a true resolution or end to any prescribed activities – activities produce more activities, collecting produces more collecting…"

"I think I've always had a very restless energy – even distracted disposition whilst at the same time being very obsessive about making things and learning about how to make things… When I say there is never any resolution in tinkering, I mean the very nature of it requires you can't leave anything alone – there is always room for tweaking-improving".[8]

A year ago or so, Swallow recommended to me a book by Donald Hall titled *Life Work*, which is part memoir, part instruction manual – and in total, a meditation on life and death.[9] In it, Hall humbly notes the obvious: "There is only one long term project".

Holte, Michael Ned, “Cardboard Age,” *Ricky Swallow: Bronzes*, London and Sydney: Stuart Shave/Modern Art and Darren Knight Gallery, 2013, pp. 3-6

1 Elsewhere I've noted a parallel in Swallow's sculptures to the music of John Fahey, where a solo guitar performance, in that musician's inimitable finger-picking style, unifies diverse compositional elements – Kentucky bluegrass, military waltzes, Gregorian chants, and so on – with no regard to supposed hierarchies. See my text "The Grit and the Oyster", in *Ricky Swallow: The Bricoleur*, edited by Alex Baker (Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, 2009).

2 In this sense, Swallow's use of cardboard also recalls his use of readymade PVC pipe and other plastic modules, circa 2000.

3 Here, I am indebted to Michael Fried's understanding of the way readymade handles function in Anthony Caro's tabletop sculptures, which might represent an important precedent for Swallow's pedestal-based sculptures. See "Caro's Abstractness" and "Anthony Caro's Table Sculptures, 1966–77", both in Fried, *Art and Objecthood* (University of Chicago Press, 1988). The artist also called my attention to his interest in Californian artists such as Ken Price, Ron Nagle, Vincent Fecteau working at a more intimate scale, which provided various models and even tacit approval for the scale Swallow's own bronzes. "Working within the scale that I have the past few years *is* also a type of reaction…almost consciously, to distance the work from L.A. big boy sculpture – where surface and decisions can seems overlooked or allowed to become more generalized". Email to the author, 10 September, 2012.

4 Email to the author, 10 August, 2012.

5 Swallow's interest in objects is often closely tied to their maker, and in this sense his collecting doubles as a kind of scholarly project, invested in individual artists developing bodies of work over time – often including artists who are anonymous or "flying under the radar". One important example of the latter is Doyle Lane (1925–2002), an African-American ceramicist working in Los Angeles from the mid-1950s through the 1980s, known for his colourfully glazed "weed pots" and tile constellations he referred to as "clay paintings".

6 Email to the author, 17 July, 2012. Swallow also notes, "I think the traditional turquoise patina also came out of looking at early Aalto Paimio-era furniture, Walter Lamb, and ahem, well, turquoise bolos! The yellow, or brighter colours – reds, blues – I can say were most likely triggered by a kind of continual surface envy I have for the ceramics (especially the weed pots) of Doyle Lane".

7 I am referring to André Malraux's notion of the Musée Imaginaire, sometimes translated as "museum without walls". See Malraux, *The Voices of Silence*, translated by Stuart Gilbert (Princeton University Press, 1978).

8 Email to the author, 18 July, 2012.

9 See Donald Hall, *Life Work* (Beacon Press, 2003).

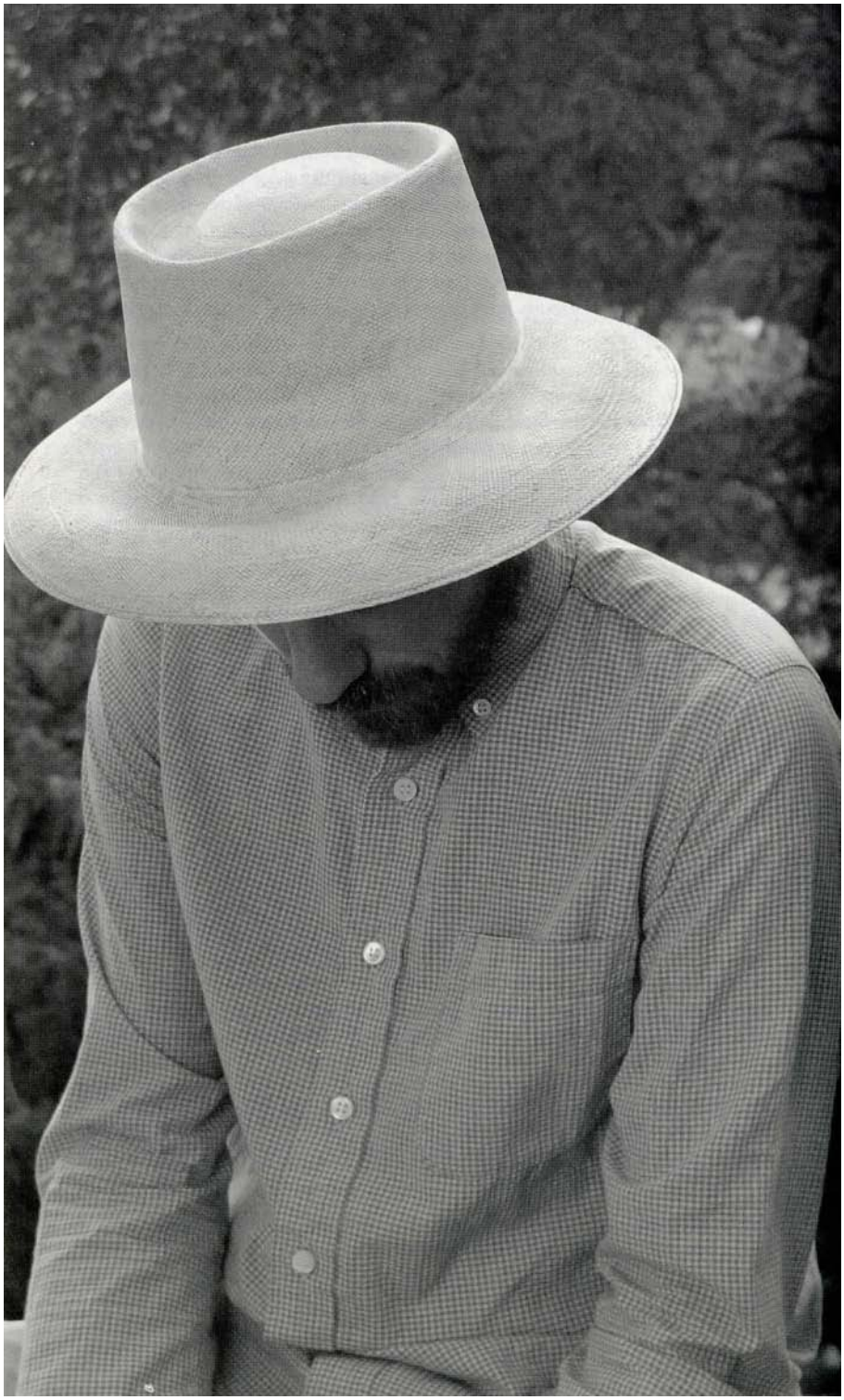
Milne, Robert, in conversation with Ricky Swallow, “Los Angeles Wednesday,” *The Blackmail*, Issue #2, 2013, cover, pp. 110-125

THE BLACKMAIL

OFFLINE

ISSUE #2, 2013

Milne, Robert, in conversation with Ricky Swallow, “Los Angeles Wednesday,” *The Blackmail*, Issue #2, 2013, cover, pp. 110-125



Milne, Robert, in conversation with Ricky Swallow, "Los Angeles Wednesday," *The Blackmail*, Issue #2, 2013, cover, pp. 110-125

LOS ANGELES WEDNESDAY

Introduction & Interview – Robert Milne
Portraits – Barry T. Fadden, Laurel Canyon, CA
Artwork photography – Fredrik Nilsen

Getting to know someone by the objects they collect isn't necessarily the most common way, but it can reveal a lot about who they are and where they've been. My experience of getting to know Ricky Swallow was kind of like this, after finding Ready for the House (his blog, named after the 1978 debut album by mysterious Houston-based musician Jandek), which catalogues, among other things, the objects he acquires at various flea markets throughout Los Angeles. Initially unaware of the blog's author, I became fascinated by the books, records, ceramics, furniture, button badges, boro textiles, denim jackets, vintage hiking backpacks, Navajo blankets and *Peanuts* characters, which, at the time, were posted on an almost-daily basis. The images were given labels, including the location where the objects were found and potential categories such as 'RIGHT ON', 'THE DO A BIT POSSE' and 'WIZARDY'.

Milne, Robert, in conversation with Ricky Swallow, "Los Angeles Wednesday," *The Blackmail*, Issue #2, 2013, cover, pp. 110-125

I was already very familiar with Ricky's art practice and would make connections between the personal objects of the unknown collector and the produced objects in Ricky's work (in much the same way that fans of Jandek tried to piece his life together using extracted information from the photographs on his LP covers). About a year or so later, we ended up meeting each other in Melbourne while Ricky was in town for his exhibition at the NGV. It certainly didn't feel like a first encounter as, to me, the objects had created the initial rapport for an ongoing conversation.

Robert Milne: How do you feel the shift in geographical context — moving from Melbourne to Los Angeles, then to London and back to Los Angeles — has affected your work?

Ricky Swallow: I moved [to Los Angeles] 11 years ago and somewhere in the middle there were two years in London — lost weekend! — so although it's hard to shake the idea of Australia being home, Los Angeles really feels like home now. It continues to be new to me or reveal different sides or elements, and I feel this is the great thing about LA, about California: there's always a new thing to find. That's a simplification, but it's a place you could try — unsuccessfully — to figure out forever.

I could propose that my time working in London allowed a very particular history to surface in the works but I also think if I was working in London now, different histories in the British sculpture or object tradition would be influencing the work. Well, they have — my first show of all bronze work just over two years ago in London with Modern Art had direct links to forms in British modern pottery, [Hans] Coper, [Lucie] Rie, [Ruth] Duckworth, et cetera.

There's a unique space carved out in the object history [of LA], which for me is very specific to California sculpture and has been really influential on my practice. Peter Voulkos, Ken Price, John Mason, John McCracken, Robert Therrien, through to more contemporary figures such as Vincent Fecteau [and] Liz Larner. With all these artists there is a kind of concentrated magic to how the things are realised and functioning as forms, a commitment to such bizarre formal presence and a material discipline or something like that, which is hard to explain. At any rate, as an artist, you gravitate towards different information, whether consciously or not, and I feel fortunate to live in a city in which that information is visible and available.

Living in LA now, do you feel a necessity to engage with the object and craft history and to make work that could be identifiable with California?

I don't feel a necessity as such. I think the goal of any artist should be to just be genuine or authentic to one's self, and the practice is an extension of that — reflective of where one is at and what kind of objects one wants

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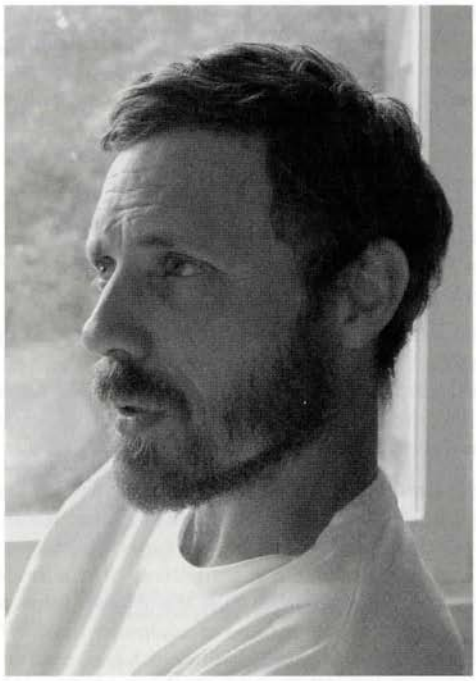

to add to the world. Sometime sculpture seems like an anxious condition. There are so many perfect forms in the world, why fuck with that? I've always felt it necessary to engage with craft or the crafting of forms, to keep one's hand in the studio and one's touch present in the sculptures. And that's something I see in the sculpture, and the sculpture history specific to California that I admire. I would say there is a type of singular strength or resolution within an individual sculpture that I'm working towards — and will be forever, most likely — which is directly linked to handcrafted or well-designed objects. When something is really asserting itself or making itself complete, despite being a referential form, it still has a capacity to allow you to forget everything else when you are confronted with it. Somehow this sounds ambitious in description. It's more of a sensation or belief system, I guess!

And, you know, I have this built-in moral resistance to abstraction that I've been trying to vanquish for years. I think of it like a small town fear of drugs or something, which I also have, where you understand there's value there but the way you're built won't allow you to jump in. Anyway, I think with recent work I'm finding a way to produce more pure, or less clearly figurative, things via a simple abstraction: splitting, simplifying or

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forms where the basis for something figurative is still there, yet it's open to other possibilities — and this started intuitively by splitting these simple cup sculptures I was making, which was a kind of parallel practice, at least in sentiment, to looking at early Voulkos and, subsequently, Price and Mason [and] also Duckworth's work, right at the time when their wheel-based forms were being subject to simple manipulation and combinations to produce more sculptural results. That transitional zone for ceramics here in the late 1950s, in which, under the spell of Voulkos, a lot of the work is almost interchangeable or clearly illustrative of this moment. There is a lot of freedom or play to that work, yet it's still rooted with a really traditional training. I like that.

Is your intuitive movement towards producing works that are less clearly figurative a result of trying to break from the craft tradition of function — which clearly came from Voulkos' 'pot shop' at Los Angeles County Art Institute, now the Otis College of Art and Design — or more about pure experimentation to create new forms?

Well, you said it better than me! It's a result of both, I guess. I've always thought my first task in the studio when making a sculpture is to remove the function; to turn out the light on my expectation of the object and look at it as a pure form, make it something of a stranger to itself. In mentioning Voulkos I was thinking how the thrown form was a basis or mother form to begin or extrapolate a sculpture from. When I started working with these different sized cardboard tubes as the starting point for sculptures, it was liberating because the tube was also this mother form — a place to begin — and it guided what type of things I'd make, but then that gets questioned too… Something about having a ready-made unit, but not being limited by that. In that regard, seeing the David Smith show at LACMA a few years ago was huge too. You see the sculpture first and then start identifying the rudimentary nature of the steel units used in its construction.

When I first visited your studio in LA in 2010 you were working on your first show of all bronze work for Modern Art in London. It was interesting to see these works before they had been cast, in a patchwork-like state of construction, particularly those that became *Make-do Suite* (2010), as they were made using the same salvaged archery target cardboard that was used in some of your earlier bronzes. Can you speak about the idea of the 'make-do' and the additive process of these works?

I'm glad you saw that stage of the work. I think about that time when I was first making the vessel-type structures from the archery targets as an important moment in my practice. It happened very intuitively. I'd taken this long break from the studio and when I came back I just started using the cardboard material to build forms piece by piece around existing vessels in various combinations to produce these 'ceramic adjacent' objects.

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Ricky Swallow, *Make-do Suite* (detail), 2010
seven patinated bronze vessels with oak table

Ricky Swallow, *Make-do Suite*, 2010
seven patinated bronze vessels with oak table
Courtesy of Stuart Shave Modern Art, London
Image: Todd-White Art Photography, London

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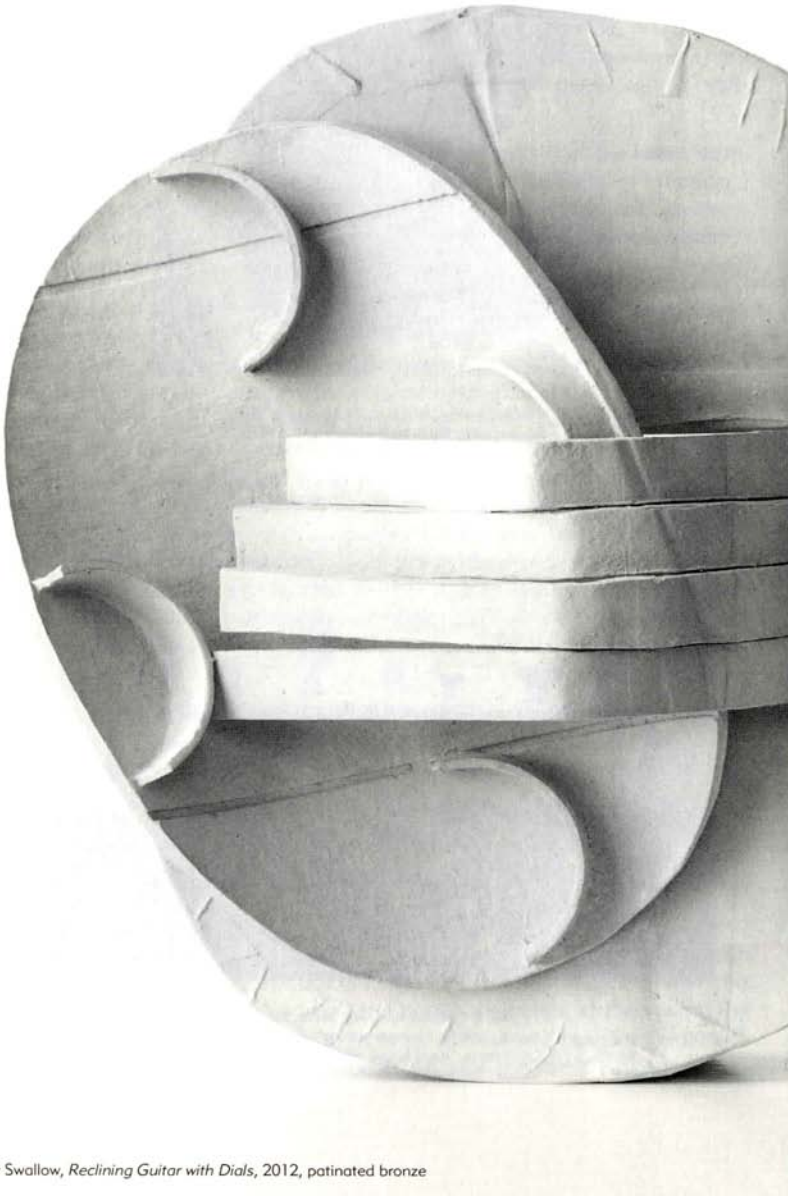

Ricky Swallow, *Reclining Guitar with Dials*, 2012, patinated bronze

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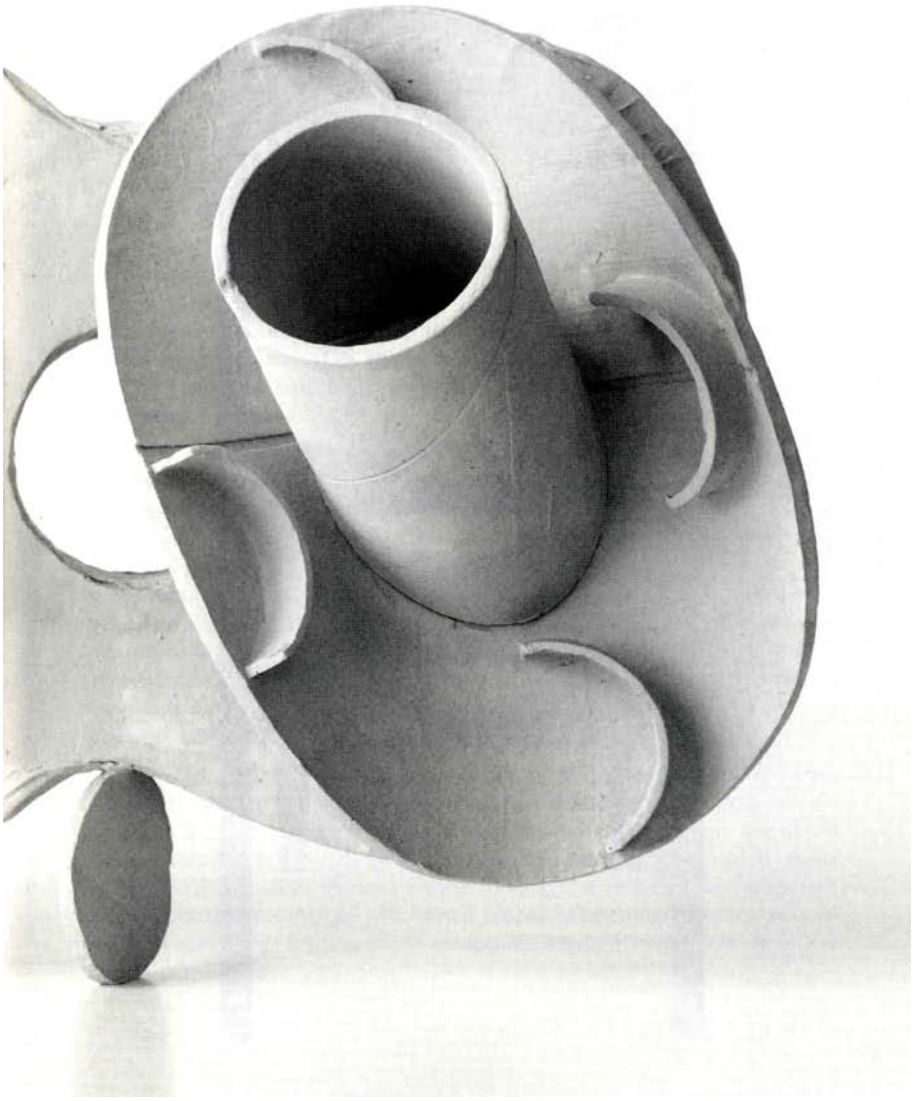

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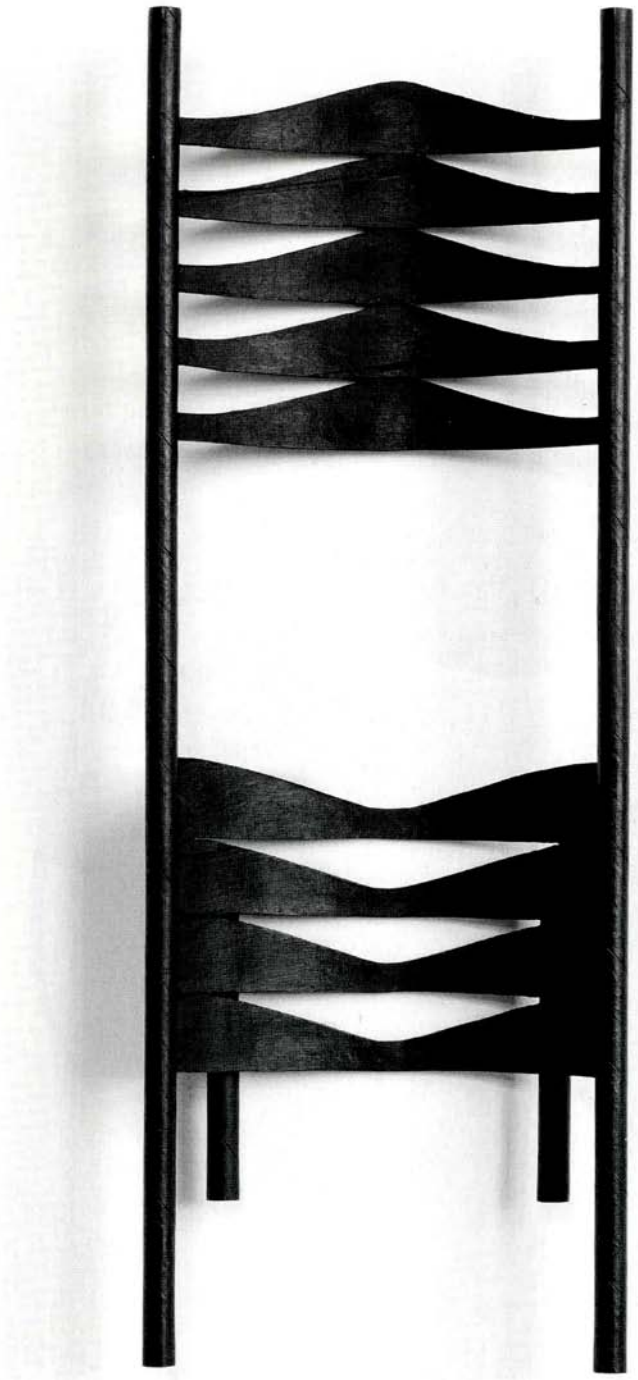

Ricky Swallow, *Chair Study/Relief (soot)*, 2013, patinated bronze

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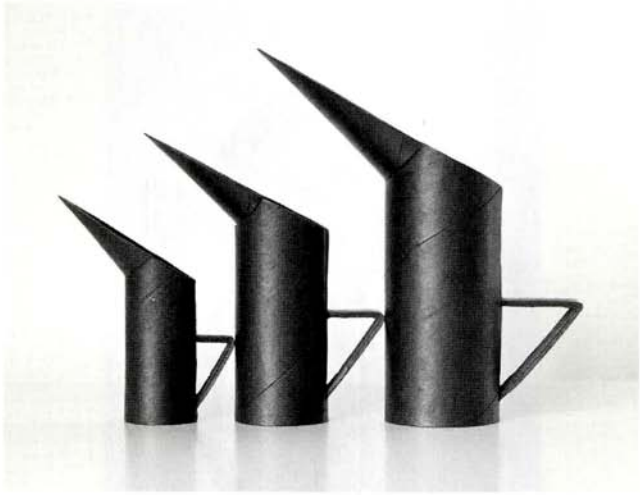

Ricky Swallow, *Penguin Pots (soot)*, 2011
patinated bronze

I was making sculptures as this formal exercise or homage — bootlegs, I guess — that landed somewhere between the preserved static I love in [Tom] Morandi and the prescription I was taking in of British modern ceramics at the time.

The way I felt making these works was very impulsive, a renewed excitement which comes from drawing or constructing things at a rate in which each form influences the next in an easily seen and measured way. Things were forming, accumulating in the studio on a daily or weekly basis, as opposed to a monthly basis, which was the only way I could measure progress when I was working on the wooden pieces. And that activity of building a work, a body of work, through an additive or tactile collage-based technique was so different from the carvings where material is removed to gain information. It reopened the door for me technically, and also allowed a more intuitive or symbiotic relationship to surface, between the kind of objects I collect and study and the kind of sculpture I want to make.

I've always been into exhausted objects, things which outlast their expected lifespan via improvised repair or adjustment, and also pottery that has either been reconstructed from the tiniest fragment, the shard literally surrounded by moulding compound to form a recognisable vessel in the British Museum. When I began making the vessel from the targets and mapping the surfaces with joined pieces, it became a studio archaeology of sorts. And the way those sculptures were patinated followed suite with that mentality.

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Ricky Swallow, *Retired Instruments with Disc (yellow)*, 2012
patinated bronze

Do you consider the casting of the cardboard sculptures and the patina application to be the final adjustments to their form? The patinated surface does such an accurate job of capturing the processes and materials used in their construction.

The sculptures as forms are finalised or fused or resolved upon their casting, but the patina process is the full stop in their realisation. It's strange to look at the bronzes through every state. I'm an over-attached parent in that regard, tracking these objects through each state on the way to bronze, wax gating, the shell room, busting them out of the shell after casting and then chasing the metal and assembling it in some instances. I try to participate and assist in these steps, more out of quality control — anxiety — than a sense of authourship, and also because I think I learn a lot from being a participant in the process. The selection of a patina for a piece is the most stressful task because you are assigning the object certain qualities through those choices, locking it into a specific reference via the colour or how a patina cloaks or reveals a surface. The term in your question "adjustment to their form", is really apt because it is an adjustment. Often I'm thinking of how heavy or light I want a piece to be, how industrial or domestic.

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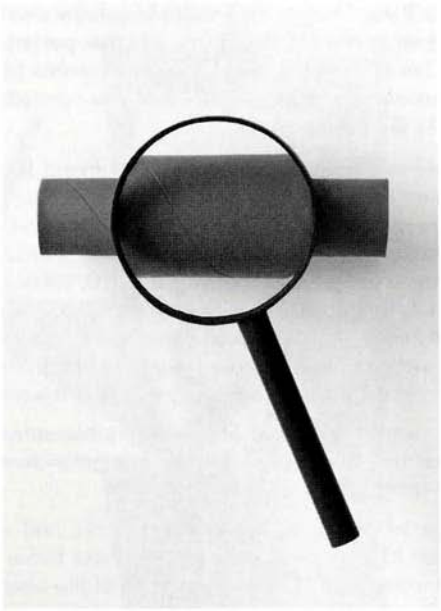

Ricky Swallow, *Magnifying Glass with Pipe*, 2011
patinated bronze

There are a few works which I re-patinated three or four times before they sat right, and in those cases the choices are normally, "This is kind of necessarily an ugly piece, should the patina honour that or contradict it?" In Robert Morris' 'Notes on Sculpture' (1966), as well as a fear of the "intimacy" and lack of "space" within small sculpture, he warns against the use of "intense colour", which "emphasizes the optical and subverts the physical" or "detaches itself from the whole work to become one more internal relationship." I've spent good time circling this text, and in the end I agree with his descriptions of how colour can affect a form, but disagree with the merits of the results. I've spent most of my career avoiding any use of colour and believing in the neutrality of the colour of the untreated medium itself, so employing [colour] in my work and trying to gain confidence in its value has been a new experience. I think it's important to have a specific palette or family of colours to work within. I like when you can identify an artist or designer's objects via the colour or application. I'm thinking of Doyle Lane's weed pots or Roy McMakin's stubbornly perfect colours, which he has used with consistency on his furniture for the past 20 years.

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Or someone like Peter Shire, where multiple colours can be instantly recognisable when applied to their form, whether pottery, furniture or other objects. Can you tell me about your relationship to Peter and how that led to the exhibition *GRAPEVINE*~ that you curated this year at David Kordansky Gallery in LA?

I was introduced to Peter through our mutual friend Ryan Conder, who runs South Willard in Los Angeles. I found an older two-toned hourglass-shaped EXP vase at the Pasadena flea market and when I showed Ryan he was like, "You gotta meet Peter and see his studio," [which was] just down the hill from Ryan in Echo Park. That was in 2010. Peter's a real influence on sculpture in LA, I think — even subconsciously, because his stuff is sort of camouflaged into the landscape on Echo Park Boulevard. Also through his association with Memphis [Group], some of the traits of which have been resurfacing in LA painting and sculpture over the past decade.

Although both [Ron] Nagle and Shire are pre-Memphis, when you dig back into their archive of objects… I'd call it dragster-deco, perhaps. [It's] something very specific to California.

I realised that a lot of Peter's really iconic works had not been shown within the context of a contemporary gallery whose focus was not specifically ceramics-based. The same goes for most of the artists that made up *GRAPEVINE*~. Even someone like Ron Nagle, who is a real artist's artist, and has been gaining a lot of deserved traction the past few years, had not shown a group of sculptures in LA for several years, and he's just up the grapevine in San Francisco. (The "grapevine" is the mountainous overpass on the Interstate 5 you cross which connects Southern California with the Central Valley and onto San Francisco.) I realised a lot of this work was being experienced via kids staring at their screens, at their phones, so it was neat to put it out there in all its awesome tactility, and the response was rewarding for me personally but I think for the artists too.

It goes without saying that most, if not all of the artists' work in the show has been an influence on my practice before and during the course of working with them on *GRAPEVINE*~. I think the common ingredient of influence would be the daily ritual towards a type of discipline or precision, very singular projects being pursued, unique visions played out plastically.

One part of the exhibition that I found particularly interesting was the 'index' in the second room, which contained works by the artists made from the late 1950s until the early 70s. This room also contained works by two artists, Ken Price and Peter Voulkos, who were not listed as participants in the exhibition. What was the reason for the separation of these works, and for including Price and Voulkos?

I always liked that smaller gallery at Dave's. Generally it's an office but it's also been used as a way to extend certain shows or add another element.

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Ricky Swallow, *Standing Figure with Animal and Shield*, 2012, patinated bronze

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My wife, Lesley Vance, hung watercolours in that room for her last exhibition of paintings there, and I liked how it added an intimate viewing experience to the show.

I found the Ken Price work in the studio of Michael Frimkess and the small Voulkos is a permanent fixture on one of John Mason's studio tables, along with other smaller pieces and models of his own work. The Price is from 1956. He had traded it with Frim and it really has some magic about it — the seeds of how talented Price was, even as a student. Also included in that room were a Mason pot from the 1960s, a very crude thing, a few pots by Frimkess from the 1960s owned by Ron Nagle, and a suite of tool prints by Mason, made in 1971 but not glazed till 30 years later, never exhibited before.

It was dubbed the 'index room' because it acted as a physical footnote to the show, displaying pieces closer to the expressionistic beginnings of the California Clay Movement. I wanted to separate them from the main exhibition because those pieces were behaving so differently to the tightness of the other works, and from where those artists had taken their respective practices. Somehow, the experience of discovering those works grouped like that in the small space approximated my initial excitement of discovering them in the artists' studios. In California, when you see properties listed, there is inevitably an extra room added to the original house plan that's not city-permitted. The term they use in the description is 'bonus room', which seems appropriate here.

I imagine the research and studio visits would have mirrored your own practice of collecting and accumulating personal objects. How is this situated in relation to producing objects?

I think it's interesting to live with objects and have them mean different things for you over time, or rather have different qualities in those things become more amplified than others. Collecting objects is something I can't imagine ever not doing, and making objects is also a seemingly compulsive activity, so as the nature of the material I'm collecting changes I'd like to think you could see that register in the work. It's by no means a crucial interpretive point, however. Also, while there are certain things that I collect in an ongoing fashion, [there are] groups of objects I have stopped collecting. It does work in cycles, accumulating specific groups of things and then saying, OK, I feel like I have exhausted this now, either because I'm trying to be momentarily more rational about how much space I have at home, or because I feel like I have enough examples that capture my impulse for that thing. In the studio, forms work in cycles also. There are bodies of work that can be obviously read as being made with the same spark. There are stragglers or transitional forms, then another body of objects, and I think there is some parallel to collecting there.

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Becoming a collector of sorts, always within spatial and economical restraints, I can more clearly understand an art collector's response to an object — that "I need this thing in my life" enthusiasm, which more pure collectors have. As an artist, it's great when you meet those collectors: Liz Laverty in Sydney emailed me a shot of one of my bronzes beside a small Robert Klippel sculpture she owns, and it blew my mind to be in that kind of company. Earlier this year I met a collector here, totally by chance, who has a recent bronze beside a small Matisse bronze that has been in his wife's family for generations. I'm drifting here, but experiencing collections in a domestic setting, whether that be folk art, Indigenous material or contemporary art, is potentially a richer experience for me because there are more variables, different readings to be had in the proximity of things to each other, and in an architectural environment where the taste of everything from furniture to textiles is put together quite individually. I'm always puzzled when I go to someone's place and they don't have any stuff! Not because it's wrong, but because I need things around me. My house, to an extent, is a sort of index to what I do as an artist. I don't have any of my own work at home… Maybe one small piece, I'm around it everyday; I don't need to see it when I get home. One thing I know has had an impact, through collecting ceramics and smaller sculptures, is this confidence to make works of a smaller scale. Some of the smallest things we have at home are my favourite forms: a tiny Inuit-carved otter made of bone, my Doyle Lane ceramics and also a David Musgrave wall relief in polished bronze. They all have such a specific formed-and-finished surface to them and a really potent energy blasting beyond their scale.

Collecting is compulsive too, and I mean collecting things on any level. A large part of it is about the search, the knowledge gleamed on the way, the accidental diversions in research that send you down other wormholes or branches of collecting. Behind every object, there's an activity.

END

Ricky Swallow is represented by Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney and Stuart Shave Modern Art, London.
All images courtesy the artist, Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney and Stuart Shave Modern Art, London.

Smith, Roberta, "Mind Is Outer Space," *New York Times*, July 25, 2013

The New York Times

July 25, 2013

'Mind Is Outer Space'

By ROBERTA SMITH

Casey Kaplan

525 West 21st Street, Chelsea

Through next Friday

One of the summer's better gallery group shows is this presentation of some two dozen works in various mediums by 17 artists organized by Loring Randolph and Alice Conconi, director and associate director at Casey Kaplan. The title implies either that the human brain is the greatest, most infinite unknown or that all ideas drift about the universe until someone gives them form. Most works here vacillate between these readings, suggesting that they may belong to the same continuum.

Aurélien Froment's exquisite video, "Second Gift," sets the stage with its exploration of the second of the 12 children's toys, called gifts, devised by Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852), the German educator who invented kindergarten. Gift 2, as it is known, features a frame from which hang a cube, a sphere and a cylinder, all made of wood. They look a bit like planets — a recurring motif here — but, as the video explains, are used by teachers to give young children a sense of the interconnectedness of geometric forms, materials and, by implication, everything in the world.

The video is a useful lesson in looking at a show full of conundrums: mysterious presences, objects and juxtapositions as well as abrupt shifts in scale or implication. Navid Nuur's image of an intergalactic expanse, printed on a rug, hangs near a 10-minute slide-projection-like HD video by Josh Tonsfeldt that seems to follow one family's life, or universe, in extreme, haphazard close-up. Ricky Swallow's small "Saturn Cup," in patinated bronze that looks like clay, has two rings and sits next to a small sculpture in pink rubber by Louise Bourgeois. It is an ear, but looks alien, as do the ghostly figures in paintings by Markus Amm, Maaike Schoorel and Gino De Dominicis, or the implied supernatural beings in Hao Liang's series of enticing illustrations on silk of Chinese poetry.

After pertinent contributions by Matt Hoyt, Mark Barrow, Haris Epaminonda and others, Mr. Froment rounds out the show with three photographs that suggest ancient sculpture but are details from "The Ideal Palace," an immense work of outsider sculpture/architecture that Ferdinand Cheval (1836-1924), a postman, built over several decades beginning in 1879, in Hauterives, France.

This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:

Correction: July 26, 2013

An earlier version of this review misspelled an artist's surname and referred incorrectly to his work in the show. He is Josh Tonsfeldt, not Tonfeldt, and while the work resembles a slide projection, it is an HD video projection of still images, not a slide projection.

Pym, William, “Julian Dashper & Ricky Swallow,” *Art Asia Pacific*, Issue 83, May/June 2013, p. 168-169

Julian Dashper & Ricky Swallow

BY WILLIAM PYM

(Left)
JULIAN DASHPER, *Untitled (O)*, 1992, photogram with black frame, 21.9 x 21.9 cm. Courtesy Minus Space, New York.

(Right)
RICKY SWALLOW, *Tube Lamp Study/Yellow*, 2011, bronze, 19.1 x 15.2 x 7.6 cm. Copyright the artist. Courtesy Stuart Shave Modern Art, London.

Few contemporary Japanese artists engage with politics; fewer still examine the painful, contentious legacy of Japan's colonial past. Tomoko Yoneda is one of those few. Whether taken in Northern Ireland, Hungary, South Korea or Saipan, her photographs cast a dispassionate gaze on landscapes and interiors whose eerie calm belies intense historical trauma.

Yoneda's "Japanese House" series (2010) focuses on Taiwan, Japan's first colony, held from 1895 to 1945. The photographs show the forlorn interiors of Japanese-style houses built during the occupation, such as the residence of General Wang Shu-ming, who was chief of staff under Chiang Kai-shek. In these works, as in other series, Yoneda cultivates a dissonant relationship between the images and their titles. In one photograph, the dark grid of a window frame, subdivided by the bluish silhouette of a grille outside the frosted glass, appears as a formal abstraction. But even a brief look at the title—*Former Residence of the Daughter of Japanese Prime Minister Kantaro Suzuki, Who Accepted the Potsdam Declaration and Full Surrender to the Allied Powers Ending the Second World War, Qingtian Street, I*—evokes the torrid history of a vanquished ideology and the personal stakes that were once embedded within.

Motoyuki Shitamichi has explored similar territory, also reflecting on the physical remnants of World War II in Japan and Asia. His "Bunkers" series (2001–05) shows the squat concrete domes of abandoned aircraft shelters, some of them overgrown with foliage, lurking ominously in the middle of rural Japanese townscapes. In "Torii" (2006–12), Shitamichi portrays some of the remaining *torii* gates of Shinto shrines that the Imperial Army built all over the Asia-Pacific region—Tinian, Saipan, Eastern Russia, Northeast China and Taiwan. These once-monumental structures are now lonely, diminutive and emasculated. One is a tiny speck in a wide, grassy valley; another is shrouded by jungle; yet another is barely visible among the crucifixes of a more recently built cemetery. In one of the most poignant images, the *torii* lies flat on its side, serving as a bench in a public park.

Yoneda's and Shitamichi's photographs bring us back to a very different and fateful conception of Japan: when the country was the heart of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. The construction of shrines in the colonies was integral to Japan's late-19th-century attempt to use Shintoism as a means to create a unified national identity centered on the emperor, not only on the mainland but across the entire empire. These gates are all that remain, demarcating borders that are now long gone. By contrast, Yoneda's interiors are unmonumental; their revelations of the paradoxes of imperialism and cultural cross-pollination are so quiet, so subtle, that they are almost imperceptible. While these are ostensibly "Japanese" houses with traditional shoji doors and tatami mats, the lighting fixtures are reminiscent of European modernism and the patterns on the curtains and wallpaper more typically Chinese.

Although these photographs are windows into another age, they are wholly relevant to the present. Political relations between Japan and its former colonies continue to be defined by bitter resentment and unchecked jingoism on all sides. But perhaps what is most discouraging is Japan's persistent historical amnesia, its collective denial about the consequences of its wartime aggression. The only way to confront this pathology is to present the facts. Emotionally detached and avoiding absolute interpretations, Yoneda's and Shitamichi's images show us what the past looks like today, casting light on the ambiguities of recorded history. These images speak eloquently for the countless lives lost and scarred in the name of an ideology of unification that did little more than divide.

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Julian Dashper (1960–2009) was a conceptual artist from New Zealand who made work about the ways we receive and process sensory experiences, as well as the ways we insist on formalizing aesthetic experiences through the institutional mechanism we call the art world. *Buzz* (2001), for example, is a recording of a fluorescent Dan Flavin sculpture. By eliminating the visual element and foregrounding ambient noise, *Buzz* reveals something that no one ever talks about regarding these over-discussed, glowing altars to Western art in the second half of the 20th century. *Buzz* feels like it should be a one-liner, but it refuses to be funny. The sound of electricity is elemental and true, as much a fact of Flavin's pieces as their prestige and value to museums of modern art the world over.

Ricky Swallow is an Australian sculptor based in Los Angeles. He became an international name after exhibiting *Killing Time* (2003–04), a virtuosic and uncanny life-size wood carving of a large table covered in dead sea creatures, at the 2005 Venice Biennale. The work resembles a dripping, cornucopic Dutch 17th-century still-life painting. For the past two years, Swallow has produced small works cast in brightly patinated bronze from forms made of taped-together cardboard tubing. They resemble, to varying degrees of specificity, guitars and vessels and lamps and hats and cups. Mostly, however, they resemble models—the sculptor's sketch in space, casual, personal and preliminary, before real life in the world of people and other three-dimensional things. They are often eerily indistinguishable from works made 60 or 70 years ago. That being the case, why did Swallow make them?

Similarly, Dashper returned throughout his career, as a totem, to the drumhead, the round bit of stretched skin or plastic that you bash on top of a drum. He hung them on the wall, painted imaginary band logos on them, cut holes in them, and most often painted target patterns on them in colorful concentric circles of enamel or vinyl. They are beyond familiar, these targets. And as works of art they seem beyond redundant. The American artist Kenneth Noland's 40-year obsession with targets has hardwired such circular designs into our understanding of what abstract painting is and is about. Jasper Johns did his part too. So why did Dashper make them?

The notion of "folk forms," a vernacular of the shared and passed-down most commonly associated with music, presses hard against the way we instinctively feel, especially in capitalistic societies, about ownership. Appropriation is now too universal a gesture not to be considered an act of creation, and the word "author" no longer connotes godlike authority. Everything we make is laden with the influence of, or is perhaps even a collaboration with, things that have been made before.

A folk form is a form that is so strong, and so clean, that we need not claim it, or change it, but simply propagate it and let it resonate forward to future generations. A folk song is a song that is easy to sing because it has been sung for centuries, changing in arrangement alongside cosmetic changes in fashion, while fundamentally carrying the same tune. Modern and contemporary art have never worked this way, demanding instead continuous invention and discovery. Yet Julian Dashper's insistent, repetitive drumheads and Ricky Swallow's recent bronzes are folk forms. They are objects that have visual potency without the sheen of freshness or uniqueness, or a need to be aggressively interesting today. They trust and enjoy being good objects. They could live anywhere for a long time, if not forever, and still be beautiful, because they are elemental and true.

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Tomoko Yoneda & Motoyuki Shitamichi

BY ASHLEY RAWLINGS

TOMOKO YONEDA, *Former House of General Wang Shu-ming, the Chief of Staff under Chiang Kai-shek, Cidong Street, II*, 2010, C-type print, 65 x 83 cm. Courtesy the artist.

MOTOYUKI SHITAMICHI, *Torii #6, Hualien, Taiwan*, 2006–12, C-type print, 150 x 100 cm. Courtesy the artist and Nap Gallery, Tokyo.

Bedford, Christopher, “A Replacement of Its Former Self,” *Lesley Vance & Ricky Swallow at The Huntington*, The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens, Seattle: Marquand Books, Inc., 2012, pp. 22-27

A Replacement of Its Former Self

Christopher Bedford

Bedford, Christopher, "A Replacement of Its Former Self," *Lesley Vance & Ricky Swallow at The Huntington*, The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens, Seattle: Marquand Books, Inc., 2012, pp. 22-27

In 1950 and then again in 1951, David Smith received a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship, an award that permitted the artist to set aside, at least temporarily, his teaching responsibilities and commit himself unfettered to the studio. Unsurprisingly, those years proved productive for Smith, yielding at least three enduring masterpieces: *Australia* (1951), *Hudson River Landscape* (1951), and *The Letter* (1950) (fig. 9). Variously interpreted as a series of deliberately unintelligible glyphs, a plea to an ex-lover, a transcription of the famous letter in James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake,* and a note to his mother about Ohio, *The Letter* is above all and most vitally a translation of one thing into another. *The Letter* is made intelligible as such by an inscription and a salutation that bracket a body of text made up of what Smith called "object symbols."[1] Yet everything Smith achieves in the work turns the traditional function of the letter on its head: the weightlessness of paper is given the heft and rigidity of steel, its fundamental portability nullified, the object tethered to the earth by a base; the letter's opening salutation is reduced to an abstract squiggle in space; and the body of the text does not communicate via a shared language, but dumbfounds with a succession of hermetic symbols known only to the author. The only element that can be easily understood as content is the signature, and not because the words are easily read, but because Smith's autographic mark is eminently recognizable as an image (or brand), making language, in turn, irrelevant. Smith, then, takes a form—the letter—with a standard cultural application defined by language, and denies that conventional utility, making it function only as an image to be looked at.

That the Australian-born sculptor Ricky Swallow would feel a kinship with David Smith and with *The Letter* in particular should come as no surprise to anyone familiar with the former's work. Consider the following quotes, the first from Swallow and the second from Smith:

> Growing up around a more working-class environment, the closest things to sculpture I was exposed to were the crafts related to the fishing profession my father was involved in—cray pots (lobster baskets) made from tea tree limbs, lead net weights poured into molds in our yard, or my

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Fig. 9 David Smith
The Letter, 1950
Welded steel, 37⅝ × 22⅞ × 9¼ in.
Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute, Utica, NY

> father’s welded cube structures for storing ropes . . . there was always this anxious necessity to keep oneself occupied . . . So I went off to art school with a fairly limited understanding of what constitutes being an artist, yet this observed daily ritual of work—of stubborn traditions followed and rudimentary materials employed—was something I adopted myself and I still believe in those basic principles . . . “hands out of pockets!” as my father would say.[2]
>
> The mystic modeling clay in only Ohio mud, the tools are at hand in garages and factories. Casting can be achieved in almost every town. Visions are from the imaginative mind, sculpture can come from the found discards in nature, from sticks and stones and parts and pieces, assembled or monolithic, solid form, open form, lines of form, or, like a painting, the illusion of form.[3]

Both artists point resolutely to a philosophy of making that is grounded practically and ideologically in the labor activities of the working class, and to the materials, objects, tools, and processes of that world as the literal genesis of their efforts to forge a new world of images, a world of and about the one we all occupy. Smith believed that work begets work,

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and Swallow shares that conviction. But while both artists champion the notion of a laboring class, and count themselves as workers, their respective stagings of that position are somewhat different. As a practicing artist, Smith's relationship to the working class ideal was intentionally indexical, hinging on a set of processes and materials that related directly to the physical work done by men in foundries and factories, men with whom he felt a deep affinity. That Swallow shares Smith's investment in the virtues and value of work is clear, but his materials and processes do not parallel the labor performed by working men in the same way. Instead, the link back to "common people and common things" is actuated on the level of imagery, or as Swallow notes, "ritual" acts and objects familiar and accessible to all.

Take, for instance, Swallow's interest in domestic subjects, particularly vessels. *Stacking Cup/Tapered (Bone),* 2011, is a modest object, measuring 4¼ × 5¼ × 4¼ inches—domestically scaled, one might say—cast in bronze and then patinated, in an edition of three with one artist's proof. Like many of his most recent vessels, the object is sketched from memory using a flexible system of cardboard and tape, its form continually embellished and improvised to eventually yield a splintered vision of its former self. Once cast and patinated—this one a soft, matte white—the surface of the object faithfully captures its deliberately rough means of construction; the imperfect joins in the cardboard and folds in the tape mark out a peculiar kind of facture that has become Swallow's signature. Quite clearly, then, neither mimesis nor trompe-l'oeil are of interest to the artist. His effort isn't to faithfully reproduce a likeness, but to denote the process of thinking and working from the quotidian to the quietly extraordinary; from the observed world, to something other. The central principle at work here is the same one that governs Smith's *The Letter,* namely translation: the process by which the artist makes of the familiar and useful, an object that is markedly neither.

While Smith relied on his processes and materials to tether his work to the working milieu that was his intended point of reference, Swallow's approach to the same idea is, as we've already seen, more oblique and less specific. He gravitates to objects defined by what he calls an air of "collective ownership," their utter familiarity as things in the world making them particularly effective as blank canvases for the imposition of new meaning.[4] Though working-class ethics, craft, and tools may be his point of reference, his objects signify more democratically than that, being everyday and common in the broadest sense. As a result, perhaps, Swallow's work exerts a magnetism that seems disproportionate to his choice of subject matter; one might even say that his sculptures should not be as interesting as they are! *Single Pot with Lid (Bone/Soot),* 2011, could be a teapot or a shrunken watering can—old, discarded, or hurriedly fixed up to extend its life just a little. But the pot and the lid, both cast in bronze with a delicate white patina, sit atop two bronze pedestals cast from sawn wooden blocks,

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Fig. 10 Ricky Swallow, Installation view, the artist's studio, Los Angeles, 2011

signifying immediately their status as objects to be looked at. As a still life, *Single Pot with Lid (Bone/Soot)* conforms to the basic conventions of the genre in that it proposes the forthrightly mundane as an object for contemplation. But this sculpture, like much of Swallow's work, scrupulously avoids the laden symbolism associated with the highest achievements of the genre. His assemblies do not, for instance, follow in the footsteps of Netherlandish vanitas painting of the sixteenth and seventeenth century, or the Renaissance memento mori tradition, and nor, for that matter, does he appear interested in advancing the radical formal experiments enacted on the genre during the artistic ferment of the early twentieth century. If Swallow has a kinsman within the ranks of the still-life tradition, that person might be the Italian painter Giorgio Morandi, who, like Swallow, returned again and again to the same subjects, but even this comparison, while formally apposite, lacks any deeper logic.

Single Pot with Lid (Bone/Soot), and many other works like it, command one's total attention not because they are allegorical, represent a self-evidently important subject, advance a wildly radical formal agenda, are pointedly topical or political, or trade in the easy appeal of modern-day spectacle. Rather, they embody the possibility—modestly and simply—of pure invention: a message made all the more accessible, direct, and resonant because Swallow performs his transformations on the most commonplace objects, objects available and used by each of us daily.

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When he reimagines the form of a lamp in *Table Lamp Study (Cadmium Yellow),* 2011—casting his cardboard invention in bronze, and finishing the composition in yellow—the resultant proposition is remarkable precisely because Swallow wrings the elusively new from the familiar with the opposite of extravagance. The same applies to the aforementioned *Single Pot with Lid (Bone/Soot).* Perched atop their diminutive black monoliths, the two components are quiet and unassuming in their scale and subject; yet in the curiousness of their construction and in their subtly orchestrated flirtation with familiarity and utility, they achieve the same autonomy as objects that Smith achieved so memorably with *The Letter.* If one of Smith's objectives was to parlay the life, ethics, and materials of the working man into the basis for a life in art, then Swallow's still-evolving practice might be understood as a comparable effort to demystify art-making—to strip it of its hermeticism and specialization—and argue through his own subjects and working processes that everyday contexts and the most incidental objects can be the basis for a compelling idea; in other words, to make aesthetic ideas seamless with the common world in a very concrete sense.

Ricky Swallow builds himself into the material world through this method of translation, complicating common objects through his labor, inscribing in them a new order of meaning that has everything to do with his eye, mind, and hand, and little to do with the object's former outward signification. What they were made *for* is now immaterial; what matters now is *how* they were made and that they demand a new kind of attention. The artist himself notes: "this economy of labor and materials toward something that's a translation of a traditional object, a replacement of its former self, is something I love."[5] As Swallow works to further populate *his* world of former selves, the force of his ideas and the reach of his vision into *our* world become more and more apparent.

1 David Smith, quoted in *David Smith: A Centennial,* ed. Carmen Giménez (New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 2006), 404.

2 Ricky Swallow, e-mail message to the author, March 12, 2012.

3 David Smith, "Tradition and Identity," transcript of a speech given on April 17, 1959, at Ohio University in Athens, Ohio, which Smith attended for a year in 1924–25, http://www.davidsmithestate.org/statements.html.

4 Ricky Swallow, "500 Words," *Artforum,* Jan. 30, 2011, http://artforum.com/words/id=27455.

5 Swallow, "500 Words."

Hess, Catherine, “A Creative Act,” *Lesley Vance & Ricky Swallow at The Huntington*, The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens, Seattle: Marquand Books, Inc., 2012, pp. 8-14

A Creative Act

Catherine Hess

Hess, Catherine, "A Creative Act," *Lesley Vance & Ricky Swallow at The Huntington*, The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens, Seattle: Marquand Books, Inc., 2012, pp. 8-14

The assembling of an art collection is a creative act. Great art collectors require vision and passion, qualities that count to a greater degree than any of the more prosaic interests that might come into play, such as investment potential or cultural validation. Arabella and Henry E. Huntington were great art collectors. Their history is ably told elsewhere.[1] Nevertheless, it is useful to recapitulate it briefly here.

Henry Edwards Huntington moved to San Francisco at the age of forty-two to help his uncle, railroad magnate Collis P. Huntington, manage the Southern Pacific Railroad. On a trip to Southern California, he visited a ranch in the San Gabriel Valley, northeast of Los Angeles, and fell in love with the property (fig. 1). Henry's attraction to the climate and the natural beauty of the area, coupled with his interest in the commercial and cultural potential of the region, led him to move to Los Angeles in 1902—two years after Collis's death—and buy the beloved ranch when the opportunity presented itself the following year.

Fig. 1
The Huntington residence from the south, set against the San Gabriel Mountains, circa 1911–12. Reproduced by permission of the Huntington Library, San Marino, CA

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Fig. 2 Henry E. Huntington standing in front of the north façade of the Huntington residence, circa 1915. Reproduced by permission of the Huntington Library, San Marino, CA

In 1910, at the age of sixty, Huntington began to devote most of his time to the collecting of rare books, a lifelong passion. While his book collection was growing, Henry Huntington was also developing an interest in art, influenced in large part by Arabella Huntington, Collis's widow, with whom he had become personally involved following Collis's death. His art collecting accelerated just at this time. She was one of the wealthiest women in America and one of the most important collectors of her generation. Henry and Arabella eventually married in 1913 when they were both in their early sixties.

Henry hired the Pasadena architecture firm of Myron Hunt and Elmer Grey to design the San Marino residence, which was to serve as a part-time home. Construction began in 1908 and the Huntingtons finally occupied their Beaux-Arts style residence in 1914 (fig. 2). Five years later, with the intention of eventually opening the collection to the public, Henry and Arabella transferred the property and collections to a nonprofit trust. Following Arabella's death in 1924 and Henry's in 1927, the institution opened to the public in 1928 (figs. 3, 4).

Their collecting activity was in accord with the standards of Gilded Age taste—eighteenth-century British and French painting and decorative arts as well as a smattering of Italian works of art—as advocated by their primary art dealer, Joseph Duveen. While these standards were popular as a means of linking newly rich Americans with an august past, more mundane circumstances influenced what they collected. These circumstances

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Fig. 3 Large drawing room in the Huntington residence. The image was published in the *Los Angeles Times,* January 2, 1930. Reproduced by permission of the Huntington Library, San Marino, CA

Fig. 4 Dining Room in the Huntington residence soon after opening to the public in 1928. Reproduced by permission of the Huntington Library, San Marino, CA

included increased access to European art coming on to the market; a new and vibrant art market that capitalized on the unprecedented wealth they and their fellow industrialists accumulated during the second half of the nineteenth century; and a new affordability of imported works of art thanks to the repeal of certain tariffs. Within this new arena, Duveen proved to be ever perceptive and opportunistic. He "noticed that Europe had plenty of art and America had plenty of money and his astonishing career was the product of that simple observation."[2]

Other than what was available, why such an emphasis on British and French art? Henry's penchant for British art probably grew out of an interest in British material for his library. Might Arabella's Francophilia be traceable to the fact that her grandmother was French, whose surname—Duval—she carried as her middle name? Certainly, she was following in the path of notable British collectors of the early nineteenth century whose interest in French eighteenth-century art sprung from the desire to be linked with the French *ancien régime.* The taste for this material continued into the late nineteenth century as displayed in such aristocratic British residences as the Wallace Collection and Waddesdon Manor, both of which served as important models for Henry and Arabella.

Within this collecting scheme, they appear to have been only marginally concerned with either art of their time or American art, with a few notable exceptions. They acquired a bronze sculpture of a *Bacchante and Infant Faun* directly from its American artist, Frederick MacMonnies, who

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also advised on the placement of the sculpture among cycads just northeast of the mansion, where it stands today. In addition, a pair of carved stone dogs by Arabella's daughter-in-law and Henry's niece by marriage, Anna Hyatt Huntington, entered the collection in 1923.

American art interested them to the degree that it related to their other collecting areas. His adopted home in the American West inspired Henry to acquire contemporary photographs by Carl Moon and Frederick Monsen, while presidential portraits—in photographs, paintings, and sculpture—aligned with Henry's library holdings. Paintings by Anglo-American John Singleton Copley and Benjamin West, and furniture by Franco-American Charles Honoré Lannuier fit in well with their other works of art.[3]

What sense, then, does an installation of contemporary American art have in the setting of the Huntington mansion?

All art was at one time contemporary. For Henry and Arabella, the most significant contemporary work of art on their San Marino property was the house itself, as it continues to be in the narrative of the place. When it was built, the mansion constituted a remarkable addition to the landscape of southern California. Not only was it one of the first important examples of Beaux-Arts architecture in the region but also, at 35,000 square feet, it remained the region's largest residence for many decades.

Little is known about the disposition of art and furnishings in the mansion. And although room-by-room inventories were compiled after Henry's death in 1927, no photograph remains of the interior spaces from the time the couple inhabited them. A few photos document gorgeous exterior views from 1915 to 1920, but only one records an interior view, of the dining room, set for a luncheon with the Crown Prince of Sweden in July 1926, two years after Arabella's death and one before Henry's (fig. 5). The paintings on the walls in that photograph tell us that before the Portrait Gallery was constructed in the early 1930s, the Grand Manner portraits crowded the smaller-scale domestic settings. The dining room retains its early twentieth-century chandelier—matching the corner wall lights that remain in the room—that was replaced with an eighteenth-century crystal one in 1959. The space appears ornate and varied, formal yet inviting.

Why Arabella and Henry chose not to document the carefully constructed and installed interiors may be explained by their interest in privacy and their conception of the place as a supremely private home, not intended for the parties one might associate with other Gilded Age mansions. Nevertheless, their synthesized amalgam of art, decoration, and architecture must have been purposeful and personalized, though it was certainly less quixotic than those of Isabella Stewart Gardner in her Fenway Park home, Albert Barnes in his Merion, Pennsylvania, complex, or Louise and Walter Arensberg in their Hollywood residence.[4]

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Fig. 5 Dining Room in the Huntington residence set for a luncheon, July 1926.
Reproduced by permission of the Huntington Library, San Marino, CA

Henry and Arabella reinstalled their collection as it grew and surely they organized the displays in intentional groupings to create relationships among the works and within the design of the house. Their collection was a growing and shifting ensemble, creatively conceived and assembled, varying with changes in circumstance and desire, and set against the architectural backdrop of their house. Although little is known about what those displays looked liked, much less signified, curatorial interventions and acquisitions since the house opened to the public in 1928 continue the creative process of display. Additions are made to engage with the Huntingtons' collections in ways that enhance and enlarge their original vision. Two of the most significant are surely Anthony van Dyck's *Anne (Killigrew) Kirke* of about 1637, acquired in 1983, and Joseph Wright of Derby's *Vesuvius from Portici* of about 1774–76, acquired in 1997. These works effectively communicate with other works of art around them so that the public is encouraged, by their very presence and through effective textual information, to create thoughtful links and meanings, be they intellectual, visual, or personal.

Such is the intent of the display of artwork by Lesley Vance and Ricky Swallow. Like Arabella and Henry, they are married to one another, and, like Arabella and Henry, they have distinct creative visions. Nevertheless, sharing studio space provides Vance and Swallow the opportunity to assess and discuss their work with one another. To what degree conjugality and propinquity affect the results is an interesting question.

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Since theirs is a temporary installation, the presentation can be more eccentric, provocative, and challenging than any longer-term addition to the Huntington's permanent collection. This situation is a special and valuable one. It allows for a vital and lively examination of the surrounding painting, sculpture, decorative arts, and architecture. Both Vance's and Swallow's work links with artwork of the past: Old Master paintings, patinated bronzes, still lifes, glazed ceramics, objects of virtue. Their presence among the Huntington's collections will strike a familiar note while, perhaps, provoking new associations and evaluations.

1 Shelley M. Bennett, "The Formation of Henry E. Huntington's Collection of British Paintings," in *British Paintings at The Huntington,* ed. Robyn Asleson and Shelley M. Bennett (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 1–15; Shelley M. Bennett, "Henry and Arabella Huntington: The Staging of Eighteenth-Century French Art by Twentieth-Century Americans," in *French Art of the Eighteenth Century at The Huntington,* ed. Shelley M. Bennett and Carolyn Sargentson (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 1–27.

2 S. N. Behrman, *Duveen* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1952), 1.

3 My thanks to Jenny Watts, Curator of Photographs, the Huntington Library; and Jessica Todd Smith, Chief Curator of American Art, the Huntington Art Collections, for the information they provided on these points.

4 See, for example, Nicolai Ouroussoff, "Eccentricity Gives Way to Uniformity in Museums," *New York Times,* March 26, 2011; available online: *http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/27 /weekinreview/27ouroussof.html;* and Naomi Sawelson-Gorse, "'For the Want of a Nail': The Disposition of the Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection" (master's thesis, University of California, Riverside, 1987).

Myers, Holly, “Review: Ricky Swallow’s modern sculpture feels right at home at Huntington,” *LATimes.com*, December 23, 2012

Los Angeles Times

Review: Ricky Swallow's modern sculpture feels right at home at Huntington

Works by the Australian-born, L.A.-based sculptor are paired with abstract paintings by artist and wife Lesley Vance. The contrast between setting and art benefits the art and the gallery.

Holly Myers

Lesley Vance, 2012 oil on linen 12x10 inches. (Fredrik Nilsen / The Huntington)

In a sunny, wood-paneled, south-facing room on the second floor of the Huntington Art Gallery, visitors who've come to peruse the Flemish Madonnas and Constable landscapes, the cases of stately British silver and florid French porcelain, will happen upon something a little unusual over the next couple of months.

It's not obvious at first. At the end of a hallway at the top of the staircase, a tall, slender sculpture appears framed in a window. It has a delicate and graceful mien, not dissimilar from those of the 18th century ladies in the portrait gallery downstairs.

Come closer, however, and you will see that this is not a lady at all but a loosely abstracted pair of legs, replicated and stacked in shrinking scale, in a manner reminiscent of Marcel Duchamp's "Nude Descending a Staircase."

Could it be — modern? Come closer still and you will find a curious detail on one corner of the base: a tear revealing a corrugated surface underneath. Could it be cardboard? Could it be — contemporary?

Myers, Holly, “Review: Ricky Swallow’s modern sculpture feels right at home at Huntington,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 23, 2012

The piece is "Descending Figure" by Australian-born, L.A.-based sculptor Ricky Swallow, and it is indeed contemporary: part of a two-person show that marks the first occasion on which real estate in the gallery of the beaux-arts mansion at the architectural heart of the the Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens has been given over to a living artist.

Contemporary work has appeared from time to time in other areas, most often in the gardens or wound into other shows. Another example appears in the exhibition "A Strange and Fearful Interest: Death, Mourning, and Memory in the American Civil War" in the Boone Gallery, where a room of truly harrowing photographs documenting the aftermath of the Battle of Antietam is accompanied by a haunting soundtrack by painter and sound artist Steve Roden.

The show pairs Swallow with painter Lesley Vance, who also happens to be his wife. The two have never shown together, but it is an inspired pairing. Swallow's sculptures — which are bronze, in fact, though cast from cardboard — riff on the forms of common objects like coffee cups, clocks and magnifying glasses to produce playful, idiosyncratically elegant works that ride the line between realism and abstraction.

Most are much smaller than the piece in the window, with an objet d'art scale that feels right at home in these galleries. They have a weight here, a sense of gravity and substance, that wasn't as apparent in Swallow's 2011 show at Mark Foxx, where the playful character could more easily be mistaken for glib.

Vance's paintings, strikingly sophisticated abstractions conceived at a wonderfully modest scale — the largest is 21 by 14 inches — involve the layering and scraping away (with a palette knife) of multiple veils of wet oil paint to produce curling, moody compositions that seem to be lighted from within.

As with Swallow's deceptively refined sculptures, whose curves and hollows they feel loosely but constructively in dialogue with, the paintings have a subtle dignity, a classical air, that would be easy to miss or underestimate in the often grosser milieu of the contemporary art world — in an art fair, for instance.

Here, among the wainscoting and the marble fireplace, this quality is happily allowed to come to the fore. It is, indeed, a strikingly beneficial exchange all around: these two young, dynamic artists bring life to these august but static galleries, while the galleries lend the artists a venerable context, illuminating their place in a continuum that goes back for centuries.

In our obsessively up-to-the-minute culture — and in an art world geared almost exclusively to the new and the hot — this isn't an opportunity that many young contemporary artists enjoy.

Finkel, Jori, “Huntington mansion to house works from Lesley Vance, Ricky Swallow,” *LATimes.com*, August 10, 2012

Los Angeles Times

Huntington mansion to house works from Lesley Vance, Ricky Swallow

Jori Finkel

It's hard to keep a house museum from seeming dusty and static, even one as full of surprises -- and British paintings and French porcelain -- as the Huntington mansion. That's one reason why the powers-that-be at the Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens have decided to introduce new work by living artists into the mansion for the first time in its 84-year history.

Huntingon curator Catherine Hess and guest curator Christopher Bedford (of the Rose Art Museum) have been working with two L.A. artists, Lesley Vance and Ricky Swallow, to exhibit their art in an upstairs room in the mansion for a show that will open Nov. 10. Usually this room holds 18th century British paintings and objects like silverware and musical instruments, but the contents will be removed for the occasion.

It will mark the first time Vance and Swallow, who are married and show here at the David Kordansky and Marc Foxx galleries, respectively, have showed their work together in the same gallery space.

Vance, who makes abstract paintings with the glimmering chiarascuoro effects of an Old Masters palette, will have eight or nine works on view. Swallow, whose enigmatic sculptures often speak to everyday objects, will have 12 small sculptures on display.

Much of the work is new, but they said it was not made in response to any particular artworks at the Huntington as much as inspired by the idea and texture of domestic life.

So is this another example of a contemporary art intervention into an established historical site?

"It could be considered an intervention in that it will be contemporary art in a place you're not used to seeing it," said Swallow. "But both of our work references historical models and modernism, so won't be such a radical shift. I'm hoping it will seem at home there."

"I don't consider it an intervention -- I think that's too disruptive a term," said Vance.

But she did acknowledge that the room itself will look a lot different come November. "What I'm most excited about is the chance to lighten up the room. I'm excited to lift the curtains and paint the room white and hang it more sparingly than most of the rooms are hung with different display mechanisms -- simple pedestals -- for Ricky's sculptures."

"It's also an exciting opportunity to see what happens when our work does come together in the same room," she said.

Ollman, Leah, “Art Review: Ricky Swallow, Marc Foxx,” *LATimes.com*, December 8, 2011

Los Angeles Times

Art review: Ricky Swallow at Marc Foxx

Leah Ollman

Image: Ricky Swallow, "Blowing Hats." From Marc Foxx.

Each of the little alchemical wonders in Ricky Swallow’s show at Marc Foxx started as a cardboard tube. The Australian-born, L.A.-based Swallow cut, folded and otherwise altered the humble, functional tubes of various diameters, turning them into jaunty tabletop sculptures cast in bronze. Three “Penguin Pots” in soot black stand in ascending sequence, angular handles aimed in one direction, extended beak-like spouts in the other. Two bone-white mugs, both split in half, nest into each other like double parentheses. A cigarette sends up a waft of blue smoke in the shape of a French curve.

The transposition of an everyday object into something else, materially and psychologically, brings to mind Therrien and Gober, as well as the *ceci-n’est-pas* sly humor of Magritte. Four small, gray top hats, stilled at different points in a windblown tumble, make “Blowing Hats” a stop-motion animated sculpture, one with the bittersweet charm of Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton antics. Figures are implied throughout, gracefully distilled into a pair of half-pipe legs or a row of coat buttons.

Swallow dips into an Art Deco idiom when he renders letters and numbers out of snippets of tubing, and elsewhere adopts a sort of Cubist approach to a single subject’s multiple planes. Art historical echoes resound among these works, yet they have distinctive character of their own, a highly appealing mix of modesty, tenderness, elegance and wit.

Byrt, Andrew, "Ricky Swallow," Artforum, May 2011, p. 297

ARTFORUM

Ricky Swallow

STUART SHAVE/MODERN ART

Ricky Swallow, who represented Australia at the 2005 Venice Biennale, is best known for painstakingly carved wooden sculptures that update the *vanitas* tradition with imagery such as serpents slithering through a bike helmet, a skull sinking into a beanbag, and a lone bird nesting in a sneaker. Although at thirty-six he is still relatively young, the success

Ricky Swallow, ***Make-Do Suite,*** **2010,** patinated bronze, wooden table, 52⅜ x 96½ x 24⅛".

of these works has, to a large extent, typecast him. So it was striking that in his recent exhibition in London there wasn't a piece of carved wood in sight. What initially seemed a radical departure, however, turned out to be pure Swallow—just a little older, and maybe wiser too.

This exhibition was made up of bronze casts of battered and torn cardboard archery targets that Swallow had collected from a practice range in Los Angeles. As one would expect from this artist, verisimilitude was king, with every fold and piercing perfectly remade. In *Plate 25 (slate, fog)* (all works 2010), the original had taken such a hammering from arrows that its center had completely disintegrated. Its cardboard incarnation would have been headed straight for the Dumpster, but Swallow's version, frozen in bronze, took on the presence of a Lucio Fontana. This wasn't accidental: Modernist nods—rather than Swallow's usual *vanitas* references—ran through the entire show. This was most obvious in the vessels and stand-alone sculptures that Swallow constructed and then cast from chopped-up archery targets, paying homage to British ceramicists such as Hans Coper, and Californian modernists such as Peter Voulkos. *Bottle/after L.R. (bone)*, for example, made no secret that it was modeled on Lucie Rie's pottery.

In pieces such as *Large Crucible (indigo)*, Swallow showed off his alchemical knack for making one material look alarmingly like another: The vessel's rich indigo patina perfectly mimicked a ceramic glaze. The largest work in the show, *Make-Do Suite*—a number of patchy vessels on a table—plays similar transformative games. Its title refers to the practice of clumsily repairing antiques to extend their life, but the work also seems to poke fun at the way we fetishize functional objects from the past: Several of the vessels are so riddled with holes that they look like they've been unearthed in an archaeological dig, then spruced up for museum display. And in another clear modernist reference, the ensemble's careful arrangement has the poise and fragility of a Morandi painting.

Whereas his wooden sculptures have always been based on real objects, Swallow's bronzes—knowing simulations made from discarded cardboard that was first obliterated by archers, then doubly obliterated by the artist—are fabrications of fabrications. They are the death masks of throwaway things, which Swallow allowed to exist only for as long as he needed to grant them their immortality. This creates a weird hall-of-mirrors effect, a layering of references that goes deeper into our urge to collect, preserve, remake, and display than his wooden sculptures have ever done. Swallow's new work shows an exhilarating maturity, and continues to remind us that, painful as it is to admit, nothing lasts forever.

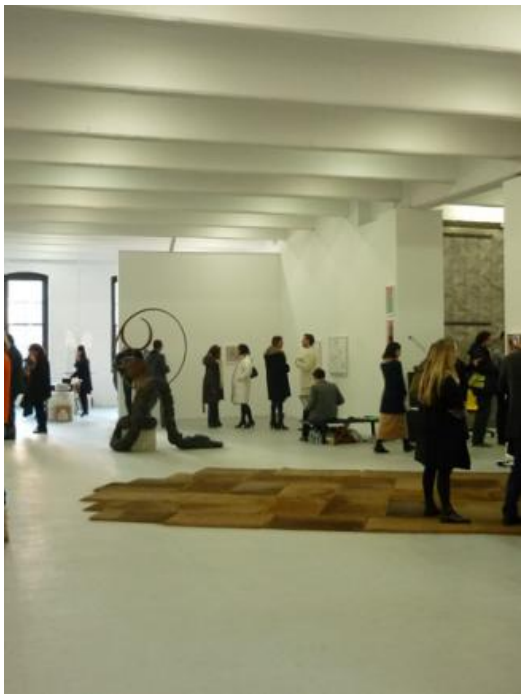
—*Anthony Byrt*

Wallin, Yasha, “Sharing is Caring at Independent,” *Art in America*, March 8, 2011

Art in America

Sharing is Caring at Independent

Yasha Wallin



INSTALL BY RICKY SWALLOW

If the Armory Show were cut down to a fourth of its size, moved to a less tedious location, and featured the most dynamic galleries with a mix of emerging and emerged artists, it would look more like Independent.

Now in its second year, Independent hosts 40-plus international galleries. Conceived by gallerists Elizabeth Dee and Darren Flook of Hotel, London, the fair is spread out over three floors of the old Dia Center in Chelsea. It is testament to the mistake made when the non-profit moved out and gave up its cavernous urban space.

The trick to Independent is that it sublimated the commercial side of things by presenting itself as one large group exhibition. Booths were open and bathed in a bright-white paint job and industrial-strength neon lights. Because the selection of galleries was tight, and because there were few clear divisions between booths (galleries spilled out of their loosely defined borders), a convivial atmosphere prevailed.

The first to greet visitors upon entrance to the main floor was the affable Hudson of Feature Inc, whose playful area was dotted with colorful abstractions by Andrew Masullo. The gallerist, who recently moved from Chelsea to the Lower East Side, hadn't participated in the Armory Show since it moved west a decade ago. Looking relaxed in bright ethnic prints and lounging in a chair in a position more suitable for a lazy Sunday than an art fair, he noted how manageable in size Independent was, adding that, "this fair is more realistic."

Upstairs, it was White Columns's second time at Independent. The nonprofit had a successful four-year run at the Armory, but opted out in 2009, shortly after the Merchandise Mart took over (in 2007) and significantly raised the price for a non-profit booth. Xeroxed editions made specifically for the fair by Dan Colen and Ricci Albeda hung salon style on the gallery's only wall. Sold to benefit their ongoing programs, these were some of the most

affordable works at the fair ($150–$1,000). Three hours into the opening only a few of the 50 unique "garbage" collages by Colen ($150 each) remained, and they had sold out of Margaret Lee's potato sculptures ($1,000 a piece).

Further down it was Anton Kern's first year participating and the dealer dedicated his booth to sculptural works like Matthew Monahan's skewed totem-figure desk and David Shrigley's cheeky faux-taxidermy puppy holding a sign stating "I'm dead," which, in this context, felt like a jab at how art and commerce intersect at an art fair. Kern was enthusiastic about his debut at Independent largely because he was in good company. "If you're looking for a great group of galleries you're going to find them here."
And—Dia and Armory, pay heed—there was no soul-crushing land-grab given the luxury of plenty of room. Folke Koebberling and Martin Kaltwasser's dissected Saab transformed into two motorcycles at Jack Hanley recalled Duncan Campbell's Delorean in the Artists Space booth last year. Katinka Bock's "Miles and Moments," a masculine ceramic series of tire marks that nearly spanned the entire length of the floor, and Michel Francois's mind-bending magnetic cube at Bortolami Gallery, were among the standouts.

And while booth prices increased slightly from the previous year, the fair's organizers claim that didn't deter anyone from taking part. A few galleries—Bortolami, Gallery Ben Kaufmann, The Modern Institute, Andrew Kreps and Stuart Shave/Modern Art—hedged their bets by participating in the Armory and Independent. Shave, who went with a solo of Ansel Krut at the Armory and, at Independent, a stunning grouping by Los Angeles-based Ricky Swallow, whose delicate, bronze sculptures created a moment of quiet on an otherwise sensory-filled floor, reported strong sales at both venues.

Some galleries, like Milan's Gio Marconi and Frankfurt's Neue Alte Brucke, who both represent Simon Fujiwara, collaborated. Among his three pieces was a witty sculpture that incorporated ephemera from the artist's childhood to re-create memories. When he was 11, his mother took him camping to a nudist colony, essentially "inducing his homosexuality." This experience was relived using a portable picnic table the family brought on the trip, and the remainder of a meal consisting of an apple, a half-eaten sandwich and a long, jarred sausage (which its collector would need to replace periodically). Shared experience, that's what it's all about.

O'Neill-Butler, Lauren, "500 Words: Ricky Swallow," *Artforum*, January 2011

ARTFORUM

Ricky Swallow

01.30.11

Left: **Ricky Swallow**, ***Standing Half Vessel (Soot), Bronze*, 2010,** patinated bronze, ceramic, 12 1/2 x 4 1/2 x 4 1/2". Right: **Ricky Swallow**, ***Make-Do Suite*, 2010,** seven patinated bronze elements, oak table,52 3/8 x 96 1/2 x 24 1/8".

Ricky Swallow's second solo exhibition at Modern Art, London, features a new body of cast bronze objects created from archery targets the artist found in Los Angeles, where he lives. Presented on plinths and installed on the wall, these works synthesize various references from art history, from British ceramics to California modernism. Here, Swallow discusses his approach to creating the show and his new processes in the studio.

COLLECTING OBJECTS—such as modern ceramics, Native American pottery, baskets, and Inuit carvings—and arranging them in different rooms in our home has, for some time, run parallel to my art practice. For this show, I wanted to capture that sense of vitality—how collecting has affected my studio logic and the forms of the pieces themselves. There's a quote I like by Ken Price where he talks about working with the cup as a form, and the ways in which it presents formal restrictions that create a structure to work within. He also speaks about the objects' universal quality, how the cup can exist as its own subject matter. That really articulated and echoed some of the concerns I had when I began constructing the vessels, bottles, bowls, cups, and jugs that the other sculptures in this show evolved from. There's a collective ownership and understanding that one brings to such recognizable forms.

I've also been thinking about the individual and handmade aspects of my work. This has led to a concern for the pacing of each exhibition. When I was planning this show, I knew that I didn't want there to be much in the viewer's peripheral vision. It needed to have the kind of breathing room that is there when I actually make each sculpture, even though in the studio environment everything looks kind of crazy and cramped. In the gallery there is that space—that ratio of intimacy of construction and experience that is important to me.

In my wooden sculptures, all of the gestures of composition happened in the very early stages of each piece, I would settle on a subject and then transcribe it in wood. Carving is such a measured act; it's the process of removing information in order to gain a form. With the new works, however, it has been a very additive practice of constructing forms, with more room for improvisation. What I was missing in my previous studio habits, or what I needed now, was a daily routine in which constructing pieces from materials at hand could inform new sculptures and lead to different sets and groupings of works. The idea of a cumulative process for me relates to both a collector's logic and the kind of studio pottery production where the sequence and subtle variation in pieces produce unexpected combinations. I've always been drawn to artists who are prolific while working with an economy of subject, materials, and scale where constant tweaking and rearranging of their established language becomes the most important tool; Lucie Rie, Hans Coper, and Giorgio Morandi are perfect examples.

O'Neill-Butler, Lauren, "500 Words: Ricky Swallow," *Artforum*, January 2011

There's an archery range adjacent to where we walk our dog in LA, and that's where I first found the cardboard targets, which the archers often leave on the hay bales after practice. I've been collecting the targets there for two years now; I feel like one of those weird guys scouting the beach with a metal detector trying to find something of value after people depart. The targets are often in various states of decomposition (and pierced differently based on the experience of the archer). Bringing them into the studio marked the first time I had incorporated a readymade form into my work. And there's been a weird sort of liberation in that—the fact that they are made, composed, and created by someone else and then collected and recast by me. There was an intuitive transition of treating the targets like a base material, in the same way that I had treated wood or clay in the past. My work has always essentially been about translation, passing a subject through various processes on the way to a fixed or permanent state, with each different material influencing the creation of new forms.

I've been spending time in the flea markets here, looking at "make-do's." Make-do's are antiques that have been creatively repaired or adapted—given an extended life rather than being discarded. I'm also interested in these other folk art forms—mosaic vessels, and furniture that has been clad in tile from broken pieces of other ceramic objects. Again, this economy of labor and materials toward something that's a translation of a traditional object, a replacement of its former self, is something I love.

I took a bunch of photographs of these objects for reference, thinking that there was something in that tradition of gleaning one form from other disassembled forms that I could use. So I made the jugs, which are constructed in the studio from cut-up pieces of the targets and other cardboard. It's interesting to begin with this material that already has a history, the punctured surface providing a sort of vulnerability (rendering the sculptures functionally obsolete from the outset). I wanted to make something that was more structurally sound and permanent out of these pieces and decided to cast in bronze. The patina of the bronze is an important element—it can dictate the form so differently. Most of my patina references come from ceramic glazes. Bronze is a kind of beautiful alchemical wizardry, which I'm learning more about through working with a great foundry here that indulges my experiments—developing new results from tweaked recipes and accidents.

— As told to Lauren O'Neill-Butler