

Matthew Monahan

November 5 – December 23, 2010

November 5, 2010, New York – For his fifth solo exhibition at Anton Kern Gallery, Los Angeles-based artist Matthew Monahan will show a combination of new sculpture and drawings. His aggressive but elegant sculptural works, cast in different materials including foam and bronze, manipulate the figure to challenge what we associate with a classical representation of the human body.

Nine tall figurative metal sculptures and ten oil-on-paper drawings animate the space. Striving for a less fragmented and more unified form, the sculptures lay emphasis on the relationship between figure and base. Each pedestal is tailored for each piece, and the two registers, the upper and lower halves, accentuate the tension between metal and masonry. All materials share one quality: they change appearance, properties, and color based on their mineral contents and their firing temperature. Monahan seems to emulate a proto-scientific, or alchemist approach to his materials. In their pursuit of turning common metals into gold, the old alchemists developed the science of understanding, deconstructing, and reconstructing matter, and along the way discovered the process of plating and the transmutation of metals.

To Monahan, the choice of bronze comes as a plausible step after having worked with wax and different melting processes, as well as bending, molding, and casting in a variety of materials for many years. However, Monahan decreases the “nobility” of bronze, he makes us feel the heat of the flame, the fire and violence of the furnace, the pummeling, hammering, and cracking sounds of the foundry. All the noise still reverberates in the sculptures. These material qualities can be extended to the psychology and symbolism of the work. Under the durable shell of metal hides the thinness, hollowness and fragility of the figure. The figures make themselves more durable and perhaps larger-than-life, in the ancient alchemist way, and - in their slight tendency towards architectural futurism and science fiction - the figures echo the creaking metal sounds of old monster movies or Ray Harryhausen’s metal giants.

The alchemy of the metal works extends to Monahan’s new oil on paper drawings. The paper is coated with two layers of paint, then folded and drawn on from the back with a fork, pressing through the line that depicts an off-kilter Vitruvian Man floating in a dark space. In fact, it is Monahan’s long practice as a draftsman, his obsession with the treatment of surface, and his interest in shared tonalities of disparate materials that have informed his approach to the metal surface and become the source for his bronze casting. Monahan has always used his drawings as foundations for sculpting by turning planar things into volume. Bronze is a skin; a skin that is first poured into sheets of wax, cast in metal, and then folded or shaped into the human figure.

Matthew Monahan’s work is currently included in *Statuesque*, a group exhibition curated by the Public Art Fund in City Hall Park, New York, as well as in the two-person exhibition *Mineral Spirits: Anne Chu and Matthew Monahan*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia. This year, Monahan was represented in *Outside the Box*, Hammer Museum, LA; *OH CRISIS!*, Huize Frankendael, Amsterdam; and *At Home/Not at Home: Works from the Collection of Marty and Rebecca Eisenberg*, Bard College. Additionally, Monahan’s work was included in *Compass in Hand: Selections from The Judith Rothschild Foundation*, MoMA, New York (2009); the 55th Carnegie International, Pittsburgh; the *Sonsbeek Sculpture Exhibition*, Arnhem (both 2008); the Hammer Museum; *Unmonumental*, the New Museum; *USA Today*, Royal Academy, London (all 2007); as well as the *Berlin Biennale* and the *Whitney Biennale* (both 2006). In 2007, Monahan had a solo exhibition at the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art.

The exhibition will open on Friday, November 5, 2010 and will run through Thursday, December 23, 2010. The gallery is open Tuesday through Saturday, 10 am - 6 pm. For further information and images, please contact Christoph Gerozissis at (t) 212.367.9663, (f) 212.367.8135 or email: info@antonkerngallery.com.



Upcoming exhibition: Marcel Odenbach (13 January – 12 February, 2011)

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