

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JOEL KYACK*On the Floor in the Cave of Skulls*

April 9 – May 14, 2016

Ghebaly Gallery is pleased to present *On the Floor in the Cave of Skulls*, an exhibition by Joel Kyack featuring new sculptural fountain works and recent paintings. This show marks the artist's third solo presentation with the gallery.

Beginning with one of his earliest performative works, *The Dam* (2006), Kyack's practice has been the result of an aggressive refusal to resist the natural resolution of materials, forms, and ideas. With this piece, a photograph of a performance that casts Kyack waist-deep in the middle of a swollen river while holding a broad plank of wood perpendicular to the rushing current, he reveals the futility of working against the charging force of nature. At the same time, the image is an allegory for the artist's position within social constructs. With this piece, Kyack succinctly establishes a paradigm for his overall practice and introduces his use of running water as subject matter and material.

In subsequent bodies of work, Kyack introduces a cast of characters that urinate, spit, and swallow who commingle with dismembered prosthetic limbs, gravestones, kiddie pools, and assorted knives. Liquids move into, around, and over many of his sculptural works, with water finding its way through any available orifice. This is especially evident in works like *The Waterfall*, a video and photo piece from 2008 and 2013 respectively, in which Kyack himself becomes a vessel, simultaneously ingesting and excreting fluids through his own biological processes in front of a camera. The visceral nature of this gesture points to the artist's tendency towards the grotesque. The dormant violence that is intrinsic to many of his objects is made palpable in performances like *Growing Pains Leave Stains* (2011) and *Your Optimism Fills Graves* (2015). In these works, Kyack is a singular performer amid an arsenal of props, sculptures, and materials that he splatters, stabs, squirts, and sprays in gesticulating throes.

For *On the Floor in the Cave of Skulls*, Kyack has constructed new sculptural works from his fountain series. These fountains are an amalgamation of disparate materials sourced from thrift shops, hardware stores, and bargain bins that are pieced together to create a closed loop that allows water to cycle throughout each discrete piece. Every object employed has its own unique surface tension, bending and conforming to the artist's will only insofar as its material qualities will permit. When combined, the staunch pragmatism of the surreal assemblages allows them to maintain their materiality while also surrendering some of their signification in favor of a more subversive cause. This duality frees the sculptures to move beyond discussions of traditional aesthetics and into a complex discourse surrounding the body in relation to a ludicrously anxious social reality.

In addition to the fountain works, the exhibition includes a selection of Kyack's recent paintings, which echo the logic of the fountains but with an economy of signs. The visual similes and puns that result from the connection of incongruent – or sometimes all too apparent – associations highlight the dark humor that permeates across his practice, where aesthetics are often subservient to practicality, where primitivism campaigns for art's potential as an unsophisticated wilderness.

Joel Kyack (b. 1972, Pennsylvania, USA) lives and works in Los Angeles. Kyack received his MFA from the University of Southern California in 2008 and attended Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in 2004. Recent solo projects include *The Very First Day*, Workplace Gallery, Gateshead, UK (2015); *Old Sailors Never Die*, Francois Ghebaly Gallery, Los Angeles (2014); *Point at the Thing That's Furthest Away*, Praz-Delavallade, Paris (2013); *Terms / Proposals / Demands*, SSZ Sued, Köln, Germany (2013); *Escape to Shit Mountain* at Francois Ghebaly Gallery, Los Angeles (2012); *Superclogger*, a public project produced in collaboration with LA><ART and The Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2010); and *The Knife Shop*, Kunsthalle · LA, Los Angeles (2009). Recent performances include *Your Optimism Fills Graves*, Workplace, London (2015); *Buy What I Say*, FIAC, Paris (2014); *Growing Pains Leave Stains*, Kaleidoscope ARENA, Macro Testaccio, Rome, Italy (2011); and *Wattis Up with this Guy?*, Wattis Institute, San Francisco (2011).