

PRESS RELEASE

Joe Bradley

Rejoice: Drawing and Sculpture

April 21 – May 25, 2023

Opening on Thursday, April 20, 6 – 9 pm

Lichtenfelsgasse 5, A-1010 Vienna

Galerie Eva Presenhuber is pleased to present *Rejoice: Drawing and Sculpture*, the gallery's fifth exhibition with the US-American artist Joe Bradley.

It's all in the title of exhibition: *Rejoice* after a long day/week/month/year of the world putting your body through its paces. Emerge, like the red orb in the magisterial sculpture *Moonlight*, into a new phase. The spiritual journey of mind-body is as classic and serious a subject as Joe Bradley could've approached, and he does so in these sculptures, as one must, with a sense of humor. His wry, counter-intuitive approach honors the journey while winking at its difficulty: That bulb is tethered to the ground. Each of the sculptures in the present group is as solid and allusive as Bradley's drawings are ephemeral and self-contained. His always recognizable scrawl harvests iconography and marks from a net thrown wide and far through time. These sculptures come together from objects found, made, and assembled with a goal of depicting a mind-body state.

Lotus Feet, for example, offers disembodied oddly stoic feet to meditate on, just as we would do so with a spiritual teacher. The dignified anonymity of this object contrasts with the more abject pancake-like *Feet*, which call up Philip Guston's distressed appendages. The two works offer, but do not resolve, the sacred and profane. The fluidity between the two modes is at the crux of this exhibition: To be whole we allow both. Bradley echoes this in his presentation: What we normally think of as a "base" is as important as the ostensible primary figure. There is not a sculpture without acknowledging the equality of the constituent elements.

The gnarled shadowy figure of *Agony* head in hands and tightly enclosed on a scuffed white base, is made poignant by its claustrophobic environment. In *Despair* the expanse of white, like a plummeting cliff around a bent woman, makes palpable the titular bottomless feeling. *Repose* with its student-model pose alighting on an enormous worktable give us a sense of real rest, of expansive relaxation. It also plays on our own perception – moving us to some far-off vantage point, peering at the scene so as not to disturb. *Awakening* brings us right next to an athleisure brand body in a moment of grace. Taking crowd-approved form, it once again pokes at the notion that growth is only possible under unique conditions.

And if you're awake, then what? *Liberation*, pictures it – man and lightbulb (that twentieth century symbol for "idea,") and yet the plaster head and wood bulb are side by side. The light of consciousness is on, but our material conditions don't change. There's no consciousness outside of ourselves: The idea of a separate ego is an illusion. *Liberation* is precisely this knowledge, and *TV* is nearly the opposite: a solid box that itself is a container of machine consciousness. The blend of machine and human comes to a point with *Jnani* and *Beaujola's Car*. These two meld tenth-generation kitsch versions of "authentic" totems and generic toy cars. This is culture on the move, literally: new vision of willed and unwilled exchange.

Each object is complete, present, and without any physical ambiguities. Look closely and they're still scrappy enough to be resolutely human, united by Bradley's subject matter. Running across them is rather like how the artist describes the making them: being out in the world and finding just the right thing. Bradley's drawings index that experience in a shorthand that points out to referents and inward to the attitude it takes to find his paintings on the canvas. The sculptures are each a moment to pause and contemplate, allowing a frisson of discovery to become a moment of recognition.

Dan Nadel

GALERIE EVA PRESENHUBER

Joe Bradley was born in 1975 in Kittery, Maine. His work has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions, including P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, Long Island City, NY (2006); Le Consortium, Dijon, France (2014); BOZAR, Brussels, Belgium (2016–17); and Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY (2017, will travel to Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University, Waltham, MA). Recent group exhibitions include *Silicone Valley*, P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, Long Island City, NY (2007); *ab-strac-tion-al*, Museum 52, New York, NY (2009); *New York Minute*, Museo d'Arte Contemporanea di Roma, Italy (2009); *EXPO 1: NEW YORK*, MoMA PS1, Long Island City, NY (2013); *The Inevitable Figuration*, Centro per l'arte contemporanea Luigi Pecci, Italy (2013); *The Forever Now: Contemporary Paintings in an Atemporal World*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY (2014); *New York Painting*, Kunstmuseum Bonn, Germany (2015); *Progressive Praxis*, de la Cruz Collection Contemporary Art Space, Miami, FL (2016); and Albright-Knox Art Gallery, New York, NY (2017, traveled to Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University, Waltham, MA, through 2018).

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