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Matthew Ronay

Betrays of and by the Body

April 30 - June 15, 2019

Casey Kaplan is pleased to announce our inaugural exhibition with Matthew Ronay, *Betrays of and by the Body*.

In this new body of work, vibrant, basswood sculptures cohabit a world of peculiar abstraction. The artworks are skillfully crafted by hand; each component carved, sanded, dyed and jointed together into colorful configurations that visually defy their wooden medium. Organic forms oscillate between primordial and futuristic, while adopting traditions of minimalism and modernist abstraction. Maintaining a deviant humor that has long defined his oeuvre, from earlier figurative work to large-scale, ritualistic installation, Ronay continues his exploration of phenomenological experience through the sculpted object.

A series of ten artworks rest on a large, low plinth placed in the entryway, that extends the length of the gallery. Arranged along the pedestal with slight increases in scale and gradient shifts in color, each piece feeds into the next through an intuitive formal logic. Within this continuum, the sculptures engage a rich variety of reference material, both sourced and imagined. Figures morph beyond the corporeal, resulting in surreal abstractions of plant and ocean life, molecular and cellular formations, cityscapes, artificial intelligence, metabolic systems, cybernetics, and microscopic bacteria. A work titled *Acoustic Encoder* cites the convoluted process through which organisms are able to store and recall auditory information in the brain. Ronay's comparatively rudimentary visualization of what this process might look like if mechanized – a series of wooden grids, pulleys, levers and knobs – appears to playfully mock the self-importance of human generated technologies. Alternatively, the carved surface of *Attuned Unmade* recall the grooves and divots of muscle tissue, exemplifying a more organic figure, that favors the spiritual over the scientific.

In the adjacent room, two larger-scale sculptures rely on multiple disparate elements. These complex works are connected through long, cylindrical appendages that resemble tentacles, tubes, conduits, or umbilical cords. The figures appear to exist as both part and whole, separate yet connected beings that feed from one another parasitically or symbiotically. Exhibited on its own pedestal, *The Small Circle of Living Matter Inside a Crowd of Tiny Scars* recalls an intestinal form, rendered in saccharine pinks and oranges and encased within a densely textured, spiky shell. Here the "living matter" can be imagined as the billions of microbes that call this warm, wet tunnel home.

Many of the works in the exhibition conjure biological processes often found to be physically and psychologically uncomfortable, such as nakedness, sexuality, digestion, disease and aging. The stark, wooden forms embody these reproductive and metabolic characteristics unabashedly, suggesting their commonality across the biosphere. Cultivated through a unique methodology and visual language, Ronay explores the invisible systems that link all living phenomena. In this thoughtfully articulated environment, each individual is not a distinct and autonomous entity, but exists within a nuanced web of systemic reliance, connection and meaning.

Matthew Ronay (b. 1976, Louisville, KY) lives in New York. In 2016, his work was the subject of solo-presentations at the Blaffer Art Museum in Houston, and the Pérez Art Museum Miami, with a fully-illustrated exhibition catalogue published on the occasion. He has exhibited extensively at major institutions worldwide, including: Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AK; Kentucky Museum of Art and Craft, Louisville; Kunstverein Lingen, Germany; University of Louisville, KY; Artspace, San Antonio; Serpentine Gallery, London; SculptureCenter, New York; Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY, and Parasol Unit Foundation for Contemporary Art, London. Ronay participated in the 2013 Lyon Biennale, curated by Gunnar Kvaran, and the 2004 Whitney Biennial. His work is included in numerous major public collections, including: ARoS Aarhus Kunstmuseum, Denmark; Astrup Fearnley Muset for Moderne Kunste, Oslo; Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AK; Dallas Museum of Art; Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Pérez Art Museum Miami; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, and Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown, MA.