

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Richard Hawkins *Bait Paintings*

March 8th – April 19th, 2019
8th Floor

Richard Hawkins' multimedia practice often reads simultaneously as vividly personal and promiscuously referential. Working in collage, painting, and sculpture, several of Hawkins' series emerge from a process of studying, internalizing, and regenerating the ideas of historical artists and thinkers, inflected by the specificity of Hawkins' own visual lexicon and biography. For his forthcoming exhibition at Greene Naftali, the artist's sixth, Hawkins revisits past series, and initiates new bodies of work, once again examining historical figures and their personal and artistic impact on him: Forrest Bess' enigmatic paintings and life as an eccentric Texan; Antonin Artaud's asylum drawings; and Mike Kelley's suicide.

Hawkins' diligent study of these artists branches into reappraisals and stylistic diversions, the resulting works both ventriloquizing other figures and bearing trademarks of the artists' own oeuvre. Hawkins continues his examination of Artaud's works on paper, classifying, assigning functionality to, and realizing in the round the component parts of the playwright's drawing, *The Sexual Awkwardness of God*. Two sculptures, *Ass Cannon*, *Rape Table*, and a relief entitled *Sperm Trap* (all works 2019), each work toward prototypes of the forms generated by Artaud's convictions, with an approach both taxonomical and unflinching. *Proposal for a monument* and *A Region-Specific Vision* each pay tribute to Forrest Bess, whom Hawkins first encountered as an undergraduate reading a 1982 issue of the regionally focused magazine *Texas Monthly*. The two paintings acknowledge the vernacular detail of Bess' often sensationalized biography, with *Proposal for a monument* depicting Chinquapin Bay, the fisherman's camp where the artist lived and worked; and *A Region-Specific Vision*, with its neatly silhouetted oil pump, signifying the industry of Bay City, where Bess was born, raised, and spent the final years of his life. Each work employs the iconography that Bess transmitted from spontaneous visions into his paintings—intensely colored circles, stacked lines, and a recurring, pelvic form seemingly related to the artist's famous self-mutilation. In *Death to Mike Kelley (in an attempted Peter Saul manner)*, Hawkins' hand combines the former's iconography with the latter's comic-based, labyrinthine style, in a painting loaded with text, much of it deliberately misspelled references to Kelley's role as teacher and mentor during his lifetime: *UNDERGRAD DUDE-NESS*, *TRANZISHUNAL ABJECT*, *INSTOOTOOTIONAL FORTITUDE*. Kelley's arresting face appears in collage alongside those of the stuffed animals so recurrent in his work. Several blocks of thickly applied oil paint reference Hans Hofmann, the formalist whose trademark Kelley derisively referenced with flatly constructed facsimiles.

Throughout the exhibition are Hawkins' *Lure Paintings*, non-objective works constituting grittily layered tangles of looping, brightly colored oil stick. Magazine cutouts of heartthrobs are obscured, buried, and emerge again, as though trapped. *Coming to Terms with Dick Pic Addiction* magnifies the figures of the *Lures* in Hawkins' own hand, weaving throughout them abstraction and sardonic terms emanating from seduction: *Lure*, as well as *Bait*, *Snare*, *Charm*, *Trap*. *All the Young Cunanans* is similarly populated with pop stars and text, in this case their content being substances like anti-depressants, cocaine, and, scrawled at the bottom of the canvas, *leaked nudes*. While these works approximate a contemporary form of idol worship, *Emptied, Lost and Swallowed Up in Thee (Quietism)* is conceived as a devotional painting. Named for an 18th century heretical ideology, the work's still and concise, yet enigmatic imagery invites meditation only to proffer a nihilistic message, reading: *Quietism: An annihilation in devotion to a disinterested god*. The painting features a young man's chest, with eyes for nipples, and a hypnotic, soul-swallowing emanation from its solar plexus.

Richard Hawkins lives and works in Los Angeles. His work is included in the permanent collections of Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles; the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; the Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown, MA; the Hessel Museum, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; the Astrup Fearnley Museum of Modern Art, Oslo; and the Tate Collection, London.

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