

Formal Complaint

Curated by Dana Kopel and Rachael Rakes

April 15–May 28, 2017

Opening Reception: Saturday April 15, 6–9pm



Christopher Hanrahan, *Standard Model (how it is)*, 2013. Brass, 15 x 46 ¼ x 45 in.

Knockdown Center is pleased to present *Formal Complaint*, an exhibition that features Aria Dean, Female Background, Christopher Hanrahan, Mario Navarro, and Megan Pahmier.

Craft, scrap, and architectural minimalism coincide in *Formal Complaint*. Featuring work by Aria Dean, Female Background, Christopher Hanrahan, Mario Navarro, and Megan Pahmier, the exhibition returns handiwork to formalism, while maintaining a sense of slackness.

Metal armatures lean and bend precariously; a painting on unstretched canvas drags on the floor. Discarded materials and everyday objects come to conjure an upright but “bereft formalism,” as Hanrahan calls it. His sculptural outline of a table rendered in thin strips of brass deploys a graceful material precarity to reclaim architectural space. An untitled sculpture by Dean disrupts the gallery space, with pipes that lean precariously against the wall and stretch across the floor; and her floor-grazing painting *Untitled, from the Glob Cobbler* (2016), is marked with streaks of black, white, and ochre, seemingly part artwork and part dropcloth.

Tenderness and despair coalesce in objects that can only just support themselves, much less make a claim for historical or philosophical significance. Some works can barely sustain their original forms: the grapes speared on a steel rod in Pahmier’s *Fountain*

(2015), for instance, shrivel and rot over the course of the exhibition. The vaguely figurative object sculptures of *Female Background* act as neither reference nor obfuscation, like signals of intended failure. Mario Navarro's mobiles repurpose materials from local demolitions—rebar, bits of stone, and cement. Hanging from the ceiling, they combine the flat pictorial space of a painting with the haphazard juxtapositions of found sculpture, combining elements of destruction and decor.

The works in the exhibition undermine past minimalisms from multiple directions—in terms of material, attitude, and dependence on context—but out of a care for and maintenance of form, rather than a casting off of it. Through these mergers of vernacular minimalism and sad design, work and supporting structure, *Formal Complaint* creates its own ecology of exhibitionary space.

Aria Dean is an artist and writer based in Los Angeles, CA. She currently holds the position of Assistant Curator of Net Art & Digital Culture at Rhizome. Her writing has been featured in *Artforum*, *The New Inquiry*, *Real Life Magazine*, *Topical Cream Magazine*, and *X-TRA Contemporary Art Quarterly*. She also co-directs Los Angeles gallery and project space As It Stands LA. Currently, Dean's research, writing, and visual work explore the relationship and resonances between blackness, media, and communication and information technologies. She works primarily through text and sculpture to hypothesize an apocalyptic blackness.

Female Background consists of Gabriella D'Italia and Cameron Crawford. Their collaborative work has been exhibited at TEMP, New York; Doyers, New York; and Perimeter Gallery, Belfast. Publications include *Mary Magazine*, Bell School Press; *Touch, See, Taste* vol. 1 (anthology), Temporary Agency; and *Maine Arts Journal Quarterly*, UMVA. Readings include Interstate Projects, New York.

Christopher Hanrahan was born in 1978 in Mudgee, Australia, and currently lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. Hanrahan was the recipient of a 2015 Australia Council Greene Street Residency, a 2013 New Work Grant, and a 2013 Marten Bequest Travelling Scholarship. He has exhibited extensively in Australia and overseas, notably at MONA, Hobart; PICA, Perth; Gertrude Contemporary, Melbourne; and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney. Recent exhibitions include *Vitreous Humour* at Kansas Gallery, New York, and *Sequester*, Embassy of Australia Gallery, Washington, DC.

Mario Navarro (b. 1984) is a Mexican-American artist based in New York. The formal aesthetics and syntax to which Navarro returns stand as alternative references to certain classes of objects, just as words do not refer to things themselves. In Navarro's practice, objects and architectures operate as nodes of meaning and conceptual signification within a broader system of relations. His work belongs to collections such as The Petitgas Collection (London), Frances R. Dittmer Collection (Chicago), Sayago &

Pardon (Los Angeles), ArtNexus (Bogotá), Dieresis Collection (Guadalajara), and Fundación Colección Jumex (Mexico City).

Megan Pahmier lives and works in New York. She received her Bachelor of Fine Arts in painting from Maryland Institute College of Art and completed her Master of Fine Arts at Hunter College. Her work has been featured in the New York exhibitions *Drawing for Sculpture* at TSA Gallery and *Future Fossils* at Dutton Gallery as well as *Hand, Finger, Digit* at The Old Hairdressers in Glasgow, Scotland, among others. Most recently, she exhibited her work at Essex Flowers in New York in the two-person show *Dust Stutter*.

Dana Kopel is a curator and writer based in New York, where she works at the New Museum. Recent exhibitions include *If you want to do something, forget this debt, and remember it later*, Celaya Brothers Gallery, Mexico City; *Givens*, AA|LA, Los Angeles; *Abstract Sex**, Hessel Museum of Art, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY; and *Care* (curated with Marian Tubbs), Interstate Projects, Brooklyn, NY. She was an assistant curator for the Maldives Pavilion at the 55th Venice Biennale. Her writing has appeared and is forthcoming in *Art in America*, *frieze*, *X-TRA*, *Modern Painters*, and elsewhere.

Rachael Rakes is an independent critic, curator, and teacher based in New York. She is currently the Programmer at Large for the Film Society of Lincoln Center; an editor at the *Brooklyn Rail*; and Editor at Large for Verso Books. Rakes has written criticism in numerous outlets, most recently for *Art-Agenda*, *Artforum*, the *Village Voice*, and *Ocula*. With Leo Goldsmith, she is at work on a book on the collaborative practices and media critique of radical filmmaker Peter Watkins, which received a 2014 Creative Capital/Warhol Foundation Arts Writers Grant.

Knockdown Center gallery hours are Thursday and Friday from 5 PM to 9 PM, Saturday and Sunday from 2 PM to 8 PM. Knockdown Center is located at 52-19 Flushing Ave, Maspeth, NY 11378.

About Knockdown Center

Featuring programming of diverse formats and media, Knockdown Center aims to create a radically cross-disciplinary environment. The particularity of our architectural environment and history leads us to gravitate toward projects that demonstrate a sensitive reactivity to site and environment. Visit our website, or follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

Media Inquiries

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