

Jonathan Callan

Colony

March 17 - April 23, 2016

Opening Reception: Thursday March 17, from 6 to 8pm

Josée Bienvenu is pleased to present *Colony*, Jonathan Callan's second exhibition with the gallery. In this new body of work, the British artist continues to explore the relationship of disembodied knowledge to embodied experience and materiality. Preoccupied with language and its limitations, Callan often works with text - books, maps or photographs - as a source material. No longer a secondhand carrier of information, text is turned into an object of first experience. His methodology consists of amplifying the physical aspects of the object by embedding or dissolving until the original form is barely identifiable. Through this sometimes violent, often obsessive process, Callan develops a system of inquiry, which both drives the work and generates meaning.

Colony was born from Callan's interest in exploring organic motifs that played with the idea of nature feeding upon or possibly destroying knowledge.

"Some years ago outside an old studio I noticed that snails were eating some of the books and texts I had inadvertently left outside, I was reminded of it recently when experimenting with casting fabric in plaster. The unset textile bags were draped over and upon books, I became interested in the ambivalence of whether these animate shapes were embracing, suffocating or feeding upon the knowledge within. Whether they were benign, aggressive and or comic."

The larger floor piece 'Colony' was inspired partly by images and thoughts of pack animals, or creatures gathered at feeding sites, they could be microbes grown monstrously large or starfish made by an inept creator, or creatures from a B movie universe. The books and maps include Thomas More's *Utopia*, a book on the development of early humans, a book on English sculpture wrapped over another book on special problems, a book on sequels, which is how the artist often thinks of his own work, and a wad of maps from the area he grew up in. The plaster forms connect the books as if they were nodes of communication in an external brain, where the intelligence of the hive or colony resides in socialized 'thought', messages that are transmitted via chemicals and pheromones.

The wall pieces are perhaps more comic and barbed, and the shapes hint at thrown paint or a gelatinous material recently frozen. The graphic form across 'Foreign influences in American life' could be an explosive motif or the ganglion of some darkened neural pathway. Nature, though not unaffected by our conceits, ignorant and uncaring of our cherished bodies of knowledge, will regard the printed effluvia of our ideas with unconscious indifference and best treat it as a source of chemical nutrition.

Born in Manchester, England in 1961, Jonathan Callan graduated from Goldsmiths College and lives and works in London. His works have been exhibited extensively in museums and galleries throughout Europe and the United States. Select institutional exhibitions include: Islip Art Museum, East Islip, NY (2014); Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, CT (2014); Boghossian Foundation, Villa Empain, Brussels (2014); Wesleyan University Museum, Boston, MA (2012); Teylers Museum, Haarlem, Netherlands (2012); John Michael Kohler Arts Center, WI (2010); Royal Society of British Sculpture, London, UK (2010). His work is included in major museum collections including: The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The British Museum, London; The Henry Moore Institute, Leeds, UK; Whitworth Gallery, Manchester, UK; The High Museum, Atlanta GA; The Leopold-Hoesch Museum, Duren, Germany; and Princeton University Art Museum, Princeton, NJ.