

The World As Willful Misrepresentation
James Bradley

April 22 - May 23, 2021

P.Bibeau proudly presents *The World As Willful Misrepresentation*, a solo exhibition by James Bradley opening on April 22, 2021. Bradley lives and works in Portland, Oregon and this marks his first solo exhibition in New York City. This intimate introduction features work constructed in 2020-2021 augmented with two individual works from 2014 as emblematic of Bradley's purposeful, consistent narrative built over a decade's time.

James Bradley's work examines the optimism of time set against the elegiac, that is, as known through the indexicality of contemporary life. Through a bracing of human-nature opposition, using symbols both allegorical and literal, Bradley assigns the cause of continual suffering to a labyrinth of mental constructs compelled to suffocate free will and compound predictability.

Most consistent in the work is Bradley's use of text, his own and others, to reveal narratives too familiar for an epiphany, citing an oftentimes jarring literalism as embellishment to our current condition. Last year, as the world sat in silence, an interest emerged to harness time and recategorize its weight of importance, a challenge to the status quo. This specific economy employs consideration of place and time as seen in Bradley's series of drawings, *Health & Hypochondria*.

As a series of individual drawings on paper, *Health & Hypochondria* (2020) are constructed on mailed correspondence from government agencies, financial and medical institutions, and used marketing collateral, (most received during the pandemic). Through these physical markers of time, Bradley depicts items of ritual as 2D objects permeated with representations of interiority and spirituality. They become works of ephemeral nature, amalgamating the symbols of a functionary life to isolated gauges of personal sanity: a held dandelion, a Belle and Sebastian LP, the collected works of John Milton, a cherished cat figurine bought years earlier at Community Thrift in San Francisco, a meditation pillow and mat, a cat asleep in a cardboard box, reading glasses. These drawings are seen individually as prayer, a clarity. Collectively the presentation of *Health & Hypochondria* is more than halved in size, on exhibition are seven of the nineteen drawings constructed and dated by Bradley in 2020.

Apparent in Bradley's work is the imbalance of human values, this identifies as a bemoaning for the loss of naturalism tied to a witnessing of equity in materialism dissipating into thin air. It is worth noting Bradley's commitment to spiritual life and the narrative that constructs a throughline in all of his works. *Mystery School*, for example, is a painting obsessed with the joy of painting for painting's sake interjected with the wreckage of a human hinging: Man of Peace/Man of Perdition. The message is veiled under exertive layers of paint, attempting a refusal, yet through the paint the message remains unmistakable: the narrator is reliable.

In *The Four Statements*, the most literal work in the presentation, Bradley treats representation as misrepresentation. Through imagery of the iconic Eye of Providence, a simultaneous rupture and allowance for the unscrutinized in life coexist, spelled out yet still indecipherable is an institution both reviled and relied upon. The unexamined provides the basis for many of Bradley's paintings, in this way most of the work presents inquiry, not resolution.

As the single painting on canvas, *Farewell to P.O.P. (Prefabricated Oeuvre of Preconceptions or Production of Ontological Partitions)*, attempts a language of symbolic organization, nearly garish in presentation, (the title 'P.O.P.' used as a moniker for the artificial divisions specific to pop culture). Here, a single manufactured feature to remain as a sign after death is presented as an interruption in the cycle of life: a mask strapped to a decomposing skull, a sign not of anonymity but a symbol related to the "pragmatism of justice". The dark night wears on. What will outlive the presentation is certain to be the fabricated material. The idea, more sublime than the producer. Flesh and bone soon to abandon time, yet time has remained optimistic, it has conquered the mastery of all else humanly perceived or denied.

James Bradley (b.1980, Orange, CA) received a Master of Fine Arts from California College of the Arts, San Francisco, CA (2009), and Bachelor of Arts from California State University, San Bernardino, CA (2003). Selected solo and group exhibitions include Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley (2014), Artists' Television Access, San Francisco (2010), Robert V. Fullerton Museum, San Bernardino (2003), AlterSpace, San Francisco (2016), The Luggage Store, San Francisco (2012), and Jack Hanley Gallery, San Francisco (2009). Bradley currently lives and works in Portland, Oregon.