

**Sean Micka**

*Fine Silver and Extraordinary Diamonds from the Estate of an Important Private Collection*

January 31 - March 2, 2019

Opening reception: January 31, 2019, from 6pm to 8pm

Josee Bienvenu is pleased to present Sean Micka's first solo exhibition with the gallery. The exhibition includes two new bodies of work: a collection of oil paintings based on selected objects from auction catalogues and a group of charcoal drawings documenting the various states of silver and portraits. The works navigate questions of value, labor and desire, production and circulation, authenticity and provenance, and the psychological investment we project onto personal and private inanimate objects.

Upon entering the space, a collection of oil paintings unfolds onto the wall and reads as a continuous strip. The paintings are based on print auction catalogs, namely Christie's and Sotheby's, of fine antique silver and luxury jewelry. The catalogues span from the early-1970's to the late-1990's. They contain all analog photography and period-specific graphic design, typography, and layout. They depict spoons, ladles, diamonds, emeralds and sapphires. Easily mistaken for photographs, the paintings ask the viewer to take a second, longer look, resisting the kind of cursory viewing prevalent today. The titles alone, drawn verbatim from the object and lot descriptions, are often difficult to read, resist easy reproduction, and often cause confusion. They require the viewer to slow down and reconsider what they are looking at. Why this, why now? Painted with high fidelity to realism, they become aesthetic objects of labor themselves, mapping out a paradoxical connection to the functions of authorship. On one hand, they are close reproductions or appropriations of readymade images. On the other hand, they represent the labor, time and material substances that went into them, creating a "third object" after the original one and the photograph, haunting the original, a history with multiple temporalities.

Across the room, a series of charcoal drawings documents the process of transformation of natural elements, rocks, minerals, the stuff of the earth which through skilled labor turns into coveted and fetishized objects of high exchange-values. The drawings show silver in various states: ingot, crystal, mineral, industrial sheets, as well as portraits of the deceased patrons whose collections and estates were sold in auction during the same era. Lastly, there is a drawing of a group portrait captured in 1879 of General U.S. Grant, miners and prospectors celebrating upon finding a giant lode of silver. Taken together, they constitute a typology of figures: silver and gems; and a genealogy of authors and caretakers: collections and collectors. Reflecting on the immanent dimensions of the artwork itself, questions of authorship and stewardship, and drawing on a history of theory, critique, and praxis — in particular the work of Andrea Fraser, Louise Lawler, Sherry Levine, Mary Kelly, and Gerhard Richter — Sean Micka's work comments and reflects on its own form and content and on institutionalization — circulation and exchange, auction and collection — creating another cycle of displacements and condensation, references and intersecting narratives.

Born in Boston, MA, in 1979, Sean Micka lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. He was a participant in the Whitney Museum of American Art, Independent Study Program, Studio Program from 2012-13 and 2013-2014, the AIR Space Program at The Abrons Arts Center in 2014-15, and Pioneer Works Residency in 2016. He received a BFA from the Art Institute of Boston at Lesley University in 2002. Solo exhibitions include *Object/Subject/Painting* at onestar Press/Three Star Books, Paris, France (2016); *Condition Report: Deregulation* at The Abrons Arts Center, Manhattan, NY (2015); *Storytelling* at Gallerie Charlotte Lund, Stockholm, Sweden (2013); *BOOK MACHINE*, at Le Nouveau Festival du Centre Pompidou, Paris, France (2013); *\$72M Sale Shatters Warhol Record* at Die Ausstellungsstrasse, Vienna, Austria (2011); and *After Images*, at Dvorak Sec Gallery, Prague, Czech Republic (2009). *Negotiations* was published by onestar Press, Paris France, in 2011.

<sup>1</sup> In the essay "In and out of Place"(1985), Andrea Fraser writes, "Even after art objects are withdrawn from exchange, the legacy of privileged expenditure is never severed from their pedigree. In museums, the labels that supplement every object always begin with the author and end by citing its previous owner; establishing art's value, these two genealogies are inseparable." She goes on to say, "Establishing authorship, ownership, pedigree, and ultimately, value, such museum labels are the most conspicuous instance of the institutional exhibition of proper names. Yet even in these titles there is an ambiguity: is the object 'proper' to the artist or the collector?" Louise Lawler, *October Files 14*, Ed. Helen Molesworth and Taylor Walsh., The MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 2013.