

MIGUEL ABREU GALLERY

GARETH JAMES

Gareth James works in abstractions disguised as pictures or language. The diverse materials that comprise his work—bicycle parts, inner tubes, plexiglas, bubblewrap, insertions into and excerpts from print publications, and film segments lifted from Antonioni and Lars von Trier—are united, as signs unmoored from their referents, by their difficult relations with representation. Topology, abstraction, formalism, capitalism, and low-level criminality are conceits that run the course of his project.

Drawing, in its expanded sense, is central to James's body of work. "The problem of drawing on a piece of paper is not what to draw, but the fact that it has two sides," he states. Thus, his early origami-based sculptures, a blank advertisement that appeared in the summer 2006 edition of *Artforum*, his Janus-faced collaboration with Storm van Helsing, and an indecipherable diagram on a blackboard could all be brought into drawing's conceptual orbit. Like a Möbius strip, such works travel from the "inside" to the "outside" and back again while remaining tied to a constant, uninterrupted surface.

For James, each exhibition proposes new possibilities of formalization—that is, the becoming-intelligible of something previously inchoate—that are in turn taken up by subsequent exhibitions. A triad of exhibitions that unfolded across three locations between 2008 and 2011, beginning with the theft of a bicycle and continuing with a symptomatic reading of the mysterious diagram in the background of a 1978 portrait of Althusser, illustrate this principle. Ultimately, the bicycle is not returned to its owner, despite the availability of information that could lead to its repossession, and the diagram is deemed incomprehensible, due to the lack of information surrounding its production. Information, or lack thereof, could lead to the dissolution of the artwork ("Hey, that's not art, that's my bike!"), or its constitution.

"It becomes necessary," the artist writes, "to insist once again on operating with functions that are not yet 'semiotically' formed, and matters that are not yet 'physically' formed—to work ahead of the forms and substances, expressions and contents a work will distribute. Thus it is important to say that the exhibition is not organized around the artist's subjective not-knowing (who cares if the artist is honest about that kind of thing or not?) but around the forms of activity that are possible on the edges of the hole produced by a truth as it comes to rupture the previous settlement of knowledge."

Gareth James (b. 1970, London) attended the Slade School of Fine Art at the University College London before completing the Whitney Independent Study Program in 1998. His work has been featured in solo exhibitions at Miguel Abreu Gallery, American Fine Arts, Elizabeth Dee Gallery, Galerie Christian Nagel, and elsewhere. In 2013, he was included in the group exhibitions Materials and Money and Crisis (curated by Richard Birkett, MUMOK, Vienna), Plaisance (curated by Fionn Meade, Midway Contemporary Art, Minneapolis), and Looking Back / The 7th White Columns Annual (White Columns, New York). Previously, he appeared in Notations: The Cage Effect Today (Hunter College / Times Square Gallery, New York, 2012), The Medium of Contingency (Thomas Dane Gallery, London, 2011), and in group exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, Portikus (Frankfurt), Artists Space (New York), The Institute of Contemporary Art (Philadelphia), Sculpture Center (New York), the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College (Annandake-on-Hudson, NY), PSi (New York), and Greene Naftali (New York).

James currently teaches in the Department of Art History, Visual Art, and Theory at the University of British Columbia, and previously held teaching positions at Cooper Union and Columbia University's School of Visual Arts, was a visiting artist at the Whitney Independent Study Program, Cornell University, New York University, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, the Milton Avery Graduate School of the Arts at Bard College, the School of Visual Arts, the Städelschule (Frankfurt), and has lectured at the Museum of Modern Art, the Dia Art Foundation, Sculpture Center, and the Contemporary Art Gallery (Vancouver). He has contributed writing to Artforum, Texte zur Kunst, and the collaborative novel Reena Spaulings, among other publications. James was a founding member of Orchard, a cooperatively organized exhibition and event space (2005-2008) and, with Cheyney Thompson and Sam Lewitt, Scorched Earth, a periodical and event space dedicated to questions of drawing (2005-2006).

James is represented by Miguel Abreu Gallery (New York) and Galerie Nagel Draxler (Berlin and Cologne).