

For immediate release

## CONOR BACKMAN

*Emiter*

July 8 - July 24, 2015

Opening reception: Friday, July 10 6-8pm

James Fuentes is pleased to present *Emiter*, a show of new paintings and sculpture by New York-based artist, Conor Backman. *Emiter* finds the artist presenting four distinct, but interrelated bodies of work, each engaging the temporal nature of creative (re-)production while furthering his ongoing explorations of invention, representation, origin and iteration.

Serving as the exhibition's centerpiece is a set of three oil paintings of rose bushes, each framed behind panes of tinted glass that range from a subtle grey to near black. The works' subject matter engages ideas of sensorial presence while functioning as a neutral image – a normalized, almost readymade stand-in for representational painting situated between landscape, still life and portraiture. This measured presentation is reinforced by Backman's treatment of his materials: each laboriously produced over several months spanning three years, the canvases have been rendered in detail, meticulously translated so as to disguise the artist's hand. The tinted glass that frames each work, meanwhile, serves as an additional filter, obfuscating any lingering indication of painterly gesture while flattening the image in a manner not dissimilar to that of a computer screen. When approached closely, the glass functions like a black mirror, placing the viewer and surrounding environment within the frame through overlapping reflections, the work itself going in and out of focus behind the pane. In photographic reproduction, the frames can further conceal the paintings, or disappear altogether, depending on camera exposure settings.

Hanging nearby is a previously unseen series of sculptural reliefs. Cast in marble and oriented vertically on the wall, these new works evoke eroded tombstones, their forms cropped to a lunar shape, their surfaces encrusted with cast lichen growths. Once again, Backman's treatment falls somewhere between representation and abstraction, his textured sculptures of sculptures deftly mimicking the effects of temporal and elemental forces on what are already man-made markers of time. Characteristically, the resulting works create a series of conceptual loops, as Backman equates the procreative, circular qualities of natural processes with the self-generative nature of a studio practice.

Backman has also included a new series of wall-hung assemblages in which found paint cans have been inserted into treated canvases. Housed within the cans are rear-painted Plexiglas inserts that serve as trompe l'oeil "paint," their opaque monochrome surfaces evoking mirrors, clock faces and camera lenses. The canvases, meanwhile, contain imagery echoing the works that surround them: shaded foliage, water-smoothed pebbles, reflected sunlight, weathered stone.

Rounding out the exhibition is a group of gray monochrome paintings, each framed under a layer of glass upon which Backman has mounted similarly colored cast lichens. The paintings are meant to mimic "gray cards," the colored panels used by photographers to establish consistent image exposure and color balance while shooting. Reflecting roughly the same amount of light as the earth's moon, gray cards are

designed to serve as an index for accurate translation. Backman's works, however, confound this function, as their neutralized hue ensures that documentation photos will collapse their layered compositions into a single, unified field - thus confirming once more an underlying, inherent instability in the relationship between image and object, copy and source.

As is often true of Backman's output, the items on view in *Emiter* find meaning in blurred narratives, each balanced firmly between painting and sculpture, original and image, authentic and simulated, actual and illusory. Layering references, fidelities and formats to purposefully disorienting ends, Backman's output challenges our expectations of physical presence, the line between direct and mediated viewing experiences rendered suddenly concurrent.

**Conor Backman** (b.1988) earned BFAs in Sculpture and Painting from Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA in 2011. Recent solo exhibitions have taken place at Annarumma, Naples, Italy (2014); Mixed Greens, New York, NY (2013); and Nudashank Gallery, Baltimore, MD (2013). His work has been included in group exhibitions at Smart Objects, Los Angeles, CA; Super Dakota, Brussels, Belgium; Evelyn Yard, London, United Kingdom; Aran Cravey, Los Angeles, CA; Reynolds Gallery, Richmond, VA; Higher Pictures, New York, NY; Stadium, New York, NY; and Saamlung, Hong Kong. Backman was co-owner of REFERENCE Art Gallery in Richmond, VA from 2009-2012. He currently resides in Hudson, NY.

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