

McCLAIN GALLERY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BO JOSEPH:
EMPIRE OF SPOILS
May 12 - June 23, 2012

Artist Reception:
Saturday, May 12, 2 - 4 PM

In his first solo show at McClain Gallery, New York-based artist **Bo Joseph** presents a group of recent work ranging from large scale tonal drawings to bold high-contrast paintings. Out of the dense organic linearity of Joseph's drawings rise ambitious abstractions and a sophisticated body of work that deftly straddles the line between the evocative and cryptic. Joseph will be in town for an artist reception, open to the public, on May 12, 2 - 4 PM. The exhibition will be on view May 12 - June 23, 2012.



Joseph works from a myriad of printed sources ranging from auction catalogues to books - seeking out objects, such as masks or ceremonial items from various cultures. Creating stencils out of these found elemental forms and abstractions, Joseph's translations retain their dynamism and relevance outside their original contexts. The symbols of people, places and ideas that no longer exist, and in which societies invest meaning - whether carved ancestor figures in an extinct African culture, or paving stones set in streets across Berlin where the Wall once stood - provide the strongest visual references for Joseph. By transcribing and relocating the silhouettes of such reproductions outside of their found context, and placing them within a richly layered field of his own gestural mark-making, Joseph creates abstract compositions that are inherent manifestations of archetypes and cultural appropriation, forming a patchwork of commonalities among disparate cultures.

Beyond their symbolic leanings, each work has a story to tell about how they were made. Whether working on a fragmentary, used drop cloth or on joined sheets of paper, Joseph exploits the painting support like yet another intrinsically charged, found object. Made with a combination of acrylic pens and paint, tempera and oil

pastel and using deconstructive techniques like sanding, masking and rinsing, his work challenges the very nature and transience of both material and subject: testing each to see what content and substance will resonate. Employing a working method that has been called "uncollage" he often uses oil pastel as a resist and washes the paper with water-based acrylic to create layers of negative space.

Using stencils made from his found imagery, he creates the negative white space on his larger paintings via layer upon layer of white paint. In smaller works on paper, brightly colored birds unfold like origami to play against a chalky canvas; in large scale drawings that measure up to 5 x 7 feet, hints of an Empire bubble to the surface: from a tribal mask and primitive tools, to spoils of war and lost civilizations, Joseph weaves relics of history and incongruent traditions together with aplomb.

Born in California in 1969, Joseph lives and works in New York City. He studied at the Rhode Island School of Design and has been showing his work since the early 1990s. Joseph has received awards and honors such as the Basil H. Alkazzi Award, and fellowships in painting from Provincetown Fine Arts Work Center and the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts. He has been a visiting artist/lecturer at the University of Massachusetts in Dartmouth, MA and the Rhode Island School of Design where he also taught drawing. His work can be found in museums nationally and abroad including Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO; and Guilin Art Museum, China.

Image: Bo Joseph, *The Byproducts of Dark Work*, 2011, oil pastel, acrylic and tempera on joined paper, 79 x 56 inches

McClain Gallery

2242 Richmond Avenue

Houston, Texas 77098

T: 713.520.9988, F: 713.520.0055 www.mcclaingallery.com

info@mcclaingallery.com

Tuesday- Friday 10 am to 5:30 pm, Saturday: 11 am to 5 pm

Press Inquiries: Erin Siudzinski, erins@mcclaingallery.com