

Jack O'Brien
The Reward
4 October/29 December

Jack O'Brien, *Just*, 2023. Ornamental steel display-shelves, stockinette, PVC plastic, wire rope. Image courtesy of the artist and Between Bridges.



Camden Art Centre is pleased to present *The Reward*, the first major institutional UK show by London-based artist Jack O'Brien (b. 1993). O'Brien, recipient of the 2023 Camden Art Centre Emerging Artist Prize at Frieze, will present an ambitious new installation responsive to the architecture and structure of Gallery Three.

Central to the exhibition is a newly commissioned work: a major spatial intervention, comprised of two suspended, steel exterior staircases, reminiscent of those once seen in areas of South London—where the artist resides—prior to urban redevelopment schemes. The staircases feature chrome ball punctuations and are wrapped in a skin-like fabric reminiscent of building hoardings. Using the structure of the existing window design, a large scale, system of holes and vents will create an adjoining light installation. The Victorian-style decorative panes and arches of the gallery space—now abstracted and obscured—further complicating how natural light moves in and about the gallery.

The intervention introduces a rippling that cuts through order and the presupposed conditions of how material, weight, and shape present within the spatial dynamics of the gallery. In this rippling, the viewer is directed to consider the work far beyond its material or architectural constraints. Objects show glimpses of previous lives. Familiar gestures are rooted in everyday experiences but altered with the slightest of motions—a staircase is turned onto its side and sheathed in a 'hermetic sealing' of industrial stockinette.

O'Brien's objects carry a sharp charge of tension and imbrication that the audience is invited to situate themselves in the midst of. Crowbars, aluminium pipes, balls, and holes all exist as sites where information and gestures are consolidated. Paired with his long-standing investment in 'linguistic structures,' his figurations achieve a poetic register that plays on motifs of music and language to an unsettling yet heady effect. Across his practice, works are imbued with a rhythmic presence. Sculptures swell with volume and serve as repositories for overlapping and repeating aural gestures. Repetitions, pauses, intonations and elongations—all of which are facets that play into the creation of these tonal structures—find their manifestation in the inanimate device.

The works invoke a direct and potent relationship to the body. Articulations of desire, restraint, and the linkages between them are cast in a new light through O'Brien's considered usage of materiality and form. His objects, sheathed and wrapped in flesh-like membranes, embody a physicality that both inhabits and disrupts the architectural spaces they exist in. Amid their presence, a 'corporeal identification' takes place that extends into and expands beyond the surrounding environment.

A new essay by Dominic Johnson is published in the latest edition of Camden Art Centre's long-running File Note series, produced for every exhibition, it represents an important strand of the organisation's programme, enabling the commission of a new piece of long-form writing accompanied by a reading/listening/watching list compiled by the artist. They are an accessible resource, available in the galleries for a small charge and online for free.

Public Programme

In partnership with the London Contemporary Music Festival (11-14 December 2024), O'Brien will present a new musical commission in collaboration with contemporary music composer Laure M. Hiendl, responding to his sculptural installation. The piece will be performed live at Camden Art Centre on Saturday, 30 November, and Sunday, 1 December, from 7.00 pm onwards.

Notes to Editors

For further information, interviews and images please contact:
Mary Doherty // mary@sam-talbot.com

Camden Art Centre

Since 1965 Camden Art Centre has been a place for art and the people that make it. Rooted in our local community and internationally acclaimed, we foster a sense of belonging and a deeper relationship to art. We aim to push boundaries and connect people to their own creativity through our exhibitions, residencies, events and learning programmes. Originally built as a public library, the building now combines historic architecture with open, modern spaces and a secluded garden with free entry for all. Camden Art Centre has always led the way supporting artists and audiences to create and engage with the most vital and inspiring contemporary art and culture today.

About The Emerging Artist Prize

The Camden Art Centre Emerging Artist Prize at Frieze offers a UK or international artist, selected from Frieze Focus, the opportunity to deliver a solo exhibition at Camden Art Centre and achieve the critical milestone of their first institutional show in London. Jack O'Brien is the fifth recipient. Previous winners include: Julien Creuzet (2019); Tenant of Culture (2020); Marina Xenofontos (2022).

Supporters

Camden Art Centre is indebted to the generosity and expertise of its Prize Supporters. Supporters of the 2023 Prize include Alexandra Economou and Noach Vander Beken, Anne-Pierre d'Albis, the Heller Family, Suling Mead, Batia Ofer, Ralph Segreti, Ronald & Sophie Sofer, Alma Zevi, and Indira Ziyabek and all those who wish to remain anonymous. With special thanks to Frieze London, Ginny on Frederick, and Matthew Brown Gallery.

Biography

Jack O'Brien (b.1993) lives and works in London and is represented by Ginny on Frederick and Matthew Brown Gallery. Recent solo and duo exhibitions include: *Nectar*, Matthew Brown Gallery, Los Angeles, US (2024); *Love Triangle*, Aro, Mexico City, MX (2024); *The Answer*, Sans Titre Invites, Paris, FR (2023); *To More Time*, Lockup International, London, UK (2022); *The Influence of Emotions On Associated Reactions*, with Henryk Morel (1937-68), Polamagnetczne Gallery, Warsaw, PL (2022) and *Waiting For The Sun To Kill Me*, Ginny on Frederick, London, UK (2021). Recent group exhibitions include: *Support Structures*, Gathering, London, UK (2023); *Memory of Rib*, N/A Gallery, Seoul, KR (2022); *Chômage Technique*, Lovaas Projects, Munich, DE (2022); *Something is Burning*, Kunsthalle Bratislava, SK (2022); *An Insular Rococo*, Hollybush Gardens, London, UK (2022) and *Strange Messengers*, Peres Projects, Berlin, DE (2018).