

# GAGOSIAN GALLERY

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## PRESS RELEASE

GAGOSIAN GALLERY  
980 MADISON AVENUE  
NEW YORK NY 10075  
HOURS:

T. 212.744.2313  
F. 212.710.3825  
Tue–Sat 10:00am–6:00pm



## MARK GROTJAHN

Thursday, September 13–Saturday, October 27, 2012

Opening reception for the artist: Thursday, September 13th, from 6 to 8 pm

Gagosian Gallery is pleased to present Mark Grotjahn's first exhibition of painted bronze sculptures.

Grotjahn's *Mask* sculptures are deceptive. Cast in bronze from spontaneous cardboard assemblages that he has been working on privately for over a decade, they record all the nuances of the original found material with its corrugations, dents, tears, and creases. Each original cardboard form—taller, deeper, flatter, or roughly cut away—spawns up to eight bronze casts, produced according to the lost-mold casting method. (In some instances, Grotjahn has even retained the channels that transport the molten metal into the slip, transforming them into powerful formal elements). The bronzes are vigorously painted, often with the fingers, in a riotous spectrum of color—deep violet with green accents, puce, scarlet, emerald, turquoise, scumbles of pastel shades, sober or fiery tones. While many of them are expressively and compellingly rendered in abstract terms, others seem primarily to be supports for the fact of Grotjahn's authorship, their surfaces covered by his erratically blocked signature or initials. Most of them rest on pedestals, stubbornly sculptural, while a few are wall-mounted, referring directly to painting. Specifically, they speak to Grotjahn's contrasting bodies of work, the *Face* and the *Butterfly* paintings—the former with their elaborate textures and primitive style, their savage quality underscored by the cardboard on which they are painted; the latter with their densely layered and nuanced monochromes.

The *Mask* sculptures recall the simple cardboard box constructions typical of early classroom activity—emulated so charmingly by Picasso for his own children during the idyllic Mediterranean years—flat, square faces with holes for eyes, a tube for nose, and a slightly larger hole or slash for a mouth. Sometimes the face is given just one of the three facial features. Replaying the inspirational relationship between the early Modernists and the arts of Africa and Oceania, they also explore the obsession with surface initiated by the Tachists and Abstract Expressionists. Like his predecessors, Grotjahn establishes an aesthetic remove from his referents via the processes of fabrication and production, thus his sculptures manifest both an undeniable primal intensity and a sophisticated yet endearing appeal.

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**Mark Grotjahn** was born in 1968 in Pasadena, California, and currently lives in Los Angeles. He received his MFA from the University of California, Berkeley, and his BFA from the University of Colorado, Boulder. Recent solo exhibitions include the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2005); Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2006); Kunstmuseum Thun, Switzerland (2007); Portland Art Museum (2010) and Aspen Museum of Art (2012). Group exhibitions include 2006 Whitney Biennial, New York; the 54th Carnegie International, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh (2004); Whitney Biennial, New York (2006); "Painting in Tongues," Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2006); "Oranges and Sardines," the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2008). His work is in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Cleveland Museum of Art; Des Moines Art Center; Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, D.C.; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; and Tate Modern, London.

Press Contacts:

[FITZ & CO](#)

Meg Blackburn

[meg@fitzandco.com](mailto:meg@fitzandco.com)

212-627-1455 x225

and

Jenny Isakowitz

[jenny@fitzandco.com](mailto:jenny@fitzandco.com)

212-627-1455 x254