



*Zachary Armstrong: Bits & Pieces Put Together  
to Present a Semblance of a Whole*

September 14<sup>th</sup> – October 29<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Reception: Wednesday, September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Tilton Gallery is pleased to present *Bits & Pieces Put Together to Present a Semblance of a Whole*, an exhibition of new paintings and sculptures by Zachary Armstrong. This is Armstrong's third solo show with the gallery. The exhibition will be on view from September 14<sup>th</sup> through October 29<sup>th</sup>, 2022. A reception for the artist will take place Wednesday, September 14<sup>th</sup> from 5:00PM to 8:00PM.

*Bits & Pieces Put Together to Present a Semblance of a Whole* is a title taken from a work by Lawrence Weiner that, for Armstrong, encapsulates his desire in this exhibition to gather a wide variety of interests and areas of conceptual exploration into one show.

In this exhibition, Armstrong continues to create his own blend of Americana with art history. The works, densely installed, touch upon multiple aspects of his repertory of imagery. Some paintings are beautiful and complex abstractions, painted in layers of encaustic, his chosen medium for painting. Underlying colors rise through an overlay of primarily blacks and whites and grays, brushstrokes overlaid with dynamic thick lines that seem to dance across the surface and evoke both flatness and depth simultaneously. Figurative paintings depict various of his personalized wide range of realistic images, again created in encaustic brushstrokes, often with an emphasis on the abstract nature of the shapes within.

Armstrong's work requires one to take a leap into the artist's head, to see what he sees, to revel in detail, in complexity, in the minutia that make up our world, both abstract and realistic. Objects are not only seen as subject, although the meaning of each image is, for Armstrong, usually important in some intensely personal way as a reference to his own history, his own inner library of images that have influenced his vision of the world, or arising from his deep

knowledge of art history. Many of the figurative works in this exhibition depict his own version of Americana, whether in an appropriation of a Norman Rockwell painting or in his oversized images of farmyard animals.

The choice of images becomes important, not only for these objects' inherent structure and detailing, and for their personal significance, but for the possibilities they present to the artist: what he can "*pack into them.*" This is a phrase the artist often repeats. A simple illustration, be it of a head, a figure, a fish, a chicken, or an appropriated, becomes a whole world, *packed* with a plethora of forms, colors, and brush strokes. Detail and repetition are essential.

A few images, such as those of a large engine or sewing machines, are chosen for their simplicity and simultaneous intricacy: they are simple, mechanical and precisely painting. They were perfectly engineered objects before being touched by human hand. With Duchamp's *Coffee Grinder* or Man Ray's sewing machine in mind, the choice of these found objects may also be seen as a nod to the famous Dada description of "a chance encounter of an umbrella and sewing machine on an operating table."

For this exhibition, Armstrong has also made a large sculptural installation that spans the entire east wall of the large second floor gallery, from floor to ceiling, surrounding the room's fireplace. One hundred and nine carved and painted fish cover the wall, each with its individual shape and creating an overall symmetrical abstract configuration where the left side mirrors the right. The black and white patterned surfaces of these fish echo the larger abstract paintings in the exhibition. Armstrong feels that this work can be viewed simultaneously as a large sculptural installation and as a large painting.

Armstrong's repeated return to depicting fish stems from Jack Tilton's recounting a story about Betty Parsons. An artist as well as gallerist, she painted found driftwood in the shape of a fish and would give these sculptures to friends to hang above the entrance of the house to protect their homes from fire. Armstrong has used this inspiration to carve and paint fish to make bronze sculptures, playing with and distorting shapes and sizes. Here, the fish become pattern and ornamentation in this already ornate 1895 ballroom.

Zachary Armstrong was born in 1984 in Dayton, Ohio. Solo exhibitions include *Grids & Abstracts* at The Contemporary Dayton, OH and *Bag of Candles* at the Faurshou Foundation, Beijing, China, both in 2021. He has shown widely at galleries in London, Berlin, Copenhagen, Los Angeles and San Francisco. Armstrong's work has been included in notable group exhibitions such as *Take Up Space* at the Pizzuti Collection and *Inherent Structure* at the Wexner Center for the Arts, both in Columbus, Ohio. Concurrent with his show at Tilton, the Faurshou Foundation, a private museum in Brooklyn, will present *Twelve Animals*, opening September 10<sup>th</sup>. Armstrong lives and works in Dayton, Ohio.