



Untitled, 2016,
bronze, unique

533 W26 ST NYC | DEC 8, 2016 - JAN 28, 2017

Michelle Grabner

OPENING RECEPTION: THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8, 6-8 PM

James Cohan is pleased to announce the opening of an exhibition of new work by Michelle Grabner. This will be the artist's second solo exhibition at James Cohan. The opening reception will take place on December 8 from 6-8 PM, and will remain on view through January 28.

The exhibition will feature a new series of bronze sculptures along with large scale paintings and works on paper. A catalogue of the bronze works will be published on the occasion of this exhibition with a contributing essay by David Getsy.

The sculptures are casts of hand-crocheted and knitted blankets, many of which were used as templates for her abstract paintings. Collected over decades, these textiles have lent themselves to different modes of "usefulness," functioning first as an object of comfort and care before becoming the physical framework for fine art objects, losing their original form during this transformation. Through the quasi-alchemical process of casting, Grabner reinvents these domestic objects and relies upon her chosen medium to change the quotidian into the heroic.

They are human in scale, relating both to Grabner's own body and the physicality of their fabrication. To create these sculptures, Grabner first made wax positives of the blanket she intended to cast. Molten bronze was then poured into the moulds, burning out both the fabric and wax, thereby sacrificing the original textile. Grabner reassembled the full blanket, changed into bronze, from these constituent parts. The draping form of the reconstituted textile reminds the viewer of Grabner's process and that this hardened bronze sculpture was once a soft, pliable fabric. Both blanket and bronze are one object with a single linear history.

As David Getsy writes in the accompanying catalog essay, "Grabner's sculptures...conjure the blankets' past lives. Her initial choice to use them as patterns for her works gave these textiles a new life and purpose, and in making paintings from their structures she honored the embedded intelligence in the domestic labor and traditions that produced them. This canny engagement with conventions of both sculpture and abstract painting combine to make a twofold case: first, for the powerful familial associations and intelligence born from traditional artist practices embodied by the blankets she chose and, second, for the larger place of such "women's work" of making handmade textiles as crucial to major debates in Western art's history. In their sophisticated layering of the meanings and uses of these blankets, throws, and afghans, Grabner's sculptures demand a different kind of attention to the complexity and capacity of such traditional artistic practices, themselves often handed down generation by generation."

Michelle Grabner holds an MA in Art History and a BFA in Painting and Drawing from the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, and an MFA in Art Theory and Practice from Northwestern University. Grabner is the Crown Family Professor of Painting at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago where she joined its faculty in 1996. Other recent faculty appointments include, Milton Avery Graduate School of the Arts at Bard College, Yale University School of Art, and Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. Her writing has been published in *Artforum*, *Modern Painters*, *Frieze*, *Art Press*, and *Art-Agenda*, among others. Grabner also runs The Suburban and The Poor Farm with her husband, artist Brad Killam. She co-curated the 2014 Whitney Biennial at the Whitney Museum of American Art along with Anthony Elms and Stuart Comer. Currently Grabner and Jens Hoffmann are working as co-artistic directors for FRONT, a triennial art exhibition in Cleveland and vicinity opening in July 2018.

She has been the subject of solo exhibitions at the Indianapolis Museum of Art, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Cleveland, INOVA, The University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee; Ulrich Museum, Wichita, Kansas; and University Galleries, Illinois State University, Normal. She has been included in group exhibitions at Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, Illinois; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota; Tate St. Ives, UK; and Kunsthalle Bern, Switzerland. Her work is included in the permanent collection of Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, Illinois; MUDAM, Luxemburg; Milwaukee Art Museum, Wisconsin; Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, Wisconsin; Daimler Contemporary, Berlin, Germany; Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington D.C. and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, UK.

David J. Getsy is the Goldabelle McComb Finn Distinguished Professor of Art History at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. His books include *Abstract Bodies: Sixties Sculpture in the Expanded Field of Gender* (Yale University Press, 2015); *Rodin: Sex and the Making of Modern Sculpture* (Yale University Press, 2010); and *Body Doubles: Sculpture in Britain, 1877-1905* (Yale University Press, 2004).

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