

Ryan Johnson

Night Table

Exhibition dates: March 31 – May 6, 2023
Reception for the artist: Friday, March 31, 5-8 pm

Marinaro is proud to present *Night Table*, Ryan Johnson's first show with the gallery featuring new sculptures made of bronze, epoxy clay, and steel.

The show is loosely organized around the work *Night Table*, which depicts a recumbent head as a table where scissors, a juice carton, a seashell, and a vase make up a dreamlike tableau. Johnson's interest is in the table as the place where the activities of life pile up, are swept aside, and categories of use overlap. Here *night* is a psychological space where the fantastical and prosaic stuff of everyday life blend and blur.

Johnson arrives at his subjects intuitively. A visual hunch, or a simple silhouette builds into a more resolute form. Yet the work maintains an aspect of its initial open-endedness and spontaneity, even as Johnson methodically sculpts and sands the work to a smooth, stone-like surface.

Throughout the show we see Johnson deploying shifts of scale to subtle uncanny effect. A large form made small, a small object made large. Such distortions are particularly evident in the works that take their subject from everyday experience. A group of toothbrushes are enlarged, distorting our tactile relationship with a common object and exaggerating their anthropomorphic designs. *Big Wheel*, the ubiquitous toy tricycle of the seventies, is shrunken down to a scale just smaller than functional, like a memory that can't quite be recalled.

In several works, subjects in motion are rendered in playful relationship to sculpture's paradoxical stillness. *Bird in Flight* and *Dog Chasing Tail* each take the impossibility of depicting motion as a formal premise and imaginative engine. But Johnson's motivation is never just one of formal experiment. Such devices are treated primarily as vehicles of feeling.

In this way, we can look to the sculpture *Night Table* as a metonym for the show itself, prompting us to think through the relationships between scissors, juice carton, and seashell, as we do sphinx, Pinocchio, and tricycle. Taken together, the exhibition points to broader categories of thinking – of dreamlike relationships where the literal and the imaginary meld and warp. *Night* as a permissive space where narrative, image, and object all merge.

Ryan Johnson (b. 1978, Karachi, Pakistan) received his MFA from Columbia University in 2003, and his BFA from Pratt Institute in 2000. Selected solo and two person exhibitions include Nina Johnson, Miami; Nemeth Art Center (w/ Dana Schutz), Park Rapids; Nicelle Beauchene, New York; The Suzanne Geiss Company, New York; Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York; and Guild & Greyshkul, New York; amongst others. His work has been included in group exhibitions at Sculpture Center, New York; Metropolitan Arts Society, Beirut; Aspen Art Museum, Aspen; The Contemporary Museum, Honolulu; and MoMA PS1, New York. Johnson currently lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.