

The Bottom Line

Ben Gocker's *There really is no single poem* at PPOW

Tuesday, July 6th, 2010



Ben Gocker, Drawings, 2009-2010. 36 mixed media drawings
87 X 118". Courtesy of the artist and P.P.O.W Gallery, New York.

In his first solo exhibition, *There really is no single poem*, New York-based artist Ben Gocker (b. 1979) has created exuberant installations, drawings and wall-mounted sculptures. On view through July 16th at PPOW Gallery in Chelsea, Gocker's work claims the impossibility of autonomy in artistic expression, emphasizing interaction between displayed objects. As captured by the exhibition's title, a quotation from the poet Jack Spicer, Gocker asserts that no work can stand disconnected from the context of its environment and perceived associations.

While each of Gocker's playful and vibrantly colored pieces is presented distinctively and can be appreciated for its individual aesthetic power, the objects interact with and refer to one another, both visually and thematically. In *Death and Friends*, the viewer is instantly struck by Gocker's use of repetition, as he symbolizes his friends and acquaintances through a series of twenty-two monochromes of varied dimensions. The piece directly refers to another work in the show, entitled *Names*, which displays the names of the individuals represented in *Death and Friends*, written in paint on a large white wheel. While these two works appear to stand alone, Gocker's intention is only wholly realized through their interaction.

Gocker continues his theme of association and spatial relationships in *Drawings*, 30 pages of notebook sketches and notes collected by the artist and reproduced in plaster. Hung in a grid formation, the pieces bring permanence to ephemeral artifacts of day-to-day life. While these drawings may represent merely quick, sketched notes, they act as totems for the people and interactions from which they were produced. *Drawings* interrogates the relationship between signifier and signified, conjuring up the artist's memories through visual symbols. In continuing this inquiry, Gocker points back to *Death and Friends* and *Names*, further developing an environment of interrelation within the exhibition.

In these effervescent installations, sculptures and drawings, Gocker points to the necessity of interaction, not only in art, but in life. As Spicer once said, you will see that they "cannot live alone any more than we can". – *Julia Horn, Curatorial Intern*