

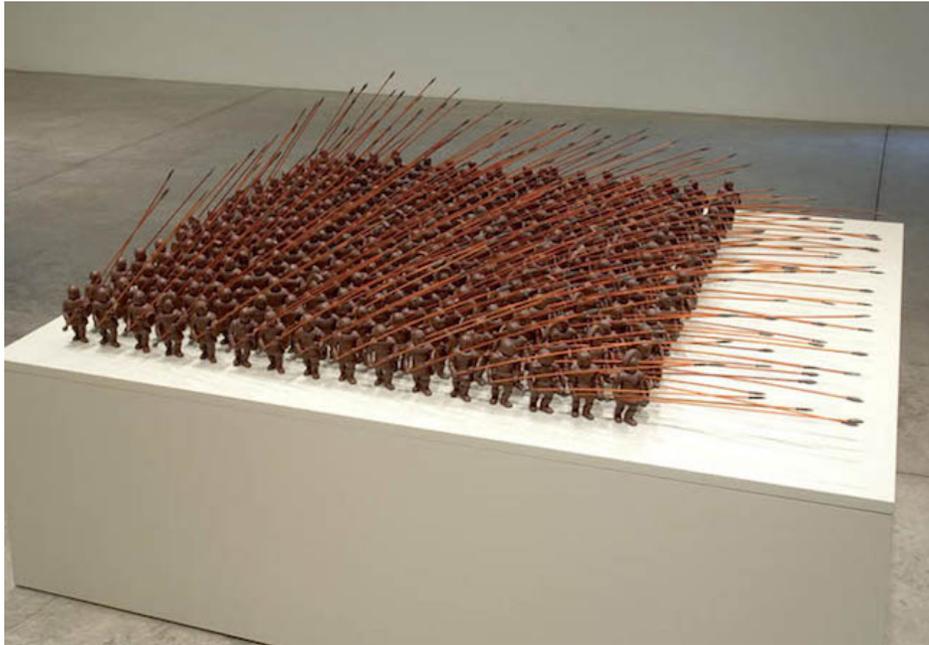
JANUARY 7, 2015 | GARTH CLARK



Art | Ben Jackel: Search, Destroy and Rescue

Los Angeles artist [Ben Jackel's](#) art is fueled by adrenaline, crisis and a serene, often minimal sense of beauty. It's an odd combination if one thinks about it but the contradictions merge seamlessly. I remember seeing his tiny chocolate warriors, a colored porcelain army on the march (it was inspired by the iconic, quasi graphic film *300* from 2007 that was based on the 1998 comic series of the same name by Frank Miller and Lynn Varley). However, I am always hesitant with charm and remember noting Jackel's name and promising to return to his career later.

*Above image: Ben Jackel, Navy Hose, 2012, stoneware and beeswax, 33 1/2 x 22 1/2 x 3 1/2 inches*



Ben Jackel, *Syntagma*, 2008-09, porcelain, mahogany, bismuth alloy, 256 soldiers, 72 x 60 x 16 inches

I have been nudged since that show by a stunning [portfolio of images](#) covering his career by Jackel's dealer [L.A. Louver](#).



Ben Jackel, *Dignity and Purpose*, 2005, stoneware, Douglas fir, 84 x 90 x 48 inches



Ben Jackel, IED, 2008, stoneware and beeswax, 32 x 17 x 17 inches

He has made works about Hurricane Katrina and became fascinated with the Brancusi-like sleekness of spy planes and drones. He is drawn to their aesthetic of quiet lethal terror and notes that we have, “have revolutionized warfare: ‘man versus man’ just got a little more complicated because one of the men is no longer present.”



Ben Jackel, Phantom Ray, 2011, mahogany, ebony and graphite, 5 x 37 x 46 ½

These planes are created in mahogany and coated in graphite. Much of the work is stoneware but looks like blackened metal. Obviously material is key to him but when the clay and the wood is together one does not feel any material difference, the vision and, dare I say it, the smoothing hand, dominate.



*Ben Jackel, Resolution Authority, 2009-2013, mahogany and graphite, 13 x 69 1/2 x 39 inches*



*Ben Jackel, Global Hawk, 2009, mahogany and graphite, 36 x 94 x 12 inches*

In addition to tools of death, Jackel makes instruments of rescue from stoneware and beeswax, all from the realm of fighting fire, fire hydrants, standpipes, alarm bells and fire hoses. The work is explained in a review from [Artweek L.A.](#):



Ben Jackel, Garrison, 2012, stoneware, 18 x 40 x 21 inches

*“Jackel instills a quiet dignity into these silent saviors, which are usually ignored by passers-by until they are summoned into action by crisis. Jackel gives each hydrant and standpipe a distinctive personality, and leads us to reexamine their form and symbolic resonance. The centerpiece of the group, and the most complex, is Garrison, 2012, which is rendered after a six-headed hydrant that Jackel discovered by a high rise in downtown Los Angeles. Garrison, “a group of troops stationed in a fortress or town to defend it” (OED), is translated into this inanimate object: a powerful force at the ready, created to serve in an emergency of unimaginable horror. The fire hydrants and standpipes also inspire the title of the exhibition: Zero Percent Contained, which is a term used to describe a fire over which firefighters have no control. It was an expression used during the initial days of L.A.’s 2009 extensive and devastating Station Fire, and has resonated with Jackel since that time.*



Ben Jackel, Swiss Hydrant, 2014, stoneware and beeswax, 28 x 9 inches

*“Born and raised in Aurora, Colorado, Jackel received his BFA from the University of Colorado, Boulder, before moving to Los Angeles to pursue a MFA at the University of California, Los Angeles. At UCLA, Jackel studied with renowned sculptor Adrian Saxe, who proved a critical influence in the development of Jackel’s work, particularly in the use of clay as his primary material. Following graduation in 2005, while pursuing his own art, Jackel worked for another of his professors, Charles Ray, and quickly rose to studio head. Following his inclusion in the exhibition Rogue Wave ’07, L.A. Louver began representing Jackel, and in 2009 presented Jackel’s first solo exhibition Compliance Solutions. In 2011, he left Ray’s studio and now works in Los Angeles as a full-time artist.”*

**Garth Clark** is Chief Editor of CFile.



*Ben Jackel, Zero Percent Contained, exhibition view*



*Ben Jackel*