



Ben Jackel at his studio applying graphite to *Legacy*, 2015

# BEN JACKEL

## AMERICAN IMPERIUM

18 February – 28 March 2015

Reception for the artist: Wednesday, 18 February 6-8 pm

**Venice, CA** -- L.A. Louver is pleased to present an exhibition of new sculptures by Los Angeles-based artist Ben Jackel. This marks the artist's third solo show at L.A. Louver.

An elevated sophistication of both technical skill and subject matter are reflected in Jackel's new body of work, created over the past two years. Titled "American Imperium," the exhibition centers on the artist's interest in the history of warfare and the implicit vulnerabilities of the human condition.

A sculpted bust of President Theodore Roosevelt, who played an essential role in establishing the United States as a world power, embodies the title of the exhibition. Jackel captures Roosevelt's distinctive features in

stoneware, including his charismatic grin that could appear more menacing than cordial. Jackel titles the work "The Colonel (Teddy)" (2015), in reference to Roosevelt's position as Lieutenant Colonel during the Spanish-American War, and which later also became a familiar nickname.

Jackel has a long held fascination with military history. This interest led him to join the crew of the Battleship USS Iowa, the World War II Navy ship turned museum which is now located at the Port of Los Angeles in San Pedro, CA, and where he serves as a volunteer guide and brass technician. During his time on board, Jackel became engrossed in the various apparatus vital to the functionality of the ship, and was inspired to develop their forms as isolated objects. "Coiled Navy Hose" (2014), created from stoneware, features an industrial hose wrapped on itself and housed in a half-moon shaped encasement. Carved from a single block of wood, "Substance" (2015) replicates a ship's massive propeller, becoming an object of surprising beauty though Jackel's interpretation of its smooth, seamless blades.

Another utility object carved from wood, and the largest work in the exhibition, is "Legacy" (2015). Standing nearly 6 ft. (1.8 m) tall, Jackel carved this larger-than-life axe using axes of different shapes and sizes, and coated its surface with graphite, which he then burnished to a rich luster.

The centerpiece of the exhibition is five oversized helmets, all produced from stoneware. Replicating European helmets dating ca. 1400-1600, each has its own distinctive shape and characteristics, with every intricacy painstakingly rendered. By sculpting the

helmets from clay, and on a larger scale, the subjects' forms and refinement come into focus, commanding the viewer's gaze with their dominating presence. "Stechhelm" (2014) was modeled after a 16th century German jousting helmet, but could easily be mistaken for a futuristic space helmet with its flattened crown and v-shaped eye slit. "Some of these helmets have graceful sweeping lines that portray the elegance of the aristocracy. Other helmets are designed to counter blows from specific weapons. I first saw them as images of power, strength and control," explains Jackel, "but now I also see that by wearing a helmet we acknowledge our own vulnerabilities."

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. Following his inclusion in the exhibition "Rogue Wave '07," L.A. Louver began representing Jackel, presenting solo exhibitions "Compliance Solutions" (2009) and "Zero Percent Contained" (2011). More recently, Jackel was selected as the "Artist in Residence 2014" at Fullerton College, CA; and in 2015, the artist will present a lecture of his work at the Denver Art Museum, CO. Notable group exhibitions include: "Bruin Battle," UCLA Fowler Museum, Los Angeles, CA (2003); "Tools," Williamson Gallery at Art Center College of Design, Pasadena, CA (2009); "Diptych America," China Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing, China (2013); "Artnauts: Art and Politics," Mahmoud Darwish Museum, Ramallah, Palestine (2014); "Prep School," Torrance Art Museum, CA (2014); and the forthcoming exhibition "Showing Off: Recent Acquisitions," Denver Art Museum, CO (2015).



*Stechhelm*, 2014  
stoneware and beeswax  
24 x 12 1/2 x 17 1/2 in. (61 x 31.8 x 44.5 cm)

**Artist Conversation:** Thursday, 26 February 2015, 7 pm

Join us for an artist conversation with Ben Jackel and Christopher Miles, as they discuss Jackel's work in the context of his current exhibition.

The event is free but reservations are required.  
RSVP to (310) 822-4955 or [rsvp@lalouver.com](mailto:rsvp@lalouver.com)

**Concurrently on view:** 18 February – 28 March 2015

Sandra Mendelsohn Rubin: *A Common Thread*  
New landscape paintings.