



Gas Mask, 2016
stoneware, beeswax, 20 x 15 x 19 in. (50.8 x 38.1 x 48.3 cm)

BEN JACKEL REIGN OF FIRE

**19 JULY —
1 SEPTEMBER 2017**

Reception for the artist

Wednesday, 19 July, 6 – 8 p.m.

Valet parking

Venice, CA -- L.A. Louver is pleased to present new sculptures by Los Angeles-based artist Ben Jackel, all produced over the past two years. This marks his fourth solo exhibition at L.A. Louver.

In his most subversive body of work to date, Ben Jackel addresses themes of warfare, exploration and American politics within both historical and contemporary contexts. Through his skillful and sophisticated facility as a sculptor, Jackel has recreated weaponry, armor, tools, architectural motifs and watercraft – accounting for every minute detail, whether carved from wood or realized in clay. As their organic media excises the forms' intended functions, the artist gives them prominence as isolated objects that require extended contemplation, bringing a new awareness to the purpose of their existence and the narratives they hold.

The exhibition title, *Reign of Fire*, is a nod to the making of the works, many of which are ceramics fired in a kiln. Moreover, it speaks to the overall subject matter – the power of humanity to exact war, to dominate and to repress. This is most evident in a series of cannons, which Jackel created from stoneware in a range of sizes (the largest being *100 Ton Gun* [2017], which measures over 10 ft./300 cm in length). Resting on the floor in dense parallel formation, each is reclined and pointed forward as if ready to be engaged. They serve as a gruesome reminder of our war history and the countless lives claimed. “We live in a nation that has been at continuous war for 16 years,” Jackel states. “These ceramic sculptures of actual old cannons represent the memory of our battlefields and the realization that, day by day, we are living through the longest war in American history.”



100 TON GUN, 2016
stoneware, 130 x 32 x 25 in. (330.2 x 81.3 x 63.5 cm)

Whereas cannons were designed to cause harm from a considerable distance, changing the way battles were fought forever, drones (unmanned aerial vehicles) were developed to strike from afar without requiring a human being to enter the battle zone.

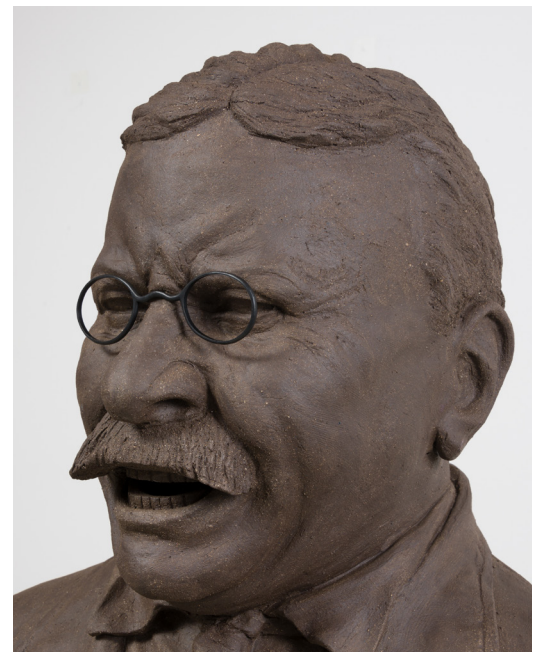
For this exhibition, Jackel has produced three drones exquisitely shaped from wood and burnished with graphite. Descending from the ceiling, they hover in mid-air. Their inherent violence belies the grace and elegance of their forms.

In contrast, six larger-than-life helmets that Jackel built from stoneware express the human component of military conflict. Ranging from 15th and 16th century helmets to the 21st century *Night Vision* (2016) and *Gas Mask* (2016), they bridge the gap between historic and contemporary warfare and convey the perpetuation of war throughout the centuries.

At the center of the exhibition is the single figurative work on view: an outsized stoneware bust of the 26th President of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt. At nearly 4 ft./100 cm and set atop a pedestal, its commanding presence and compelling likeness embody the grandiosity of the man himself, a steadfast imperialist who played a pivotal role in establishing America as a global power, and also a conservationist who created a legacy of public lands across the nation.

Similarly, *Dark Tower* (2017), depicts another kind of presidential portrait. A representation of Trump Tower in New York City, Jackel created this sculpture in reaction to our current political administration. In the artist's words, "To create and control a towering structure has always been central to the hierarchy and power base of human civilizations. Man-made towers have always been used to channel power and express control. I created this sculpture in response to the rapidly changing world around us. As I laid down coil after coil of clay, I struggled to understand what was happening. I just knew that I had to keep building upwards. I needed to build my own dark tower."

Born and raised in Aurora, Colorado, Jackel received his BFA from the University of Colorado, Boulder, and earned his 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), *Zero Percent Contained* (2011) and *American Imperium* (2015). Recently, his work was presented in the solo exhibition *Providence of Night*, Brandstater Gallery, La Sierra University, Riverside, CA. Notable group exhibitions include: *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); *Showing Off: Recent Acquisitions*, Denver Art Museum, CO and *We Must Risk Delight: 20 Artists from Los Angeles*, BardoLA, La Biennale di Venezia (2015).



TR, *Teddy Roosevelt*, 2017 (detail)
stoneware, walnut, beeswax, 43 x 35 x 21 in. (109.2 x 88.9 x 53.3 cm)

A comprehensive online of Ben Jackel's works from 2008-2017, with videos and descriptions, can be viewed at:
lalouver.com/ben-jackel-catalogue

Concurrently on view at L.A. Louver (19 July – 1 September 2017):

SECOND FLOOR GALLERY

Kienholz: *The Jungen*, *The Non War Memorial*, *Still Dead End Dead 1 & 2*