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ARTFORUM

New York

Ricky Swallow

MACCARONE | 630 GREENWICH STREET

630 Greenwich Street

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For his first solo exhibition in New York since his 2006 survey at MoMA PS1, Los Angeles–based Australian sculptor Ricky Swallow embraces an unprecedented degree of abstraction. The artist has made bronze casts of configurations of studio scraps—cardboard, rope, leather, wood—that could be called a kind of found or incidental abstraction. On several occasions, Swallow has talked about his “built-in moral resistance” to abstract modes, yet his folk version of the genre, for lack of a better term, complicates our understanding of what abstraction can do. Swallow is, above all, most interested in the beauty and emotional charge everyday objects can carry, as he elevates their humble functions and properties aesthetically and empathically.



Ricky Swallow, *Split (with ball) #5*, 2017, patinated bronze, oil paint, 14 1/2 x 17 x 10 1/2”.

The verisimilitude and craftsmanship of his painted and patinated bronze pieces invite careful and extended looking. Swallow’s newer works here play with balance, weight, and tension. In *Split (with ball) #5* (all works cited, 2017), for instance, white rope has been looped through what look like four small sections of red tubing. The object, a soft parallelogram, stands on a pair of rounded corners and a gold-colored ball bearing. The whole composition is bound by a single piece of taut string. Such considerations of physics are also present in *Bow/Drop #2*, which asks us to contemplate a length of rope that does not slacken from the pull of gravity—a force that has been neutralized by the bronze. Throughout the exhibition we constantly question how these sculptures came to take on these particular arrangements. Perhaps it is because Swallow is a bricoleur—an uncommon mind with the unique skill to cull the marvelous from the ordinary through playful and surreal transmutations and juxtapositions.

—Alex Bacon