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For Immediate Release

Josh Blackwell | Casual Dress Pants

March 28 - May 3, 2009

Opening Reception: Sunday, March 29, 4-7 PM



Rachel Uffner Gallery is pleased to present gallery artist Josh Blackwell's first solo show in New York. In the gallery, Blackwell will exhibit two series of works on paper that use clothing as their point of departure, exploring the intersection between the body and the world of things it both inhabits and disrupts. Extending the show's reach into nearby Freeman Alley, Blackwell will also present embroidered plastic bags that will hang from an alley tree, turning mass produced objects into handmade redundancies.

Investigating questions with an arch sense of humor, Blackwell's paper pants are characterized by awkward silhouettes, galumphing proportions and bright colors. Lumpy and strangely cropped, the negative space below their crotch is emphasized with contrasting color. The results are oddly proportioned garments that both conceal and reveal: red pantaloons sport vulnerably baggy MC Hammer bottoms, preppy trousers bewilder in a pink sperm whale pattern, while Jim Morrison-like leathers sprout an embarrassingly union-like protrusion. By employing a troubled version of geometric abstraction, the works not only stress the body's tense relationship to external strictures, but also draw on the formal and material language of Minimalism.

Blackwell's sweaters are vibrantly painted paper patterns that mimic the act of knitting or weaving. Exploring the physicality of color and texture, the works' surface is created through a dance of repetitive notations, suggesting that a body's labor isn't separate from the product it generates but is, rather, another version of it. The colorful, Matisse-like intertwining of representation and abstraction is also approached in Blackwell's plastic bags. The embroidered surface emphasizes the structure of the bag itself, while simultaneously overwriting its original function. With their logos obscured by wobbly stitching, these wispy bits of street detritus are returned to their natural habitat, but with a twist: gently swaying in the breeze, the tree as their pedestal, they are bashful, yes, but also proud.

Josh Blackwell has exhibited his work in the US and abroad, including solo exhibitions at Kate MacGarry, London, Mary Goldman Gallery, Los Angeles, and Galleria Alessandro de March, Milan. His work has also been featured in group exhibitions at the Contemporary Arts Center, New Orleans; Weatherspoon Art Museum, Greensboro, North Carolina; Norwich Gallery, Norwich, England; and Misako and Rosen, Tokyo, Japan. He has been awarded artist residencies at Yaddo, Gemini GEL in Los Angeles, and the Delfina Studio Trust in London. He is a visiting faculty member in Visual Arts this spring at Bennington College.

On April 26th, Lizzie Scott will stage a dance performance in the gallery as part of The Movement Research Spring Festival 2009: Roll Call (April 23 - May 2, 2009). For more information, please go to <http://movementresearch.org/rollcall/>

Josh Blackwell and Rachel Uffner Gallery would like to thank Fabienne Stephan, Michael Mahalchick, and Lizzie Scott for their contributions to Casual Dress Pants.

Image: *Alden*, 2009, acrylic on paper, 52 1/4 x 34 in.

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