

Art in America
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DONALD MOFFETT
MARIANNE BOESKY



In "The Radiant Future," Donald Moffett presented 12 new works completed in 2011-12, many of them hybrid objects that problematize the relationship between painting and sculpture. Although Moffett may be best known for his AIDS-related activist art from the late '80s and '90s, he has always rigorously explored issues connected to the nature of painting and its changing contexts. Piercing the surfaces of his paintings with voids and covering what remains with monochromatic paint extruded as prickly, highly tactile matter, Moffett conveys in these works an understated violence and implied sexuality.

The exhibition, beautifully installed in the gallery's three rooms, included both wall-hung paintings and freestanding sculptures. The latter are large-scale assemblages constructed of found and industrial materials, within which the artist typically suspends one of his signature abstract paintings. These hybrid works constitute a new line of exploration for Moffett, as his paintings now inhabit space in a new way. He has professed dissatisfaction in the past with the fact that paintings are inextricably tied to the wall, and his recent works seem designed to circumvent that restriction.

Moffett has continued his practice of titling works as numbered lots with meaningful subtitles. In *Lot 010212 (the double hazard)*, Moffett creates an unanticipated realm for one of his paintings. The work consists of two large, rough wooden platforms upon which stand two concrete donkeys suggestively facing away from the viewer. Resting on their backs is a steel I-beam resembling a yoke, and from that Moffett suspended a bright orange painting with four holes that resemble painting drips. As if bearing an onerous burden, the animals seem slowly to

usher the painting away from the viewer. Perhaps Moffett is here posing a metaphor about painting's limitations and problematic future.

In the press release, Moffett described his recent interest in questions of texture and weight. These variables were consistently at play throughout the show. Even in the case of his wall-mounted pieces, Moffett makes us acutely aware of his work's material existence. Installed in the first room, for example, was *Lot 122811 (the double extension)*, a canvas covered in deep blue accumulations of paint. Protruding visibly, the painting is attached to the wall by two thick metal pipes that also puncture its highly tactile surface with two large holes. The painting's manner of suspension is integral to its status as an object. Ever the provocateur, Moffett complicates our expectations about the nature of painting—how it operates in the world, and how it might evolve over time.

[*"Donald Moffett: The Extravagant Vein," a survey of the artist's work at the Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College until June 3, travels to the Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, June 23-Sept. 9.*]

—Jane Panetta

View of Donald Moffett's exhibition "The Radiant Future," 2012; at Marianne Boesky.