

Michigan Avenue: 'Chicago's William J. O'Brien Shows Multimedia Pieces at the MCA',
by Elle Eichinger, January 15th, 2014

Chicago's William J. O'Brien Shows Multimedia Pieces at the MCA



Untitled, 2007, William J. O'Brien.
Collection of Dana Hirt.

Chicago artist William J. O'Brien unveils his first major survey exhibition on Saturday, January 25 at the Museum of Contemporary Art by discussing his work in an artist's talk (3 p.m.) with the museum's Marilyn and Larry Fields curator, Naomi Beckwith. More than 130 of his pieces—ranging from sculptures to drawings to paintings—comprise the eponymous exhibit.

"I find inspiration from the people in my life, alive and dead," O'Brien says. "[And from] the memories created with them: good, bad, and ugly." The idea of creating memories is an active one, and his pieces represent that. Beckwith found a connecting factor of movement among O'Brien's works: fast line drawings, vivid sculptures with no starting or ending points, and a focus on the process rather than the technique.

Despite their commonalities, the pieces vary greatly, from a Southern America-inspired mask with raised details, to a Picasso-esque abstract sculpture that looks like a mini Daley Plaza. O'Brien himself possesses the same energy his pieces radiate: in addition to this exhibition, the artist will concurrently present works at the Almine Rech Gallery in Paris, which means jet-setting between Chicago and the City of Light.

"I hope visitors to my exhibition will be left asking questions," O'Brien says. "Hopefully [they] feel a physical or emotional reaction, and, at the end of the day, are left with some type of joy or inspiration." The exhibit is on view through May 18. 220 E. Chicago Ave., 312-280-2660



Untitled, 2008, William J. O'Brien.
Courtesy of the artist and Marianne Boesky Gallery, NY.



Untitled, 2012, William J. O'Brien.
Courtesy of the artist and Marianne Boesky Gallery, NY.