

ROEBLING HALL

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DAVID ELLIS: DOZENS
22 MAY - 28 JUNE, 2008
OPENING THURSDAY 22 MAY, 6-8 PM



Roebling Hall is pleased to present its first solo exhibition of new work by New York-based artist David Ellis, entitled *Dozens*. The title of this exhibition, taken from the slang “playing the dozens” to describe good-natured verbal sparring, is more than just a piece of poetic musing. David Ellis does, in fact, make trash talk, or at least makes it sound funky and he uses language and cadence as integral parts of his art making. Weaving rhythm, cultural landscape, conceptual art, a variety of collaborators and a myriad assortment of materials, Ellis’s art evokes both the participatory spirit of Allan Kaprow- watch and see what happens- and the mechanical wonderment of Jean Tinguely.

For this exhibition in the gallery’s main room Ellis installs a large pile of garbage and discarded objects scavenged from the gallery’s Chelsea neighborhood. Ellis places player piano actuators inside the debris. Using his ear to determine each object’s inherent resonance, Ellis provides cues for collaborator and composer Roberto Lange to create musical compositions that transform the otherwise dormant pile into a kinetic instrument of percussive funk. A pile of garbage one minute, an extraordinary beat-box sculpture the next. This is the largest example to date of Ellis’s *Trash Talk* installations, an ongoing series of work with Lange.

In the gallery’s foyer Ellis debuts a new sculpture entitled *Oh, Superman*. Paying homage to Laurie Anderson’s iconic 1981 song and performance, Ellis repurposes an IBM Selectric typewriter into a new fangled player piano. Here, Anderson’s lyrics are magically typed onto a scroll of paper to the repetitious beat of the song. Ellis uses the mechanical device to call attention to the prophetic verbally sparse lyrics: “Here come the planes, they’re American planes, made in America, smoking or non-smoking?...”

Ellis fuses his mechanical wizardry with his long established technique of time-lapse photography, works that he calls motion paintings, in a new installation in the gallery’s project space. A new motion painting is projected onto the tops of ten art storage crates arranged on the wall according to the Fibonacci mathematical golden rule principal. Next to the projection, inside the actual crates, piston actuators bang and vibrate a collection of discarded studio debris that creates the soundtrack for the adjacent projection.

Also included in the show are twelve new paintings. “Ellis paints onto collaged pages comprised of his to-do lists and hardware store needs, papers from the daily grind, as well as things he finds on the street. Ellis then responds to the pages by painting in and on them, rhythmically providing a pulse. The painted layer is graphic, loose and flowing. Ellis calls his signature painting form—a graphic wave in silver and black— “flow,” representing motion in air and water. There is an unconscious, visual catalog below the surface of the final work—an archaeological, archival underpinning inside the painting, submerged below grade.”
(Dara Meyers-Kingsley)

This is Ellis’s third solo exhibition in NYC and his first solo exhibition at Roebling Hall. Ellis has participated in numerous prestigious group shows, including P.S.1’s *Greater New York* (2006), and *Ensemble*, curated by Christian Marclay at the ICA (2007) in Philadelphia. His *Motion Paintings* have been screened at the MoMA.