

Alex Becerra, David Leggett, William J. O'Brien

November 19, 2016 – January 21, 2017

Kimmerich Gallery is pleased to present works by Alex Becerra, David Leggett and William J. O'Brien. All three artists circle around different versions of the (male/artist) identity by referencing disparate histories of painting and popular culture.

Alex Becerra's paintings locate themselves in the history of European, and often German, painting like Werner Büttner, Martin Kippenberger, and Jonathan Meese. Working in traditional figurative genres, Becerra builds up multiple layers of paint in search for color, composition and form. In "Back Seat Driver" (2016) black and dark blue oil paint serve as a background for a thick white outline of a female torso holding a can of beer. The detailed colorful rendering of the beer can contrasts the simplified silhouette of the figure and, in conjunction with the title, alludes to a meandering party night turning the red and yellow marks that are worked into the dark background into urban lights.

David Leggett addresses topics like racism, political movements and sexuality by using the picture surface as a free floating space where collaged images meet with reoccurring characters, cut-out abstract forms with rhinestones assembled into caption-like text. He shows societal power structures by virtuously clashing hierarchies of taste and power in art and popular culture. Leggett draws from a rich legacy of humor and satire created by forerunners like the comedians Robin Harris and Richard Pryor and art historical movements such as the Chicago Imagists.

Materiality and process convey a narrative central to William J. O'Brien's work. The stitches of the felt collages reveal the ever-present appearance of the artist's hand while referencing traditions of craft. Cut-out felt letters assembled into words and shapes associated with quotidian life, sexual desire and obsession compose a picture plane perceivable as an abstract interplay of various forms if viewed from afar, but reveal their signified meaning when viewed from close-by.

*Alex Becerra (*1989 in Piru, California) lives and works in Los Angeles. His work has been shown at ltd los angeles; Artist Curated Projects, Los Angeles and at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles and has been covered in the Los Angeles Times, Frieze, Zoo Magazine, and Modern Painters. Alex Becerra plays in the band Los Tres Pericos.*

*David Leggett (*1980 in Springfield, Massachusetts) lives and works in Chicago. Leggett has had solo exhibitions in Chicago at Gallery 400, Arts Incubator, 65 Grand Gallery, Hyde Park Art Center, Western Exhibitions, and Hinge Gallery. His work has been included in group shows at Shane Campbell Gallery, Chicago; Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts, Chicago; Tracy Williams Ltd., New York; DePaul Art Museum, Chicago; and Regina Rex, New York, among others. From 2010 to 2016 he ran a daily drawing blog Coco River Fudge Street. Leggett received a BFA from Savannah College of Art and Design in 2003 and an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2007 and attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in 2010.*

*William J. O'Brien (*1975 in Eastlake, Ohio) lives and works in Chicago. O'Brien has had solo exhibitions at Shane Campbell Gallery, Chicago; Marianne Boesky, New York; Susanne Hilberry Gallery, Ferndale; Taka Ishii Gallery, Tokyo; Almine Rech, Paris; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; The Renaissance Society, Chicago. His work has been included in numerous group exhibitions such as "Thread Lines" at the Drawing Center, New York and "Surrealism: The Conjured Life" at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. O'Brien's work is part of several public collections such as the Miami Art Museum, US; Hara Museum of Art, Japan; The Art Institute of Chicago, US; Hammer Museum Los Angeles, US.*

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