

### PRESS RELEASE

2 October 2019 (New Orleans, LA) **JONATHAN FERRARA GALLERY** is pleased to announce the debut solo exhibition of Dirk Staschke. Presently working in Portland, Oregon the artist has created nine new two- and three-dimensional ceramic sculptures that explore the theme of Dutch Vanitas still life. His current body of work explores the space in between sculpture and painting and often uses meticulous representation as foil for examining skill and craft. With his sculptures, the artist blurs the distinction between reality and illusion. The exhibition will be on view from 2 October through 25 October 2019 with an opening reception coinciding with the Arts District of New Orleans' (ADNO) First Saturday Gallery Openings on Saturday, 5 October from 6-9 pm.

The artist discusses his new body of work...

*Dutch still life paintings of the 17th and 18th centuries, sometimes referred to as Vanitas, are concerned with the futility of pleasure and the certainty of death. Religious in nature, the paintings also confer the belief that this world is somehow less real than the one that awaits. In a time before the camera, these paintings' reliance on skill and verisimilitude confounded the viewer with realism. This same attachment to skill has been a key element of my own work since the beginning and it has become a greater focus of investigation for the last eight years.*

*I endeavor to explore the space in between sculpture and painting that neither medium can occupy alone. Look behind a painting and the illusion of space is lost. My work seeks to give that space a tangible form. Like the façade of a movie set, the knowable gives way to a backdrop of structures that exist in support and in reaction to its creation. Representation becomes a departure point and a foil for examining skill and craft.*

*My questions manifest in the studio as boundaries, rules, or intentionally self-defeating gestures realized through process. In my glaze paintings I look to translate the futility associated with Vanitas into an artistic gesture by painstakingly depicting what is representational and static in the fluid medium of glaze that will change beyond my control once fired. It is a leap of faith that captures a fleeting moment reminiscent of the temporal nature of life. The outcome is never guaranteed.*

*Although I still find joy in the precise, I have become more interested in inventing systems and exploring meaning in the surprises of the ceramic process that occur outside my control. Unlike the pessimism embodied in Dutch Vanitas paintings, my work is an acceptance and encouragement of the things we cannot control. Reality is transformed and futility gives way to optimism.*

Dirk Staschke received his BFA from the University of Montevallo followed by an MFA from Alfred University and has maintained an ongoing studio practice and extensive exhibition record for the last twenty years. During this time, he has taught at many notable universities, including Alfred University and New York University. His work has been shown internationally and resides in the permanent collections of several museums including the Smithsonian Museum in Washington (DC), Icheon Museum, World Ceramic Center (Gwango-dong) South Korea, Crocker Museum (CA), Portland Art Museum (OR). He has received various artist's grants including grants from The Virginia Groot Foundation and the Canada Council on the Arts.

**For more information, press or sales inquiries please contact Gallery Director Matthew Weldon Showman at 504.343.6827 or [matthew@jonathanferraragallery.com](mailto:matthew@jonathanferraragallery.com). Please join the conversation with JFG on Facebook (@JonathanFerraraGallery), Twitter (@JFerraraGallery), and Instagram (@JonathanFerraraGallery) via the hashtags: #DirkStaschke, #JonathanFerraraGallery and #ArtsDistrictNewOrleans.**