

GEARY

Dan Gunn

The Ungrateful Son

June 8 - July 28, 2024

Opening Reception

June 15, 2024, 3-5p

34 Main St
Millerton, NY 12546
+1 518-592-1503
info@geary.nyc
geary.nyc



Dan Gunn, *The Ungrateful Son*, No.7, 2
018, Glazed stoneware, marbles, light fixture, 13 x 21 x 25 in.

"A man and his wife were once sitting by the door of their house, and they had a roasted chicken set before them, and were about to eat it together. Then the man saw that his aged father was coming, and hastily took the chicken and hid it, for he would not permit him to have any of it. The old man came, took a drink, and went away. Now the son wanted to put the roasted chicken on the table again, but when he took it up, it had become a great toad, which jumped into his face and sat there and never went away again, and if any one wanted to take it off, it looked venomously at them as if it would jump in their face, so that no one would venture to touch it. And the ungrateful son was forced to feed the toad every day, or else it fed itself on his face; and thus he went about the world without knowing rest."

The Ungrateful Son, The Brothers Grimm N.145, 1815

Geary is excited to present *The Ungrateful Son*, Dan Gunn's first solo exhibition with the gallery. In this exhibition, Gunn presents larger than life size, hand-built, stoneware toads along with three collaged works on paper.

Fully functional as floor lamps, the toads are meant to alternate between menacing and sublime. A panoptic frog with many eyes / warts brings forward associations with apocalyptic Biblical plagues, Japonisme within American Arts and Crafts, and in the European mythological tradition is a potent symbol of abject masculinity. The series and exhibition title is taken from the Brothers Grimm fairytale where the toad is a punishment for intergenerational disloyalty. Amphibians are seen as the opposite of princes, with contemporary examples like Kermit or the alt-right 'Pepe'. The work presents a swollen counterfactual version of a folk art object. The use of stoneware reinforces the relationship to American craft traditions and the usage of the past to construct a political image for the present.

Dan Gunn was born in suburban Kansas. His practice processes imagery from the American Midwestern rural vernacular. Wood-paneled basements, cheap roadside memorabilia of the West, and signs of agrarian culture are the norm. Gunn's work investigates the ideological function of his cultural inheritance, both for political purposes but also for a formulation of male subjectivity. *The Ungrateful Son* series is an attempt to construct a different contemporary image from the past, a kind of strategic anachronism that forgoes idealization, and is therefore more accurate to the present.