

M+B

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



SAM MESSER *Go to it laughing*

January 29 – February 26, 2022

Opening Reception

Saturday, January 29, 2022 from 6 to 9 pm
612 N Almont Drive, Los Angeles

M+B is pleased to present *Go to it laughing* by Sam Messer. This is the artist's first solo show with the gallery and runs from January 29 – February 26, 2022 with an opening reception on Saturday, January 29 from 6 to 9 pm at our Almont location.

Sam Messer has language on his mind. His paintings arrest the ambiance of contemporary life as if it were a lyrical turn of phrase, each canvas saturated with the vernacular of the space within which it is made. Much like Morandi with his vases, or Manet with his flowers, Messer is possessed by a fascination with seriality and repetition, a small cast of subjects and objects populating the bulk of his works. The muses Messer concerns himself with are not simply curated source images, but rather collaborative portraits, his depictions of them repeatedly morphing and evolving to capture the passage of time and emotional states. Each canvas has a poetic quality: like a cherished sonnet or colloquial ballad, Messer constantly reworks and amends his paintings, eschewing consistency of form in favor of sincerity and malleability of meaning. His works are not strict representations. Messer collects bits of cultural material and emotional data, constructing and reconstructing his portraits as they need to be constructed, as opposed to how they ought to be according to convention or prevailing style.

Among Messer's subjects, the typewriter reigns supreme. Messer's obsession began when he first encountered the novelist Paul Auster and the two started a creative exchange. The essays by Auster and Messer's portraits of the writer and his typewriter resulted in the 2002 collaborative book *The Story of My Typewriter*, which is an extended ode to Auster's Olympia typewriter, on which virtually all of Auster's works have been written. Messer's typewriters meditate on the mutation and elasticity of language, harkening back to the era of the Gutenberg Press, the notion of an individual ritualistically reproducing and disseminating language through a single device. Early iterations of these typewriter paintings reflect a type of symbiotic relationship between Messer and Auster's Olympia, positioning the hunk of metal and ink as a collaborative intermediary between Auster and Messer's respective crafts, a co-authored muse holding multiple oeuvres (Messer's typewriter, Auster's typewriter, the typewriter itself) within one frame.

Messer's most recent typewriters embody a declarative language which is theirs alone. Produced during an extended stay in Los Angeles, these new works are markedly lighter, evoking the flattened idylls of beachside Southern California. These typewriters appear to melt at the edges, blending into brightly checkered kitchen floors and playful, sun-dazed dogs. While some of Messer's paintings seem to lose the form of the typewriter entirely, his compositions never retreat into pure abstraction. Rather, these typewriters seem to morph into secondary characters, an inquisitive frog here, a peanut gallery usher there, the shape of the typewriter retaining a representational weight even as the typewriter itself fades away. Their flattened perspectives

M+B

become supplemented by three-dimensional layers of material, gobs of oil and spray paint overlapping one another, creating valleys which seem to mirror the sprawl of competing vernaculars one encounters wandering the streets of Los Angeles. For all of their airy color palettes, however, these paintings are not escapist reveries. Messer adorns his typewriters with suggestive notes of social dissolution: melancholic figures cling to the sides of devices, animated crowds glint around the edges of the frame. While not explicit in content, his canvases bear the mark of particular social events and currents, as if they are both tied to their context in time and space and yet open to reinterpretation. Messer's vision of California is that of a segregated heaven, placid open-air afternoons always bookended by a sense of complicity, one set of language overlapping the other in a constant tug-of-war for control over the final stanza. With this new set of typewriters, which might appropriately be called portraits of typewriters, Messer paints faces which are evocative of their time, windows into the unspoken language of our contemporary consciousness.

Sam Messer (b. 1955, Brooklyn, NY) received his MFA from Yale University in 1981 and a BFA from The Cooper Union in 1976. Professor Emeritus at the Yale School of Art, Messer was Associate Dean at the Yale School of Art 2005-2018. His work has been exhibited nationally and internationally, including the National Portrait Gallery, Washington, D.C.; Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford; and DeCordova Museum, Lincoln, NE, among others. Messer has been awarded with a Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Grant, the Engelhard Award, a Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant, and a Guggenheim Fellowship. In 2019 he was awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Provincetown Artist Work Center. His work is in the public collections at the Metropolitan Museum of Art; New York, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Art Institute of Chicago; Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford; and Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven. His paintings have been written about in *The New York Times*, *New York Magazine*, *The New Yorker*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, *BOMB Magazine*, *Art in America*, *LA Weekly*, *Arts Media*, *The Boston Globe*, and *Boston Herald*. Sam Messer lives and works in New York. @sammesserstudio

Location:	M+B , 612 North Almont Drive, Los Angeles, California 90069
Show Title:	<i>Sam Messer: Go to it laughing</i>
Exhibition Dates:	January 29 – February 26, 2022
Opening Reception:	Saturday, January 29, 6 – 9 pm
Gallery Hours:	Tuesday – Saturday, 10 am – 6 pm, and by appointment
Social Media:	@mblosangeles @sammesserstudio

For all inquiries, please contact info@mbart.com.