

THE ARMORY SHOW: DAVE COLE
Booth 913
March 7 – 10, 2013



DODGEgallery is pleased to present American sculptor, Dave Cole, at The Armory Show. The artist will be exhibiting a solo booth at Focus and *Flags of the World* at the end of Pier 94.

Cole's monumental works include *Fiberglass Teddy Bear* at the deCordova Sculpture Park + Museum, *The Knitting Machine* at Mass MoCA, *The Music Box* at the Cleveland Institute of Art and his forthcoming *Jackhammer Orchestra*. Cole also makes meticulous and poignant material-driven sculptures. Spun bronze, cast salt, spent bullets,

sewn lead, melted typewriter keys, kevlar, and butyl rubber are part of his material repertoire. Political content is integral to the work; however, Cole is not proposing singular arguments. His work intentionally provokes contradictory perspectives, triggering the diverse backgrounds of viewers. Navigating memory, history and national identity, Cole investigates this nation's past and addresses what it means to be an American today. His sculptures give ear to the inevitable and often-tragic march of time played to a tune of desire, longing, and hope.

Presenting an overview of Cole's recent practice, the booth is composed of several sculptures: *American Flag (Bullets)*, *American Flag (Lead)*, *Three Generations*, *Singer*, *Salt Print (La Somme, 1916)* and *Breastplates*. Each of these works engages an historical context while firmly grounding itself in an ever-present socio-political dialogue. The booth demonstrates Cole's interest in diverse mediums that spark and commission dialogue while never allaying the need for beauty. Aesthetically, Cole's sculptures appear like authentic artifacts, lending an historic resonance as if unearthed, or resurrected from the past. This play of authenticity lends the objects an authority that, upon closer investigation, turns on itself.

A particularly provocative series, *American Flag (Bullets)*, is fabricated from recovered bullets and projectile fragments. Each bullet represents an act of violence whether actualized or not. The color variation denotes the difference in purpose of the bullets; the darker gray have been used domestically, while the copper have been used in international warfare. The surface of the flag appears jagged and irregular like a wasteland, but also glistens with reflecting light. The stars and stripes fade in and out of articulation, requiring a constant shift of focus to read this unchanging symbol.

The most intimate work in the booth, *Three Generations*, consists of a group of turned hardwood and sterling silver baby rattles. Each is in the form of a specific hand grenade used by the US Army in WWII, Vietnam, and the current ongoing wars, respectively: the baby boom, the baby boomers, and the baby boomers kids. The piece is an unsettling and cross-bred fetishization of history, child-rearing, and violence. Nestled on linen cushions; however, they appear harmless and precious. And when picked up, their charming functionality temporarily distracts from their darker suggestion.

Singer, the only kinetic work on view, is an industrial sewing machine made in 1920 in Elizabeth, New Jersey and apparently now operating itself. The simple animatronic trick is, in fact, a Herculean feat for a 92 year old sewing machine. *Singer* searches the internet, repeating strings of queries related to its own operation. It then prints the results into a binary code by altering the rate at which it feeds reels of contemporaneous teletype paper under its needle. It is an expression of impressive accomplishment accomplishing nothing: The Modernist Crisis, seen through the eyes of a solitary outdated, but relentlessly hardworking sewing machine.

American Flag (Lead) represents the most recent and only monochromatic iteration of Cole's flag series. Having been run over repeatedly with his truck, the lead appears more like a worn leather or heavy fabric than metal. Composed with Cole's typical obsessive craftsmanship—the sheets of lead were treated like bolts of cloth: cut and stitched with braided cables of stainless steel wire finer than human hair. After being punched by machine (a modified industrial sewing machine) every stripe and star was re-routed with a tiny drill, and then double-stitched by hand. The result is a broad, undulating object that transcends its materiality. Bent and wrinkled, the form takes on the appearance of something soft that has been frozen in time. The lack of color makes it seem more like an afterimage of a flag than the thing itself.

Presented side-by-side, *Salt Print (La Somme, 1916)* is a double-track spine of military tank treads that Cole cast with pure table salt. Traditionally, casting is intended to embed an event or a figure in history, or to script one's legacy. However, Cole selected salt because of its transient relationship to landscape and to mankind. It is a seemingly simple, innocuous material that is wrought with historic significance, complexity and contradiction. Salt has been used to preserve, and to destroy; it once held coveted value, and has become commonplace; it has powerful cultural and ritualistic significance for some, while being utterly valueless to others. Cole used his Rappaport Prize to fabricate a custom furnace designed to melt salt in order to cast it, which requires heating the mineral to a higher degree than is necessary to melt metal. Cole cast the part of the first tank from WWI that touches ground and leaves a temporary print on the earth as it passes through its own wake. Landscape, the ultimate canvas of time, is a recurring metaphor throughout Cole's work. *Salt Print (La Somme, 1916)*, is at once a ghostly remnant, a loaded memory of violence, and a beautiful, light-permeable, abstraction.

Cole's *Breastplates* are suspended behind glass, appearing as artifacts presented out of context for contemporary consideration. Interested in making his breastplates be "faithful to the original", Cole examined Native American breastplates from different tribes, including the Lakota Souix, Oglala Souix, Caddo and Brule Tribes, at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Anthropology. Originally made from the by-products of conquest, including European cattle bones and glass trade beads, here the breastplates have been recreated with military materials, including assault rifle cases, lead bullets, and other projectiles. From serving as a means of protection, to becoming a status symbol, to being used as a kind of decorative jewelry, for Native Americans the function and material make-up of the breastplates was altered in accordance with the influence of trade and the dominance of outside culture. Appearing like precious metals, glistening like jewels, installed like preserved objects of cultural history and monetary value, yet solely constructed with materials of war, Cole's *Breastplates* are highly provocative and conflicted.



At the end of Pier 94 hangs Cole's *Flags of the World*, a monumental patchwork quilt of an American flag fabricated to the US standard proportions and comprised entirely of an official United Nations Flags of the World set. Cole removed the red, white and blue from each of the 192 flags, retaining the symbols of certain countries and sewing each irregular piece into a massive quilt of an American flag. The suspended form allows light to pass through the varying shades of red, white and blue. Evidencing the memory of previous flags, *Flags of the World* displays a legacy within itself. Strewn at the base are unused colorful scraps, including pieces of an American flag. At once, the viewer is confronted with two visions: America the melting-pot and America the usurper.

Dave Cole was born in 1975 in Lebanon, NH and received his BA in 2000 from Brown University. He has exhibited at national and international museums including: Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, CT, MASS MoCA, North Adams, MA, The Norton Museum of Art, Palm Beach, FL, deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum, Lincoln, MA, 21c Museum, Louisville, KY, Renwick Gallery at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C., Museum of Arts and Design, New York, NY, Danforth Museum of Art, Framingham, MA, Indiana State Museum, Indianapolis, IN, Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art, Scottsdale, AZ, Vestlanske Kunstindustrimuseum, Bergen, Norway, Nasjonal Museet, Oslo, Norway, Haifa Museum of Art, Haifa, Israel, Textielmuseum, Tilburg, Netherlands. In 2012, Cole's The Music Box was commissioned by the Cleveland Institute of Art. Cole was the recipient of the 2009 deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum's annual Rappaport Prize. His work has been reviewed in Artforum; Art in America; ARTnews; Art Papers; Modern Painters. His work is included in the collection of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Danforth Museum, Wellington Management, 21c Museum, RISD Museum, The Burger Collection, The Pizzuti Collection and Jaermuseet Vitenfabrikken. Cole lives and works in Providence, RI and will be moving to Brooklyn, NY in the Spring of 2013 if all goes according to plan.

Founded in April 2010 by Kristen Dodge, DODGE gallery is a contemporary art gallery located on the Lower East Side. The gallery is run by Kristen Dodge, Founder/Director, and Patton Hindle, Director of Operations. Housed in a 2,500 sq/ft former sausage factory, the gallery opened to the public in September 2010. The program combines early-career and mid-career artists, often featuring two concurrent exhibitions. Artists on the gallery roster include Rebecca Chamberlain, Dave Cole, Taylor Davis, Environmental Services, Darren Blackstone Foote, Ted Gahl, Sheila Gallagher, Ellen Harvey, Jason Middlebrook, Daniel Phillips, and Lorna Williams. For more information please visit dodge-gallery.com

Front Image: Dave Cole, *American Flag (Lead)*, 2013, lead sheet and stainless steel cable, hand sewn, 42.25 x 80 x 3 inches

Back Image: Dave Cole, *Flags of the World*, 2008, United Nations official 192 piece "Flags of the World" set, cut and re-sewn, with mixed media, 180 x 342 inches

For further information about the exhibition please contact Patton Hindle at patton@dodge-gallery.com or +1 212-228-5122