

THE NEW GALLERY

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
July 26, 2019

Good Artists Copy, But Great Artists Steal

Artist Mathew McConnell's new exhibit explores the long debated issue of artistic originality

Little Rock, AR - The New Gallery is pleased to announce, "February," a solo exhibition of ceramic pieces by Arkansas based artist Mathew McConnell. The exhibit will run from August 2 – August 24, 2019 with an opening reception on August 2 from 6 p.m. – 9 p.m. The opening reception is part of SoMa Little Rock's new monthly event, SoMa After Dark.

"February" consists of 28 molded and pressed earthenware tiles finished with bone charcoal and graphite. The rich black surfaces of the ceramic tiles absorb light, causing the tablets to appear as voids or placeholders for the viewer's own interpretation. From a distance, the ceramic tiles are virtually indistinguishable from one another, and it is only on closer inspection that individual details, patterns, and textures in the tiles become noticeable.

McConnell's artistic process begins by investigating the works of other visual artists. Often using a form or image of another artist's as a starting point, McConnell alters and recreates the work to suit his vision. For the show "February," McConnell scoured the internet and contemporary art websites, compiling hundreds of images during the month of February 2018. "Many of the objects and images I choose also have a direct lineage to the works of a previous generation of artists. They too are re-worked responses to their predecessors and contemporaries," says McConnell. The selected images were then used to produce physical models and plaster molds, with the final result being earthenware copies of the works, with a rich black metallic surface treatment. The completed ceramic tiles vary between what could be mistaken as a copy of another artist's work and an artwork with a source seemingly outside of any particular reference.

McConnell's use of appropriation calls to mind a well-known quote by Pablo Picasso, "Good artists copy, but great artists steal," causing one to wonder if creativity is still alive, and if so, what makes for an original thought or piece of art? Artistic appropriation, the intentional borrowing, copying, and alteration of existing objects, is a strategy that artists have used for millennia. However it is becoming more apparent in art today as artists have increased access to visual culture through print and online media.

“February” continues McConnell’s long exploration into the persistent problems of invention, originality, and creative influence in art making and will be on display from August 2 – 24, 2019 at The New Gallery. The opening reception on August 2 is free to attend and light refreshments will be available. Free parking is available on the street outside the Gallery. Please contact The New Gallery by email at info@thenewgallery.net for questions.

About Mathew McConnell:

Mathew McConnell holds an MFA from the University of Colorado, Boulder, and a BFA from Valdosta State University in Georgia. He has held numerous solo exhibitions and his works have been included in over fifty group exhibitions nationally and internationally. Mathew has lectured widely, and has been the subject of feature-length articles in *Ceramics Art and Perception*, *Ceramics Monthly*, and *New Ceramics*. In 2012, he was granted an Emerging Artist Award from the National Council on Education in Ceramic Art. He has also been an Artist in Residence at the Archie Bray Foundation (Lilian Fellowship in 2011 and Sage Scholarship in 2007), Greenwich House Pottery (2017), and Anderson Ranch Arts Center (2018). He is currently serving as an Associate Professor at the University of Arkansas School of Art.

About The New Gallery:

The New Gallery is a contemporary art gallery featuring art made by emerging and mid-career artists. Located in SoMa, The New Gallery shows new art exhibits every month and is open on Saturdays from 11 a.m. – 2 p.m., with additional hours by appointment.

The gallery is owned and operated by David and Teresa Carlisle. David and Teresa are both Master of Fine Arts graduates from the University of Delaware with a combined 20+ years of experience in the art field.

To learn more about The New Gallery visit www.thenewgallery.net, [like us on Facebook](#), or [follow us on Instagram](#) at [@thenewgalleryandstudio](#).

###