

GAVLAK

Vincent Szarek

Like a Rock

September 11 – October 24, 2015

Gavlak is pleased to present an exhibition of new work by Vincent Szarek, his first solo exhibition with the gallery. A sculptor with a longstanding interest in car culture and Minimalist art, Szarek has developed a practice that draws on the pristine, high-gloss finish of custom automobiles, the reflective surfaces and experiential nature of Minimalism, and the works of artists like John McCracken, Craig Kauffman, and the practices of the Fetish Finish school of Minimalism and the Light and Space movement to create provocative and stylized sculptural works.

Like A Rock will feature a series of new works that draw on the culture and mythology of the west. The exhibition title references the Chevy commercial that features the Bob Seger song of the same title, which presents an idealized and heroic vision of Americana. From a lacquered white prickly pear cactus covered in thousands of gold-plated needles, to rock piles inspired by frames of the Roadrunner and Coyote cartoons, to an actual Texas longhorn skull that has been molded and lacquered, the works bridge fine art with pop culture imagery and the allure of desert culture.

Szarek began working on cars as a hobby at the age of thirteen, and went on to work as an employee at an auto body shop while in school, an experience that was formative to his practice. There, Szarek learned to use the industrial materials and paints often used in the fabrication of custom-made cars, surfboards, and bikes, and to apply them using hands-on techniques. Despite the pristine and seamless appearance of Szarek's sculptures, his practice involves tremendous craftsmanship – the works, made with various materials including aluminum and fiberglass, are all hand-made, hand-plated, and hand-glazed, resulting in a carefully crafted yet highly polished finished piece.

Among the works on view will be *Home Brew* (2015), a Geodesic dome, based on an original pattern found in a magazine from the 70s. A lasting symbol of the idealized desert life of the 60s and 70s, the Geodesic dome is here modernized, a golden, glittered version of the ultimate hippie dream that Szarek describes as "a tribute to do-it-yourselfers and dreamers." Also on view will be *Firebird II* (2015), a large-scale Firebird inspired by the design of California-based artist and custom car designer Ed Roth. Szarek has transformed Roth's drawing into an three-dimensional object, capped by one of Roth's wryly humorous flourishes – what Szarek describes as a "fascist eagle," an angry, geometric bird.

Szarek moved from Brooklyn to Los Angeles four years ago, and the exhibition reflects his own shifting landscape and interest in the iconography of his new home state. Taken together the works on view depict an idealized and mythical vision of the west, drawn from movies, cartoons, the rich history of desert life, and the spirit of the utopians, pioneers, and dreamers who first made the west coast their home.

Vincent Szarek was born in Westerly, Rhode Island and lives and works in Los Angeles. Szarek was the subject of a solo exhibition at MoMA PS1 in New York. He has also been included in group exhibitions at notable institutions, including: Mercedes-Benz Museum, Stuttgart, Germany; MoCA Tucson, Arizona; The Albertina Museum, Vienna, Austria; Magasin Centre National d'Art Contemporain, Grenoble, France; Singapore Art Museum, Singapore; Museu d'Art Espanyol Contemporani, Palma de Mallorca, Spain; the Albright Knox Museum, Buffalo, New York; and the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York City, among others. He earned his BFA from Rhode Island School of Design in 1995.

For more information concerning the exhibition, please contact Tabor Story at tabor@gavlakgallery.com, or (323) 467-5700.