Jack O'Brien
Cascade
11 January – 15 February 2025

Capitain Petzel is pleased to announce *Cascade*, Jack O'Brien's debut solo exhibition with the gallery, opening on January 11, 2025.

For the exhibition, O'Brien presents a striking suspended sculpture that merges two grand pianos into a singular, imposing form, hovering mid-air within the gallery space. The pianos are stripped of their traditional function yet retain their physical grandeur. Between them is a striking void, a central negative space that becomes the focal point of the composition, evoking both a sense of dialogue and rupture. By suspending these instruments and cutting a void at their core, O'Brien reimagines them as objects of silence and memory, rather than tools of sound. Assemblage becomes a means of storytelling for the artist, where fragments of materials carry traces of their past.

The cascade emerges as a unifying gesture within the exhibition, threading through each work with a sense of motion that feels simultaneously fluid and interrupted. The works on view, created from repurposed materials partly sourced in Berlin, reflect O'Brien's sensitivity to material histories and an interest in the interplay between the personal and the found, weaving local narratives into his broader exploration of space and form. In O'Brien's practice gestural repetition is reminiscent of the dynamism found in Futurist painting. The fractured forms and layered materials suggest movement captured mid-stream, as if the works themselves were animated or imbued with an internal rhythm that propels them beyond their material confines.

Here the crescendo also serves as a conceptual undercurrent. Like a musical swell, the sculptures seem to build toward an apex, holding the viewer in a state of anticipation. This crescendo, both visual and metaphorical, amplifies the interplay of silence and motion, creating a rhythm that crescendos not to sound, but to a sense of presence and potential. The suspended grand pianos exemplify this quality, as they seem to both rise and fall, caught in a moment of unresolved transition. Viewers can experience the works as dynamic, unfolding events rather than static objects.

Grounded in a subtle interplay of material, personal experience, and cultural critique, O'Brien's installations evoke a sense of precarity, reflecting both the physical and social fragility of the structures he creates. The artist is particularly interested in destabilizing the fixed nature of objects, forcing rigid materials like metal and glass into confrontations that evoke a sense of unease. Through these clashes, he challenges notions of form and function with works that appear charged with nervous energy, as if on the verge of collapse. This precariousness becomes a metaphor for the broader, often fraught, dynamics of identity, particularly within the context of queer cultural histories and the lineage of queer abstraction.

Jack O'Brien's (born 1993 in London, UK) solo and duo exhibitions include Camden Art Centre, London (2024); Between Bridges, Berlin (2023); Sans Titre Invites, Paris (2023); Lockup International, London (2022); Polamagnetczne Gallery, Warsaw (2022) and Ginny on Frederick, London (2021). Group exhibitions include *Non-Specific Objects*, Capitain Petzel, Berlin (2024); *Support Structures*, Gathering, London, (2023); *Memory of Rib*, N/A Gallery, Seoul, KR (2022); *Something is Burning*, Kunsthalle Bratislava (2022) and *An Insular Rococo*, Hollybush Gardens, London (2022).

Jack O'Brien was the recipient of the Camden Art Center's 2023 Emerging Artist Prize at Frieze. The artist is currently participating in a group show at CAPC Bordeaux. His work is included in the Pinault Collection, Paris; The Rubell Museum, Miami, FL; and The Perimeter, London.