

# METRO PICTURES

## Olaf Breuning

March 17 - April 15, 2017

(Upstairs Gallery)

Olaf Breuning's multifarious practice is united by his distinctive sense of humor. His drawings, photographs, videos and sculpture utilize a vocabulary that draws from ubiquitous cultural symbols to present a deceptively lighthearted and colorful meditation on everyday life. Incorporating one-liner visual puns and graphic jokes, Breuning's works are deeply steeped in the pathos and absurdity of the human experience.

The exhibited drawings eloquently concentrate the key themes and motifs of his work, using a pared down, graphic form to vivify his cunning viewpoint. While the stark black-ink-and-white-paper palette contrasts the exuberance of much of his other work, the immediacy lent by the medium has expanded Breuning's practice to traverse even further the range of psychological states he has routinely addressed. *Loch Ness* dryly imagines the eponymous monster occupying a shallow bowl, with its ears, humped back and tail drawn just below the water's surface, while a sailboat sits obliviously in the space between the monster's back and tail. With the simplest of means, the work swiftly and bracingly comments on the nature of myth-making and its persistence in society.



*The Wall*, 2017, 3 ceramic sculptures  
9.45 x 13.78 x 9.84 inches (24 x 35 x 25 cm).

This same immediacy and mordancy is evident in the group of hand-painted ceramic sculptures exhibited alongside the drawings. Intimately scaled, each sculpture shrewdly evokes its titular phrase or concept. *The Wall* depicts a lone human figure staring up at an imposing, monolithic wall, picturing a scene both psychologically foreboding and comical in its stark dourness. The apparent simplicity of these sculptures' forms and their vivid, colorful finishes create a mise en scène reminiscent of cartoons or children's toys, contrasting the challenging subject matter that underlies these works.

A monograph of Breuning's drawings from 2005-2016 was published by Verlag für moderne Kunst in 2017. He was the subject of a 2016 retrospective at the NRW-Forum Düsseldorf, which published a major catalogue of his work in collaboration with Gestalten. He has had additional one-person exhibitions at Palais de Tokyo, Paris; Chisenhale Gallery, London; Kunstverein Freiburg, Germany; Kunsthall Stavanger, Norway; and the Paul Klee Museum, Bern. Public exhibitions of his work include the Public Art Fund commission *Clouds*, Doris C. Freedman Plaza, Central Park, New York, as well as the Public Art Fund exhibition *Lightness of Being*, City Hall Park, New York. He participated in the 2008 Whitney Biennial and has also been featured in group exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Pompidou Center, Paris; Haus der Kunst, Munich; Kunsthalle Zürich; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Jeu de Paume, Paris; KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin; Whitechapel Gallery, London; and the Mori Art Museum, Tokyo.