

PRESS RELEASE**The Effect
Haim Steinbach****29 May–21 June 2008****Monday–Friday 10am–6pm
Saturday 10am–1.30pm**

Untitled (dog chews, chain, scarecrow) 2008
43 x 73 x 21 in / 109.2 x 185.4 x 53.3 cm
plastic laminated wood shelf; 2 rubber dog chews;
plastic chain; plastic owl

"Every thing and object has a skin through which it speaks. We have feelings about these objects – we project through them, and communicate through them." — Haim Steinbach¹

Waddington Galleries are pleased to announce an exhibition of ten works by the American artist Haim Steinbach. Steinbach's methodically ordered, almost ceremonial displays of common artefacts convey how our collective desires become organized and ritualized through objects – how communication and aspirations are exchanged through the language of design.

Steinbach was born in Rehovot, Israel, in 1944. From an early age he became conscious of how objects are appreciated and form part of our projected identity. Whilst still a child growing up in Israel, a gift from his grandmother, a packet of American *Chicklets* gum became a revered object of unobtainable beauty. But after moving to the United States in 1957, all desire for the object was dissipated by its familiarity and availability. Steinbach had moved with his family to New York and went on to become an American citizen in 1962. He studied at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, and later at Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

Steinbach began to work with manufactured objects in the mid 1970s, making flat panel works of geometric shapes, composed from flooring linoleum that imitated Spanish tiles or Italian marble. His early shelf pieces of 1980 were hand made from found pieces of wood and plastic, but since the mid-1980s the shelves have been professionally fabricated and standardized to his specifications, usually from plastic laminated plywood. The shelves are composed of the same triangular "wedge" shape, having internal angles of 40°, 50° and 90° with an end left open to expose the way they are constructed. These manufactured box-like shelves are reminiscent of the industrial sculptures of Donald Judd, and the precise, regulated placement of objects gives Steinbach's work an air of formal austerity. The colour and size of the shelves relates to the choice of objects placed upon them; the bright orange top of *it is III – 1*, 2008, echoes the colour of the Tony Tiger character on the adjacent *Frosted Flakes* cereal packet.

Steinbach came to critical attention in the early 1980s, being crudely associated with the Neo-Geometric Conceptualists which included Jeff Koons, Ashley Bickerton and Peter Halley. But unlike Koons, Steinbach does not transform objects into other materials but instead uses actual shop-bought items. A recurring object in all the works of this exhibition is the black rubber dog chew. Emanating more presence than a canine toy should seemingly justify, it appears a hybrid between an organic swollen pod and an oriental vase, and when aligned six times, as in the work *crate & barrel*, 2008, emphasizes the object's unique characteristics beyond their ordinary functionality.

In all of the sculptures the juxtaposition of objects, such as *Untitled (dog chews, chain, scarecrow)*, 2008 creates an intentionally ambiguous and unsettling narrative of which Steinbach has stated: "When you confront people with the everyday they panic".¹

Steinbach's first solo exhibition was held in 1969 at the Panorás Gallery, New York. His first solo museum exhibition was held at the Musée d'Art Contemporain in Bordeaux (1988). Recent one person exhibitions have included Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Turin (1995), Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, Vienna (1997), Haifa Museum, Haifa, Israel (1999), Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, Berlin (2000), and Haus der Kunst, Munich (2000). In 2005 his first one-person museum exhibition in the United States was held at the UC Berkeley Art Museum, Berkeley, California. Steinbach works and lives in Brooklyn, New York.

A fully illustrated catalogue will accompany this exhibition. For further information or images please contact Leonie Holzwarth

¹ *Journal of Contemporary Art Online*, interview with Joshua Decter