

# alexanderlevy

**John von Bergen**

***Prey Voidant***

**Jan 18 – Mar 01, 2014**

**Opening: Friday, Jan 17, 2014, 6 – 9 pm**

The alexander levy gallery is pleased to present recent works by John von Bergen with his new exhibition *Prey Voidant*.

“If there are wall fragments, there must be buildings; if buildings a city, if a city a civilization, if a civilization a religion—all the ingredients to form a mythological context.”

- Will Insley (1929 – 2011), excerpt from *ONECITY*

As one enters the gallery, the visitor is immediately confronted by a constellation of twisted and tangled metal supports that have been forcefully ripped from a hollowed, rubber-skinned wall. Von Bergen’s newest installation, *NOT*, is a forceful, anarchic surge that is determined towards the center of the room. Its title may refer to the German word for *emergency* just as it connotes the homonym *knot*.

The installation is joined by a number of smaller “wall fragments” that employ a wide range of deceptive transformations. Von Bergen uses common construction materials that stretch, crumble and morph into new forms by implementing repellant materials such as lead, fiberglass, and rust. These constructed studies invite a range of ominous scenarios for the visitor to imagine.

*Prey Voidant* concludes with a smaller wall installation titled *Finished Drawing*. We encounter an actual framed drawing that the artist was subsequently displeased with, crushed in comic absurdity as the wall literally sandwiches its frame to an extreme end. Eye-distanced shards of glass greet viewers who attempt to examine the entombed drawing. Adjacent to this installation sit two newer drawings from von Bergen’s decade-long series *UFO-UMIS*, presented peacefully, unperturbed.

Jacque Lacan’s description of a Pascalian void functions almost like a perfect description of this exhibition: “This void does not at all interest us theoretically. For us it has almost no more sense. We know that in the vacuum can still be produced knots, solids, packets of waves, and everything you want.” In *Warped Space* (2000, M.I.T. Press), the architect Anthony Vidler reacts to Lacan’s statement by saying “that it is what the void can hold, and its continuous propensity to inspire horror... all representations of anxiety and horror in the face of the void...”. Such conversations concerning architecture, psychology, and “inspired horror” are also echoed throughout von Bergen’s exhibition. The artist’s reaction to space, materiality and pictorial conditions opens a range of doors, as Arsalan Mohammad has written: “This element of surprise front-loaded into a von Bergen work serves a number of effects, both instant and lingering. His tendency to work with blank walls and surfaces deviates instantly from an accepted order of things, subverting expectations and creating an immediate state of shock and disbelief.”

alexander levy

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This exhibition coincides with the release of von Bergen's first monograph titled *CORE*. Designed by mischen, including 112 pages with over 50 illustrations, texts by Arsalan Mohammad, Heinz Stahlhut, and an interview with Kimberly Bradley. English / German. Published by Kerber Verlag, distributed by D.A.P.

John von Bergen (b. 1971, Connecticut, USA) earned his BFA Degree with Honors from The School of Visual Arts in New York City. Since moving to Berlin in 2003, his work has been exhibited in various international museums, galleries, and institutions, including Halle 14 (Leipzig), Galerie Schmela (Düsseldorf), Wilhelm-Hack Museum (Ludwigshafen), The Pera Museum (Istanbul), and Smack Mellon (New York). In 2009, von Bergen received The Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant, and, in October, 2012, presented his first South American exhibition, *Post-Hyper*, with Galeria Pilar in São Paulo (with support from the Berlin Senate for Culture).

Please contact the gallery for further information and images.