



48 WALKER ST | OCT 25 – DEC 21, 2024

Alexandre da Cunha

These Days

Alexandre da Cunha, *Vital (Rosetta)*, 2024,
shovel handles, t-shirts, cleaning cloth,
bed sheet, tea towel, hand towel, sarong,
fabric cut outs, 80 3/4 x 80 3/4 x 2 3/8 in.
(205 x 205 x 6 cm).

James Cohan is pleased to present *These Days*, an exhibition of recent work by Alexandre da Cunha on view from October 25 - December 21, 2024, at the gallery's 48 Walker Street location. *These Days* is da Cunha's first exhibition with James Cohan. The gallery will host an opening reception with the artist on Friday, October 25 from 6-8 PM.

Alexandre da Cunha's sculptures and wall-mounted works uncover the poetry and beauty of everyday objects, liberating them from their cultural uses even as he draws forth their essential connections with patterns of consumption and labor. The artist plays within and against the language of art historical movements such as Arte Povera and Tropicália to craft elegant, vibrantly inventive propositions for alternative modes of viewing and understanding. Da Cunha's compositions, which are rooted in the history of the readymade, are formed through carefully balanced relationships between color, form, and material, generating a fractilated universe of rich association between art-making, daily life, and philosophical concerns. Through the symbolic transformation of recognisable functional objects into formal sculptures and reliefs, da Cunha's work oscillates between connection and disconnection from their source materials' everyday and often throw-away status.

Working between São Paulo and London, da Cunha's unique point of view is amplified by his hyper urban surroundings. The artist's lyrical use of concrete, a material crucial to his vernacular, emanates from his ruminations on traditions of construction, architecture and modernism in addition to the material's ubiquity within his native Brazil. Da Cunha's monumental concrete installations gesture towards an industrial urban landscape, a confluence of city infrastructure and domestic design. Typically constructed from pipes and other connective mechanisms, da Cunha's sculptures express transitional states, notions of flux, and the fluidity of movement across both time and space. In *These Days*, da Cunha debuts three new spectacularly choreographed sculptures with looping forms derived from industrially produced manholes. Despite their apparent heft, da Cunha's concrete installations are playful and serene, forging an alluring dissonance between their intended quotidian application and their artfully constructed aesthetic presentation.

Troubling notions of use and intrinsic meaning is a generative throughline across da Cunha's practice. The artist's *Vitral* series, composed of shovel handles that have been paneled with luminous technicolored cloth, breaks down the sum of their parts to reveal modern design elements. Titles within this series refer to the rooms that make up a modernist home, including *Den*, *inner garden*, and *Atrium*. These spaces are often design features, adorned with elegant furnishings and carefully placed objects intended to define the soul and narrative of a dwelling. For da Cunha, the brightly hued fabric intermixed with the utilitarian wooden handles is a stand-in for the domestic and for the bodily. The skeletal shovel handles function both as an architectural ornament as well as an evocation of physical human presence and the performance of labor.

Situated within the frictive space between the built and the natural environment, the works on view in *These Days* reflect upon our complex and varied relationships with global mass consumption. Through surprising juxtapositions of paraphernalia including keys, belts, brushes and bottles, as well as commercial materials such as plastic, glass, and concrete, da Cunha connects abstracted forms to our lived experiences and behaviors. These thoughtful and often humorous arrangements activate broader conceptual associations to socially reinforced patterns of consumption ranging from fashion and beauty to construction. Da Cunha's ongoing *Ikebana* series, in which two or three elements are carefully organized into delicately balanced yet unexpected compositions sealed in sleek concrete, brings these concepts to the foreground. The *Ikebana*s represent striking arrays of the physical residue of our lived experience in the present while also suggesting an archaeological future beyond functionality.

These Days marks the first large scale presentation of work from da Cunha's *Exile* series, gouache paintings on paper that have been framed without glazing to emphasize their direct relationship with the viewer, as if they were personal messages or letters. The series is an exploration of flux and movement between spaces, both physiologically and physically. Intimate, immediate, and portable, these notebook scaled works were made between London and São Paulo, coinciding with the period that the artist was traveling between homes.

Alexandre da Cunha (b. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 1969) has been the subject of solo exhibitions at Galeria Luisa Strina, São Paulo, Brazil; Thomas Dane Gallery, London; Brighton CCA, Brighton, England; Royal Society of Sculptors, London, England; Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Chicago, IL; Centro Cultural São Paulo, São Paulo, and Camden Arts Centre, London. Da Cunha has been featured in major group exhibitions at institutions including Lismore Castle Arts, Lismore, Ireland; Warwick Arts Center, Coventry; Royal Academy of Arts, London; South London Gallery, London; Pinacoteca de São Paulo, São Paulo; MO.CO. Montpellier Contemporain, Montpellier; Plymouth Box, Plymouth; Seattle Art Museum, Seattle; Museu de Arte de São Paulo, São Paulo; Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; and Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. The artist participated in the 30th São Paulo Biennial in 2012.

Da Cunha's work is included in major private and institutional collections including the Droom en Daad Foundation, Rotterdam, the Netherlands; ICA Boston, Boston MA, USA; Inhotim, Brumadinho, Brazil; Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Chicago IL, USA; Museu de Arte de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil; Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, Brazil; and Tate, England. Major public and outdoor sculptures by da Cunha are on permanent view at Battersea Power Station Underground Station in London, the Monsoon Building in London, the Laumeier Sculpture Park in St. Louis MO, USA, Pierce Boston Tower in Boston MA, USA and the Rochaverá Tower in São Paulo, Brazil.

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