

Devotion

Mike Ballou, Joe Brittain, William Corwin, Serra Victoria Bothwell Fels, Elizabeth Ferry, Rico Gatson, Elisabeth Kley, Rachel Monosov, Roxy Paine, Joyce Pensato, Katie Bond Pretti, Carin Riley, Paul Anthony Smith, Justin Orvis Steimer, Gail Stoicheff, Sophia Wallace

Curated by Curators: William Corwin & Catinca Tabacaru

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New York, November 21, 2015 – Ai Weiwei once declared that all ancient art was created out of a fear of death. Whether he meant that art was a defense against death or a preparation for it, or some other kind of accommodation of the hereafter, it is a broad statement that certainly works as a starting point for exploring DEVOTION at Catinca Tabacaru Gallery. This exhibition is a thought experiment about art created as a means of dealing with the hereafter. What happens after death is still the greatest metaphysical challenge to the human entity, and much art is still being created to deal with that eventuality.

The exhibition repositions art into a context in which it does what it is intended to do. We've built a chapel-like space, reminiscent of an Orthodox Christian format. The art objects inside the chapel serve a ritual purpose, the images and sculptures are tools, and the intention is for the space to begin functioning with the same spiritual coordination and orderliness, using the contemporary and updated versions of liturgical machinery, that we see in an archaic shrine. Much of the work addresses the spiritual within a lexicon that 21st Century citizens of a largely agnostic society can accept. But some pieces are overtly spiritual and are motivated by a desire to create the space of a chapel through saintly portraiture and historical or narrative imagery. The show is anchored by selection of 17th and 18th century Russian and Romanian icons from Tabacaru's family collection. Until we have conquered death, the world beyond our own is of great consequence, and we cannot close the door on it. About William Corwin: Will is a sculptor and journalist who has curated exhibitions in New York, London, and Beijing. He has been interviewing artists for Clocktower Radio since 2009 and includes many of those artists in the exhibitions he curated. He also writes for Frieze, Art Papers Magazine, The Brooklyn Rail, Bomb and online for Artcritical. □ Curatorial Essay by William Corwin