Installation view, Harlan Levey Projects, Brussels, Belgium

Your current exhibition is titled "Industrial Dance." Where does this title come from? How does it relate to works in the exhibition?

It comes from a series of instant-formed works Marcel Broodthaers made in the late 1960s, which he called "Industrial Dance." He used the phrase to mock or subvert the notion of advertising, that it's a dance, that works like a living man. It seems natural now an object is an attractive idea. Back then it was not. Broodthaers was a poet who worked in Brussels, grandfather owned a furniture and self-transfer press business, he commissioned signage and poetry both someone. Can also interested in Dada and Surrealism, and he was also a fan of the Belgian comics artist Hergé. Brands are the dance representations of those first phases poetic because the unique opportunity to combine his influence with a museum form as well. The painting machine goes with print machine, the end result is an object.

"Castelli & Hergé," Oil, Ink, Pen, 150 cm x 100 cm, 2013

This exhibition is part of a much larger project you've called "Castelli & Hergé." Tell us about the project, how it came together, and what it did to Hergé's and your book to evolve into a project? What was your relationship to Hergé's work?

It's another approximately, but from a poem. Castelli & Hergé is the last line of Sylvia Plath's "Edge" written just before her suicide. It's a poem about a woman who's dead, she's lying in her bed, she's cold, she's dead. It's the last line in the poem, it's the last line in a poem of Sylvia Plath's. Sylvia Plath, the Rijksmuseum, a song from his solo album "Cross Fall Six Twelve." I was trying to be a coach to Ellen and to Hergé, I was I was only half listening, so he has been my coach for most of the time. Hergé's work is important to me because it's a kind of poetry, it's a kind of poetry that I can't do, I can't do it, I can't do it, I can't do it

"Susie, Mike & Tom, Georgia c.1977", c-print, 73x58 in, 2015

Something different, if your child said "Dad, I want to be an artist," what advice would you give her

Honestly I'd groan inwardly in despair and be super happy at the same time. It's such a hard game, and I don't mean the vocation, every vocation has it's unique challenges, but art is a disaster in a glutted and saturated world where originality is almost impossible; the competitiveness is so diabolical that it's often not enough the other one wins, but you have to lose; where you have to answer for yourself in all these crazy ways, represent yourself, stand alone in front of what you do and on and on; then all the gate keepers and taste makers, some qualified, others not; it can be isolating, you come into things and back out of them again when you've done your dance together; then there's the money problems and the rest of it all; but that all being said I still think its the best response there is to being alive in the world. Not necessarily the best contribution, but the best response. At the very least art means you're paying attention, you care enough to have an opinion, are aware enough about the fact that you're alive, that you want to leave a personal mark, encapsulating the experience. Stuff like that is golden. There's something powerless and futile and unjustifiable about art that in an inverted sense lends it its special power, it's not overt.

"American Greetings", graphite, resin, funerary ash on wood panel, 48x60 in, 2013

Over the past couple of years, you've made it a ritual to start your studio visits by reading a page from a James Baldwin text. Why did you start doing this? What is your intention? How does it work out?

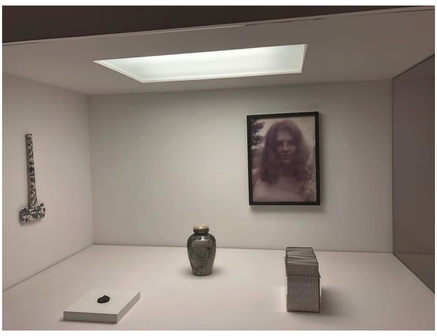
Yeah I used to read this passage from I Am Not Your Negro, the transcript from that film, I'm not sure where it originated.

"I have always been struck, in America, by an emotional poverty so bottomless and a terror of human life, of human touch, so deep, that virtually no American appears to be able to achieve any visible, organic connection between his public stance and his private life…This failure of the private life has always had the most devastating effect on American public conduct…"

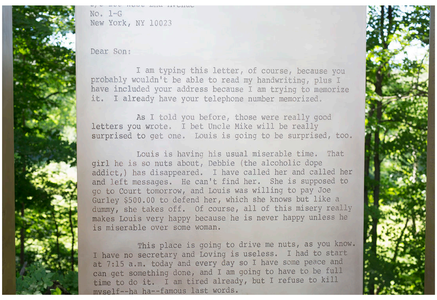
What is that?

I guess I though this passage would help the visitor understand where I was coming from, that I was attempting to do exactly that, create a connection between my public stance and my private life. Life can be very hard, incredibly sad, especially at the level of the individual, "The whole earth can suffer no greater torment than a single soul." I have a binder of little stories, brief passages from things I've seen, or heard, moments of single soul suffering, and of course my mother's story. There's another Baldwin thing I keep close to me. His novel "Giovani's Room", maybe to end here with that is the perfect summary for all this, we're ultimately talking about intent, right? Why do this, or that, what is meant by this or that? I mean ok I make things, crafted objects. At it's simplest definition that's what art is, a made object that can be silently contemplated, evocative in many ways, but it's just as obvious, whether stated or unstated, that each of these objects, by whoever makes them has some purpose or aim for having been made in the first place. Giovanni's Room is a disquieting book about love, disquieting because it's also about a character who is unable to love, can't really get with another in a real, and vulnerable, and honest way. He's a murderer and the people who come close to him die or become lost. Baldwin plumbed the murky depths of us, found the horrors and emptinesses there and brought them into the light where they could be seen, and held, and acted upon. I think as far as what we need now, or what art might be valid now, this sort of intent to provoke an audience to a place where they think about individual suffering and love, and relate themselves to an expression like that, well it should be given at least a lane on the highway. No?

Installation View, "Jeanne", The Print Center, Philadelphia, PA, 2017



Installation View, "The Hummingbird" (Group show), Dallas, Tx, 2018



No. 1-G
New York, NY 10023

Dear Son:

I am typing this letter, of course, because you probably wouldn't be able to read my handwriting, plus I have included your address because I am trying to memorize it. I already have your telephone number memorized.

As I told you before, those were really good letters you wrote. I bet Uncle Mike will be really surprised to get one. Louis is going to be surprised, too.

Louis is having his usual miserable time. That girl he is so nuts about, Debbie (the alcoholic dope addict,) has disappeared. I have called her and called her and left messages. He can't find her. She is supposed to go to Court tomorrow, and Louis was willing to pay Joe Gurley $500.00 to defend her, which she knows but like a dummy, she takes off. Of course, all of this misery really makes Louis very happy because he is never happy unless he is miserable over some woman.

This place is going to drive me nuts, as you know. I have no secretary and loving is useless. I had to start at 7:15 a.m. today and every day so I have some peace and can get something done, and I am going to have to be full time to do it. I am tired already, but I refuse to kill myself--ha ha--famous last words.

Detail of 3 Letter Bronze Sculpture (each 12 x 4 feet), Private Collection, 2018