



Portrait, 2013
 ceramic
 78 x 64 x 57 in. (198.1 x 162.6 x 144.8 cm)

MATT WEDEL

Sheep's Head

11 APRIL - 11 MAY 2013

Reception for the artist:
Thursday, 11 April, 6-8 PM

Venice, CA – L.A. Louver is pleased to announce the first solo exhibition of new work by Matt Wedel. The exhibition, titled *Sheep's Head*, features over twenty ceramic sculptures, and is presented throughout L.A. Louver's first floor galleries and second floor open air Skyroom.

Four monumentally scaled figurative works form the heart of the exhibition. Inspired by the hand-painted design of a 16th century Italian bowl by Giorgio Andreoli, Wedel animates a larger-than-life figure, poised in mid-air as if rising up (or perhaps about to sit) on a stool below. A second figure, with bulbous midriff and thighs, kneels on the gallery floor. And a female head, measuring

over 6 feet tall x 6 feet wide (1.8 x 1.8 m), its surface coated in pewter-colored luster, also rests directly on the ground, its form conjuring an Olmec sculpture. Nearby, atop a bed of succulent flowers, an animal body morphs into a human head: a towering contemporary Centaur barely contained by the almost 14 feet (4.3 m) gallery ceiling.

Two related forms complement the large-scale figures: plants and rocks. The former, which Wedel titles "flower trees," are of varying palette and scale, from tabletop size to more than 6 feet (1.8 m) tall. The flower tree is a recurring subject for Wedel, who is constantly developing its form, while stretching the limits of the clay's materiality. In this exhibition, a large faceted rock, over 5 feet (1.5 m) tall, and covered in a rich brown luster, takes center stage. Wedel also frequently integrates the rock form, colored with painterly splashes, into his plant sculptures. Like an eccentric botanist who experiments with hybrids in a hot house, Wedel imposes his will on his subjects, to defy the qualities of the clay.

Ambiguity is felt throughout the exhibition: while Wedel focuses on the female form, other figures appear androgynous, and the flower trees seem to be a strange cross between real succulents and science-fiction growths. Alluding to classical motifs, the sculptures are also entirely contemporary. Color is used lavishly: bright yellows, reds, greens and blues abound, and elegant browns and greys gleam with subtle complexity. Working quickly – he states "clay abolishes the time lag between the idea and the object" – Wedel's prolific output expresses his vivid imagination and formal inventiveness.

Matt Wedel was born and raised in Colorado, and first began working with clay at age 2. Under the guidance of his father, a functional ceramicist, Wedel developed an early passion for making sculpture. With easy access to a wheel and kiln, and a teacher at his side, he developed a proficiency and easy facility with the medium by his adolescent years. Wedel earned a BFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois, in 2005, and a MFA from California State University, Long Beach, California, in 2007, where he studied with Tony Marsh. Wedel went on to teach at the University, and has since received teaching positions at Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada; Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Rhode Island, and University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado. In each location Wedel was lured by the accessibility to large kilns, which allowed him to create the sculptures of his imagination. In early 2012, Wedel moved with his family to Athens, Ohio, where he built his own studio and a massive kiln. He works alone, propagating his magical flora and fauna without the help of studio assistants. All the work in *Sheep's Head* has emerged from the studio over the past 12 months.

Matt Wedel's work has received national attention with his inclusion in group exhibitions at Ellis Armory, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 2008; Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, 2009; *67th Scripps Annual*, Ruth Chandler Williamson Gallery, Claremont, California, 2011; Brevard Art Museum, Melbourne, Florida, 2011; and *Stone Gravy* curated by David Pagel, Ameringer McEnergy Yohe Fine Art, New York, New York, 2012. L.A. Louver first presented Matt Wedel's work in the group exhibition *Rogue Wave '09*, and since 2011 has represented the artist. L.A. Louver's presentations of Wedel's work at Art Basel, Switzerland in 2011 and 2012, has led to international recognition, with work entering collections in Britain, France, Italy, Switzerland and Turkey.



Flower tree, 2013
ceramic
31 x 27 x 24 in. (78.7 x 68.6 x 61 cm) in. (27.9 x 37.5 cm)



Fruit bowl with handle, 2013
ceramic
20 1/2 x 20 1/2 x 18 in. (52.1 x 52.1 x 45.7 cm)

For a short documentary movie on Matt Wedel by Jeff McLane, please visit: lalouer.com/Wedel.

Artist conversation: Matt Wedel will speak with Christopher Miles at L.A. Louver on Saturday, 13 April at 11 a.m. The event is free but reservations are required. Please RSVP to 310-822-4955 or rsvp@lalouer.com.

Concurrently on view in the second floor gallery:

Charles Garabedian - re: *GENERATION*

New paintings on paper by the Los Angeles-based artist.

For more information and visuals, please contact Elizabeth East, L.A. Louver, 45 North Venice Boulevard, Venice, CA, USA, www.lalouer.com
tel: 310-822-4955; fax: 310-821-7529; e-mail: Elizabeth@lalouer.com Gallery Hours: Tues - Sat, 10 - 6 PM; Validated parking available