

OVERDUIN & CO.

PRESS RELEASE

Michael Bala
"Eye Comfort"
November 15th, 2024 – January 11th, 2025
opening reception: Friday, November 15th, 6-8 pm

Overduin & Co. is pleased to present the gallery's first exhibition by Michael Bala.

"The world is still deceived with ornament."¹

With ornament. With the found object. With everyday patterns. With their associations, structures, and functions. With their shadows. Michael Bala's first solo exhibition, *Eye Comfort*, references the early-twentieth century lighting system sold by the Chicago-based National X-Ray Reflector Company, a system that boasted the ability to illuminate retail and residential spaces by concealing lamps behind ornamental fixtures.

Bala, too, conceals his sources. Umbrellas, red oak balusters, and heads-up pennies are just a few of the materials Bala repurposes to assemble this fourteen-piece exhibition. Whether peeled off the pavement or salvaged from the dump, these objects resculpt relations to the world; for instance, bicycle horns become wall-mounted, their fluting bells flare vertically into illuminated sconces. Bala's interest in and ambivalence toward perspective crafts new visual orders for these otherwise forgotten objects. Tricks of the eye give way to slips of sense. Bala's deceitful decoration expands the gaze towards touch, a multisensory dialogue that pushes and pulls in more ways than one.

Knock, knock, knock. Eyes seem to rap on the wood providing structural and conceptual support to these artworks. More than a verification of materials, this inquiry is in line with the age-old apotropaic practice of knocking on wood. Offered in return is a warding and protective cast stimulated by the simple engagement with everyday objects, decorative architecture, or ornamental readymades. Here, crown molding plays the role of an exit sign acting as the threshold between what is in and out. Pinstripes accent the contours of the cornices' bodywork, however for Bala, delineating what adorns and what composes is a futile exercise. *Slick as Nails (exit #1)*, the first of three patterned emergency exits, takes its modified title from a Robert Pollard song. *Eye Comfort* heeds the song's starting lines as instruction: "Be drawn to what's wrong and believe everyone / Go ahead touch your nose & off you go up and run."

Isabel Casso, 2024

Michael Bala (b. 1994, Maui, HI) is a Los Angeles based artist working in sculpture. Bala received a BFA from the University of California, Los Angeles. Bala's work centers around the reframing of found objects and salvaged architectural fragments. Overlaying structure and ornament, Bala's material interventions construct a typology of ever-mutable forms from society's cast-offs. Bala's work has been included in exhibitions presented by Clearing in Los Angeles, Clearing in New York, Castle in Los Angeles, Tiffany's Door in Los Angeles, Et al. in San Francisco, and Paul Soto in Los Angeles.

For more information and images, please contact the gallery at office@overduinandco.com.

Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 10 am to 5 pm, or by appointment.

¹ William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, ed. by Peter Holland (London: Penguin Classics, 2015) (act 3, scene 2), quoted in Oleg Grabar, *The Mediation of Ornament*. First edition. (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1992). <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780691252773>.