

## A Brutal Sensitivity

Ran Ortner and Norman Mooney do not fall short in "Falling Short of Knowing" at Milk Gallery.

IN REVIEWS BY [RAJESH BARUA](#) 2008-09-20

"From the most tender brutalities to the most devastating sensitivities" is how Ran Ortner describes the subtle range of his work. A one-time professional motorcycle racer, and extreme sports enthusiast, Ortner relishes the physicality of his art process—an exchange of blows with the canvas like those of battering waves against his surfboard. "The arc of movement, the range of movement, up and off the ladder, back, that moving in and out while I am painting feels like a dance. You're both exhausted and you're touched by the magnitude of the process."

It's a dance Ortner and fellow artist and good friend Norman Mooney have put on exhibition at the Milk Gallery, a collaboration with Ch'i Contemporary Fine Art entitled: "Falling Short of Knowing." This is the first stop of a tour that will eventually make it to East Asia following a visit to Moscow this December.



Photo courtesy Milk Gallery & Ch'i Contemporary Fine Art.

The show features an unlikely pairing of techniques. Ortner paints large scale oil on canvas, while Mooney uses a method of carbon on aluminum panel that can take as little as five minutes to complete, once planned and put into form with a blowtorch. Still, they share a common directness, a certain relationship to their materials that is left unmasked. In Ortner's case there is a visceral admiration of nature that thrusts forward with a confidence of understanding it. *Storm #1* (2008) testifies to this, and to Ortner's own love for the waves he straddles as a surfer. The quadripartite oil on canvas takes hold of the exhibition space, a jolting snapshot of nature, of the titanic scale and rumblings of the ocean in violent shades of green and blue.

Joining it is Mooney's *Star #1* (2008), a pair of large aluminum-cast spheres composed of massive prickling needles. With the sharpness of a medieval weapon, Mooney evokes the same abruptness of Ortner's slicing waves, channeling, or at least hinting at a power hidden and primordial. The two pieces, *Star #1* and *Storm #1*, are the show's center, and give some meaning to its title "Falling Short of Knowing." The other works shown are smaller in scale, but interesting in their own right, featuring more powerful mid-wave ocean moments by Ortner, and sublime forms created out of Mooney's carbon on panel technique. Again, they strangely complement each other in some unknown tone of a deeper emotion.



### "Falling Short of Knowing" Exhibition

at Milk Gallery  
in the Chelsea 14th -  
19th area

This event has ended -  
(2008-09-13 - 2008-09-  
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