

JIM ISERMANN SCULPTURE
FEBRUARY 18 – MARCH 25, 2017
Opening reception is Saturday, February 18, from 5 to 7pm.

Richard Telles presents *Jim Isermann Sculpture*, an exhibition of just three works. For his 9th solo project with the gallery, Isermann continues to develop modular forms that toy with distinctions between art, industrial design, and craft. Strains of modernism meet and clash in playful, yet precise, combinations of processes, colors and materials. Isermann interweaves visions of utopia in post-WWII America with references ranging from the Bauhaus to beanbag chairs.

To create each work, Isermann operates within a set of limitations, often using a single module or component to explore possibilities. Two new sculptures suggest the efficiency of crates. However, these hexahedrons resist their function as stackable containers. With each sculpture, two cubes perch delicately at a gravity-defying diagonal angle, one on top of the other, touching only at a single corner. They stand on tip-toe reaching upward, as if dancing. From a distance, the burnt umber sculptures appear to be made of raw wood or Corten steel, the brute materials of minimalism. Up close, it is possible to see that they consist of brown plastic (roto-molded polyethylene), the kind used to make contemporary park and playground furniture. Conflating high art with popular design, the works reflect modes of production in recent history, but they are also urgently imaginative.

In the Martel space, two sculptures created twenty years earlier work with a different set of rules. While the *Untitled (stacked cubes)* from 2016 address commercial manufacturing processes, the two *Untitled (donuts)* made in 1996 investigate handmade methods of production. For these works, Isermann seeks to create a looping “resolved braid,” with no logical beginning or end. Borrowing from the colonial American craft of rug braiding, Isermann weaves primary-colored cotton twill over inflated truck tire inner tubes. When the tubes are deflated and replaced with synthetic filling, the rigid geometry of the woven loops collapses into shapes resembling donuts. Their weight and texture recall a 1970s vision of utopia involving hacky sacks and beanbag chairs. In this circular work, sculpture slouches into furniture, and then reasserts its status as art.

Jim Isermann, born in 1955 in Kenosha, Wisconsin, lives and works in Palm Springs, California. He has presented solo projects at the Hammer, Los Angeles; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. Isermann has completed commissioned works for the Bloomberg Space, London; Albright Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo; Cowboys Stadium, Arlington, Texas; The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio; Princeton University, New Jersey; the University of California, Riverside; the University of California, San Francisco, among many others. His work is in the permanent collection of the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago; FNAC, Fonds National d’Art Contemporain, Paris; MOCA, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; and the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven among others. He is a professor of art at the University of California, Riverside.