



LOS ANGELES

**Richard Ankrom: "The Curio Shop"
at Charlie James Gallery**

There is something curious about the facade of Charlie James Gallery, where the wattage of the overhead lights seem more fluorescent than usual. A collection of sculptures and figurines are positioned within the architectural borders of the space, accentuating their presence as if they were commodities, transforming the gallery into a kitsch retail environment. While the identity of the objects are unknown from the entrance, they are united in their treatment of what appears to be blackface. The show marks the gallery debut of LA-based artist Richard Ankrom, best known for his 2002 guerilla art intervention on signage for the 110 freeway. Aptly titled "The Curio Shop," the exhibition presents items from Ankrom's *Fetish Figurine* series, featuring an extensive collection of tchotchkes amassed from garage sales, flea markets and eBay. Each "curio" object lives up to its name, and are indeed rare and intriguing, as they resonate and reflect a cultural fascination with figures in popular culture. Ankrom classifies his collection into various themes, such as "Famous Faces," featuring busts of Elvis Presley and John Wayne and a ceramic cookie jar bearing Clark Gable and Vivien Leigh's iconic embrace from "Gone with the Wind." There's also an arsenal of familiar Disney characters including Snow White, Tinker Bell and Dopey. Additional genres include The Neo-Classicals, Dogs, Cats and Pigs, Animalia, and the Miscellaneous. While each character or form is identifiable, they have been transformed by the artist, who meticulously applied synthetic black rubber masks to each visage and then used dental tools to add metal studs, zippers, and hooks. Objects which were once cheerfully mass-produced now peer at us through slitted eyes and a half smile, from beneath an opened zipper.

A replica of Michelangelo's Renaissance masterpiece *David* stands in the doorway wearing a leather loincloth and looking out onto the horizon with sunken eyes. The tree stump that supports his *contrapposto* position now holds a heavy metal chain that connects to the collar of David's mask while his right arm bears the weight of bondage. "The Curio Shop" presents the perversion of Americana, and Ankrom accomplishes this by lifting the proverbial mask and adding a synthetic one.

—A. MORET

"AUGUSTUS CAESAR," 2015

Richard Ankrom

FOUND FIBERGLASS WITH SYNTHETIC RUBBER, ZIPPER

73" x 19½" x 16"

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE ARTIST
AND CHARLIE JAMES GALLERY