

OFF PARADISE

Continuous Squeeze

January 17 — March 17, 2025

Opening Friday, January 17, 4-8pm



Off Paradise is pleased to present “Continuous Squeeze,” a solo exhibition debuting new and previously unseen—or rarely seen—historical works by American sculptor Ross Knight. This marks the artist’s first presentation in a decade and his first solo exhibition with the gallery.

Most of Knight’s preferred materials are decidedly inorganic: urethane, thermosetting polymer, resin, steel. At a glance, the sculptures appear slick, recalling the cool surface fetishism of Minimalism. But a closer look reveals their superficial imperfection, the clear evidence of a hand at work. The works flit back and forth across the spectrum between machine- and human-making, an animating tension for the artist’s practice. Formally, the works suggest human bodies as well as functional objects: two parts slotting almost perfectly together might evoke an industrial process, or a sex act. Knight’s great trick is the transfiguration of coldness and inhumanity into tenderness and familiarity.

The exhibition shares a title with one of its constituent sculptures. In *Continuous Squeeze* (2025), a waist-high steel pole supports a mysterious, seemingly industrial pressing contraption: a series of plates and cylinders sandwiching a mass of fleshy yellow silicone foam. The foam bubbles out from the metal housing, its texture rich and slightly abject. The piece has an odd intimacy, which stems from the simultaneous strangeness and recognizability of its forms and finishes. This sensibility is shared by all the works in this condensed survey, which span from 2012 to 2025. Viewing works created over a longer period of time, we witness the evolution of Knight’s practice. Where balance and suspension were the defining actions of his earlier works, the acts of holding, supporting, and embracing characterize his more recent output: parts press more closely on one another, contrivances of mutual reliance arrested in permanently intertwined states.

These sly sculptures, while funny and unpretentious, are never cynical or parodic. The artist's ongoing project is a sincere formal and material investigation into where the *human* begins and ends. Here, the therapeutic pillow provides a central motif, appearing both as found object and referenced form. These pillows, designed to support the body, appear as its mirror or negative, mimicking its curves and angles; they dwell in the overlap of animal and artificial that Knight's practice seeks to isolate, define, and expand.

"Continuous Squeeze" consists of ten sculptures: four free-standing, another four atop pedestals, and two wall pieces. The works are domestic in scale, occupying space like common household objects - a lamp, a humidifier, a jewelry display, a picture. In each work exists the appearance of a mysterious functionality, some obscure purpose. The superficial whiff of familiarity gives the show an inviting effect, but it is one that complicates and unravels when the echoes of recognizable forms inevitably give way to the weird, the curious, the alien. At once off-putting and magnetically charming, these sculptures evince Knight's confidence and facility employing friction and contradiction, as well as his peculiar and undeniable mastery of his medium.

Ross Knight (b. 1962, Lafayette, Indiana) is an American sculptor whose work has been exhibited in the U.S. and abroad since 1989, including team (gallery, inc.) (New York); American Fine Arts, Co. (New York); Richard Telles Fine Art (Los Angeles); MoMA P.S.1, Long Island City, NY; Sculpture Center, Long Island City, NY; Socrates Sculpture Park, Queens, NY; Tucson Museum of Contemporary Art, Tucson, AZ; Columbus College of Art and Design, Columbus, OH; and The Wanås Foundation, Sweden. More recently, Knight's work was included in "Like a Nightingale with a Toothache" at Off Paradise (2024). Knight has been an Associate Professor of Fine Arts at Pratt Institute since 2015, and lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.

Off Paradise is a gallery located on Walker Street founded by Natacha Polaert in the fall of 2019. The name evokes the old neighborhood of Five Points, at the center of which was a small, triangular park, full of hopes and grime, called Paradise Square. It also invokes Paradise Alley, the artists' and poets' colony on the then-godforsaken corner of Avenue A and East 11th Street that is referenced in Jack Kerouac's novel *The Subterraneans*. Off Paradise is a fictional place, right off Paradise, adjacent to it, but not exactly it.

Images: Ross Knight, *Coupled Prop (two blues)*, 2022, coated therapeutic pillow, thermo polymer, 13 x 14 x 9 in. (33.02 x 35.56 x 22.86 cm); *Shape of What*, 2012, Steel, HDPE, platinum silicone, rug gripper, 66 x 16 x 21 in. (167.64 x 40.64 x 53.34 cm)