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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

No Aloha
Strauss Bourque-LaFrance

September 7 – October 19, 2014
Opening Reception: Sunday, September 7, 6 – 8 pm

Rachel Uffner Gallery is pleased to present *No Aloha*, its first solo exhibition with Strauss Bourque-LaFrance. Bourque-LaFrance's interdisciplinary practice combines painting, sculpture, and performance, and merges disparate fields and influences, from interior and stage design to film and comics, exploring desire, memory, and estrangement in contemporary domestic and commercial culture. For *No Aloha*, Bourque-LaFrance presents a series of paintings and sculptures that fuse his interest in the fabricated, minimal object with synthetic readymade materials, constructing an uncanny interior *mise-en-scène* with shifting views and multiple readings.

A new group of domestic sculptures that function as fireplace mantels or pedestals populate the carpeted interior of the main gallery space. Traditionally the mantelpiece has been an archetype of formal domesticity, defining interior décor and an architectural focal point that served a ventilating purpose, but has since, particularly in the 20th century, been used to frame the “family room,” signifying a place to gather, or to display objects, photos, mementos; a kind of secular altar. Fireplace mantels reached a high point of cultural saturation in the early nineties, when roughly two thirds of American homes had one. Today, these sites are mostly painted over and left behind as decorative markers lamenting the grandeur of a bygone era. In Bourque-LaFrance's disjointed interiors, the mantels are resuscitated and filled with a buoyant sense of openness and optimism that articulate domesticity, but as a malleable construct. Each of the four mantels in the exhibition takes on a different shape or surface – referencing the design and political ideologies of International Style and Memphis Group along with the high/low aesthetics of Pop and ornamentation – acting as a pedestal, a sculpture of an object, an image of an object, and so on. These mantels likewise double as animated portals to an alternate space or reality (think *Beetlejuice*), setting the stage for a spiritual-like sense of transformation inherent in his practice.

In concert with these works, Bourque-LaFrance will show a new grouping of “vacation paintings” that explore escapism and contemporary ways of seeing, expanding his visual language by synthesizing marks, tropes, and framing devices of historical and

Rachel Uffner Gallery
170 Suffolk Street
New York, NY 10002

+1 212 274 0064
info@racheluffnergallery.com
racheluffnergallery.com

contemporary painting. Created using spray enamel on polyethylene mesh encased in multi-colored Plexiglas boxes, the vacation paintings combine spontaneous gestural abstraction with collaged and often representational imagery. Like blurred, optical remnants of “attempted images,” they oscillate between the tastefully benign and comically unhinged. Ultimately, “vacation space” is a non-space, as it exists between one’s everyday life and the life one hopes to live (or in the Foucauldian sense of heterotopia, it is an in-between space of *otherness* that offers a means of escape from daily anxieties). Whereas for Foucault the mirror was an ideal site of heterotopic duality, Bourque-LaFrance’s hybrid paintings are positioned somewhere between textiles, smartphone screens and commercial or historical vitrines, potentially hopeful and meditative fields where the viewer projects one’s fears and desires, but that never fully reveal themselves. It is the space between one’s home and one’s job, between one’s fantasies and realities. This space is *No Aloha*.

Strauss Bourque-LaFrance, b. 1983, lives and works in Brooklyn. Recent solo shows include KANSAS, New York; Courtney Blades, Chicago; Bodega, Philadelphia/New York. His work has been included in exhibitions at ICA Philadelphia, SculptureCenter, New York; Contemporary Austin Jones Center, Texas; Abrons Art Center, New York; Johannes Vogt Gallery, New York; Vox Populi, Philadelphia; Crane Arts, Philadelphia; Extra Extra, Philadelphia; Clifford Gallery, Colgate University, New York; and Porch Projects, Washington D.C., among others. He received his BFA from Hampshire College, Amherst, MA; and his MFA from Tyler School of Art, Philadelphia, PA.

Gallery hours are Wed-Sun from 10-6pm or by appointment. For further information and images, please visit www.racheluffnergallery.com or contact Dmitry Komis at dmitry@racheluffnergallery.com.

Image: Strauss Bourque-LaFrance, *Martini*, 2014, MDF and laminate, 53 x 57 x 15 inches