

Bill Smith

Synthetic BioStructure

January 10 – February 7, 2015

Opening Reception: Saturday, January 10, 6-8 pm



P·P·O·W is pleased to present an exhibition of work by Bill Smith. Smith, who has a degree in both sculpture and micro-biology, uses his knowledge of science not only as a basis for inspiration but as his media as well. While artists since the Renaissance have used scientific ideas to create masterpieces, Smith uses actual techniques of the scientific and natural world to create sculptural assemblages that draw on the intricate systems and inherent beauty found in nature. Taking scientific laws and principles as a guiding form, Smith has created a highly aesthetic visual language that he uses to create complex, often mechanized, sculptural works that bridge the gap between art and science.

P.P.O.W's exhibition will feature a new body of work by Smith, including a series of small sculptures made out of spring steel, along with large-scale models made out of carbon fiber and biodegradable 3-D printed material. While appearing to be geometric, these elaborately crafted works, created using a complex molecular inspired building system that Smith recently patented, in fact contain no straight lines and have the potential to create an infinite variety of shapes and structures.

The development of this patent, and these works, exhibit Smith's ongoing exploration of smart materials – responsive materials that are able to reconfigure their physical properties based on contact with outside influences – and are thus ever changing. The assemblages that will be on view represent a selection of modules that he has proposed in his most recent patent, and are all meant to have the capacity to change shape and mimic living organisms.

The exhibition will also include Smith's uniquely designed projector, which throws the image of a large scale exoskeleton of a dragonfly in high definition, allowing visitors to interact with an insect they would otherwise be unable to see. While science has been known to objectify, and even exploit, the natural world, Smith constructs assemblages whose structural workings derive from natural principles to elucidate our appreciation of nature and its intrinsic beauty. Thus Smith's work acts a link, not only merging explorations of science and art, but between science and nature as well. Taken as a whole, Smith's videos and mechanisms derive from an interest in bio mimicry – the process of using solutions found in nature to resolve problems concerning humans, and his ongoing desire to expose viewers to the ways in which the complexities of the natural world can be translated into interpretations of our own collective ecologies.

Bill Smith holds a BS in Science, a MFA in sculpture and a technical degree in Diesel Mechanics. His work has been exhibited at: The Chicago Cultural Center, Chicago; White Flag Projects, St. Louis; The Forum for Contemporary Art, St. Louis; the 5th Biennale de Montreal, Canada; The St. Louis Art Museum, St Louis; the Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia; the World Chess Hall of Fame, St. Louis; and The Cleveland Institute of Art, Cleveland. In 2015 Smith will have a solo exhibition at the Mattress Factory in Pittsburgh and the Figge Art Museum in Davenport, Iowa.