

## Timothy Wehrle

### *Elsewhere*

March 17 – April 16, 2016

Opening Reception: Thursday, March 17, 6-8 pm



**P·P·O·W** is pleased to present an exhibition of new works by Timothy Wehrle, his first show with the gallery. A self-taught artist, Wehrle creates intricate drawings that carefully blend nostalgic yearnings with stark depictions of everyday life in rural, middle-America. Firmly grounded in a specific place and moment in time, Wehrle's works are born out of a realist's vision of his native Iowa, one that moves away from the dreamy, pastoral fantasy of America's heartland and questions the conception that nostalgia is inherently good. As writer Anya Ventura describes it, "Wehrle's Iowa is not bulging pastures and gold-struck hay bales, starched, weather-beaten farmers with their pink-cheeked children. This Iowa is not honorable, clean, industrious, or pure. This is the Iowa of Monsanto and ethanol plants. It is the Iowa of grain elevators, freight trains, and Hummer trailers...It is the poor, rural Midwest, the America of fast food and industrial ag, where the coal is burning, the livestock is screaming, and the water has turned bad."

*Elsewhere* pays tribute to the grease-stained detritus of American culture; the wholesome vision of America's breadbasket is here replaced with a manufactured, packaged, chemical version of reality. Through a series of still lifes that bring together the playful pop art of Wayne Thiebaud envisioned through the disturbed lens of the surrealists, and the angular immediacy of Richard Diebenkorn, Wehrle projects a vision of his everyday surroundings that is at once nuanced and immediate, familiar and totally unnerving. While Wehrle withholds outright judgment and creates works that are open to wide interpretation, his drawings are tinged with a critique of the passive culture that surrounds him, which relishes in its uniformity and tradition, allowing for latent racism and antipathy for otherness to bubble to the surface. "Iowa is a place of complete barren boredom and sadness," says Wehrle. "It's a tundra of fear, and where there's fear and sadness there's guns, religion and drugs."

In works like *Under the Bed*, Wehrle creates richly layered stories that seem to exist just beyond the edge of real life. In this large-scale work, as in our childhood imaginings, an entire world exists under the bed, a place where our lost possessions become the starting point for an alternate and fantastical reality. *Village Green Preservation Society* offers an Americanized, country version of the Kink's song of the same title. Here the quaintness of the Kink's Donald Duck and strawberry jam is replaced with cigarettes, processed candy, condoms, and potato chips, a visual rendering of an updated, now tragic, pop song.

Wehrle is a self-taught artist who was born in southeast Iowa and currently lives and works in Oxford, Iowa. He was the subject of the 2012 solo exhibition *The Drawing Season: I Don't Understand You and I Never Will* at John Michael Kohler Arts Center in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, and the 2009 exhibition *Iowa Artists* at Des Moines Art Center, Iowa. An illustrated brochure with an essay by Anya Ventura will accompany the exhibition.