FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: COURTNEY STRIMPLE >>> TEL: 212 331 8888 >>> FAX: 212 343 2134 >>> COURTNEY@MIXEDGREENS.COM

COKE WISDOM O'NEAL *"BLUE NUDE"*

FEBRUARY 17 – MARCH 19, 2011
OPENING: THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 6–8PM

Mixed Greens is thrilled to announce *Blue Nude,* Coke Wisdom O'Neal's fifth solo exhibition with the gallery. Over the past five years, O'Neal has become known for his monumental plywood boxes, where people are invited to climb in and be photographed. In this new series, the box and its participants—a now diminutive and transparent container with nude inhabitants—have changed significantly. What was once a project about space, identity, and identification has become a venture exploring anonymity, constraint, and escape.

In both photographic series, O'Neal uses the sculptural box as a framing device. In the past, the subjects were given the space and freedom to comfortably explore the structure, and were encouraged to include autobiographical props or to stage a scene. In this iteration, O'Neal's cruelly small box is lidded, rejecting the notion of movement or even much choice in bodily orientation. The interior often becomes laden with perspiration and steam—the aftereffects of a body contorted in a small, confined space. Instead of looking for signifiers of individuality in the subject's expression, clothing, props, and posture, these photos leave the viewer searching for tiny signs of identity in a tattoo, ring, or the shape of foot.

At the turn of the 20th Century, Houdini became famous for escaping from handcuffs, milk cans, water chambers, and straightjackets. "Magic," raw physicality, and the symbolism he created as an exemplar of the American dream—escaping to America and then escaping repeatedly before a crowd—led to his popularity. O'Neal toys with similar themes of escape and containment in these photographs, however, his subjects are never seen freeing themselves. In most cases, they must physically manipulate their bodies to fit, pushing against the Plexiglas from within. They are forever entombed in a static, yet performative, state.

Coke Wisdom O'Neal is a New York City-based artist whose work has been exhibited in numerous venues throughout the United States including Chuchifritos, New York, NY; Northern Illinois University Art Museum, DeKalb, IL; Socrates Sculpture Park, Queens, NY; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Tucson, AZ; the Furman Gallery at Lincoln Center, New York, NY; and White Columns, New York, NY. His solo exhibitions include Mixed Greens, New York, NY; Finesilver Gallery, Houston, TX; Evo Gallery, Santa Fe, NM; and Aaron Packer Gallery, Chicago, IL. In 2009, he was chosen as a finalist in the Hasselblad Master Competition and the exhibition traveled to Hong Kong, Copenhagen, New York City, and London. He recently won an inaugural 25 for 25 grant from AOL.

>>>