

**ON VIEW: NOVEMBER 20, 2025 - JANUARY 10, 2025**

## **GALLERY TWO**

### ***James Castle: The Architecture of Silence***

Ricco/Maresca Gallery presents an exhibition of works by James Castle (1899–1977), an artist whose life and art were inseparable. Born deaf and mute on a small farm in Garden Valley, Idaho, Castle spent his entire life creating images and objects from the world around him. He never learned to read, write, or sign; instead, he communicated through drawing, collage, and construction—each work a fragment of a language entirely his own.

This exhibition gathers a focused selection of drawings and constructions—domestic interiors, household objects, facades, and solitary figures—made with the same quiet precision that defines his oeuvre. Rendered in tonal grays, weathered browns, and chalky whites, these works reveal Castle’s uncanny ability to locate structure and rhythm within the ordinary. Chairs, stairways, window frames, and scraps of cloth emerge as both physical and metaphysical architectures: records of lived experience and metaphors for containment, solitude, and observation.

Castle’s practice consistently challenged what drawing and sculpture could be. His materials—salvaged envelopes, matchboxes, cereal cartons—bear the trace of use and decay, holding the memory of touch and domestic routine. From this detritus, he built a sustained vocabulary of form rooted in repetition and reinvention. A chair may appear again and again, subtly altered each time, as if seen through shifting layers of time or consciousness. An interior wall becomes a stage for light itself. Each drawing feels less like depiction than retrieval: the reconstruction of a world through sensation rather than sight.

Though Castle’s art was born in isolation, it speaks fluently to the broader history of modernism—collage, assemblage, minimalism—without belonging to any of it. His sensitivity to texture and negative space recalls the intimacy of Joseph Cornell’s boxes, the measured stillness of Giorgio Morandi, or the tonal quietude of early American abstraction. Yet his vision remains entirely his own, its strength rooted not in influence or innovation but in the deep necessity of making. Deprived of speech and formal education, he developed a visual syntax of marks, folds, and surfaces that allowed the world to answer him back.

The interiors and objects shown here—drawn on reclaimed paper or built from layered cardboard—embody what might be called an architecture of silence. They are spaces that hold absence without despair, revealing how observation itself can become a form of expression. In Castle’s hands, soot and scrap acquire a kind of luminosity. The rough edges of his constructions, the soft density of his tonal fields, the way his blacks breathe across paper—all convey a tactile intelligence that transcends words.

Over the past decades, Castle’s work has entered the collections of major institutions including the Museum of Modern Art, the Smithsonian American Art Museum, and the Whitney Museum of American Art. Yet each encounter with his drawings still feels like a discovery. Their modest scale resists monumentality; they ask instead for intimacy and attention. Seen together,

they form not a narrative but a pulse—a steady continuity between object and image, material and imagination.

To stand before a work by James Castle is to experience both clarity and mystery. Every line feels deliberate yet instinctual, every shadow inhabited by memory. His art reminds us that creativity is not bound by language or circumstance—it is born of looking closely, and of turning that looking into a world.