LISSON GALLERY

frieze
October 2025

Interview: With a new exhibition opening this autumn at Lisson Gallery in London, *Hugh Hayden* talks to *Terence Trouillot* about crafting works that seduce and unsettle

‘My work is about access, aspiration, alienation – things that cross boundaries.’

TERENCE TROUILLOT I know you're currently working on your upcoming show at Lisson Gallery in London this autumn and just coming off the heels of your exhibition 'American Vernacular' at the Frye Art Museum in Seattle. You also had a huge survey last year in your hometown of Dallas, Texas, at the Nasher Sculpture Center, aptly titled 'Homecoming'. But before we get to all that, I thought we could speak about your contribution to 'Ground/work 2025', a public sculpture exhibition in the grounds of the Clark Art Institute in Massachusetts. You're presenting a large-scale wood sculpture titled *the End* [2025]. Can you tell me more about it?

HUGH HAYDEN Yeah! It's a sculpture in the woods. I'm really excited about it because it's not a temporary piece, but it's also not permanent – it's somewhere in between. It's made from hemlock wood, which is native to the region, and over time it's going to decay naturally. So, unlike bronze or concrete, it's going to just disappear. It takes the shape of a whale skeleton, its ribcage and spine, with tree branches protruding or growing outward from the ribs – just in the middle of this forest, adjacent to a trail. It essentially camouflages into the surrounding trees. I love how, depending on the season, it becomes more or less visible. In winter, for instance, it will blend in more with the environment. You won't know where it begins or ends.

TT So it's also about camouflage – which I know is a topic that fascinates you.

Previous page
Hugh Hayden, 2025. Image commissioned for *frieze*; photograph: Ashley Markle

Below
American Gothic, 2024, wood, metal, hay, mop, rubber, feathers, 250 × 35 cm. Courtesy: © Hugh Hayden and Lisson Gallery, London

Opposite page
the End, 2025 installation view, 'Ground/work 2025', Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts. Courtesy: the Clark Art Institute; photograph: Thomas Clark

HH Absolutely. I'm really drawn to the idea of camouflage – not just visual, but conceptual. Skeletons are raceless, genderless – you can't tell the sexuality of a person based on their skeletal structure. There's a universality in that. And it's similar to the bark of a tree: most people can't tell a maple from an oak without the leaves. That ambiguity excites me.

TT It reminds me of your earlier work with the school desks and branches seemingly bursting out of them, like your *Brier Patch* [2022] installation at Madison Square Park in New York.

HH That project was 100 school desks with tree branches coming out of them. Those works are always shown in parks – on cut grass, or some other sort of manicured lawn – never in a truly natural landscape. But recently, we permanently installed 20 desks in Sharjah, in the desert. I like the idea of them getting covered by the sand or being completely submerged by it, and then at some point being re-revealed. There's another version in St. Louis, at Laumeier Sculpture Park. Those are also about blending into their environment. The one in the park was on mown grass, so it didn't quite integrate in the same way. But this one at the Clark is in the woods – real woods – and already a sapling has started growing through it.

TT It's like the work becomes part of the ecosystem – or returns to it.

HH That's always been part of the work – reinstituting it into nature, in some sense. The material choice, the shape, even the site: it's all about that relationship between the artificial and the organic.

I have always used salvaged wood. Originally, in New York City, when I was going to Columbia for my MFA, I sourced some trees that had died in a park. We would walk by them in St. Nicholas Park on the weekends, on the way to the studio. I knew someone at the Parks Department and was able to get in touch with the right people to retrieve these blue spruces that had died. I ended up making a piece out of them – this Lexus dashboard [*Untitled Lexus Dash*, 2017] that's at the Studio Museum in Harlem.

TT Looking back to your undergrad at Cornell, where you completed the intensive five-year BArch programme, I'm curious as to how your background in architecture has influenced your art practice, if at all?

HH Architecture was the most creative field that I felt would lead to a career. As a kid, I went to the Dallas Museum of Art every Wednesday. But all we learnt about art was that these people were dead and they made nice things. We weren't encouraged to become artists.

I remember, when I was a teenager, I woke up one morning and decided to build a koi pond. I first saw koi at the San Antonio Zoo, and then all of a sudden I decided I wanted to have some. I was 15, and I found a water garden centre in Garland through the Yellow Pages. I drove out, bought supplies and started digging a hole in the back of our yard. My parents came home, like, 'What are you doing?' and I said, 'I'm building a pond.' Eventually I hired a contractor and built a proper one – concrete, cinder blocks, six feet deep. I paid for it all with money from mowing lawns and a restaurant job.

I never quite finished the pond, but that experience turned into an interest in architecture. I remember right

Skeletons are raceless, genderless –
there's a universality in that.
And it's similar to the bark of a tree.

Hugh Hayden

before I left for Cornell, I bought palm trees for it, told my mum where to plant them – of course, she put them somewhere else. But that project is what got me into Cornell.

TT Were you already making art at that point?

HH Not really. I thought I wanted to be an architect or a landscape artist. But I did start making weird, conceptual stuff. I ran a student magazine at Cornell called *Awkward*, which evolved into a kind of art object. Don Johnson – now a partner at Luhring Augustine – actually co-founded it before I took over. It started as a stapled-together fashion zine and became a tactile lifestyle magazine – for one issue we used heat pads, rough textures, even a petrified bagel.

The summer prior, in New York, I interned at *Visionaire* – they also produced *V* magazine – created by Stephen Gan, Cecilia Dean and James Kaliardos. Each issue was a multisensory experience; one even came with custom scents. That had a huge influence on me. I staged a dinner party about taste, where guests wore white, had their hands tied behind their backs and were fed liquefied versions of American comfort foods through funnels. It was kind of a happening, but one guest had a panic attack and it turned into a campus police investigation. I had to write a formal apology – but honestly, the police report might be the most thorough documentation of the piece.

TT That's amazing. Returning to your architectural training, do you feel that it served as a pathway into your work as an artist?

I want people to feel something before they understand it.

Hugh Hayden

Opposite page
'Brier Patch', 2022, installation view, Madison Square Park, New York. Courtesy: © Hugh Hayden and Lisson Gallery; photograph: Mark Waldhauser

Above
'Hugh Hayden: Boogey Men', 2021, exhibition view, ICA Miami. Courtesy: © Hugh Hayden and ICA Miami; photograph: Zachary Balber

Right
'Hugh Hayden: American Vernacular', 2025, exhibition view, Frye Art Museum, Seattle. Courtesy: © Hugh Hayden and Frye Art Museum, Seattle; photograph: Jueqian Fang

'Hugh Hayden: Home Work', 2025, exhibition view, Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Boston. Courtesy: © Hugh Hayden and Rose Art Museum; photography: Julia Featheringill

The material choice, the shape, even the site: it's all about that relationship between the artificial and the organic.

Hugh Hayden

Below and opposite page
Hugh Hayden in the studio, 2025. Image commissioned for *frieze*; photograph: Ashley Markle

HH I'm so far removed from that architecture programme. I really appreciate what it taught me, in terms of creative problem-solving – the way you'd be given a prompt to create a building that responded to the needs and users of the site. It made me more conscious of the material properties that I was using. It might have had some cultural significance. Is that how I got interested in wood? I don't know. I think it's unrelated. It was mainly out of necessity.

After the recession hit, I ended up back at Tihany Design – where I had previously interned – filling in for people they'd laid off, before getting laid off myself. That was a turning point for me.

TT So tell me about your White Columns show in 2018. That was your first big moment, right?

HH Yeah, that was my first solo show in New York. It happened kind of suddenly. Matthew Higgs from White Columns saw the dashboard piece at NADA Miami in 2017 – it was part of a booth curated by the artist Jesse Greenberg. It didn't sell, and White Columns ended up showing it again in their booth at Frieze New York in 2018, where it was acquired by the Studio Museum. Jesse and [White Columns deputy director] Erin Somerville had visited my studio a couple of times already, and Erin told Matthew he had to see my work. After that, he asked: 'Do you want to have a show with me?' And I was like, 'What?' It would open less than a week before my Columbia thesis exhibition.

TT So that show happened before your MFA show?

HH Yep. I installed that exhibition and then immediately went back to the studio to prep for my thesis. The White Columns show had the very first version of the classroom installation with school desks and branches. I had maybe six desks. People responded strongly to it. It was the first time I realized I could make something personal that also spoke broadly about education, structure, access, assimilation. I did my first show at Lisson that September, spending all summer going around Texas cutting down trees to transform into sculptures.

TT Did that change how you approached your practice?

HH I had to scale up fast. I was still making everything myself, and suddenly I had to manage production, deadlines, budgets, assistants.

Since my show 'Boogey Men' opened [at ICA Miami] in late 2021, there's been something big every four to six months – Madison Square Park, the NGV Triennial in Melbourne, 'Hughman' in LA and then 'Hughman(s)' in New York, both with Lisson. The schedule got scrambled by COVID and gallery delays, so I hadn't had a New York show since 2021. That's why we did 'Hughman(s)' last year – it had been too long. For 'Hughmanity', we started building the biggest pieces back in January but paused to make work for the shows at Frye and the Clark. Now it's a sprint to finish.

There were points when I had ten projects going at once. It was exciting, but it was too much. I started realizing I needed to slow down – not just for my sanity but to protect the quality of the work.

TT I'd love to hear more about your new show at Lisson – 'Hughmanity'.

HH The centrepiece is a sculpture called *The Good Samaritan* [2025]. It's a wooden lifeboat – full-scale – but it's created in such a way that you can't sit in it. It can be


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Sometimes institutions want to make the work legible in a certain way – to fit it into a narrative. But I try to leave room for openness, for different people to see themselves in it.

Hugh Hayden

read literally, metaphorically, politically. It's about the idea of rescue, of safety that's inaccessible. That could be immigration, healthcare, the American dream. It's meant to be seductive and dangerous at the same time; to represent institutions that are supposed to help people – education, healthcare, housing – but are often just out of reach. The idea is that the lifeboat is there, visible, symbolic, even aspirational, but you can't get to it.

TT There's also humour in your work. That seems important, too.

HH Yeah. Some people miss that, but it's definitely there. I think humour opens the door. It's disarming. A chair with branches growing out of it is absurd, right? But it's also dangerous. If someone laughs, then steps back and goes, 'Wait, this is about access, or education, or violence', then that's a win. I want people to feel something before they understand it.

TT You've talked about resisting being pinned down, especially by race or identity categories. Can you say more about that?

HH It's complicated. I'm a Black man, and my work gets interpreted that way. I've had curators impose very specific interpretations – racial or political – that aren't necessarily there. One piece, a burning picket fence, was read as a comment on the KKK or Black homeownership trauma. But I just made a burning picket fence. The piece wasn't about race explicitly – more about the impossibility of home ownership or the American Dream – but because I made it, it gets read that way.

But I'm also queer. No one ever mentions that in reviews. It's interesting which parts of identity get highlighted and which ones don't. I want to hold all of it. My work is about access, aspiration, alienation – things that cross boundaries. I don't want to be flattened.

I want people to engage with the work without feeling like there's one correct interpretation. Sometimes institutions want to make the work legible in a certain way – to fit it into a narrative. But I try to leave room for openness, for different people to see themselves in it ●

Hugh Hayden is a sculptor. His current solo exhibition, 'Hughmanity', is on view at Lisson Gallery, London, UK, until 1 November.

Terence Trouillot is senior editor of *frieze*.

Opposite page
Huff and a Puff, 2023, wood, mirrored glass, brick, steel, dimensions variable. Courtesy: the artist; photograph: Mel Taing

Below
'Hugh Hayden: Homecoming', 2024–25, exhibition view, Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas. Courtesy: © Hugh Hayden and Lisson Gallery; photograph: Kevin Todora

LISSON GALLERY

The New York Times
30 August 2024

The New York Times

An Artist With Sharp Edges

Hugh Hayden's career is exploding. Take care not to be hit by shrapnel.

The visual artist Hugh Hayden, 41, in his studio in East Williamsburg, Brooklyn, in August, Ahmed Gaber for The New York Times

At Hugh Hayden's Brooklyn workshop, useless versions of utilitarian things are gestating all around. No chefs could cook with his skillets, punctured by orifices and attached to musical instruments. No basketball players could score points with his nets made of synthetic hair, trailing down dozens of feet like Rapunzel's tresses. He and his employees implant metal and wooden blades in tables and chairs, and drape barbed wire and prickly vines across baby cradles.

Mr. Hayden, who is Black, gives sardonic titles to his artworks, reflecting how systemic racism has blocked upward mobility for some. His forbiddingly spiky school desk is called "Work-Study." A wooden ladder sprouting garden shears is "Higher Education."

During a recent workshop tour, Mr. Hayden, 40, sported eyeglasses trimmed in fir twigs harvested from the Dolomite mountains in Italy. He leafed through piles of raw cotton and vintage books about wicker and rattan furniture, pondering new ways of weaving. Thorny smilax vines were strewed underfoot, and a sandaled reporter, dazzled by the varied work in progress, narrowly avoided goring her toes.

Mr. Hayden's branched skeleton piece is described by the artist as "an evolving work in progress made of bald cypress wood." Ahmed Gaber for The New York Times

The artist's woven rattan and smilax vine basketball backboard titled "Happily Ever After" will go on display at SFMoMA. Ahmed Gaber for The New York Times

He brought out chocolaty chunks of bark, the stuff he has layered on Timberland boots and Burberry trench coats. “It’s fun when it has the lichens and moss on it,” he said. Despite the razor edges on his chairs, gallery goers still sometimes mistake them for something supportive: “People try to lean on them, out of an instinct.”

His staff was on deadline, sanding bits of Christmas trees for a dining set and braiding blond wig strands, alchemically transforming detritus into commentary on injustice. This fall, Mr. Hayden has one-person exhibitions at the Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas (opening Sept. 14, with an oaken playground castle bristling with boar hairs) and the Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University in Waltham, Mass. (opening Sept. 18, with a cottage engulfed in branches).

Mr. Hayden works on a woven rattan vessel titled “Waterboy” to be displayed at the R and Company gallery in New York in September. Ahmed Gaber for The New York Times

He is participating in group shows at R & Company gallery in New York ("Objects: USA 2024," opening Friday, with his giant vessel made of woven rattan) and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (opening Oct. 19, with his rattan basketball backboard laced in vines). In 2025, his team will build a hemlock whale skeleton for the grounds of the Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, Mass., and fill a desert ghost town near Sharjah, in the United Arab Emirates, with overgrown classroom desks.

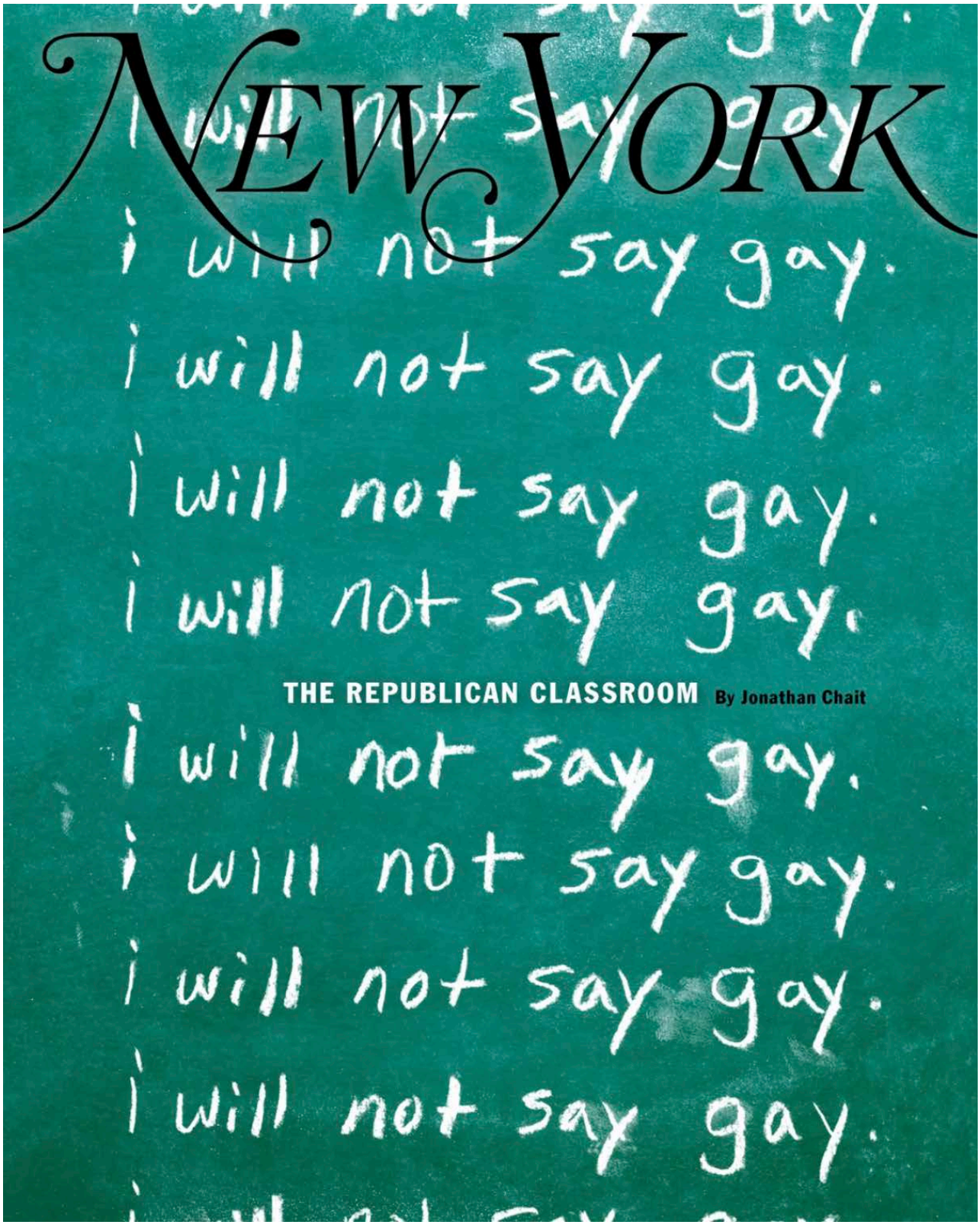
Mr. Hayden, a Dallas native, previously worked as an architect, with projects including clothing stores and Starbucks outlets. He comes across as self-effacing and unrattled by his growing art-world fame on multiple continents. He was equally unfazed during the interview by his Ibizan hounds, Mars and Jupiter, longing to escape their corral and chew on some rattan.

When Mr. Hayden visits exhibitions surveying his own past work, he said, he has a series of reactions. It can start with "gosh, yeah, I've done a lot." And then, he added, "Sometimes I start critiquing it: 'I should have made it differently.'"

LISSON GALLERY

New York Magazine
8 May 2023

NEW YORK



4 PLACES Where ART Gets Made NOW

By WENDY GOODMAN

The Bear
"I made that as a night-light for myself back in 2014. It's incomplete and has never been shown."

Hayden With "Pride" (2021)
A recliner, an office chair, and a baby seat, each covered in zebra hide.

East Williamsburg

HUGH HAYDEN's Former Fruit Warehouse

Photographs by Jeremy Liebman

I HAD OUTGROWN my previous studio in the Bronx," Hugh Hayden says, sitting beside an aluminum and wood zebra skeleton sprouting massive branches from its bones. He needed more space to make large pieces for a show at ICA Miami in 2021 and had looked at plenty of listings through the website LoopNet, which focuses on commercial real estate. Prices were too steep for what he needed, until he happened upon a former fruit distributor's warehouse.

"I actually didn't like it," he says of his first visit to the fluorescent-lit, cinderblock-walled structure, "but it ended up being a good deal."

The two-level space totals about 5,500 square feet with 18-foot ceilings and a garage door on the ground floor, where Hayden has his wood shop and sculpting studio. On the lower-ceilinged second floor, there is a kitchen, an office, and a hangout room, where he and his staff gather for lunch.

Hayden knew what he wanted to do with it. "I had this vision that putting Sheetrock on the walls, as well as painting the walls, floor, and ceiling, would completely transform this space."

It's now his design laboratory, where his fantastical anthropomorphic sculptures are created to address a constant theme. "There's still this overarching fascination and exploration," Hayden says, "of trying to inhabit the American Dream—more specifically, this metaphor of camouflage and this idea of blending into a natural landscape is sort of, for me, represented by blending into a social landscape, so that was my fascination with vegetation and the landscape and the environment."

That fascination plays out in pieces throughout the studio, where his dog, Mars, wanders amid towering plants. On the walls are skeletons and rib cages made of carved wood. They are not, he says, a symbol of death but a representation of our shared humanity: "When you see a skeleton, you don't know the gender, or race, or sexuality."

A collection of seating called "Pride," from his 2021 ICA Miami Show, "Boogey Men," is covered in actual zebra hide. "The notion is that zebras work together as a group to camouflage and appear like a bigger organism," he explains. "So their camouflage works like a family." The pieces represent different stages of life for each family member—a car seat is childhood, an office chair is adulthood, and a recliner is about getting older.

Growing up in Dallas, "I had this entrepreneurial spirit," Hayden says. He built a koi pond in his family's backyard when he was in ninth grade. "I didn't know that you could be an artist," he says, but he knew he wanted to leave Texas. His conservative high-school guidance counselor didn't get it, dismissing the idea of going to RISD, where, he was warned, the students wore only black and had tattoos and piercings.

He ended up at Cornell studying architecture. He graduated in 2007 and won second prize in a travel fellowship sponsored by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill with a proposal for researching culinary installations and food-related architecture. He went to work for architect Adam Tihany but was laid off in 2009 during the Great Recession.

That's when he started honing his sculptural practice in furniture in Brooklyn. He also met artist Derrick Adams.

Upstairs Lounge
Hayden's dog, Mars, on the De Sede DS-600 sofa. Hayden traded with Chen Chen and Kai Williams for the Geology dining table.

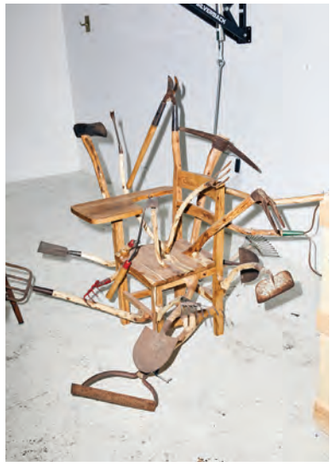
"He was one of the first people I met who said they were an artist, and he was a full-time artist; he didn't have another job. Also, the work he was making was from his perspective as a Black man, and I had ideas about the world, but I didn't know there was an audience for them, or a way to make them and display them, or that you could have a career or livelihood from it."

Before he became an artist, he worked on store design for the fashion brand Alice + Olivia and Starbucks. He earned his M.F.A. from Columbia in 2018.

His upstairs office is where he goes to work on projects at the end of the day, after the rest of the studio has gone home. It's filled with woven baskets, each one unique. There are finished pieces displayed on the walls, while those in process are scattered across his desk, all the result of teaching himself to weave during the pandemic.

Communal cooperation is important to him. In 2016, he created an installation around a table where diners were tethered together and had to coordinate their movements to eat. Later, for his birthday in 2020, he made a rocking table, where everyone had to work together to keep the surface from flipping over to use it. ■






Top (from left): The Barbie-doll hoop, a study from 2022; a zebra-tail detail from the "Pride"-series recliner. *Armor,* made from cherry bark applied to a Burberry coat, from 2014. **Middle:** *Workstudy* is from 2018 to 2023; *BEC,* made of yellow enameled cast iron, from 2021; *Ball Chair,* from 2009. **Bottom:** This piece, with a bald cypress sprouting out of an aluminum zebra, was originally shown at his gallery, Lisson, last summer—"I'm now transforming it into a new piece"; a Birkin bag covered in bark for a collector this year; a woven basket in process.

The Slanted Sculptures
"They represent a body under stress. The slanted school desk represents an educational experience that is leaning forward, on the offense … in pursuit of something."

Sculpture Magazine
9th November 2022

sculpture
A PUBLICATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL SCULPTURE CENTER

Kiyan Williams, *Ruins of Empire*, 2022. Photo: Nicholas Knight, Courtesy Public Art Fund, NY and the artist

"Black Atlantic"

November 9, 2022 by Susan Canning

New York

Brooklyn Bridge Park

Up until the 1970s, the Brooklyn waterfront served as a shipping port and site of cultural and mercantile exchange along the transatlantic route between the Caribbean and the European, African, and American continents. Now transformed into Brooklyn Bridge Park, the waterfront and its piers are hosting "Black Atlantic" (on view through November 27, 2022), an exhibition featuring five artists of the Black diaspora that examines, like Paul Gilroy's 1993 book of the same title, the legacy of the transatlantic crossing and the potential for creating more nuanced cultural and political formations from the collective experiences of immigration, identity, and nationhood.

Agali Awamu (Togetherness), a two-part sculptural grouping by Ugandan-born, Brooklyn-based Leilah Babirye, takes advantage of its placement on Pier 1. Three totem-like sculptures are positioned like sentinels against the backdrop of the Brooklyn Bridge and Lower Manhattan, while two additional figures dramatically frame the Statue of Liberty and the busy New York Harbor. Fashioned out of hollow

tree trunks and festooned with gears, metal plates, and ornaments associated with the trans-femme community, Babirye's imposing works stand at the ready. They shield and empower, forming a defensive family that celebrates kinship and the international LGBTQ+ community.

Hugh Hayden's *The Gulf Stream* references Winslow Homer's painting of the same title, as well as Kerry James Marshall's 2003 response. A dinghy placed on the rocks at the entrance of Pier 2 looks as if it has just washed ashore. Constructed out of oak, with a central, carved cedar core that resembles human ribs and a whale spine, the boat metaphorically embodies the Middle Passage and survival.

Tau Lewis's three cast-iron disks, which recall tombstones or prehistoric markers, are inscribed with marine creatures from the crinoid family, including urchins and starfish, and West African Adinkra symbols. Embedded in the ground on a grassy knoll and surrounded by bushes, these somewhat hidden works, once they're discovered, invite meditation on ancient wanderings and the dispersion of bodies.

Houston-born Dozie Kanu employs a more surreal approach. Located on a plaza overlooking the waterfront, *On Elbows* juxtaposes a white, cast concrete couch mounted on "Texan Wire Wheel" rims (inspired by the street auto "SLAB culture" of his hometown) and a cylindrical vessel filled with black liquid that pulsates like a beating heart. Overlaying references to psychoanalysis and individual and collective identity, Kanu's installation probes the tension between Black creative expression and the materialist desires of modern capitalist culture.

Kiyan Williams uses sampling and recycling to explore and redefine notions of Blackness. *Ruins of Empire* riffs on Thomas Crawford's Statue of Freedom, which stands atop the dome of the U.S. Capitol building. Alluding to the Roman goddess Libertas and Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi's Statue of Liberty, Williams's partial figure—just the upper half and rooster-topped head—retains a monumental presence. It appears to be moving resolutely forward—its momentum perhaps a hopeful articulation of the promise of freedom and openness—and simultaneously about to collapse, its soil-covered, eroding body in danger of disassembly.

Versed in popular culture and Black history and speaking to the intersecting narratives of migration and the immigrant experience, the works in "Black Atlantic" educate and enrich. Through their dialogue with viewers, they enunciate what Gilroy called "the polyphonic qualities of Black cultural expression."

Interview Magazine
2 March 2022

ART

Meet Hugh Hayden's Lurking "Boogey Man"

By Alexandre Stipanovich

March 2, 2022

Photo courtesy of Hugh Hayden.

Nobody reveals the ambiguity of the American Dream like Hugh Hayden does. His sculptures—looming, eerily anthropomorphic monuments—explore the relationship between African American identities and American culture. This relationship, through Hayden's eyes, is one of simultaneous joy and anguish, dream and nightmare, life and death. With "Boogey Man," the sculptor's current exhibition on view at , Hayden (a carpenter by trade) mixes mediums—a police car shrouded in a Klan-like hood, cypress branches woven into skeletal forms—to evoke new facets of American identity. To learn more about the exhibition, we sat down with the artist for a conversation about complex processes, ownership, and dreams—good and bad.

ALEXANDRE STIPANOVICH: "Boogey Man" is incredible. I want to ask you about the titular piece, the hooded car. There's a police car under the ghost draping. How did this idea come about? Why did you use steel this time?

HUGH HAYDEN: Thanks for asking me to speak about the exhibition! As I mature as an artist, I'm moving away from saying, "This means this, and that means that." However, it's impossible for an artist's work to be completely abstract and devoid of all meaning. I kind of like everyone to have a different perspective. But I've had the idea of this piece for a while...more than four years. I made some maquettes based on toy police cars that I had purchased online. I explored using plaster bandages to get a sense of what it might look like. Does the idea translate? Is it successful? While the work itself is not made out of wood, this piece is in a way similar to the skillet pieces of pots and pans, where I recast African masks into metal. In that way, there is an original, historical form that is reshaped and slightly abstracted into metal. You still have some facsimile of the thing that's being referenced, but you're also transforming it into something else. It wasn't a huge leap. I mean, mainly it was the scale that was a challenging.

Hugh Hayden: Boogey Men, Exhibition view. ICA Miami. November 30, 2021 – April 17, 2022. © Hugh Hayden, Courtesy Lisson Gallery.

STIPANOVICH: Can you comment on the piece's title?

HAYDEN: Do police in this country create ghosts? Or are they also ghosts themselves, you know? It's about perspective. "Boogey Man" is something a child would say, versus an adult. Who would call a police officer a Boogey Man? Who would be raised to think that this person is a monster? There is a particular style of police car, the Crown Victoria, that was everywhere during my adolescence in Dallas. That style of police car represents a

particular era—[in the exhibition,] we've actually distorted it. It's 75% smaller than the real car, and it's deliberately out of proportion between the length and the height to give a more cartoony impression. That it makes it more humorous and fun. People still think there's a car under it, and they can't imagine that it's metal either.

Hugh Hayden: Boogey Men, Exhibition view. ICA Miami. November 30, 2021 – April 17, 2022. © Hugh Hayden, Courtesy Lisson Gallery.

STIPANOVICH: What about the "Brass Ensemble"? It has a much more festive spirit than "Boogey Man."

HAYDEN: They are 12 pairs of pots and pans—cast-iron skillets with African masks on them—each paired with an attached brass instrument. Those are then re-plated in their entirety in copper. It's this ensemble of musicians with their instruments, if you will. There are 24 pieces, but I consider them 12 musicians paired with 12 instruments. The work is about not only the creation of food, music, and overall culture in the United States, but more about the African origins of culture, food, and music in the United States. The pot is sort of the container for creating this melting pot stew that is America. A lot of my work has to do with the American Dream—how it's something desirable that you want to be a part of. "Boogey Man" might appear cutesy and benign, but at the same time there's something undesirable and dangerous lurking. There is this duality of desirable and undesirable, or inviting and uninviting, that appears in a lot of my work in different ways.

Hugh Hayden: Boogey Men, Exhibition view. ICA Miami. November 30, 2021 – April 17, 2022. © Hugh Hayden, Courtesy Lisson Gallery.

STIPANOVICH: Speaking of that duality, the two rooms in the gallery have different vibes.

HAYDEN: Yeah. The show is divided into two rooms. The first space you enter is like this cul-de-sac. There's a concrete curb with a carpeted lawn, the things outside of a home. This ghost police car sits outside. On the inside, there's a kitchen, a staircase, and a reclining skeleton, which I now call "Nude Over Past Roots." It's the idea of a family tree, with connections to nature. My attraction to skeletons is not about death. It's more this idea that it could be anyone—we all have a skeleton. Likewise, these leafless branches could be any type of tree. So for me, this could be anyone's home in America. Alternatively, this is a Black experience. I mean, there are different ways of approaching this notion of inhabiting America.

Hugh Hayden: Boogey Men, Exhibition view. ICA Miami. November 30, 2021 – April 17, 2022. © Hugh Hayden, Courtesy Lisson Gallery.

STIPANOVICH: The skeleton's position is intriguing. It looks like it's thinking or daydreaming.

HAYDEN: Yeah, or trying to relax, or leaning back on the couch.

STIPANOVICH: Or even listening to the ensemble, maybe?

HAYDEN: Oh yeah, I like that. Like a harmony.

STIPANOVICH: This piece must have been very difficult to produce.

HAYDEN: Oh yeah. Everything in the show had its challenges, but this was particularly challenging. The big pieces took close to a year to make, because typically, with lumber, branches are the first parts removed. Lumber is an abstraction of a tree. It's a lot of work just sourcing the wood, finding someone who could procure the wood per my specifications, keeping it in intact, and transporting it. Then, working with the wood that has the branches attached is also a challenge. It is an exercise to achieve the final effect, which is hopefully that the viewer is left not knowing how this is made. The piece just arrived. You don't even know how to approach it. Someone early on pointed out that when you can't even begin to guess how the piece is made, it automatically transports you to another place. It's the idea that art can transform you.

Hugh Hayden: Boogey Men, Exhibition view. ICA Miami. November 30, 2021 – April 17, 2022. © Hugh Hayden, Courtesy Lisson Gallery.

STIPANOVICH: It's definitely puzzling to think how you produced this.

HAYDEN: It's a lot of hard work. Most of the people who've worked with me can't get over how difficult it is. They say, "Why would you want to do that?" There are a lot of people who hang up, "No, we can't help you." In this particular installation, I was using bald cypress trees from Louisiana—they grow from Florida to Texas, where I'm from. It was just a challenge finding someone who had access to these trees, and who would cut them down in a certain way. And eventually we did find someone, he had been on a TV show called *Ax Men*. There was a family who lived in a swamp outside of New Orleans in the 1800s. They would cut them down up river, and they would float the logs down to a sawmill. A percentage of them would sink in the river, and some of them would start a petrification process. Or they would age in some way, that now 200 years later, people are digging them up for this new, transformed cypress lumber called Sinker Cypress. There's a whole cottage industry around this product now. I figured if someone would go through this much trouble to find and harvest wood, they might be into working with me on this project, collecting this wood. I'm happy they were convinced to help me out.

Scarecrow, 2021 Cherry bark on Burberry coat on Gabon ebony rack. 72 x 18 x 60 in © Hugh Hayden, Courtesy Lisson Gallery.

STIPANOVICH: What about the Burberry coat scarecrow facing the ghost police car? That's another element of fear.

HAYDEN: I made the first version of that almost 10 years ago. I have a piece in my studio, called "Armor," which is a Burberry raincoat been covered with similar bark. It's this idea of camouflage. For me, it's a way of assimilation, or blending into a certain class, or group· because Burberry is a luxury brand. It's about looking the part, especially juxtaposed to the police car. If you look a certain way, you won't have any trouble.

STIPANOVICH: How was the bark put together? It looks like a delicate process.

HAYDEN: It pretty much is. That's just what goes into making it look believable. I don't want to get too much into how it's made, but the first part is procuring the bark. I have a guy upstate at a lumberyard who lets me chisel the bark off of his logs before he processes them. Then he dries them for me in a kiln for two weeks to kill any parasites or insects. Then it's a puzzle to figure out a way to completely cover the existing surface.

STIPANOVICH: It has a ghostly presence. Between that, the car, and the skeleton, there are many ghosts in this show...

HAYDEN: Yeah, a lot of things are in the air— in terms ghosts, or things suspended in the air.

STIPANOVICH: And there's a chair on fire titled "America."

America, 2021. Black locust, milk paint, 60 x 60 x 60 in. © Hugh Hayden, Courtesy Lisson Gallery.

HAYDEN: It's an Adirondack chair made of wood, and the branches are sculptured into flames. You can take it how you want. People put Adirondack chairs in their yard to relax and enjoy their exterior space. That chair is the symbol of land ownership, or property—the American Dream, or the suburban dream. Here, that dream is up in flames, so that's about about the difficulty of inhabiting that. Many people of my generation may never be able to own a home, have a yard.

STIPANOVICH: Are these flames of anguish, because that privilege is built on other people's lives? Are they flames of inaccessibility, because some people will never afford that dream?

HAYDEN: It could be those. It's both inaccessible, or it's someone protecting this dream from other people. That dream isn't possible anymore.

The New York Times
13 January 2022

The New York Times

Hugh Hayden, Surrealist Sculptor, Addresses the Education Debate

His public art installation in New York's Madison Square Park takes on the thorny issues roiling American classrooms.

The sculptor Hugh Hayden working on his Madison Square Park installation "Brier Patch" at Showman, a fabrication factory space in Bayonne, N.J. Douglas Segars for The New York Times

By Hilarie M. Sheets

Jan. 13, 2022 Updated 12:22 p.m. ET

"Just watch your eyes," the sculptor Hugh Hayden warned as he circumnavigated the wooden school desk he had made from cedar logs, their branches still attached. The limbs erupted from the seat and desktop, in all directions — strange, unruly, alive.

Hayden, 38, was in the last stages of production at Showman Fabricators in Bayonne, N.J., completing his most ambitious project to date. "Brier Patch," an art installation opening Jan. 18 in New York's Madison Square Park, assembles 100 newly minted school desks into outdoor "classrooms" across four lawns. The largest grouping morphs ground up from an orderly grid of right-angled chairs into a wild tangle of potential eye-scratching branches intersecting midair.

"He's simultaneously questioning opportunity and inequity in the American education system," Brooke Kamin Rapaport, deputy director and chief curator at the Madison Square Park Conservancy, said, offering an interpretation of the "brier patch," a reference to the fictional Br'er Rabbit stories as well as to a thorny crop of plants. The show opens amid a storm of debates roiling classrooms over curriculum changes addressing systemic racism and whether to remain open amid the Omicron surge.

Hayden's installation in Madison Square Park, where he has assembled 100 hybrid school desks with branches into "classrooms." They suggest opportunity but also barriers for young people on the path forward. Yasunori Matsui, via Madison Square Park Conservancy

Hayden, who is from Dallas, studied architecture at Cornell and worked for a decade in that field before receiving his M.F.A. from Columbia in 2018 and moving on to a full-time career as a sculptor.

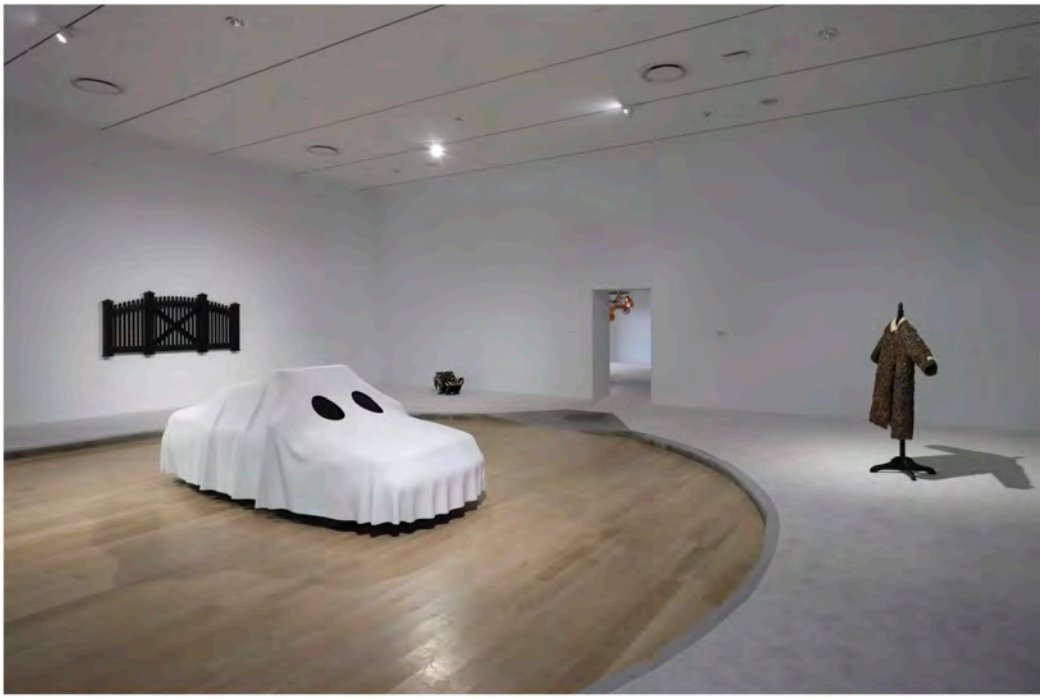
Working mostly in wood by hand, he reconstructs vernacular objects in the American landscape — a picnic table, an Adirondack chair, a suburban fence, a school desk — subverting their utility and meaning by giving them human qualities.

"The objects themselves are in transition between a cultural object and a natural object," the artist Mark Dion, a professor and mentor to Hayden at Columbia, said of these startling hybrid forms. "He harkens back to the best of the Surrealists like Man Ray and Meret Oppenheim, where the objects are really unsettling. They oscillate in this very uncanny world. It's a chair and it's not a chair."

At Showman, Hayden demonstrated how his logs, salvaged from the Pine Barrens in New Jersey, are split and planed into usable planks that still preserve their long branches, defying standard lumber production. "My wood is like bone-in chicken, with the foot even — you're still seeing this is a tree," he said. The result looks almost magical yet "there's no smoke and mirrors," he noted, interested in shifting how people might think about an everyday piece of wood.

"My wood is like bone-in chicken, with the foot even — you're still seeing this is a tree," Hayden said. Here, he uses a shaping disc to sculpt a seamless transition from the wooden desk top to the branches. Douglas Segars for The New York Times

The following day, the artist, dressed in a camouflage hunting jacket and cap, led his visitor through a capacious new studio in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, his large Ibizan hound vying for attention. Hayden moved here in October from a smaller space in the South Bronx to help keep pace with his ballooning exhibition schedule, which in 2021 included solo gallery shows at Clearing in Brussels and Lisson in New York.



At the ICA Miami, from left, “High Cotton,” “Boogey Man,” “Pride,” and “Scarecrow,” all from 2021. The artist has positioned “Scarecrow” in a pointed juxtaposition with “Boogey Man,” a police car hooded in a white sheet with cartoonlike holes for eyes. Hugh Hayden and Lisson Gallery

“The idea that tree bark can be a metaphor for an experience of skin is one of the driving themes in the work,” said Alex Gartenfeld, artistic director of the ICA. “Part of Hugh’s work being anthropomorphic is that it’s relatable. There’s a very human quality that signals that the issues it’s contending with are about you and me.”

Hayden’s installation of school desks at Madison Square Park summons associations for anyone who’s ever sat in a classroom. “Brier Patch” simultaneously resembles an orchard and a thicket difficult to inhabit.

“Nude” (2021) in “Hugh Hayden: Boogey Men” at ICA Miami, through April 17. Hayden carved the oversized human skeleton, sprouting branches “like a family tree” with wood from Louisiana, his mother’s birthplace. Hugh Hayden, via Lisson Gallery

Education is a subject of deep personal significance. Hayden's parents were teachers in the Dallas Independent School District and put a premium on his and his brother's academic success. "We had to give 110 percent," said the artist, who attended gifted and talented programs and a rigorous Jesuit high school.

While creative, Hayden didn't know art could be a career. Landscaping projects in his family's backyard pointed him toward architecture at Cornell. It wasn't until he was introduced to Derrick Adams at an opening, the first professional artist he'd met making art about contemporary life, that he felt inspired to try putting his ideas about the world into form. Hayden's taxidermied heads of North American buffalo and mountain goats, given a Black identity with the addition of cornrow extensions, won him a residency at Lower Manhattan Community Council in 2011 and set him on a course toward Columbia while supporting himself as an architect.

Alex Logsdail, Lisson's executive director, saw Hayden's work at White Columns in 2018, did a studio visit two days later at Columbia and began planning Hayden's first show at Lisson that year, after he graduated.

"It's very unusual to see an artist and be so affected that you have to do something immediately," said Logsdail, who has sold Hayden's work to the Studio Museum in Harlem and the Whitney Museum.

Hayden's installation of school desks summons associations for anyone who's ever sat in a classroom, our writer says. "'Brier Patch' simultaneously resembles an orchard and a thicket difficult to inhabit." Douglas Segars for The New York Times

At the height of the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020, Hayden approached both his galleries about working together on graduate school scholarships to make the art world more accessible to people of color. "You either have to take on debt or come from a privileged position," he said.

Funded through the sale of his artwork at Clearing and donations by some of Lisson's directors, as well as by Hayden, the Solomon B. Hayden Fellowships — named for the artist's father, who died in 2014 — will partly support tuition for two Black students at Columbia, in visual arts and art history, in perpetuity.

Hayden will help curate as well as participate in a group exhibition "Black Atlantic," produced by the Public Art Fund and opening in Brooklyn Bridge Park on May 17. Originally a solo opportunity, Hayden requested that "we expand the platform we had offered him to other young artists of color," said Daniel S. Palmer, the curator of the Public Art Fund. They selected Leilah Babirye, Dozie Kanu, Tau Lewis and Kiyan Williams to engage with the site and each other.

Hayden plans to show "The Gulf Stream," a wooden boat with a whale's rib cage carved inside, and, on the gunwale, a male mermaid (he calls it a "merboy") modeled on a childhood photo of himself. The artist said he was visually referring to two famous images of Black life in America — Winslow Homer's 1899 painting "The Gulf Stream," with a Black figure in distress on a boat surrounded by sharks, and Kerry James Marshall's 2003 response, showing a Black family enjoying sailing .

For Hayden, it is another artwork that wrestles with past, present and future in uneasy ways, as "Brier Patch" also does. "It's a story of being thrown overboard," he said, "and reinterpreting that as a new opportunity."

Hugh Hayden: Brier Patch

Opens Jan. 18 through April 24, Madison Square Park, Broadway-Madison Ave., between East 23 Street and East 26 Street; (212) 520-7600; madisonsquarepark.org.

Hugh Hayden: Boogey Man

Through April 17, ICA Miami, 305-901-5272; icamiami.org.

ARTnews
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Betye Saar, Hugh Hayden Conjure Mysteries with Everyday Objects in Standout ICA Miami Shows

BY ALEX GREENBERGER December 2, 2021 1:20pm

Installation view of "Betye Saar: Serious Moonlight," 2021, at Institute of Contemporary Art Miami.
PHOTO ZACHARY BALBER

As is often the case at art fairs, where artworks vie for the attention of eyes stimulated by so much overabundance, there is easily legible art aplenty at Art Basel Miami Beach. So it comes as a bit of respite to see standout shows that reward contemplation of the kind encouraged at the **Institute of Contemporary Art Miami**. **Betye Saar** and **Hugh Hayden**, two artists with shows now on view, could not be more different—they are separated by multiple generations, and they work in seemingly different modes. But their work is bound by a desire to develop private mythologies while using ready-made objects. Taken together, the two shows seem to ponder how items we encounter every day can be lent new meaning.

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Saar's show, curated by Stephanie Seidel, may come as a surprise for those who are more accustomed to her work of the '70s, which addressed sexism, racism, and combinations of the two by wresting freighted symbols from popular culture and turning them on their heads. This exhibition instead surveys Saar's comparatively restrained installations made primarily during the '80s. Traces of the thorny issues engaged in works such as *The Liberation of Aunt Jemima* (1972), in which a racist icon used to market pancake mix was lent a rifle by Saar, reappear in more oblique ways in the later works. The legacy of slavery is mined in *Gliding Into Midnight* (2019), a sculpture involving a canoe filled with ceramic hands hung to hover above a diagram of a vessel used during the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Shown in a darkened room, it makes clear that the violence of bygone centuries has not yet been forgotten. Yet Saar's work is not all gloomy: Nearby *Gliding Into Midnight* is *Oasis* (1988), a sandy space dotted with beachballs that invokes the childlike glee of a family vacation.

A work like *Oasis* showcases just how generous Saar's work can be. Even as they seek to unnerve, her assemblages evince an openness and willingness to accept a variety of reactions, whatever they may be. Sometimes her work includes an invitation to interact, like *Wings of Morning* (1992), an altar-like installation made in the wake of Saar's mother's death for which she invited viewers to leave trinkets as offerings. At the ICA, the work is presented with MetroCards, tiny Tabasco bottles, dollar bills, and more detritus of the everyday. In other instances, her works' receptiveness is expressed more symbolically, often using sculptures of hands that are almost always cast upward toward the heavens.

Betye Saar, *Oasis*, 1988.
PHOTO ZACHARY BALBER

There is a spiritual quality to much of the work, a tendency made most clear by gestures paying homage to traditions like Haitian Vodou and Santería. Rather than outright copying the iconography of such religions, Saar's approach is to "take a little bit from each one," as she once said. In so doing, Saar is able to infuse a spread of symbolic imagery—shooting stars, dice lit aflame, architecturally impossible towers—with meaning knowable only to herself.

Meaning takes even more oblique turns in Hayden's show, which was curated by Alex Gartenfeld. Like Saar's, Hayden's work is composed often of ready-made objects, though he alters his items in ways that can be hard to determine. *Pride* (2021) features what seems like a children's car seat lined with zebra hides and placed on the floor. But the wall text says it also includes an "artist's desk chair" and a La-Z-Boy recliner. Questions about how those objects figure in the work go unanswered, but in any case Hayden refashioned a car seat in a way of his own.

Hugh Hayden, *Nude*, 2021.
PHOTO CHRIS CARTER

A Burberry jacket features prominently in one work; cast iron skillets plated with copper that resemble faces in another. But Hayden's stark, minimalist sculptures render a lot of the objects as dysfunctional and often rather strange. He also recombines his materials in such a way that they seem to communicate heady statements without making those statements explicit, in a tradition that includes David Hammons and Robert Gober.

A certain amount of unknowability seems to be Hayden's preferred mode of communication, though his work occasionally takes on a political edge. *Boogey Man* (2021), the work that lends the show its title, features a recreation of a Ford Crown Victoria, a car commonly used by police forces in the U.S. Hayden's car, oddly reproduced at three-quarters its typical size, is draped with white fabric, with two black holes that resemble eyes. The fabric likens the police to the Ku Klux Klan, but the piece is intriguing beyond that. When Hayden is at his best, he asks viewers to do the guesswork of understanding what the objects in his surroundings mean to him—and, by extension, to us.

LISSON GALLERY

Artforum
25 October 2021

Hugh Hayden

LISSON GALLERY

Sculptor Hugh Hayden has enjoyed quick success, his work interrogating the idea of the American dream, often symbolized through the kitchen table, to explore class, aspiration, and the African origins of American cuisine, especially in the South. Hayden's strength lies in his skillful use of wood—specific types of which he often sources from particular places for their cultural and historical import—as both material and symbol. His exhibition here, titled after his pet name, "Huey," drew on memories of his Texas upbringing to tackle the knotty subject of African American childhood through sculptures poised between indoctrination and imagination, discipline and play.

The show was divided into three spaces, each referring to a different section of a church. Six salvaged pews and a school desk filled the sanctuary, all carefully reupholstered with chemical cleaning brushes, the pews an eye-catching red. A pair of hairbrushes and a comb, each with a menacing steel blade in place of a handle, were affixed to the far wall. Making up a series titled "Good Hair" (all works 2021), the modified seating acknowledged the role that institutions such as church and school play in establishing and enforcing standards of appearance, while the objects, somewhat heavy-handedly, implied the violence of such disciplinary regimes. A chapel-like second room tackled the oversize role that athletic excellence plays in narratives of Black masculinity through a half dozen wall-mounted basketball hoops woven out of rattan and other materials. One of these, *Huey*, was inspired by the iconic 1960s poster of Black Panther cofounder Huey P. Newton enthroned on a wicker peacock chair, an image whose popularity made that item of furniture a familiar fixture in African American households. Hayden re-created its oversize back as a backboard, weaving the logos of Nike, Under Armour, and Umbro into the frame. Another work, *Fruity*, is unexpectedly pink, the rattan strips stained with Gatorade. In *Rapunzel*, the net, woven out of synthetic blond hair, is more than six feet long and just skimmed the floor. A number of these pieces referenced fairy-tale characters in their titles, perhaps suggesting that those seeking success and communal upliftment via sports might be engaging in wishful thinking.

In a minimally lit all-black crypt, Hayden presented a set of ebony sculptures, interrogating the material as a signifier of African American excellence. Some pieces directly referenced the history of slavery: A

Hugh Hayden, *Good Hair 2*, 2021, wooden desk, Tampico, nylon, epoxy, 33½ × 24 × 27". From the series "Good Hair," 2021.

spinning wheel acknowledged the central role of cotton, while an antiquated chair recalled the plantation. Scrupulously handcrafted by Hayden, *Lincoln Logs* resembled a cabin constructed from the eponymous building blocks, which were invented a century ago. The toy originally came with instructions on how to build dwellings that belonged to both the slavery-abolishing president Abraham Lincoln and the literary Uncle Tom, a figure who has become shorthand in African American vernacular for "a sellout." This idea of racial compromise and economic success rippled through other work. *Uncle Phil* is a gavel named after the avuncular judge from the 1990s sitcom *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*, a humorous take on class tensions between urban and suburban African Americans. An uncanny replica of a gourmet chocolate bar, *To be titled*, was carefully ensconced in its half-open wrapper, which reads "100% COCOA." *110% Cocoa*, a slanted door whose inset panels mimic the chocolate bar's grid, leaned next to it. The visual distortion and the numerical excess of its title seem to parody the desire for an authentic Blackness. *Talented and Gifted/Passing*, a conjoined pair of school desks, dramatized this tension. The left one, sculpted from lighter sapwood, leans back, winning a tug-of-war against the one on the right, made from the more familiar black heartwood. Visualizing a hierarchy based on skin tone, it questions whether achievement and success truly shield one from racial prejudice. Emphasizing ebony's many subtle hues, these disparate objects brilliantly complicated any monolithic view of Blackness.

Though mostly invisible in the final work, some unconventional materials were mentioned in the checklist: cocoa butter, Gatorade, Neosporin, Tiger Balm, tung oil. Many are restorative substances, providing nourishment and healing to an exhausted or injured body. If Hayden's sculptures may be read as metonyms for the African American body, then the gesture of anointing them with such emollients quietly acknowledges the heroic effort and debilitating cost of growing up Black in America.

—Murtaza Vali

LISSON GALLERY

W Magazine
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Hugh Hayden, with his dog, Mars, in his South Bronx studio.

Hugh Hayden Explores the Thorny Sides of the American Dream

In the studio with the artist whose sculptural pieces are as mesmerizing as they are unsettling.

by **Arthur Lubow**
Photographed by **Nicholas Calcott**
10.27.21

At the eccentrically daft dinner parties that Hugh Hayden stages regularly, guests are showered with hospitality and hobbled by irksome constraints. Much thought and care goes into these culinary installations, which he has been presenting in different forms since high school. Using his training as an architect, Hayden, now 37, once designed a set of interlocking tables with semicircular cutouts that enclosed diners, who were seated on spinning stools. In an earlier year, he bound and blindfolded his guests, and spoon-fed them. He usually dictates a dress code—most recently, white shirts and black pants. "They're a lot of fun, but it requires you to submit to the experience," said Kayode Ojo, a sculptor and a friend, of the soirées. "He's a very generous host. It's almost a lot of pressure as a guest, as well. You're a bit trapped."

The uncomfortable reality of interacting with a space that's not quite what you had envisioned is a theme that runs through much of Hayden's art. His sculptures include church pews upholstered with bristles, a carved wooden football helmet with internal spikes, and an Adirondack chair with protruding limbs. "All of my work is about the American dream, whether it's a table that's hard to sit at or a thorny school desk," Hayden said. "It's a dream that is seductive, but difficult to inhabit."

America, 2018.

Untitled (Wagon), 2018.

He was speaking at the end of August in his studio in the South Bronx, a space he was ready to relinquish for an East Williamsburg studio almost three times as large. He was living the American dream, subcategory Successful Young Artist. On his agenda was finishing the pieces that would be displayed in "Boogey Men," his solo show at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, opening November 30. In Madison Square Park, which has staged outdoor exhibitions of such established artists as Martin Puryear, Teresita Fernández, and Maya Lin, he will install 100 grade-school desk chairs that sprout intertwining branches, in a piece he calls *Brier Patch*, opening in January 2022. Commissioned by the Public Art Fund, he is co-curating another New York show, "Black Atlantic," featuring five artists, himself included, that will be installed at Brooklyn Bridge Park in May.

"When I was younger, I would say, 'I'd love to have an exhibition,' and never say no to anyone," he observed. "Now I have to choose between projects. I'm trying to sustain it. Being an emerging artist, no one can tell you what to expect or how to be successful." Earnest and affable, Hayden speaks with an uncommon candor. "Hugh wants to become a real art superstar," said his friend Hannah Levy, a sculptor whose studio is in the same building as his in the Bronx. "When you talk to most people about their career, they won't admit that, because it's a little embarrassing. He doesn't have embarrassment about that. And I think he's achieving it."

Hayden, with works in progress.

Good Hair 3 (Brainwash), 2021.

When I visited his studio, it was replete with wood blocks and tree branches, along with pieces from past shows hanging on the walls, and works in progress. Two assistants were seated at a large table, in confines that were made more claustrophobic by the friendly, bounding presence of Hayden's large Ibizan hound, Mars. A shipment of hammered copper pots and pans that he'd bought at a flea market on a recent trip to Brussels had just arrived. He was melding brass instruments to 12 of them; they would join 12 cast-iron skillets that he was backing with African-style masks, each different, but all of them simulating his ears and mouth. The two dozen customized pots and skillets would hang from a three-tier rack. He had called the piece *Soul Food*, and planned to include it in the ICA Miami exhibition along with *Boogey Man*, a large replica of a police car draped in a white sheet with eyeholes reminiscent of a Ku Klux Klan hood. "Calling it the boogeyman is in terms of a child being told who to be afraid of," Hayden said. At the time of my visit, the piece was being fabricated in China. He had shortened the car in the middle, lending it a cartoon aspect that made it even more evocative of the Philip Guston Klan paintings that recently had provoked controversy because of their subject matter.

While he is starting to glimpse middle age on the horizon, Hayden as an artist is still very young. He left Cornell University in 2007 with an undergraduate degree in architecture, and, after receiving a fellowship, won positions as a house architect: He designed stores, first for Alice + Olivia, a women's clothing company, then for Starbucks. About six months after starting at Alice + Olivia, in 2011, he was awarded a residency at the Lower Manhattan Community Council, which provided him with a studio. He would arrive there at 6:30 in the evening and stay late—often until midnight, sometimes until 4 a.m.—then go home, and return to the office at 10 in the morning. That was his daily routine. "This whole time I was an architect, I was going to the studio in the evening," he remarked. "A lot of people always would ask, 'Why are you working so hard?' Now those people might say, 'Why wasn't *I* working?' " He noticed that most other young artists already had M.F.A. degrees. "I decided to go to grad school because I had a taste of the critical discourse from the residencies," he said. He enrolled at Columbia in 2016 and earned an M.F.A. two years later.

Ebony Fetish Object After Rumpelstiltskin, 2021.

Talented and Gifted/Passing, 2021.

Growing up in Dallas, the younger son of a father who was a middle school mathematics teacher and a mother who worked as a school counselor, Hayden visited the Dallas Museum of Art weekly. Still, he never realized that being an artist could be a way of making a living. He dreamed of becoming a landscape architect, and was especially enamored of koi ponds. "I was the youngest person in the local koi and water garden club in Texas, when I was 15," he said. "Everyone else was 55." He shifted his aspirations to becoming an architect once he realized that the credential would allow him to design any structure, including gardens, whereas being a landscape architect would limit him. His ambition was unbridled even then.

In Dallas, he was not only a Black kid in a mixed community, but also a gay kid with little interest in the prevailing sports-mad culture. At his all-boys high school, he joined the football team, as his father wanted him to do. "What I hated the most about football was that it was boring or dumb to me," he said. "I was good at first, but I got lazy. The practice took so long. You're at school until four, and then the practice is two or two and a half hours in the hot sun. I wanted to be at home gardening or watching *Judge Judy*."

Along with sadistic football helmets, Hayden has made a series of basketball hoops woven of rattan. The basketball subject matter immediately suggests David Hammons, an artist Hayden admires, but for Alex Gartenfeld, the artistic director of the ICA Miami, who curated the upcoming show, closer artistic precedents are Robert Gober and Charles Ray. "They share themes of childhood and memory and American culture," Gartenfeld said. "Hugh has an interest in pairing eroticism with the use of material, a seductiveness to the surface, using materials in perhaps surprising ways. It's so thoughtful and playful." Hayden's sculpture is also influenced by Doris Salcedo, the Colombian artist who transforms found pieces of furniture with subtle interventions.

Hayden's show this past summer at Lisson Gallery in New York, "Huey," featured many works that allude to white supremacy and Black oppression. Nonetheless,

Hayden said, "I don't like when my work is talked about only as the work of a Black artist." Certainly, his use of wood can have racial overtones. In "Huey," a dimly lit space contained six sculptures made from Gabon ebony, and they receded into invisibility in the darkness. But the most prominent piece in that room represented a spinning wheel with distinctly phallic spokes—a ash-up of the feminine and the masculine that feels very queer.

Hayden has an attachment to wood as a material. "He gets really obsessed; it's a fun thing to see," Levy said. "Not everyone who works with wood knows as much about trees as he does." He made his first wood piece—a hand with twig fingers—while he was studying at Columbia, using a branch he harvested from a fallen tree with a handsaw. "My work started off as more identity-based on bark or skin color," he said. "When it went below the surface, it could be about anyone."

One of the pieces going to the ICA Miami is *Roots*, a large skeleton composed of branches of bald cypress, the state tree of Louisiana, where Hayden's mother's family is from. "A skeleton has no race or gender," he remarked. "Just like a tree branch without leaves; you don't know if it's an oak tree or a cypress tree. The leaves on the trees are associated with the bark, feathers, hair, clothing, skin—what I call the organs of identity."

Good Hair 2, 2021.
Grooming by Walton Nunez for See Management using Laura Mercier. All supplied images: © Hugh Hayden and Lisson Gallery.

Most of Hayden's current work is still identity-based, but as with *Roots*, that is not always apparent. Often, the sensual allure of the piece outweighs the concept, and the artist is fine with that. "My work is sculpture and can't be replicated in a 2D image," he said. "It's better to experience in person. It's why we're alive."

Hyperallergic
12 August 2021

HYPERALLERGIC

Hugh Hayden Confronts the Black American Dream

Hugh Hayden's works combine elements of spaces in which Black Americans gather, heal, and memorialize.

by Shameekia Shantel Johnson
August 12, 2021

Hugh Hayden, "Huey" (2021) (all photos by the author for Hyperallergic)

Hugh Hayden's latest exhibition, *Huey*, presents visuals of social assimilation through a kamikaze of cultural references spanning sports, fairy tales, television, and African-American Vernacular English (AAVE), each carefully coded.

Sculptures are adorned with synthetic and organic materials to represent the natural and unnatural camouflage of Black bodies within the mainstream United States. In “Good Hair 1” (2021), cherry red nylon bristles — usually associated with industrial brooms — replace the velvety seating of church pews, drawing a parallel between the invisibility of God and the servitude of Black folk. The beach-blonde kanekalon of “Rapunzel” (2021) replaces the standard hoop net as 68 inches of braided hair pay homage to “baddie culture” — an aesthetic designed by Black and Hispanic women in the ’90s.

An uneasy mixture of joy and trauma, the included works combine elements of spaces in which Black Americans gather, heal, and memorialize. Hoop dreams come to life as rattan and vine are loosely woven together for “Cinderella” (2021) and “Fee-Fi-Fo-Fum” (2021), while “Juneteenth” (2021) evokes a silent presence of lives lost and celebrated.

Hugh Hayden, “Good Hair 1” (2021)

Overall, *Huey* functions as a life-sized triptych, displaying scenes of piety, acceleration, and solace. Viewers become active characters in a loop of praise, play, and death upon entrance and exit. Meditating on the false freedoms and false securities of blaccelerationism, to have a Black American dream is to exist at the crossroads of right and wrong, plight and ascension. Hayden portrays the tensions in conformity and echoes Huey P. Newton’s legacy against the backdrop of last year’s racial reckoning — the artist calls out to us, awaiting a response.

Hugh Hayden, "Rapunzel" (2021)

Hugh Hayden, "Cinderella" (2021)

Hugh Hayden: Huey *continues at Lisson Gallery (504 West 24th Street, Chelsea, Manhattan) through August 13.*

The Guide.Art
15 July 2021

THEGUIDE.ART

HUGH HAYDEN

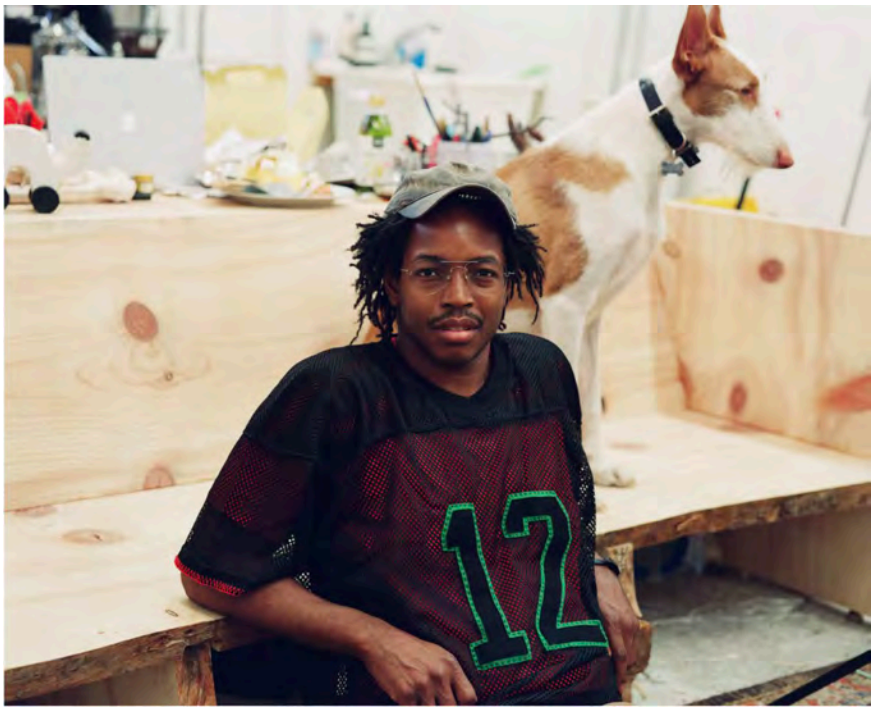
Photography Roeg Cohen

By Emily Bode

At the opening of Hugh Hayden's second solo show at Lisson New York earlier this summer, the artist wore a custom Bode jersey, as did all of his assembled fabricators and friends. It was a hot sticky night, but a good one nonetheless, much like the intimate dinner parties that Hayden used to routinely bake his apartment for—in the name of art and company. For proof, one party-goer tweeted: "Lisson party was great. Hotel terrace, talk and ambition, painters, supermodels, lightning storm, well-staffed bars, mountain of healthy food, no desserts, all paid for. Just the sort of art world I'd like to see return."

Maybe this isn't exactly Hayden's vision of hospitality, but this Gatsby-like persona is one that resonates with Emily Bode, who remembers the beginnings of the artist's exhibition-making in New York and his dinner performances. The two met sometime in college or right after although they can't quite remember when. Both of them, despite their diverging practices—as a fashion designer and trained-architect-turned-fine-artist respectively—share an unabiding passion for looking at the anthropological clues embedded in the objects around us and what they say about us.

Working out of a studio in the Bronx, Hayden is a center of gravity constantly orbited by Mars, his dog, who accompanies him almost everywhere. In "Huey," Hayden's latest exhibition, he had to fight Mars's affection for wood to transform the Chelsea white cube into a chapel replete with ebony carved reliquaries of leisure and labor, rattan basketball net altars, and pre-spiked pews. Bode and Hayden also had to contend with Mars when they sat down the week before the party to discuss the new show, the origins of their friendship, and the joys of Lincoln Logs.



EMILY BODE: This is the second studio [of yours] I've ever been to.

HUGH HAYDEN: Bona fide studio with a lease I guess.

BODE: Right. You first moved up to this neighborhood while at Columbia?

HAYDEN: I moved right after Columbia. It wasn't on my radar to be in the Bronx. I had never really been to the Bronx, but actually, geographically, it was very close to where I was already living in Harlem and relatively affordable. It also made more sense to go to the Bronx than to go to Brooklyn when I'm living in Harlem. Then it was just a virtue of Columbia being already close. I could walk.

Now, I don't need public transit. My needs have changed. I want to be next to the freeway. This studio is fairly close to the freeway. Living off the FDR makes it easy to get downtown.

I think Brooklyn is dead. No offense. I don't know where you all live, but Brooklyn is more than dead [*laughter*]. I used to always live off the L train. But now there's so much happening downtown, it feels like, post-COVID, it became a more centralized meeting place or modern watering hole.

Brooklyn was always so spread out, and with the pandemic, that worked against it in a way, because it wasn't a place to go, versus being in the Lower East Side or Chinatown you'll inevitably run into someone.

BODE: You're in a five-block radius of everybody else. I'm actually not totally sure when we met.

HAYDEN: Maybe 2015? When I had that birthday party with the sunglasses.

BODE: But I had met you before that, where did you live?

Hayden: In the south. It was actually a terrible apartment. It was good, artistically, but a low point of my personal living scenarios. It was a sub-level apartment, technically, it was like half something and it's on the ground, like the first unit.

BODE: I lived in one of those. Everybody has to live in one of those because it feels really cool at the time that you might live on the ground floor in New York. Then after living there, you're like, "Oh, this is why you want to be high up."

HAYDEN: I met you though, when you had the apartment where you had the flag on the fire escape or you had a one-bedroom studio. It's something with a balcony or a roof.

BODE: I had a roof. I think I met you before you started showing. Because I remember you going to Scotland. But not knowing you too well. Do you still have those t-shirts? That's the work that I remember the first work seeing of yours, the t-shirts from the toddler all the way up. I remember the colorful one.

HAYDEN: Oh, yes. The first ones were colorful ones. Well, initially I worked with a range of clothes, but then it became only American Apparel. I called it “Lust for Fashion” like this play on fast fashion. It was layering materials from this company that made every size of American fast clothing from toddler to 3XL on top of each other like a Russian matryoshka doll. They become this lasagna of people's clothes.

BODE: I love that metaphor because when you cut into it, you see it.

HAYDEN: You have this grain that tracks the transformation of someone's body. That's actually what got me into carving wood. It was looking at this transformation of the body but at the scale of a tree and at the scale of the earth.

BODE: Those were cast. They were in plaster or resin or something?

HAYDEN: They were in Aquaresin which I call 21st century plaster. The first one, like the little baby on the inside, would be stuffed with plastic bags, coat it in plaster, let it harden, and take out the bags. Then I would start dressing it in the next size up, pulling them together with more plaster.

BODE: How many layers?

HAYDEN: Sometimes they got too fat.

BODE: Like you couldn't fit the shirt over?

HAYDEN: American Apparel made 16 sizes but they didn't make every single piece of clothing in every size.

BODE: It's interesting because, looking at a company like that, I remember thinking some of these basics like those cotton t-shirts made in America, you're going to have them for the rest of your life. And then ironically the entire company disintegrated.

HAYDEN: I've been wearing American Apparel lately. I still have a lot of those shirts. I mean, they're getting more ratty. But I loved having the range of colors. [*Interrupted by dog*] "Mars put that down". That’s another thing we are doing for the show. we're making mini Lincoln Logs. There's going to be a Lincoln Log ebony cabin. Mars loves the wood.

BODE: Did you play with Lincoln Logs as a kid?

HAYDEN: A little bit, but I remember building with these other things more. They look like a reddish-brown cardboard. They probably weren't as big, but I remember them visually being like this, a foot and half. I also had Legos. My brother is four years older than me and so at some point, it became like a catching up thing where I needed to have what he had, which was video games. It forced me to skip over some parts of my childhood because we were having this quarrel on achievements.

BODE: So the Lincoln Logs have nothing to do with your personal nostalgia for childhood?

HAYDEN: Well, a little bit, but I only played with those at school. We didn't own Lincoln Logs. The main toys for me were dinosaurs and Ninja Turtles. Lincoln Logs were something you have at school, but you never have a full set. There's always missing pieces or someone would knock it over. They're too easy to knock over. Maybe they're more communal but I became an architect to fix those things.

BODE: [*chuckles*] Yes.

HAYDEN: It also wasn't as intuitive how they would go together. Even trying to put this together just to see what pieces I need to make, the way you're supposed to put them together isn't necessarily fun.

BODE: I remember playing with those for hours. We also had little cowboys.

HAYDEN: That came with it?

BODE: I don't actually think that they came with the set, but we stored them together. Are you guys having late nights and things right now?

HAYDEN: I need six hours of sleep to be active.

BODE: You know what I remember about you when I was in college was you did this crazy sleep schedule.

HAYDEN: It wasn't all necessarily intentional, I just had my full-time architecture job.

BODE: No, but I think you were trying this napping thing out.

HAYDEN: Oh, I was doing the Bulletproof method.

BODE: Right. It wasn't napping, it was intermitten fasting. You've always been interested in living as experience or something, right? Especially with your job at Starbucks and the dinners you used to host.

HAYDEN: I like the idea of heightening the experience of something basic and not just forcing it to be simply sustenance.

BODE: When was the last time that you had dinner? Or do you think you'll do those again? Those weren't necessarily an art practice of yours or were they?

HAYDEN: Of course actually they are. But now I call them culinary installations as a way to incorporate them in my practice because I'm more visible.

BODE: It definitely felt you were developing something.

HAYDEN: The last one I did was here for my birthday and that was the first time I did it at the studio. It made sense. I have more space here. But I realized that one I don't actually need to cook anymore. I could get them outsourced. Because at the end of the day I don't want to be running a restaurant, I want to participate in it, and not be like, "Oh, gosh. Is the dish going to be burned or something?"

BODE: The one that I went to at your old live-work studio, you were running around and cooking the entire time and like plating everything. The only other food works that I know of are the cast iron skillets, which I think are the most genius.

HAYDEN: I would say the dinners are still a whole another part of my practice because I only recently started bringing in more sculpture things that are food-related. There have been the skillets, which for me, were this idea of the origins of America through the lens of cooking. Then the tables, but not the tables that were used for the dinners. I started making these tables that were hard to sit at. They have thorns coming out of them.

BODE: I saw those.

HAYDEN: One of them, not the first one, but one of the earlier ones, was based off of my childhood kitchen table, which is just this round oak table that was really popular when I was growing up. Now, that most people think is ugly. There's one of them here. There's a chair for one of them in there. It's like a pressback, oak chair. It just has a very particular design.

BODE: With the bevel?

HAYDEN: Yes, bevel. Essentially, the way they came about, up until the turn of the century, or the Industrial Revolution, the only people that had access to comfortable furniture were the wealthy. Something comfortable and ergonomic had to be hand-carved. When they developed this technique of steaming and bending wood to mold to the body and have a decorative design, they could sell it to the masses for a lot cheaper. So that chair was originally a democratic gesture that was similar to the Ford Mustang. Any person could afford it. So it remained popular through the '90s in America.

BODE: With no true designer or brand behind it?

HAYDEN: They were just generic. They are out of fashion now. You can find them at any second hand shop.

BODE: The skillets themselves, I know that you had told me that they were made using a historic technique.

HAYDEN: Yes. They're sand cast.

BODE: But they're not seasoned, right?

HAYDEN: The ones that are all black are seasoned, but I'm using linseed oil. I'm being gentle on them.

BODE: And that process helps to patina the metal?

HAYDEN: Yes. It's so funny because I haven't been seasoning them well, so I'm not as up on it. But all of the recent ones I've made have been copper plated iron or enamel so basically the iron isn't visible.

BODE: And the designs. Where do those motifs come from? Are they antique masks you've collected?

HAYDEN: Yes, they're mostly West African masks and that has different foundations, for one, the majority of Black people who come to the United States came from West Africa. It's because it's closer. One is the proximity. Also, that's where most of the trees were growing.

BODE: So it wasn't specifically your family origins, it was more of a commentary on Black history in America.

HAYDEN: More like the diaspora. It was one of my responses to this idea that I'm obviously of African descent but I might not know from where or how much, and blah, blah, blah, but it's undeniable. I'm partially Africa. With these I decided I'm just going to claim that wholesale even if I'm just an abstraction of an African. The process of making these skillets was about making a rudimentary copy. In sand casting, it's not like a lost wax cast where you retrieve exact detail. In sand casting, it's pixelating, it's distorting it. Parts of it might crumble. There's this intentional loss of information, which to me reflects this idea of not being an original.

BODE: Are you casting again, the second iteration? Or do you always start back from the very beginning?

HAYDEN: A mix of both, per se. All those ones hanging over there are the originals, but I'm adding to them. I haven't recasted any of the ones I casted, but each time I cast one I never remake the same one. I'm adding the details to it. I've added my mouth, nose, and ears. All of them have different finishes to them as well. They are losing information as they get recast. Some of them have degraded because they got stripped.

Beyond this notion of me being an abstraction of an African, I'm making these copies that are less detailed.I did get this African ancestry DNA test done which is funny because 23andme or Ancestry.com, they give you this big thing where they say you're a percentage of this and this, but this one tells you the percentages of an African tribe you are from your mother and your father side. I am part Fang, who comes from Ghana, which is where the trees come from and also some of the masks that I like come from. So it kind of worked out.

BODE: But that was secondary to your process.

HAYDEN: Yes, I'm just aesthetically attracted to them and it turned out that I have some connection. Maybe it's my DNA

BODE: You hear about kids who have been adopted and who love a specific cuisine or curry. Then, they find out later that their grandparents were from this region of the world or something.

HAYDEN: It's believable. Even things I didn't like as a child but I've started to let in.

BODE: I feel most connected to you in looking at the private space and all these artifacts from the home. Things like the kitchen table that you grew up with. Also, your use of historical techniques. You actually care about the preservation of basket weaving. You're taking apart this chair to relearn how to do it. Your investment in materiality and its history

HAYDEN: Yes, the physical and cultural properties of the material. That's a big thing for me especially with some of the woods that I cut down on the U.S.-Mexico border. You wouldn't know they're from the border looking at them or that they're persecuted, like one of the woods is Mesquite which is native to the Southwest, all over Texas and Arizona, and California, and Nevada. A lot of people hate it because they consider it invasive because they do well in scenarios where other trees can't.

BODE: It doesn't need water.

HAYDEN: Or it will take the water that is there. Agricultural people, like ranchers or farmers, don't want it and so they kill it. They'll do all sorts of things to get rid of it, spray it, burn it. It was interesting that this wood has this unwanted and invasive connotation and how that can be synonymous with a group of people.

Although you don't look at this wood and you see that it's unwanted. Part of why it's available is because people don't want it. They want you to cut it down and get rid of it or it is really big in barbecue.

BODE: Then you have this whole other practice with another type of wood that's completely illegal.

HAYDEN: It's not illegal, it is endangered.

BODE: You love ebony, the only wood that sinks, right?

HAYDEN: It definitely sinks. There's a little bunch of things about it that make it special. But it's amazing what you can do with wood in general. It's just about understanding the properties.

For example, OSB is as notorious as the shittiest wood. It is a plywood that's made up of lots of pieces of different mulch. I thought of it as the wood that's the most reflective of us. It's all these different trees mashed together to make this thing that's global. It's in everything. It's in cars. It's in houses. It's in furniture. I like the idea of sanding it until it looks like marble. You can take something that you think is the shittiest thing, use it correctly and with the right detail you make it something totally transformed. That's probably the same at Bode.

BODE: Yes, so that's much of what we do too. We take things like tablecloths or things that otherwise discarded because of cigarette holes or staining, and make it into something that you'll cherish again —like your work.

Pubished: July 15, 2021

"Huey" is on view at Lisson Gallery, 504 West 24th Street, through August 13, 2021.

Emily Bode is an award winning fashion designer and business owner living in New York City. Bode's flagship store is located at 58 Hester Street, New York.

The New York Times

5 Art Gallery Shows to See Right Now

Julie Mehretu's prints; Lee Lozano's drawings; paintings by the Florida Highwaymen; sculptures by Hugh Hayden; and a survey of protest art.

Hugh Hayden

Through Aug. 13. Lisson Gallery, 504 West 24th Street, Manhattan; (212) 505 6431. lissongallery.com

A sinister streak runs through the work of Hugh Hayden. His precise, cleanly executed sculptures, evincing his training as an architect, are saturated with pointed critiques of prevailing American institutions. In "Huey," his third solo exhibition with Lisson Gallery, Hayden shows the outsized impact of two such institutions — organized religion and athletics — on Black identity and masculinity. Sparsely arranged across three rooms, the sculptures — all from 2021 — use a minimal but careful selection of materials to reinterpret familiar objects in a Gothic sensibility.

The final space features seven sculptures, carved from Texan and Gabon ebonies. Though the slanted, skewed iterations of doors and chairs draw apt comparisons to the art of Robert Gober, they veer sharply from this legacy in their centering Black visual culture, as indicated by their surface color and the references in their titles —a small black gavel, titled "Uncle Phil," nods to James Avery's character on "The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air." With this attention to detail, Hayden cinches his spot as a noteworthy figure in the lineage of American conceptualism.

In the first gallery, visitors confront an installation of found church pews, refurbished and covered in red nylon bristles; mounted along the right wall are three hairbrushes made from white oak and boar hair, each bearing sharp, steel daggers as handles. These works, part of the series "Good Hair," refer to Hayden's experience growing up in the Christian church, with its strict regulations on outward appearance. In the adjoining room, Hayden continues this theme of discipline and ritual with a set of wall-mounted basketball nets fashioned from Gatorade-dyed rattan ("Fruity") and other organic fibers.

Hugh Hayden's "Rapunzel" (2021), painted fiberboard, synthetic hair extensions and metal rim. Hugh Hayden and Lisson Gallery; Mark Waldhauser

LISSON GALLERY

Artnet News
15 July 2021

artnet news

The Art Detective pro

The Lockdown Made Collectors Even Hungrier for Paintings of the Human Form. Is Figuration Fatigue Coming Next?

After a year of looking at art on cell-phone screens, advisors and dealers are hoping collectors will broaden their interests.

Katya Kazakina, July 15, 2021

Reflecting on the contemporary art market's voracious appetite for portraiture today, an art dealer recently told me over coffee: Imagine all these collectors waking up one morning, looking around their homes, and asking themselves, "Who are all these people?"

It was a joke, of course. But it got me thinking: Is there figuration fatigue on the horizon?

There's a glut of figurative art out there: on social media, in galleries, auction salesrooms, and museums. Building up prior to the pandemic, the desire for figurative paintings, and portraiture in particular, has only accelerated over the past 16 months. Recently, Asian collectors have been driving up prices for works by Dana Schutz and Amy Sherald, Amoako Boafo and Emily Mae-Smith.

Amoako Boafo, *Baba Diop* (2019). Image courtesy Christie's.

Human figures appeared in all but three of the top 30 contemporary and ultra-contemporary artworks sold at auction in the first half of 2021, according to Artnet Analytics (two of the three exceptions depict plants and trees).

“It’s hard to get away from portraiture,” said Miami-based collector Mera Rubell, whose family museum will display new figurative works by three artists in December. “It remains powerful. Every generation has its own version.”

Artists have been depicting the human figure for millennia, starting with cave paintings. But the current obsession has been fueled by a number of factors. Key among them: As museums and private collectors alike work to fill gaps in their holdings by women and artists of color, and particularly Black artists, whose work has been undervalued for decades, portraiture has emerged as an important genre.

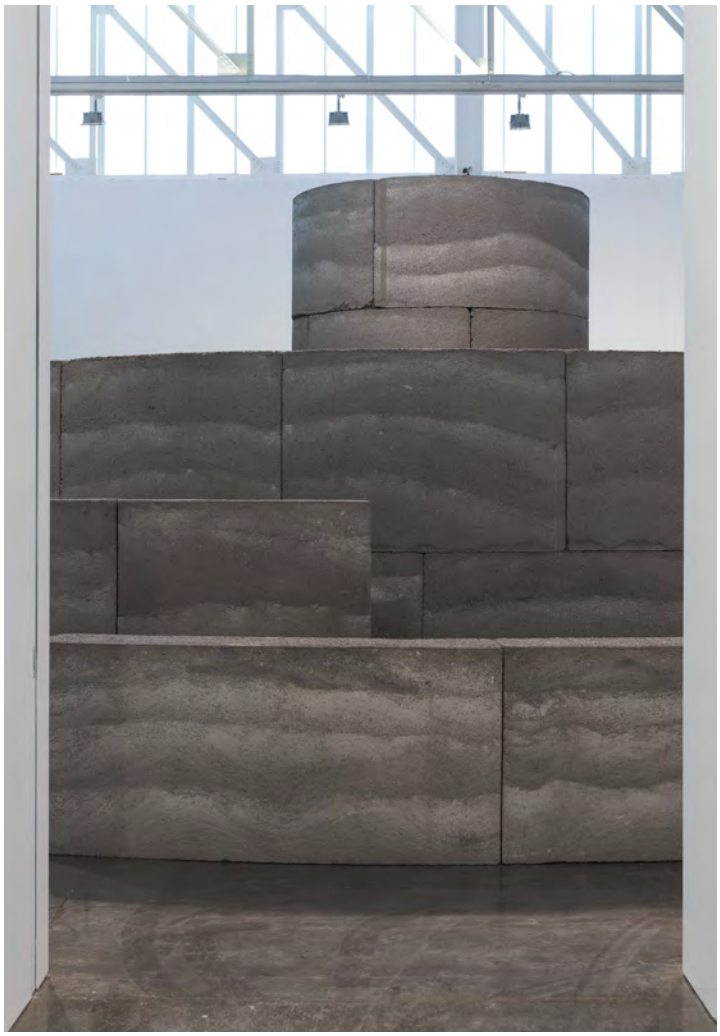
Some, however, wonder if the single-minded focus of profit-motivated collectors may keep them from engaging with the true breadth of cultural production. “People want to check these boxes and say they participate in the moment,” said art consultant Rachael Barrett. “They want something recognizable, something people can easily spot on a wall. I think there’s going to be fatigue of that. I do hope that the range of artistic practice of the artists of color becomes more appreciated.”

Installation view, “Hugh Hayden: Huey” © Hugh Hayden. Courtesy Lisson Gallery.

There are signs this is already starting to happen. At Lisson gallery in Chelsea, Hugh Hayden has created three chapel-like spaces filled with meticulously sculpted, sawed, and woven objects such as reclaimed church pews, basketball hoops, and school desks.

Nearby, Gagosian mounted “Social Works,” an exhibition that focuses on community engagement in Black art practice, with monumental sculpture, video installations, and even a functional farm. Theaster Gates contributed a display of 5,000 records amassed by DJ Frankie Knuckles, who was influential in Black queer circles in the 1980s. House music fills the gallery and a DJ on site is busy digitizing the archive for the duration of the show.

Works of this scale and complexity would be hard to appreciate, or even grasp, on Instagram, the social media platform that contributed to the saturation of figurative art during the pandemic. Portraits are much easier to digest and acquire because people know what they were looking at.



Social Works, installation view, 2021. Artworks © artists. Photo: Rob McKeever. Courtesy Gagosian.

“Even sculptures, in lockdown, it’s hard for people to take this leap of faith and buy something digitally,” said art advisor Ed Tang. “Unless you are standing in front of it, looking at it from various angles, it’s difficult to commit to it.”

In a moment of social isolation, figurative imagery was comforting. “There was a desire to see ourselves in some way or another, to see the context around the human figure, socially, historically, or just on a physical level,” said gallery owner Franklin Parrasch. “The drive for figuration is part of the replacement of the socialization process.”

As physical interactions with art resume at museums, art fairs, and biennials, audiences may swing toward something more challenging.

“The way people are looking at art will change,” Tang said. “Can you imagine going to Venice and seeing figurative painting in every pavilion?”

While it’s hard to say what the next big trend will be, the pendulum seems to regularly swing between abstraction and figuration. And while some artists make work that responds to prevailing ideas and taste, many do what they do independently of them. Sometimes, it takes decades to understand the significance of a particular work or artist. A recent rehang of New York’s Museum of Modern Art radically paired Faith Ringgold’s 1967 *American People Series #20: Die* with Pablo Picasso’s *Les Demoiselles d’Avignon*.

“We didn’t have the same versatility of context in the ‘60s when this work was being made,” said art advisor Allan Schwartzman. “Figuration was seen as dated.”

Installation view, “A Thought Sublime.” Courtesy of Marianne Boesky Gallery.

While pure abstraction remains somewhat out of fashion these days, the landscape, which hasn’t been a hot genre in decades, is making an appearance in several shows, including “A Thought Sublime” at Marianne Boesky and “Ridiculous Sublime,” organized by advisor Lisa Schiff.

“It’s something of a relief from all this figuration,” said art advisor Wendy Cromwell. “It may be a bridge back to abstraction for some artists and collectors.”

Some artists are fusing the figure and the landscape. Matthew Marks gallery sold out its current show by 31-year-old Julien Nguyen, who makes haunting portraits and jewel-like allegorical scenes inspired by the Bible, Renaissance painting, and anime. (The waiting list for his work is growing.) Prices ranged from $30,000 to $50,000.

A block north, at Cheim and Read gallery, the late Matthew Wong’s ink drawings depict his signature lone figures in exquisitely rendered mystical spaces. Several sold, with prices ranging from $275,000 to $450,000.

Many see figuration fatigue as linked to the pure volume of material, some of which is bound to be of lower quality. “Bad figurative painting is everywhere,” critic Dean Kissick wrote last year in an essay on a wave of painting he called Zombie Figuration. “It crawls into every room, from museums to galleries, to cool young project spaces, to the world at large.”

Others simply long for a more sophisticated and critical level of discourse than a social media post that says: “Hey I just got this artwork. I bought it online. What do you think?”

“And there are 400 likes or kisses,” Parrasch said. “It’s never anything deep enough to create an argument. What we have is clicks and underdeveloped thoughts.”

But weaning off the figure will not happen overnight, said Ron Segev, the co-founder of Thierry Goldberg gallery on the Lower East Side.

“Collectors who are coming to me want figurative work,” he said. “I can’t convince people to buy abstract paintings right now. But you can see that there are some artists out there who are working against the trend. One of these artists will start a new one.”

*Wallpaper**
28 March 2020

Wallpaper*

ART | BY DIANE THEUNISSEN

Hugh Hayden's multimedia exhibition serves food for thought

A virtual tour of the Texan artist's latest exhibition at Lisson Gallery, which ties together African histories and the American South

Hugh Hayden, *Honorary Natives and the elephant in the middle of the room*, 2020, chestnut with steel hardware. © Hugh Hayden; courtesy Lisson Gallery

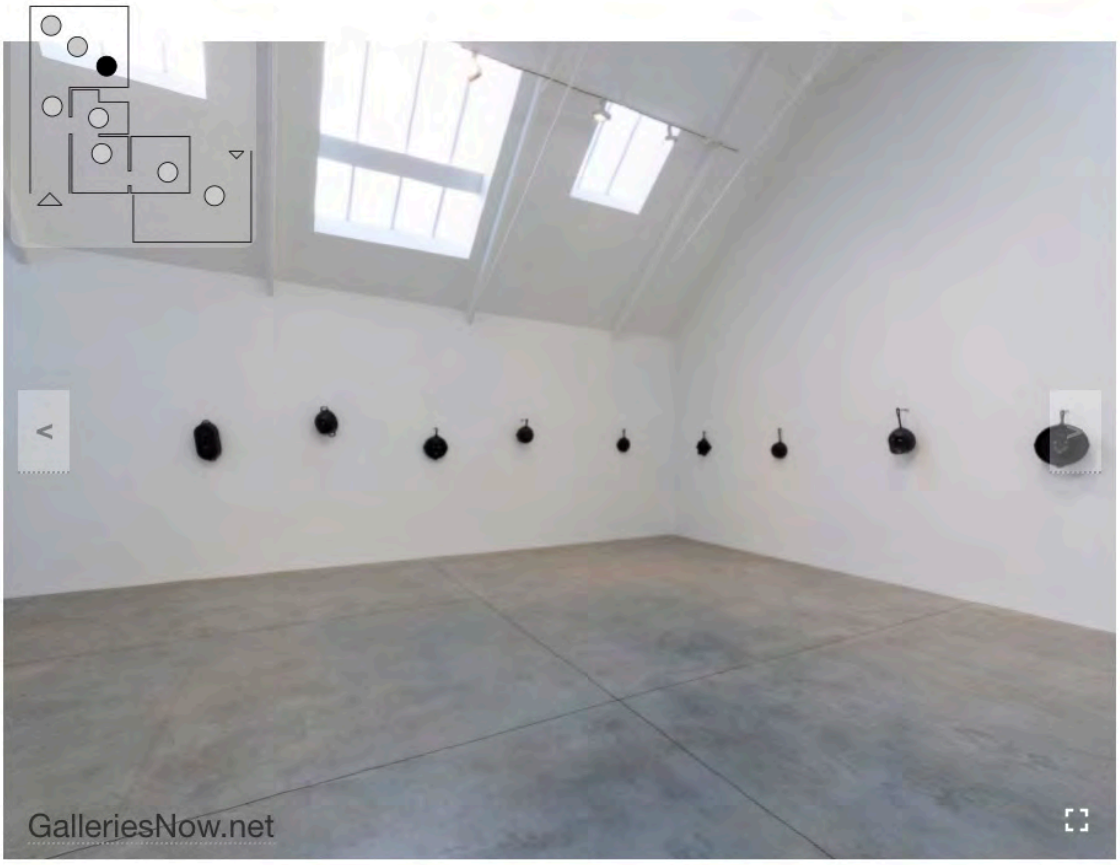
Hugh Hayden has a lot to offer the new decade. A few weeks after the opening of his solo exhibition 'Creation Myths' in New Jersey, the Texas-born and New York-based artist has unveiled another new show, capturing the symbolism of cooking and communal eating in America.

Held in London's Lisson Gallery, 'American Food' comprises a range of culinary-themed installations, which invite visitors to 'develop a consciousness of their environment' while challenging their perceptions of contemporary society.

Hugh Hayden, *The Cosby's*, 2020. cast iron 3 skillets. © *Hugh Hayden; courtesy Lisson Gallery*

These themes are laid out in the first installation, a multimedia 'stove' with speakers in place of hobs, playing a recording of Hayden cooking and eating bacon, a fundamental ingredient of Southern food. The soundtrack offers both an intimate culinary moment with the artist, and an evocative backdrop to Hayden's exploration of Southern culture and its spread across America.

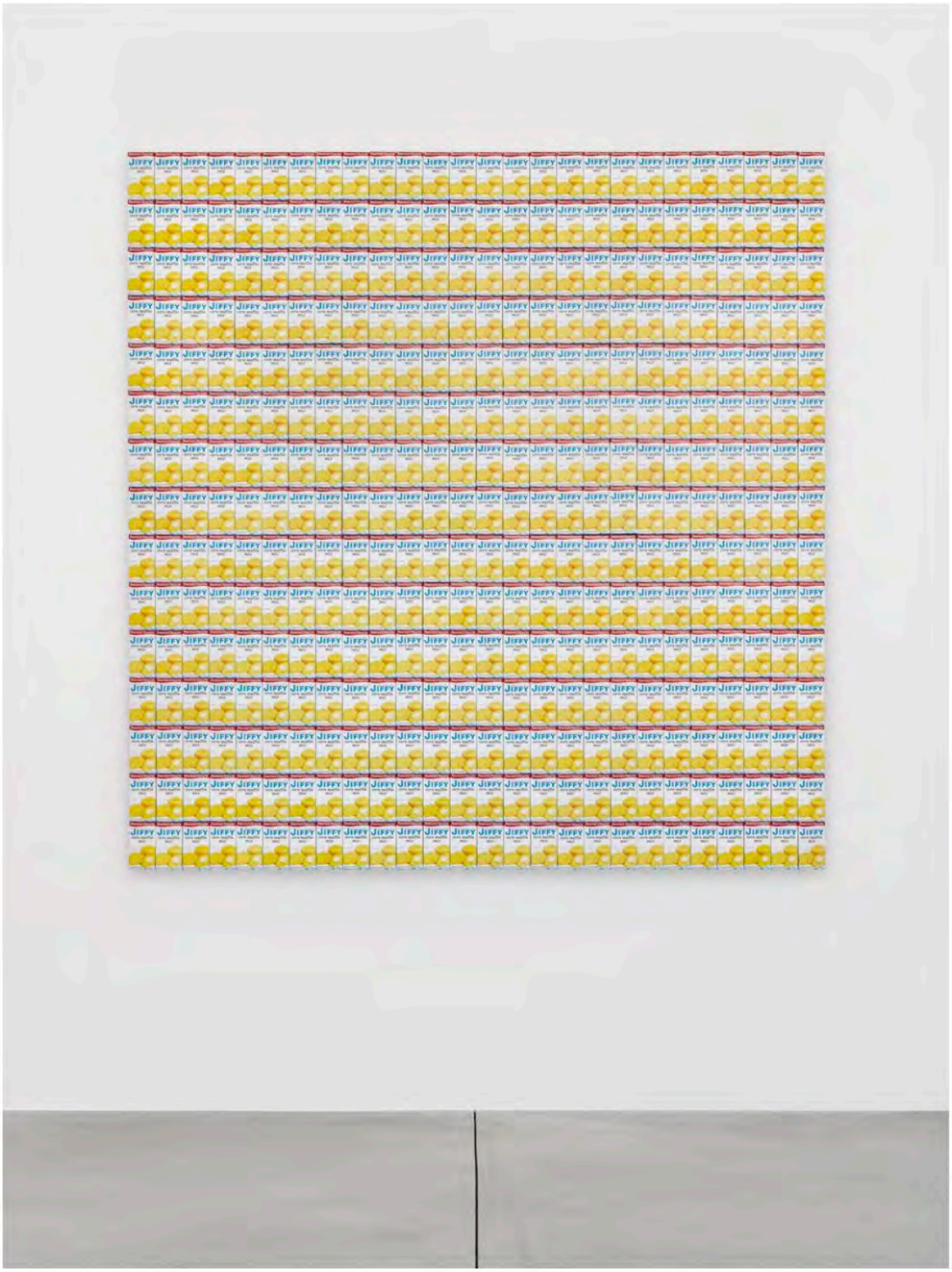
Explore Hugh Hayden's exhibition in 360°



Courtesy of GalleriesNow

The next space is lined with a series of 'skillets', West African-style masks cast in frying pans, an intelligent commentary on African input in the development of Southern cuisine. This work also alludes to the paradoxical combination of old and new: each mask assumes a new character that the artist has created and abstracted through old sand-casting techniques.

The exhibition continues with two mosaic-like wall installations using Jiffy corn muffin mix packaging. Jiffy is one of America's most popular brands of readymade cornbread, a food closely identified with Southern cuisine. 'I always thought most cornbreads that I had, growing up in Dallas, were fairly dry and just not my thing' he admits. He's since set out to reinvent the dish: following 'internet sleuthing and weekly recipe trials', he arrived at a cornbread pudding recipe for Wallpaper's Artist's Palate series, which can now be found on the back page of our April issue (W*253, available as a free download here).



Hugh Hayden, *The ease of forgetting*, 2020, Cardboard boxes, wooden panels. *© Hugh Hayden; courtesy Lisson Gallery*

In his Lisson show, Hayden also presents a new series of three picnic tables – similar to those seen outside pubs in the UK – enhanced by jutting branches and spikes that are at once threatening and playful. The tables are intricately carved from Hornbeam and Chestnut. The artist has kept each branch largely as it would have grown. These striking installations use wood as a metaphor for identity and boundaries and bring the artist's architectural background and deep interest in history to the fore. ✱

Hugh Hayden, *Jazz 10*, 2020, cast iron. *© Hugh Hayden; courtesy Lisson Gallery*

INFORMATION
'American Food', opened at Lisson Gallery, London on 12 March. It is temporarily closed to the public.
lissongallery.com

Mousse Magazine
Winter 2020

MOUSSE

Meet Hugh: Hugh Hayden

Adam Carr

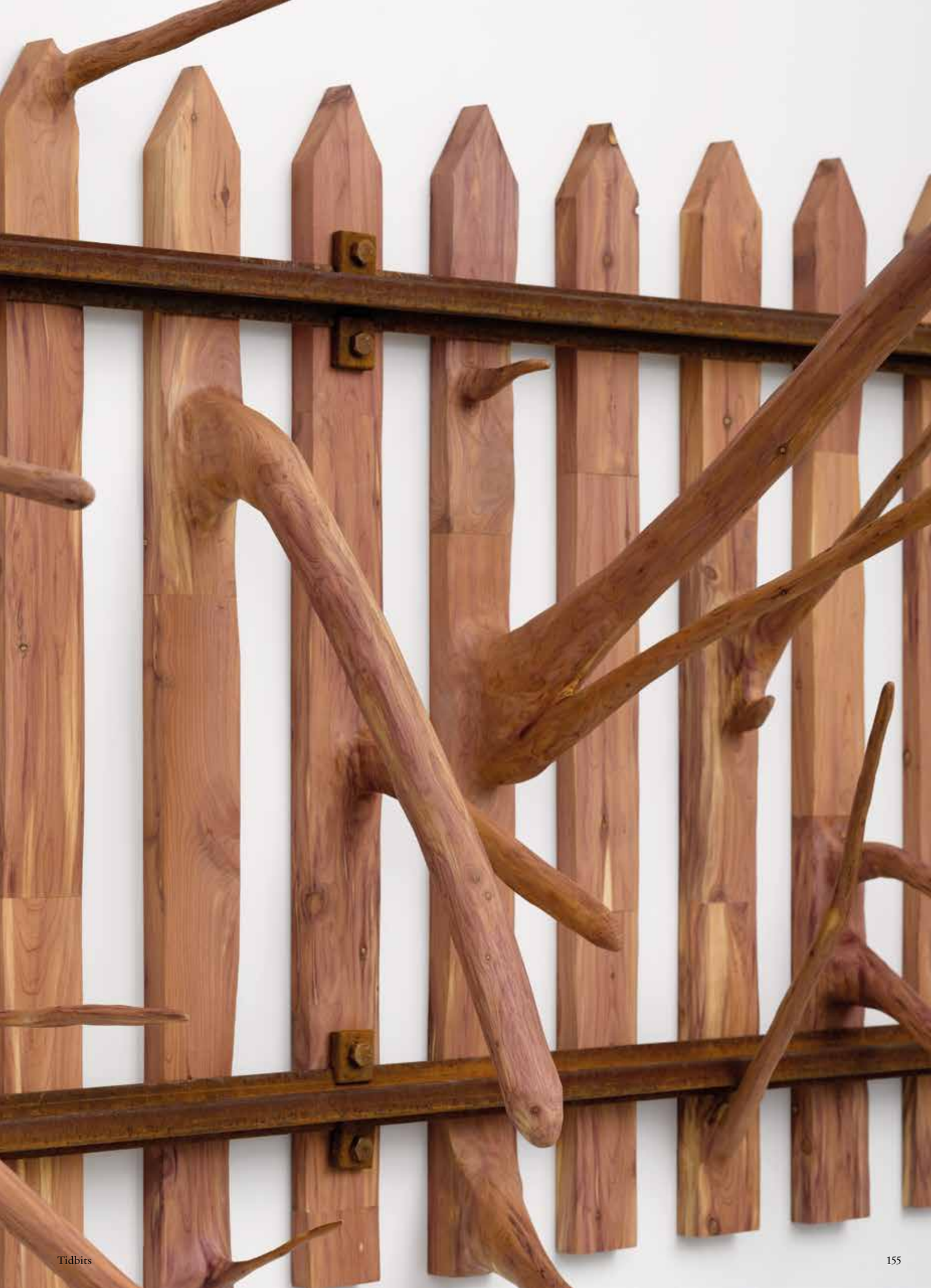
Hugh Hayden deploys natural materials such as feathers and wood in sculptures that seemingly camouflage themselves. Often they appear to be something that they are in fact not, and in this subtle yet profound way they grapple with issues of race, class, and identity. And there is a clear link between the work Hayden makes and his own personality. When you meet the artist, his charisma is immediately striking, perhaps partly thanks to his Texas accent. He has a knack for linking people together effortlessly, to make any social situation feel easy.

Consider for example Hayden's pieces from earlier in the decade that seem to conceal yet assimilate to various contexts and situations, positioning these aspects in a larger conversation linked to the human condition. *Zelig* (2013) might be quickly dismissed as a couple of logs, one stacked on the other—perhaps intended as an act of displacement, an invocation of the natural world and our ability to reflect upon it in the apparently safe confines of the gallery space. Yet closer inspection unearths a whole other web of interpretive possibilities: the "bark" is composed of grouse feathers that surreally mimic the surface of a log. Likewise disguised is *Armor* (2014), in which bark from a cherry tree is applied to a Burberry coat, a brand synonymous with British heritage and outdoor lifestyles as well as class aspirations. Hayden invokes these by no means accidentally; they are amplified further in other pieces such as the film *Hugh the Hunter* (2015). Here, Hayden assumes the role of a hunter stalking the woodlands and hills of Cairnie, Scotland, wearing a classic hunter's tweed jacket and breeches—yet the story is a cautionary tale of the hunter becoming the hunted. All of these works bring together quite disparate social realities, distilled through the lens of the artist's biography and lived experience—connecting for instance Dallas, Texas, where he was born and raised, and the remote highlands of Scotland, where he was residing during much of the works' making.

Wood has become more and more central for artist. While one could think of its use in relation to, say, Giuseppe Penone's sculpting of wood to reveal trees within trees, or Oscar Tuazon's taking of the material to its breaking point, and of course Land art and its many proponents, Hayden's use attests much more to social concerns. *America* (2018), *The Jones Part 3* (2018), and *Oreo* (2018) adopt types of trees indigenous to the Mexico–U.S. border, not far from his hometown of Dallas. Each was handpicked by the artist for its particular characteristics—for instance its grain or odd growth patterns. Rigorously sculpted through hand carving and sanding, in the artist's hands the wood morphs into corrupted and subverted signifiers of the American dream. In *Oreo* a child's crib appears to turn in on itself with menacing thorns, denying any implication of safety and care and instead delighting in their opposites—imprisonment and torture. *America* is modeled on the artist's childhood kitchen table, yet it is hardly a place for conversation, for family gathering and bonding; its spikes and thorns make it instead a site for risk, for grave danger to oneself and the family unit.

That Hayden's work suggests a position of extremity, his layering of contexts, social circles, and diverging identities is reflexive and often poetic. For instance the three 2018 works discussed just previously are made from mesquite trees, which are native to his childhood home but also invoke a region with a fraught political context in the present. Mesquite trees have long been associated with trash, additionally respected for their capacity to grow in harsh, seemingly unfavorable terrain. Such a condition suggests a profound analogy not only to this particular constellation of works but to Hayden's entire working practice, which is a testament to the perseverance of disparaged people inhabiting a land that is likewise becoming ever more adverse and unpropitious.


Burberrys



onEarth
August 2019

An Artist Who Finds Uncommon Meaning in Common Trees

Hugh Hayden's exquisite wooden sculptures and installations comment on race, immigration, and the American environment.

August 21, 2019 | Patrick Rogers

Hedges, 2019 © Hugh Hayden

All photos courtesy of Lisson Gallery

"I'm really into trees," says the sculptor Hugh Hayden. "I'm drawn to plants."

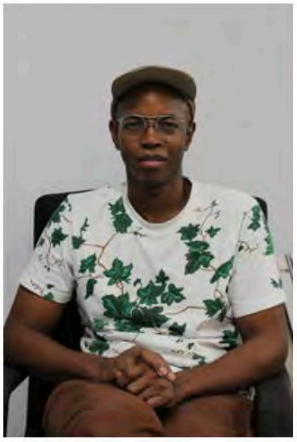
Nature and plants have always been a source of fascination for the artist, who grew up near a protected greenway on the outskirts of Dallas. "My family was always outdoors, not in the sense of camping, but of gardening," he recalls fondly. "When I was in high school, I was the youngest person in the North Texas Water Garden Society—I was, like, 15, and most of the people were over 55."

Now working out of a studio in the Bronx, Hayden uses elements of nature to powerful effect in sculptures that have grabbed the attention of curators in the United States and Europe. And he recently won a major commission at New York City's newest cultural outpost, The Shed. Housed in a large exhibition space, Hayden's *Hedges* installation presents an architecturally accurate facade of a single classic American suburban home that, thanks to mirrors mounted on opposing gallery walls, is amplified into infinity to form the illusion of an entire street.

Hedges, 2019 © Hugh Hayden

Those illusory houses and their imaginary middle-class occupants, however, are not alone. Sprouting from holes in the walls is a thicket of bare tree branches that appear to colonize the living space. When seen in the mirrors, they form what looks like the world's longest hedgerow.

There's an obvious tension in *Hedges* between human civilization and untamable wilderness. But Hayden, whose art tends to challenge perceptions of social order and the environment, is also interested in how people use nature as a form of camouflage to mask their differences in order to become part of their communities. "It's the idea of home ownership and being part of the American dream, of having a little house with its own yard—of blending into a landscape that is also a social landscape," he says.



© Hugh Hayden

Hayden mostly uses salvaged wood that he manipulates through carving and juxtaposition. The branches used in *Hedges* came from a display of Christmas trees that once stood in the median strip of Park Avenue in Manhattan—one of the nation's most pedigreed addresses, he notes—which lends his work an aspirational quality. And due to the mirrors placed around them, viewers cannot avoid encountering their own reflections. The artist says, "They're seeing themselves reproduced in something that is a fantasy. They see how they fit into that American dream."

America, 2018 © Hugh Hayden

Hayden, who trained as an architect at Cornell and quit his day job designing in the hospitality industry last year to pursue art full time, has been finding great meaning in the trees that he uses as raw material for his sculptures. In 2018 he traveled to the U.S.–Mexico border and gathered branches of mesquite, a tree that many Texans regard as an undesirable invasive species. "Mesquite trees thrive where other trees can't, on limited resources like water. Given the issue on the border around immigration, I thought of the material as politically charged." Hayden used the thick branches in a sculpture titled *America*, which takes the form of a kitchen table and chairs, a classic symbol of welcoming and comfort, but with sharp protuberances that discourage gathering.

On the same Texas trip, the artist paired up with a crew of nursery scouts who buy slow-growing desert palmettos from landowners in the region and then resell them for a profit to wealthy urbanites in Houston. Together they located stands of so-called Texas ebony trees, which have a narrow range of growth in the southern part of the

state and in northeastern Mexico. Hayden used the dark brown and blackish wood of the trees' interior in a pair of meticulously rendered sculptures that comment self-reflectively on the experience of young African-American men.

"To me, that species was like my own identity as a tree," he says. One piece, *Crown of Thorns,* which was exhibited at Art Basel in Miami Beach last year, was in the shape of a football helmet, with a knot of thorns inside that render it impossible to wear. The other, *Oreo,* shown at New York's Lisson Gallery, represented a baby's crib also studded with sharp thorns. "I was interested in positioning the imposed expectations of a black man in Texas. I hated playing football, for example, but it was the expectation that I play." As for the crib, its construction brings to mind the neoclassical architecture of a typical Texas courthouse, where, because of systemic injustices, an African-American man is likely to turn up during the course of his youth.

Oreo, 2018 © Hugh Hayden

"I think people could interpret my work as an ad for a group like Greenpeace," Hayden says when asked if he considers himself a part of the environmental movement. "Of course, I am *for* the environment. But I would say my use of natural material is more an extension of my personal interests," he explains. "I like plants, and I like the idea that I can use something as ubiquitous as trees to change the way that people think."

Hedges *is on view at The Shed in New York City until August 25.*

Crown of Thorns, 2018 © Hugh Hayden

The Brooklyn Rail
01 November 2018

THE BROOKLYN RAIL

Hugh Hayden: *Border States*

by Eliza Barry

LISSON GALLERY | SEPTEMBER 15 - OCTOBER 27, 2018

Hugh Hayden, *The Jones Part 3*, 2018. Sculpted eastern red cedar (Juniperus virginiana) with steel, 78 1/2 × 180 × 26 3/4 inches. © Hugh Hayden. Courtesy Lisson Gallery.

Hugh Hayden's *Border States* brings America's domestic architecture to life in a series of seven painstakingly carved and pointedly macabre wooden sculptures. Prosaic objects—a front door, three iterations of a picket fence, a kitchen table, a stroller, and a crib—are transformed into wily subjects. The sculptures, which are made from trees harvested by the Texas-born artist along the border between his home state and Mexico, beg for both reflection on, and revision of, the latent narratives that rest within the familiar, quotidian forms. These synecdoches for a vision of the American dream are reframed and mutated into thorny renditions, menacing barriers.

One can surmise that *The Jones Part 3* (2018), a wall-mounted segment of a picket fence sprouting phallic protrusions, is titled at least partially in reference to the quintessentially American idiom "Keeping up with the Joneses." The saying, which has roots dating back to a popular comic strip that originated in 1913, hits upon the deep-seated cultural tendency to compare oneself perpetually to those around you, particularly in relation to socio-economic status and the accumulation of material

goods. To a comedic yet poignant effect, the phalluses (flaccid, erect, and everywhere in between) appear as though they are in competition, clamoring.

Hayden riffs on variations of these protrusions, which lend the work its anthropomorphic quality, as the personalities of the objects expand beyond their forms. Just as in *The Wizard of Oz*'s forest of fighting trees or a Brother's Grimm fairy tale, some sculptures feel as though they might just reach out and snatch you. There is an overarching sense of danger. (At the show's crowded opening, an incidental layer of irony was added by a suited guard who stood before one of the picket fences, appearing as though he was policing the barrier. In reality, he was there to prevent preoccupied onlookers from being pierced by an especially sharp outgrowth.)

The works also play upon and obscure the chasm between mass production and artisanal craft. *America* (2018) presents a table surrounded by four chairs, which Hayden modeled after his own childhood kitchen table. This symbol of household discourse and model of family values remains functional yet treacherous as large thorn-like formations cover the wood's wavy surface. In contrast to the menacing nature of the sculptures is the attraction that lies in the craft of these objects, the ogle-worthy, carved detail.

Hugh Hayden, *Cable News*, 2018. Sculpted post cedar (Juniperus ashei) with mirror and hardware, 101 × 31 1/2 × 19 1/2 inches. © Hugh Hayden. Courtesy Lisson Gallery.

Cable News (2018), a built-to-scale representation of the stereotypical suburban front door, sits mounted on the wall at the gallery's entrance. While *America* brings bespoke furniture to mind, *Cable News*'s form plays on a Home Depot aesthetic. Still, the surface reveals the artist's hand as the extensions again jut out from the undulating cedar plane. The door's function as a threshold is revoked. There is no knob, and where the panes would normally support glass windows are tinted mirrors that reiterate the boundary. This sculpture contains the only overtly readymade elements in the show: the mirror and a brassy mail slot, which pop from the untreated wood. Fasteners, and presumably some glue, are the only other materials in the show that are not natural, crafted, or sourced by Hayden. The gallery smells of freshly cut wood, and the surfaces, which are left without paint or lacquer, lend a sense that the natural forms underwent an autopoiesis, a self-creation of sorts.

Hugh Hayden, *America*, 2018. Sculpted mesquite (Prosopis glandulosa) on plywood, 43 1/4 × 81 × 81 inches. © Hugh Hayden. Courtesy Lisson Gallery.

These sculptures, which tap into the subconscious and reveal the ids of everyday objects, make the mind run into nightmarish corners. Perhaps most culpable would be *Oreo* (2018), a child's crib made from Texas ebony, which sits on its own in a back room. The Robert Gober-esque architectural structure is lined with thousands of thorns (think *vagina dentata*) that resolve in sharp white tips. *Oreo* lends itself to a more overt commentary on race, assimilation, and admission—lines which are deftly threaded throughout the show.

Border States brings Robert Frost's classic parable-like poem *Mending Wall* (1914) to mind. In the poem, the speaker and his neighbor meet one day each spring to walk the length of the wall that divides their properties and fill any breaches along the way: *And on a day we meet to walk the line / And set the wall between us once again. / We keep the wall between us as we go.* The speaker reflects on this ritual and eventually questions its purpose. My apple trees will never get across / And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him. But the neighbor replies, "Good fences make good neighbors." *Why* do good fences make good neighbors? The speaker wants to know. The neighbor only repeats himself. *Good fences make good neighbors.* Hayden's sculptures beg the question in reply: what more is a fence or a wall than a physical manifestation of fear?

Bomb Magazine
16 October 2018

BOMB

One Piece: *America* by Hugh Hayden

The artist talks about an uninhabitable American Dream.

Oct 16, 2018

Essay
Art

SHARE

Hugh Hayden, *America*, 2018. Sculpted mesquite (Prosopis glandulosa) on plywood. Overall dimensions: 109.8 x 205.7 x 205.7 cm. Overall dimensions: 43 1/8 x 80 7/8 x 80 7/8 inches; table: 90.2 x 101.6 x 101.6 cm 35 1/2 x 40 x 40 inches; chairs: 109.9 x 53.3 x 44.4 cm 43 1/4 x 21 x 17 1/2 inches. © Hugh Hayden; Courtesy Lisson Gallery.

America is modeled after my childhood kitchen table set. The chair's aesthetic motif is based on a "pressed back" design that was developed in the late 1800s during a time of great industrialization. This type of chair was made by pressing a metal engraving into chair backs, which resulted in the appearance of a more expensive hand carving and in doing so became a democratic gesture at allowing the average consumer access to furniture that was not just utilitarian but also decorative. This design remained popular in American households up until the 1980s and 1990s.

For me the kitchen table functions as a symbol of the American Dream—the nuclear family sharing a meal together at a round table where everyone has equal access. Only with *America* this dining set is uninhabitable. Off-limits. The dream is now unattainable for a multitude of social and economic reasons.

The piece is fabricated from mesquite branches collected along the U.S./Mexico border at a ranch in Laredo, TX. At the state level mesquite is considered a "trash tree" and is often derided for its resilience and ability to thrive and proliferate in adverse conditions ... a perseverance-like quality I consider admirable, and a likeness to many disparaged groups and peoples in their relationship with America.

Hugh Hayden: Border States *is on view at Lisson Gallery in New York City until October 27.*

Hugh Hayden was born in Dallas, Texas, in 1983, and lives and works in New York City. He holds an MFA from Columbia University and a Bachelor of Architecture from Cornell University. His work was the subject of a solo exhibition at White Columns in New York in 2018. His work has been included in numerous group exhibitions including JTT, New York (2018); Clearing, New York (2018); Tanya Bonakdar Gallery (2018); PPOW Gallery, New York (2017); Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York (2017); Postmasters Gallery, New York (2016); MoMA PS1, Rockaway Beach, New York (2014); Socrates Sculpture Park, New York (2014); and Abrons Art Center, New York (2013), among others. He is the recipient of residences at Glenfiddich in Dufftown, Scotland (2014); Abrons Art Center and Socrates Sculpture Park (both 2012); and Lower Manhattan Cultural Council (2011).

LISSON GALLERY

Artspace
18 October 2018

Artspace

8 Artists to Watch in October 2018

By Artspace Editors

OCT. 18, 2018

HUGH HAYDEN

Lisson Gallery, New York

September 15 - October 27

Image via Lisson Gallery.

Straight out of graduate school at Columbia, the Texas-born artist Hugh Hayden hit the ground running. This month, both Clearing gallery in Brussels and Lisson Gallery in New York announced they'd be representing him. Last spring he had a solo exhibition at White Columns. And while still in school, he participated in group shows at Tanya Bonakdar, Marinaro, JTT, Clearing, Gavin Brown's Enterprise, PPOW, and Postmasters among many others. Despite being in the very beginning of his career, Hayden already has a signature style, and it's on full blast at his current exhibition at Lisson Gallery in New York, on view until October 27.

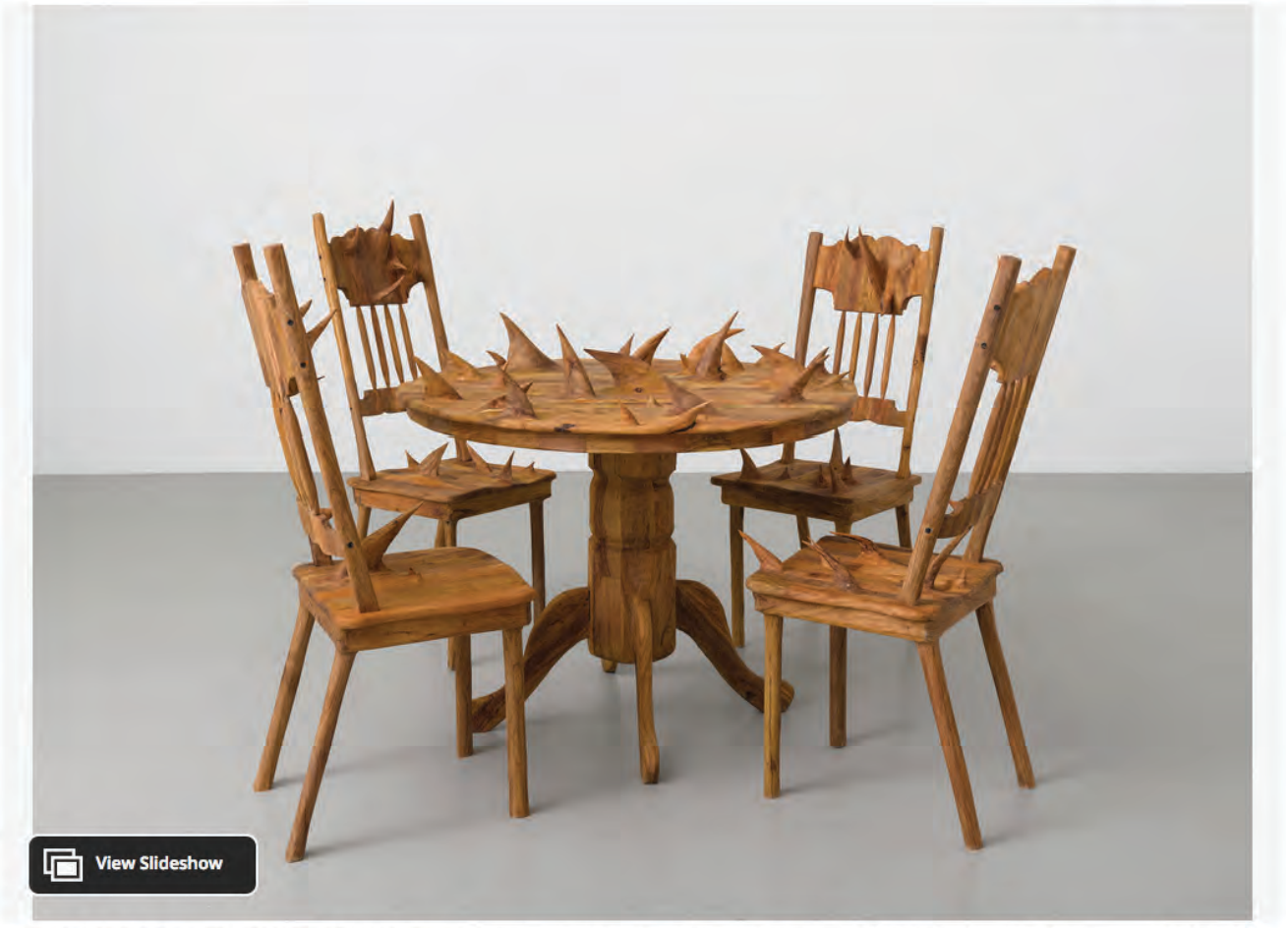
The artist takes found wood—in this exhibition's case, wood indigenous to the U.S./Mexico border—and cuts it up and sands it down to sculpt "composite forms which address themes of assimilation and acceptance, and metaphorically disrupt traditional American social context." Branches are filed into spears, left attached to trunks that have lost their "natural" appearance and have become, instead, material. Hayden connects notions of land (and the trees that grow on it) with ideas of family values and home ownership—signified by the objects trees are used to make: "a shared dinner table, the white picket fence, a baby crib and stroller. These personal components embodied the great idea that dreams are attainable by all people through hard work and determination and that upward mobility can be visible through a series of material objects." The broken promise of the American Dream has been splintered into a collection of relics.

Blouinartinfo
02 October 2018

BLOUINARTINFO

Hugh Hayden's "Border States" at Lisson Gallery, New York

BY BLOUIN ARTINFO | OCTOBER 02, 2018



"America," 2018, by Hugh Hayden (1983, Dallas), Sculpted mesquite (Prosopisglandulosa) on plywood, Overall dimensions: 109.8 x 205.7 x 205.7 cm, Overall dimensions: 43 1/4 x 81 x 81 in, Table: 90.2 x 101.6 x 101.6 cm; 35 1/2 x 40 x 40 in, Chairs: 109.9 x 53.3 x 44.4 cm; 43 1/4 x 21 x 17 1/2 in each, © Hugh Hayden, Lisson Gallery (Courtesy: Lisson Gallery)

Lisson Gallery is holding an exhibition of new works by Texas-born, New York-based artist Hugh Hayden at its New York venue.

VENUES
Lisson Gallery

Lisson Gallery is hosting Hugh Hayden's "Border States" that explores notions of citizenship, manifest destiny, and the contested boundaries between people and nations. The exhibition is on view through October 27.

According to the gallery, Hugh Hayden's work investigates natural and artificial means of identification. From early works featuring hair, feathers, tree bark, and clothing to recent sculptures created from salvaged Christmas trees, Hayden begins with objects which inherently carry significant associations with social categorization: race, religion, ethnicity, education, sexuality and the like.

The artist by the use of rigorous process of sawing, sanding and sculpting combines disparate types of wood to create new composite forms which address themes of assimilation and acceptance, and metaphorically disrupt traditional American social context.

"He has collected different varieties of wood from his home state of Texas; including Eastern Red Cedar, a wood with a pinkish interior also called 'Aromatic Cedar' for its fragrance; Ashe or 'Blueberry' cedar, found in the area's Hill Country; 'Texas Ebony' identified by its dark color and found in the region that lies at the Texas and Mexico border, and Mesquite, which is known for its weed-like ability to spread quickly and the invasive nature in which it requires a great deal of water from an already arid climate. This lumber, gathered in highly politicized areas, has been combined to create forms that typify the idealistic US notions of family values and home ownership — a shared dinner table, the white picket fence, a baby crib and stroller," the gallery writes.

Hugh Hayden was born in Dallas, Texas in 1983 and lives and works in New York City. He holds an MFA from Columbia University and a Bachelor of Architecture from Cornell University.

His work was the subject of a solo exhibition at White Columns in New York in 2018. His work has been included in numerous group exhibitions including JTT, New York (2018); Clearing, New York (2018); Tanya Bonakdar Gallery (2018); PPOW Gallery, New York (2017); Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York (2017); Postmasters Gallery, New York (2016); MoMA PS1, Rockaway Beach, New York (2014); Socrates Sculpture Park, New York (2014); and Abrons Art Center, New York (2013), among others. He is the recipient of residences at Glenfiddich in Dufftown, Scotland (2014); Abrons Art Center and Socrates Sculpture Park (both 2012), and Lower Manhattan Cultural Council (2011).

"Border States" is on view through October 27, 2018 at Lisson Gallery, 138 Tenth Avenue, New York, USA.

Artnews
26 September 2018

ARTNEWS

MARKET — NEWS

Lisson Gallery Adds Hugh Hayden to Roster

BY *Andrew Russeth* POSTED 09/26/18 3:10 PM

Installation view of "Hugh Hayden: Border States" at Lisson.
COURTESY LISSON

Hugh Hayden, who's made a name for himself with psychologically charged sculptures of carved and found wood, which are both ingeniously elegant and often more than a bit dangerous-looking, is now represented by Lisson Gallery, the international outfit with two galleries each in New York and London.

Earlier this year, Hayden, who was born in Dallas and who lives and works in New York, inaugurated the new location of White Columns in the Meatpacking District of Manhattan with a show that included a showstopper of an installation with spindly branches of wood sprouting from carved school desks.

A couple weeks ago, Hayden opened a solo show at Lisson's 10th Avenue Space in the West Chelsea area of New York called "Border States," which continues in that creepy but alluring mode, with various types of branches exploding off of from fences or, in one case, growing through a stroller. It's on view through October 27.

Nodding to artists as disparate as Louise Bourgeois, Mona Hatoum, Yayoi Kusama, and Robert Gober, Hayden's pieces allude to, and plumb, issues surrounding race and politics in various ways. Works in the Lisson show, for instance, were made with wood species found along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Thirty-five years old this year, Hayden just graduated from Columbia's M.F.A. program and this summer pulled an art hat trick—a rarity in the industry—by appearing simultaneously in three summer group shows at New York galleries: "Keep Me Warm" at Clearing in Brooklyn, "Pine Barrens" at Tanya Bonakdar Gallery in Chelsea, and "Beside Myself" at JTT on the Lower East Side.

Before that, he had a solo show in 2017 at the Amon Carter Museum in Fort Worth, Texas, and had been included in exhibitions at Postmasters Gallery, Marinaro, P.P.O.W., Socrates Sculpture Park, and Wave Hill in New York, as well as Pilot Projects in Philadelphia.

Get on over to Chelsea to see the show!

Artdaily
25 September 2018

artdaily.org

Exhibition features sculpture created from wood indigenous to the United States and Mexico border

Hugh Hayden, Untitled (French gothic picket), 2018. Sculpted post cedar (Juniperus ashei) on plywood, 172.7 x 248.9 x 149.9 cm, 68 x 98 x 59 in © Hugh Hayden; Courtesy Lisson Gallery.

NEW YORK, NY.- Lisson Gallery is presenting an exhibition of new works by Texas-born, New York-based artist Hugh Hayden. This marks the artist's first exhibition with the gallery and features sculpture created from wood indigenous to the United States and Mexico border.

Hugh Hayden's work investigates natural and artificial means of identification. From early works featuring hair, feathers, tree bark and clothing to recent sculptures created from salvaged Christmas trees, Hayden begins with objects which inherently carry significant associations with societal categorization: race, religion, ethnicity, education, sexuality and the like. Using a rigorous process of sawing, sanding and sculpting, he combines disparate types of wood to create new composite forms which address themes of assimilation and acceptance, and metaphorically disrupt traditional American social context.

In the exhibition at Lisson Gallery, Hayden explores notions of citizenship, manifest destiny and the contested boundaries between people and nations. He has collected different varieties of wood from his home state of Texas; including Eastern Red Cedar, a wood with a pinkish interior also called 'Aromatic Cedar' for its fragrance; Ashe or 'Blueberry' cedar, found in the area's Hill Country; 'Texas Ebony', identified by its dark color and found in the region that lies at the Texas and Mexico border; and Mesquite, which is known for its weed-like ability to spread quickly and the invasive nature in which it requires a great deal of water from an already arid climate. This lumber, gathered in highly politicized areas, has been combined to create forms that typify the idealistic US notions of family values and home ownership — a shared dinner table, the white picket fence, a baby crib and stroller. These personal components embodied the greater idea that dreams are attainable by all people through hard work and determination and that upward mobility can be visible through a series of material objects.

However, the exhibition arises at a time when America's characteristic optimism is at a low ebb and when the widely-held ideals of the country as a land of opportunity, hope and familial togetherness, are similarly in crisis. In the current geopolitical climate, the works begin to take on a new, twisted relevance. The fence which is traditionally a status of having achieved a middle-class suburban life, is now a wall, erected to exclude. The table, the crib and stroller which once embodied the community and safe routines of an everyday life now sit empty — relics of the American dream.

Hugh Hayden's practice considers the anthropomorphization of the natural world as a visceral lens for exploring the human condition. Hayden transforms familiar objects through a process of selection, carving and juxtaposition to challenge our perceptions of ourselves, others and the environment. Raised in Texas and trained as an architect, his work arises from a deep connection to nature and its organic materials. Hayden utilizes wood as his primary medium, frequently loaded with multi-layered histories in their origin, including objects as varied as discarded trunks, rare indigenous timbers, Christmas trees or souvenir African sculptures. From these he saws, sculpts and sands the wood, often combining disparate species, creating new composite forms that also reflect their complex cultural backgrounds. Crafting metaphors for human existence and past experience, Hayden's work questions the stasis of social dynamics and asks the viewer to examine their place within an ever-shifting ecosystem.

Hugh Hayden was born in Dallas, Texas in 1983 and lives and works in New York City. He holds an MFA from Columbia University and a Bachelor of Architecture from Cornell University. His work was the subject of a solo exhibition at White Columns in New York in 2018. His work has been included in numerous group exhibitions including JTT, New York (2018); Clearing, New York (2018); Tanya Bonakdar Gallery (2018); PPOW Gallery, New York (2017); Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York (2017); Postmasters Gallery, New York (2016); MoMA PS1, Rockaway Beach, New York (2014); Socrates Sculpture Park, New York (2014); and Abrons Art Center, New York (2013), among others. He is the recipient of residences at Glenfiddich in Dufftown, Scotland (2014); Abrons Art Center and Socrates Sculpture Park (both 2012), and Lower Manhattan Cultural Council (2011).