

Press Release

Henry Taylor

Hauser & Wirth Somerset
26 February – 6 June 2021

Launches online from Friday 26 February 2021

Open to the public from Tuesday 13 April 2021



Henry Taylor culls his cultural landscape at a vigorous pace, creating a language entirely his own from archival and immediate imagery, disparate material and memory. Through a process he describes as ‘hunting and gathering,’ Taylor transports us into imagined realities that interrogate the breadth of the human condition, social movements and political structures.

For his inaugural exhibition with Hauser & Wirth, the American artist has taken over all five galleries in Somerset to present a major body of sculptural work and paintings, evolving in unison across the spaces. Throughout his four-decade long career, Taylor has consistently and simultaneously both embraced and rejected the tenets of traditional painting as well as any formal label. He has amassed a staggering body of highly personal work rooted in the people and communities closest to him, often manifested alongside poignant historical or pop-cultural references. In preparation for the exhibition, Taylor extended and unraveled his studio practice within the galleries at Hauser & Wirth Los Angeles, followed by an artist residency at Hauser & Wirth Somerset this winter - energetically building, stacking and affixing a vast array of collected objects together to create a holistic record of his everyday routine and the materials that define them. With a guiding sense of human connection, Taylor layers reoccurring visual cues associated with his own personal experiences and broader cultural references that lead us through a multifaceted narrative in sculpture and painting.

Although his subjects are wildly diverse - family members, peers and acquaintances - Taylor’s ability to seek out the truest sense of a person and their sociocultural framework is evident throughout. This sharp focus has shifted inwards during the UK’s national lockdown with two new self-portraits. The first, a head and shoulder profile, depicts a regal-looking Taylor as Henry V and is a play on the artist’s childhood nickname of Henry VIII,

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since he is the youngest of eight children. The second is a full body image of Taylor in Somerset adorning pinstripe pyjamas and flanked by sheep, placing him firmly in his new rural environment.

Taylor's lean towards standalone sculpture over the past decade has allowed him to reconfigure commonplace objects into stories of his own lived history. Throughout the first two galleries we journey through new installations made over the past six months, including a series of tabletop sculptures that relate directly to the landscape of a city, urban planning and an altered perspective looking down into housing projects. Repetitive objects connected to voyage, sense of place and locality evolve from the first to the last gallery, alongside materials synonymous with Taylor such as heavily painted black milk bottles, a wall sculpture made of toilet paper rolls and a return to horses as a symbol of freedom and power, or alternatively of power restrained and fenced in. Taylor's heightened awareness of art historical predecessors is continually prevalent throughout, ranging from references to Philip Guston, Bob Thompson, Yayoi Kusama, Louise Nevelson and Cy Twombly.

A series of miniature box paintings in the Pigsty gallery act as a conduit between Taylor's painting and sculpture, serving as a continuous thread in his studio practice. This will be the first time these works have been presented on a scale of this size in Europe. The earliest, made in the 1990s while Taylor was still a student, are painted on cigarette, cracker, and cereal boxes, surfaces that were on hand at the time. Acting as fleeting thoughts and records, the miniature works span intimate domestic scenes to prison visits and playful reinterpretations of the boxes' original logos. Tactile, expeditious, and recognizable, Taylor repurposes the box both as substrate and subject.



Several miniatures exist more fully in the realm of sculpture, with painting extending across multiple sides, whilst others act as a starting point for the manifestation of large-scale works. Such is the case for Taylor's first outdoor bronze sculpture placed within Oudolf Field, relating to a conversation he had with his older brother Randy in the 1980s. Randy was a founding member of the Black Panther Party's Ventura County, California chapter and was faced with an explicit bumper sticker using a racial slur. The story of this encounter stayed with Taylor and was realised in both a miniature work in the Pigsty gallery and the more recent outdoor bronze.

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About the artist

Henry Taylor lives and works in Los Angeles, CA. Taylor's work is currently featured in US group exhibitions 'i'm yours: Encounters with Art in Our Times', at the Institute of Contemporary Art Boston, Boston MA and 'Grief and Grievance: Art and Mourning in America' at New Museum, New York NY. The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles CA is preparing a major survey exhibition of his work for 2022.

Taylor has been the subject of numerous exhibitions in the United States and internationally, and his work is in prominent public collections including the Bourse de Commerce – Pinault Collection, Paris, France, The Bronx Museum of the Arts, Bronx NY, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh PA, The Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris, France, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles CA, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston MA, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles CA, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York NY, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles CA, Museum of Fine Art, Houston TX, Museum of Modern Art, New York NY, Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, Durham NC, Pérez Art Museum, Miami FL, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco CA, The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York NY, and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York NY.

In 2018, Taylor was the recipient of The Robert De Niro, Sr. Prize in 2018 for his outstanding achievements in painting. Taylor's work was presented at the Whitney Biennial at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York NY in 2017 and the 58th Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy in 2019.

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Hauser & Wirth Somerset

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The gallery is currently closed, please
visit the website for reopening details
following the UK national lockdown

www.hauserwirth.com
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Henry Taylor
2020
Photo: Fredrik Nilsen

Henry Taylor
Untitled
2021
Acrylic on linen
Photo: Ken Adlard

Henry Taylor
Y'ALL STARTED THIS SHIT ANYWAY
2021
Mixed media
189.3 c 150 x 51 cm / 74 1/2 x 59 x 20 1/8 in
Photo: Ken Adlard

Henry Taylor
Untitled
2020
Bronze
294.6 x 207 x 101.6 cm / 116 x 81 1/2 x 40 in
Photo: Ken Adlard