

Press Release

Hugh Hayden *Huey*

June 30 – August 13, 2021
504 West 24th Street, New York

Lisson Gallery is pleased to present a new body of work by Hugh Hayden that examines the American experience via agency, appearance, athletics and religion. In his second New York exhibition with the gallery, Hayden interweaves symbols of the institutions that play key roles in an American upbringing with equally ever-present fairy tales to produce a new series of sculptures in wicker, vine, and ebony.

Hugh Hayden has previously examined the concept of the American Dream as well as the role historical foodways and dining traditions have played in shaping American identity. For *Huey*, the Texas-born artist chronicles and remixes his upbringing in the American South. Church, sport, school and hair are highlighted as Hayden probes the ingrained nature of cultural expectations. The exhibition is split into a trinity of rooms: a barber shop cum sanctuary, a basketball chapel and an ebony crypt, all of which harbor Hayden's meticulously sculpted, sawed, sanded and woven objects.

The sanctuary features "Good Hair," a new body of bristled wooden works that explore expectations of appearance and refinement in obligatory adolescent participation in athletics, education and religion. For Hayden the bristles render a subject simultaneously desirable yet uncomfortable, creating order via an abrasive action that, like the American Dream, is challenging and difficult to inhabit.

In the second chapel-like space hang woven basketball hoops out of hair, rattan and vine. The works are a childhood reimagination of the iconic peacock chairs the artist grew up with as well as an homage to the 1967 portrait of Black Panthers co-founder Huey P. Newton seated in one. The braided and woven works conflate tedious domestic handwork with hypermasculine athletics to materialize a queerness at odds with the fairy tale-like aspirations and reservations of becoming a professional athlete.

The final room of the exhibition is a meditation on agency, blackness and invisibility. Works sculpted from Gabon and Texas ebonies are presented in a daylight-lit, all-black room shifting in and out of visibility. Sculptures that reference the body, both moving fast as well as relaxing, offer an opportunity to reflect on the many hues of blackness.

Other upcoming projects for Hayden include a solo exhibition, *Boogey Men*, at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, opening on November 30, 2021. A major project commissioned by Madison Square Park Conservancy, New York will open in January 2022. Hayden has conceived a group exhibition with Public Art Fund that will open in May 2022. Titled *Black Atlantic*, it will feature new commissions by six artists, including Hayden.

About the artist

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. He has had solo exhibitions at The Princeton University Art Museum in New Jersey in 2020 and at White Columns in New York in 2018. His work has been included in numerous group exhibitions including Sculpture Center, New York, NY, USA (2021); Hayward Gallery, London, UK (2020); The Shed, New York, NY, USA (2019); Pilot Projects, Philadelphia, PA, USA (2018); Sundance Film Festival, Park City, UT, USA (2015); MoMA PS1, Rockaway Beach, New York, NY, USA (2014); Socrates Sculpture Park, New York, NY, USA (2014); and Abrons Art Center, New York, NY, USA (2013), among others. He is the recipient of residencies at Glenfiddich in Dufftown, Scotland (2014); Abrons Art Center and Socrates Sculpture Park (both 2012), and Lower Manhattan Cultural Council (2011).

About Lisson Gallery

Lisson Gallery is one of the most influential and longest-running international contemporary art galleries in the world. Today the gallery supports and promotes the work of more than 60 international artists across two spaces in London, two in New York, one in Shanghai, as well as temporary spaces opened in 2020 in East Hampton and London's Mayfair district. Established in 1967 by Nicholas Logsdail, Lisson Gallery pioneered the early careers of important Minimal and Conceptual artists, such as Art & Language, Carl Andre, Daniel Buren, Donald Judd, John Latham, Sol LeWitt, Richard Long and Robert Ryman among many others. It still works with many of these artists as well as others of that generation from Carmen Herrera to the renowned estates of Leon Polk Smith, Ted Stamm and Roy Colmer. In its second decade the gallery introduced significant British sculptors to the public for the first time, including Tony Cragg, Richard Deacon, Anish Kapoor, Shirazeh Houshiary and Julian Opie. Since 2000, the gallery has gone on to represent many more leading international artists such as Marina Abramović, Ai Weiwei, John Akomfrah, Susan Hiller, Tatsuo Miyajima and Sean Scully. It is also responsible for raising the international profile of a younger generation of artists led by Cory Arcangel, Nathalie Djurberg & Hans Berg, Ryan Gander, Haroon Mirza, Laure Prouvost, Pedro Reyes and Wael Shawky.

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