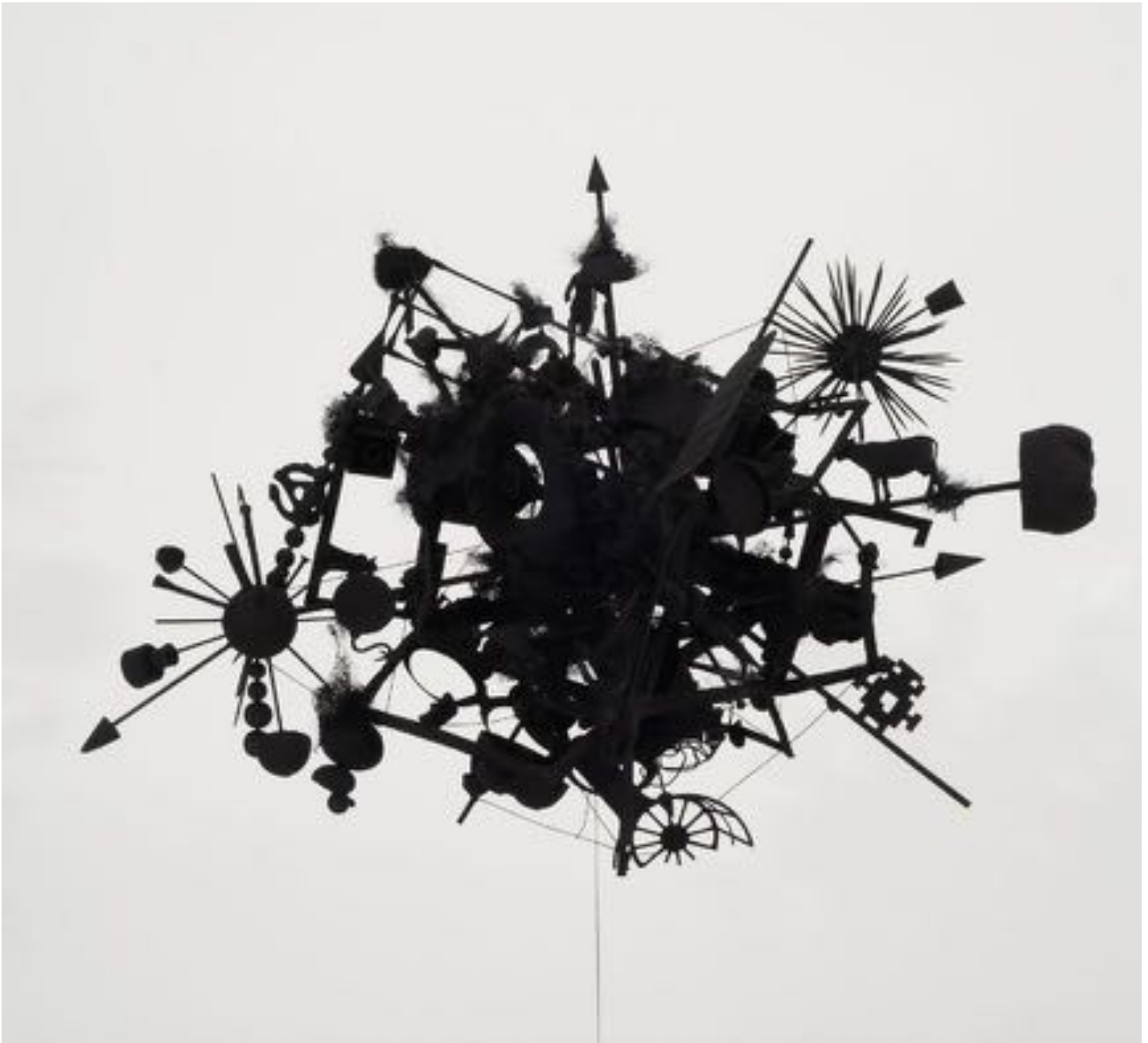


TOM FRIEDMAN

Tom Friedman: In Focus

November 16 – December 16, 2023

New York



Tom Friedman, *Black Constellation*, 2023 (detail)

Lehmann Maupin is pleased to announce *Tom Friedman: In Focus*, an exhibition of new and recent work by American sculptor Tom Friedman. Featuring both sculpture and work on paper, this presentation explores the role of scale in Friedman's practice, which he has utilized as a tool throughout his career to disrupt viewers' expectations and provoke deeper inquiry. *Tom Friedman: In Focus* also recognizes Lehmann Maupin's recently expanded representation of the artist, which now includes the Americas. In fall 2025, Friedman will have a major solo exhibition spanning the gallery's New York location.

Friedman is best known for his alchemic sculptural practice that transforms ordinary materials, such as styrofoam, oven roasting pans, plaster, and household items into meticulously constructed art objects. Over the course of his decades-long career, Friedman has pushed the limits of scale to extremes; the artist has both carved his self-portrait into a single aspirin and built gigantic human figures out of tinfoil and aluminum pans, casting them in stainless steel to immortalize the ephemeral material while retaining its signature aesthetic qualities. While Friedman's work is marked by an astounding level of craftsmanship, his subjects are also highly conceptual. The artist is fond of visual puns and riddles, and many of Friedman's sculptures assume their own circular logic—for example, the minute precision and prolonged focus required to carve one's face into a 3mm painkiller is also likely to give one a headache.

When creating figurative sculpture, Friedman often resists a one-to-one ratio, opting instead for the slightly larger or smaller—or the vastly larger or smaller. Recent editions of the artist's shrugging figures stand just under five feet tall, while one edition from his notable *Looking Up* series towers over the viewer at a staggering 50 feet. When Friedman does produce

work in a true-to-life ratio, his sculptures are often incarnations of everyday objects imbued with trompe l'oeil effects. An acoustic guitar, a video camera, or a baseball bat may appear unassumingly placed in a gallery space, but closer inspection reveals them to be imposters, constructed completely out of paint and styrofoam.

Each work in *Tom Friedman: In Focus* subverts expectations of scale in its own way. At only three inches high, Friedman's *Hey* (2023) draws viewers in to examine the genial figure's open-armed gesture, which simultaneously suggests both a warm welcome and an expression of puzzled inquiry. Crafted from a single piece of closed-cell styrofoam, *Hey* exudes both a featherlight quality and a familiar tactility. Friedman used an arduous, subtractive method to create this work, painstakingly removing individual balls of styrofoam cell by cell as the figure took shape. Recalling the more traditional technique of chiseling sculptural forms from a marble block, here Friedman draws the human form from more humble materials.

Standing eight feet tall, *Scribble Being* (2023) offers a delightful contrast to *Hey's* minimal, diminutive nature. Fundamentally additive, the piece is constructed from hundreds of pieces of paper cut out from essays, articles, magazines, and other texts featuring Friedman's work, including this press release. Collaging these onto a slim MDF panel, Friedman creates an oversized figure that functions as a conceptual portrait of his practice, or even himself, through descriptions, critiques, and reproductions of his entire oeuvre to date. In the exhibition, *Scribble Being* retroactively considers Friedman's storied artistic career while simultaneously gazing out at a gallery full of new work, as if pondering where the artist will go next—and what the viewer might find there.

Tom Friedman (b. 1965, Saint Louis, MO; lives and works in Leverett, MA) is a conceptual artist known for his meticulously fabricated work, including sculpture, painting, drawing, video, and installation. Friedman investigates the concepts of perception, logic, and plausibility with a strong attention to detail. Since the early 1990s, Friedman has utilized an array of sophisticated processes to achieve a seemingly mass-produced appearance. His highly conceptual work engages both maximalist and minimalist aesthetics, as well as recalling those of Pop Art, and his practice is deeply engaged with the history of sculpture.

Friedman draws from personal experiences to recreate prosaic moments from everyday life. His work tends toward the darkly humorous, and his often sarcastic use of materials has distinguished his practice over the last 30 years. Made from a wide variety of unconventional materials, such as Styrofoam, foil, plastic, wire, paper, clay, and hair, Friedman's work often surprises the viewer. As Friedman explains, "Art, for me, is a context to slow the viewer's experience from their everyday life in order to think about things they haven't thought about, or to think in a new way."

Throughout his career, Friedman has developed an important body of outdoor and public sculptures. Most of these are cast from maquettes rendered out of aluminum roasting pans, further cementing the artist's alchemic ability to transform the everyday. In his celebrated large-scale sculpture *Looking Up* (2015), a figure looks to the sky, inviting viewers to stand at its

base and do the same. *Looking Up* was installed at the entrance of Rockefeller Center's Channel Gardens in January 2021, and has previously been exhibited at Park Avenue, New York; South Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, Illinois; and the Contemporary Austin, Texas, among others.

Tom Friedman received a BFA in graphic illustration from Washington University in St. Louis in 1988 and an MFA in sculpture from the University of Illinois at Chicago in 1990. Solo exhibitions of his work have been organized at Gagosian Gallery (2006 and 2008); Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Chicago, IL (2000); Saint Louis Art Museum, St. Louis, MO (1997); and the Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY (1995). Friedman's work has also been included in major group exhibitions including *Shapes of Space*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY (2007); *Recent Acquisitions: Contemporary Sculpture*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY (2004); SITE Santa Fe, Santa Fe, NM (2004); *Self-Portraits from the Permanent Collection*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY (2000); *New Work: Drawing Today*, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA (1997); and the São Paulo Biennial, São Paulo, Brazil (1996).

Friedman has received numerous awards, including an Academy Award in Art from the American Academy of Arts and Letters (1993), the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Award (1993), and a grant from the Joan Mitchell Foundation (2001). He was also a finalist for the Hugo Boss Prize in 2000.



**LEHMANN MAUPIN**

Rachel Lehmann and David Maupin co-founded Lehmann Maupin in 1996 in New York. Since Inception, Lehmann Maupin has served as a leading contemporary art gallery with locations in the U.S., Europe, and Asia. For over 25 years, Lehmann Maupin has been instrumental in introducing international artists in new geographies and building long-lasting curatorial relationships. Known for championing diverse voices, the gallery's program proudly features artists whose work challenges notions of identity, and shapes international culture. Today, the gallery has locations in New York, Hong Kong, Seoul and London, as well as a team in mainland China. In the past year with growing opportunities in new markets, the gallery has opened seasonal spaces in Aspen, Palm Beach, Taipei, and Beijing.

NEW YORK

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