

LISSON GALLERY

Press Release

Hugh Hayden
Hughman

November 18, 2023 – January 2024
1037 N. Sycamore Avenue, Los Angeles

Opening: November 17, 6 – 8pm

For his first solo exhibition in Los Angeles, Hugh Hayden presents a new series of work in an ambitious, site-specific installation that explores the prosthetics of power. Known for his examination of the American experience and symbolic investigation of everyday life using organic material, Hayden engages with recurring themes in his practice and provides deeper inquiry into topics of revelation, intimacy, desire, and sexuality.

Upon entering the gallery, the visitor is confronted with a large, open space lined along the perimeter with generic metal bathroom stalls which appear, at first glance, devoid of artwork. However, it is only upon opening each stall that one encounters the contents of the exhibition. The vulnerable act of opening a public restroom door is repurposed here as an entry point, an invitation to explore. Hayden probes this notion of privacy and expectations throughout the exhibition, including urinals with atypical positioning that suggest the users participate in an usually intimate arrangement. Other stalls feature toilets with protruding branches, pointed pencil shapes or bristled-covered seats—each echoing a familiar theme in the artist’s work. Something which is meant to be familiar or ordinary is now desecrated and impossible to navigate, a layered metaphor for the discomfort and inaccessibility that permeates our present-day society in the pursuit of the ideals of the American Dream.

A section of stalls addresses the pervasion of violence in the police force in the United States and the ongoing issues around brutality and safety. These works are created in bronze, resin and silicone, three new mediums for the artist. They are shaped into pistol figures, and in one case, a nod to the cowboy Western ideal of the gun holster, reimagined as a strap-on pistol—a reference to complicated notions of violence and sexual desire.

Also included is a wooden skeleton work building on the artist’s *Eden* series of interlocking rib cages. The skeleton, a recurring motif in the work, evokes themes such as race and identity. It serves as a nondescriptive visual symbol, meant to embody any ethnicity, age or gender. The work in this exhibition is composed of two red flocked skeletons in a red flocked closet.

Hayden’s Los Angeles debut coincides with a number of public and institutional exhibitions throughout the U.S. A new public installation, ‘Huff and a Puff’ premieres at deCordova Sculpture Park Museum in Lincoln, MA this month, and his major work, ‘Brier Patch’ continues its nationwide tour to Sundance Plaza in downtown Fort Worth, Texas, after debuting at Madison Square Park Conservancy in New York, NY, and exhibiting at the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh, NC, and Dumbarton Oaks Gardens in Washington, DC. In 2024, his much anticipated 10-year survey exhibition *Hugh Hayden: American Vernacular* will open at Laumeier Sculpture Park in Saint Louis, Missouri in February, and travel to Brandeis University’s Rose Art Museum in Massachusetts in the fall. Hayden’s first major catalogue has been published by MIT Press to accompany the exhibition.

About Hugh Hayden

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 juxtaposing 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. Hayden's work has been the subject of numerous exhibitions in the United States and abroad. Recent solo exhibitions include public art installations, 'Huff and a Puff', at the deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum, Lincoln, MA (2023), and 'Brier Patch', at the Madison Square Park Conservancy in New York, NY, which later travelled to the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh, NC, and Dumbarton Oaks Gardens in Washington, DC. Other solo institutional and gallery exhibitions include 'Boogey Men' at Institute of Contemporary Art Miami, Miami, FL, which travelled to the Blaffer Art Museum, Houston, TX; 'Huey', Lisson Gallery, New York, NY; 'Hues', C L E A R I N G, Brussels, Belgium; 'Hugh Hayden: American Food', Lisson Gallery, London, UK; 'Hugh Hayden: Creation Myths', Princeton University Art Museum, Princeton, NJ; and 'Hugh Hayden', White Columns, New York, NY. Recent group exhibitions include 'Forest of Dreams: Contemporary Tree Sculpture', Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park, Grand Rapids, MI (2023) and 'NGV Triennial', National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia (2023), as well as 'Among the Trees', Hayward Gallery, London, UK (2020).

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). Hayden holds positions on advisory councils at Columbia University School of the Arts, Johnson Museum of Art at Cornell University and Cornell College of Architecture Art and Planning. His work is part of public collections at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), Los Angeles, CA; The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, NY, USA; Institute of Contemporary Art Miami, Miami, FL, USA; deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum, Lincoln, MA; Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA; Princeton University Art Museum, Princeton, NJ; and more.

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 spaces in London, New York, Los Angeles, Shanghai and Beijing. 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 estate of Leon Polk Smith. 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, Ryan Gander, Van Hanos, Hugh Hayden, Haroon Mirza, Laure Prouvost, Pedro Reyes, Wael Shawky and Cheyney Thompson.

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