

Tilton Gallery is pleased to exhibit *Wood: Painted & Assembled*, a presentation of artists who use wood to create abstract beauty and social meaning. The presentation extends from works from the 1970s by Betty Parsons and Ruth Vollmer to 1990s works by John Outterbridge and Noah Purifoy to recent works by younger gallery artists Tomashi Jackson, February James, Anna Tsouhlarakis, Abby Robinson, Antone Künst and Zachary Armstrong.

Painted wood assemblages by Betty Parsons combine abstract painting with found driftwood. The inventive re-use of this natural material expresses her unique spirit and pursuit of the new. The driftwood, sourced on the beach near her studio, serves as both structure and support, a surface for painted stripes and planes of color that give the wood a new and lasting energy. Ruth Vollmer combines an exploration of mathematical form with an abstract minimalist aesthetic that was influential to a generation of minimalist and post-minimalist artists. Her *Large Archimedian Screw*, first shown at the Betty Parsons Gallery in 1973, makes manifest a geometric form that naturally occurs in nature. Represented by Parsons, her scientific approach to art provides a counterpoint to Parsons' own spirituality and sense of poetry, seen here in the shared materiality of wood.

John Outterbridge and Noah Purifoy explore the material of found wood to create sculptures and wall constructions that speak to their firm belief that art can create societal change without being overtly political, relying on the poetry of form to convey meaning. They transform found objects and materials to demonstrate the potential for beauty in the discarded object.

A younger generation of artists turn to the incorporation of wood in their art to transform the material for their own explorations and purposes. Zachary Armstrong was inspired by Betty Parsons, who extended her abstract practice to transform found wood shapes into painted fish to be hung over the door to protect the home from fire. Armstrong expanded a figurative practice that already included painted images of fish to the making of his own carved and painted fish that hang on the wall. For our booth he has created a wall of these painted, curved wood fish, each unique unto itself, installed in a symmetrical pattern and extending from edge to edge. The swirling symmetrical composition creates a new type of abstraction that is at once painting, sculpture and installation.

Anna Tsouhlarakis follows the lineage of Purifoy and Outterbridge to assemble found wood as a tool for social change. She addresses the multiple realities of Native American experience and the accompanying stereotypes by combining disparate objects, both organic and manmade, from found branches to the processed wood of an Ikea shelf. A cast plaster hand inserts a human reference that acts as a bridge between the natural and commercial, bringing new life, a nod to the surreal and subtle humor to her primarily white sculptures.

Tomashi Jackson and Abby Robinson use wood as support and formal structures in their paintings. Jackson explores both the collision and convergence of historical and current events in paintings that include photographic images painted in half tone lines, embedded in painterly abstract surfaces. Some works are stretched on hand made three dimensional wooden structures that evoke the awnings used in public space. Other works include inserted wooden boards that ground the paintings in the material world and act as formal visual elements. Robinson uses wood panels in abstract paintings that blend the natural world with contemporary abstract imagery to achieve her own form of abstract composition. In Dremel drawings, she digs into the wood surfaces with a drill, drawing new patterns that interact both with the natural wood grain, left visible under thin washes of bright paint, and collaged materials such as leather, fabric or small rocks.

February James in her figurative paintings and Antone Künst in his surreal still life and landscape paintings both reference the natural world. For James, the family tree symbolically connects generations of voices that reverberate in the present. Her exploration of memory and the physical manifestation of the inner psychology, primarily of women, remain at the core of her work. For Künst, trees convey the image of peace, tranquility and strength in an imagined world of invented flora, mythical beings and objects that come to life.

All these artists bring new life to wood to create social and political statements and varied presentations of beauty and meaning.