

Nari Ward

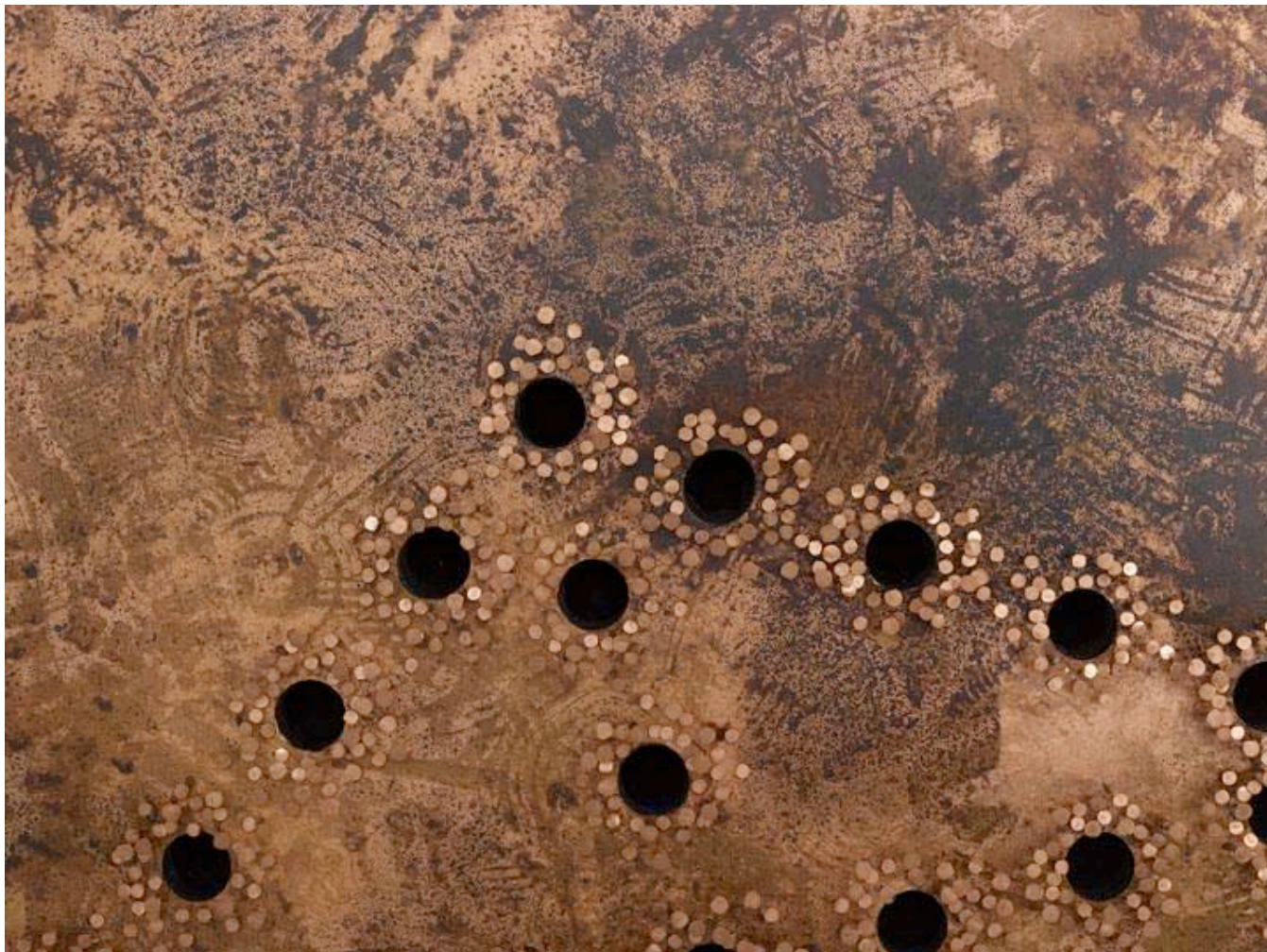
Breathing Directions

September 9-November 1, 2015

201 Chrystie Street, New York

#breathingdirections

Opening Reception: Wednesday, September 9, 6-8PM



Breathing Panel #4 (detail), 2015, oak wood, copper sheet, copper nails, darkening patina, 62 x 50 x 1.75 inches, 157.5 x 127 x 4.4 cm.

[Courtesy the artist and Lehmann Maupin, New York and Hong Kong.](#)

New York, August 6—**Lehmann Maupin** is pleased to present *Breathing Directions*, **Nari Ward's** third solo show with the gallery, on view at 201 Chrystie Street from September 9-November 1, 2015. Showcasing the artist's new "Breathing Panels," among other works, this exhibition continues Ward's longstanding interest in the context and history of places in which he works, as well as the materials, objects, and phenomena he finds in those locations. In the works included in this exhibition the artist traces the meaning of various symbols, histories, and personal journeys, investigating how such signs can be at once present and visible, yet concealed to viewers unaware of their meaning. **The artist will be present for an opening reception on September 9, from 6-8PM.**

The “Breathing Panels” are large-scale abstract works on copper that include the imprint of the artist’s making: Ward creates them by applying darkening patina to the bottom of his shoes and stepping on the copper panels, leaving a trace of his performative gesture. Ward has also punctured geometric patterns into each panel, which reference traditional Congolese “cosmograms,” an ancient prayer symbol that represents the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. Ward first came across these symbols during a visit to the First African Baptist Church in Savannah, Georgia, which was part of the Underground Railroad, and where he came upon 26 distinct sets of patterns. At the church, holes were cut in the floorboards to allow escaping slaves to breathe as they moved clandestinely under the church. In his “Breathing Panels,” Ward surrounds this pattern with copper nails and thin lines excised into the copper sheets, both reflecting light and drawing the viewer’s attention to the seemingly deep voids. Copper recurs as a fundamental material for Ward, who alludes to its resilience, conductivity, and association in some cultures with healing and restorative properties. The three panels in the exhibition act together as a sort of compass, with each “cosmogram” oriented in a different direction, referencing the escaping slaves’ northern journeys. In this work Ward utilizes visceral, thought-provoking imagery—including juxtapositions of hard, industrial materials with the evocation of a hunted person’s baited breath and the artist’s own footsteps—to poignantly call attention to American history as well as issues of race, identity and politics that remain relevant in this country today.

Ward will also present a new sculptural work, entitled *Ground (In Progress)*. Composed of over seven hundred masonry bricks covered in sheets of copper and laid flat on the gallery floor, which visitors are encouraged to walk on, the work references informational symbols found on quilts employed on the Underground Railroad. As in the “Breathing Panels,” Ward uses darkening patina—here to re-create the patterns and directional signs utilized by travelers making their way to freedom. The artist highlights a vital, coded language that would have been discretely visible, understood only by an intended informed audience.

Also included in the exhibition is Ward’s *Spellbound*, commissioned by SCAD Museum of Art as part of the artist’s 2015 exhibition. Ward created the work from a used, upright piano and covered the instrument in hundreds of keys, each hanging on a nail embedded in the wood. For the artist, the keys symbolize inaccessible or disused places, as well as referencing historical events that are forgotten or no longer acknowledged. The piece includes a film that incorporates the sounds and symbols of forgotten histories, which plays on a flat-screen monitor affixed to the back of the piano.

Selected works from this exhibition will also be included in Ward’s mid-career survey exhibition *Sun Splashed* at Pérez Art Museum Miami opening November 19, 2015 and on view throughout Art Basel Miami Beach. The exhibition will feature works from the 1990s to the present and will highlight a broad range of themes explored by the artist throughout his career, including African-American history and culture, political power dynamics, and Caribbean diaspora identity.

About the Artist

Nari Ward’s (b. 1963, St. Andrew, Jamaica) work has been widely exhibited in major venues, including solo exhibitions at the Savannah College of Art and Design, Savannah (2015); Louisiana State University Museum of Art, Baton Rouge (2014); Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia (2011); Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, North Adams (2011); Institute of Visual Arts, Milwaukee (1997); Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston (2002); and Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (2001, 2000). The artist has taken part in important group exhibitions, including the Whitney Biennale (2006); Prospect 1, New Orleans (2008); and Documenta XI, Kassel (2003). In November 2015 the Pérez Art Museum Miami will present a major solo exhibition of Ward’s work.

About Lehmann Maupin

Founded in 1996 by partners Rachel Lehmann and David Maupin, Lehmann Maupin has fostered the careers of a diverse group of internationally renowned artists, both emerging and established, working in multiple disciplines and across varied media. With three locations—two in New York and one in Hong Kong—the gallery represents artists from the United States, Europe, Asia, South America, Africa, and the Middle East. Known for championing artists who create groundbreaking and challenging forms of visual expression, Lehmann Maupin presents work highlighting personal investigations and individual narratives through conceptual approaches that often address such issues as gender, class, religion, history, politics, and globalism.

Current and Upcoming Exhibitions

Matthias Weischer, *Traces to nowhere*, September 8-October 3, 2015, Hong Kong, Pedder Building

Billy Childish, *flowers, nudes and birch trees: New Paintings 2015*, September 10-October 31, 2015, New York, West 22nd Street

Adriana Varejão, October 10-November 21, 2015, Hong Kong, Pedder Building

Teresita Fernández, November 5-December 19, 2015, New York, West 22nd Street

Shirazeh Houshiary, November 25, 2015-January 9, 2016, Hong Kong, Pedder Building

For more information on Nari Ward and other Lehmann Maupin artists, please contact Marta de Movellan at +1 212 255 2923 or visit lehmannmaupin.com

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