

LEONARDO DREW

September 9 - October 23, 2021

Opening Thursday, September 9, 2021, 10:00am - 8:00pm



Leonardo Drew, *Number 306*, 2021.

Galerie Lelong & Co., New York, is pleased to present our solo exhibition with Leonardo Drew, featuring new sculptures and a major site-specific installation *Number 305* (2021), *Number 123* (2014) and the "explosion" piece *Number 215* (2019). Whole sculptures are included in the installation along with multiple elements from Drew's different vocabularies, now combined in a singular work. Unevenly shaped wooden pieces lay flat akin to wall drawings, while horizontal elements create the effect of speed lines and add another layer of dynamism. *Number 305* commands the space, allowing the viewer to focus on the choreography of individual elements including drawings and sculptures that build an immersive experience. In addition, a group of new individual sculptures explode the grid while using it as a system to control action. By incorporating open rift spaces, Drew's use of tension enlivens each work in motion.

From the early 1990s, Drew has been making assemblage-based installations and sculptures in his distinctive abstract language that speaks of life's cyclical nature. Possessing an in-depth knowledge of materials and their materiality gained over three decades of practice, Drew weathers store-bought wood and other construction materials through processes that make them appear to have been found in a state of natural decomposition. Through oxidation, shredding, and splintering, Drew builds a library of material to use in his layered compositions. These masses of elements, many of which have been rendered as small as toothpicks, are utilized in an additive process to orchestrate richly layered sculptural surfaces that pulse with the rhythm of the artist's energy and appear to almost burst from the armatures. These highly individualistic and monumental sculptures reflect interior and exterior landscapes, revealing his keen awareness of our world in flux. His intention in his work is to "make chaos legible." Instead of assigning them descriptive titles, Drew chooses to number his works, believing that each piece will find eventual completion in its resonance with the viewer.

Since his first outdoor public art project, *City in the Grass* (2019), at Madison Square Park, Drew has continued to explore the possibilities for wave-like momentums to energize the work. In the installation *Number 305*, a totemic form appears to simultaneously lift off from and be grounded by the wall, incorporating gaping negative spaces that reinforce the curves of the sculpture, animate it, and emphasize its gravitas. Drew's rigorous approach extends to the recycling and re-invention of materials and older works into new ones—an act that parallels the rebirths seen in the natural world. Evident in *Number 306* (2021), Drew repurposed a "carpet" element from *City in the Grass*, now transposed from the ground onto the wall in an assemblage that comprises smaller wood elements seemingly disintegrating and congregating at once.

Following his first solo exhibition with Galerie Lelong, New York, in 2019, solo museum presentations have been held at the University of Massachusetts Amherst; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson; and North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh. This exhibition coincides with two ongoing solo exhibitions at the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art (an updated installation of *City in the Grass* on view through November 14, 2021, and Drew's site-specific installation in the museum's lobby through January 2, 2022) and the traveling solo exhibition *Leonardo Drew: Cycles, from the Collections of Jordan D. Schnitzer Foundation*, at the Patricia & Phillip Frost Art Museum, Florida International University from September 1 – November 17, 2021.

About the artist

Leonardo Drew is known for creating contemplative abstract sculptural works that play upon a tension between order and chaos. At once monumental and intimate in scale, his work recalls post-Minimalist sculpture that alludes to America's industrial past. Drew transforms accumulations of raw materials such as wood, scrap metal, and cotton to articulate various overlapping themes with emotional gravitas: from the cyclical nature of life and decay to the erosion of time. His surfaces often approach a language of their own, embodying the labored process of writing oneself into history.

Drew's works have been shown internationally and are included in numerous public collections including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; The Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC; and Tate, London. His works have recently been acquired by The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC; Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, Connecticut; North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh; and Sidney and Lois Eskenazi Museum of Art, Bloomington, Indiana among others.

Drew was commissioned for a new outdoor project for Madison Square Park in summer 2019, marking the Madison Square Park Conservancy's 38th public commission and the artist's first major public outdoor art project. Recent solo museum exhibitions include shows at the Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson (2020); North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh (2020); de Young Museum, Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, California (2017); Palazzo Delle Papesse, Centro Arte Contemporanea, Siena, Italy (2006); and the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC (2000). Drew's mid-career survey, *Existed*, premiered at the Blaffer Gallery at the University of Houston in 2009, and traveled to the Weatherspoon Art Museum in Greensboro, North Carolina, and the DeCordova Sculpture Park and Museum in Lincoln, Massachusetts. Drew was also commissioned for two major site-responsive works permanently installed at San Francisco International Airport, Harvey Milk Terminal 1, and at the Facebook Headquarters, Menlo Park, California respectively. In July 2021, Drew had his first solo exhibition in Paris, France at Galerie Lelong & Co., to a warm reception from the local press.

Drew was born in 1961 in Tallahassee, Florida, and he grew up in Bridgeport, Connecticut. He currently lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.

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