

## LEONARDO DREW

September 9 - October 23, 2021

Opening Thursday, September 9, 2021, 6:00pm - 8:00pm



Leonardo Drew in his studio, 2021.  
Photo: Christopher Garcia Valle.

Galerie Lelong & Co., New York, is pleased to present our solo exhibition with Leonardo Drew, featuring new sculptures and a major site-specific installation for the gallery. Since 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. Employing many techniques that include oxidation, shredding, and splintering, he builds an arsenal of material in his layered compositions. With masses of elements, many of which have been rendered as small as toothpicks, the artist orchestrates richly layered surfaces on sculptures that pulse with the rhythm of his energy that almost bursts from the armatures. These highly individualistic and monumental sculptures reflect interior and exterior landscapes, revealing Drew's strong association with a world in flux that in his words, "make chaos legible."

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 in energizing a work. In *Number 305* (2021), 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.

Seeing his practice as a way of establishing a connection with the cosmos, Drew's rigorous approach extends to the recycling and re-invention of older works into new ones—an act that parallels nature's rebirths. In particular, *Number 306* (2021) uses a "carpet" floor piece from *City in the Grass*, which now transposed from the ground onto the wall in an assemblage, comprises smaller wood elements seemingly disintegrating and congregating at once. This methodology of repurposing finds its roots in Drew's generative piece *Number 8* (1988)—which he refers to as the mother—the result of six years of progressive experimentation with *Number 1* through *7*. At the core of Drew's oeuvre is a refusal of definitive expression in favor of layered histories that are open to interpretation, hence the decision to number his work instead of giving descriptive titles, believing that each work will find eventual completion in its resonance with the viewer.

Through physical works or artisan techniques he mastered, Drew weaves an array of humanity's cultures into his own background of growing up in the USA. Drew gathers pieces from his travels to China, Peru, and Japan that make their way into his assemblages—such as pot shards from a ceramics factory that inspire the growing use of color and pattern.

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

For press enquiries, please contact Grace Hong, 212.315.0470 or [grace@galerielelong.com](mailto:grace@galerielelong.com).

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