

For Immediate Release

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LAUMEIER SCULPTURE PARK ANNOUNCES SPRING 2024 EXHIBITION, *HUGH HAYDEN: AMERICAN VERNACULAR*

At a Glance

- WHAT:** A ten-year survey of artist Hugh Hayden, including recent and newly commissioned sculptures and an outdoor sculpture installation.
- WHO:** Artist Hugh Hayden (American, b. 1983 in Dallas, TX. Lives in New York City)
- WHEN:** On view Feb. 10 - May 12, 2024.
- WHERE:** Laumeier Sculpture Park, 12580 Rott Road, St. Louis, 63127. Laumeier's Aronson Fine Arts Center and Outdoor Galleries near The Way Field.
- WHY:** Hayden creates sculptures out of wood and other natural materials. His reconstruction of familiar objects transforms them into proxies for critical cultural issues. Drawing on his own experiences as a Black, gay American, Hayden creates succinct and powerful commentaries on American society, including its painful truths.



Hugh Hayden
Wheaties, 2023
Wheat, rattan, basketball rim
Courtesy of John Auerbach and Ed Tang
© Hugh Hayden, photo courtesy Lisson Gallery

Detailed release follows



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Laumeier Sculpture Park presents the first Midwest solo presentation of artist Hugh Hayden.

St. Louis, MO – Laumeier Sculpture Park is proud to announce *American Vernacular*, Hugh Hayden’s first Midwest solo presentation exploring a decade of his work in a variety of mediums including newly commissioned works. The exhibition will be on view Feb. 10 through May 12, 2024, in the Aronson Fine Arts Center’s Whitaker Foundation Gallery and in the Outdoor Galleries, near The Way Field. This exhibition was organized by deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum in consultation with Laumeier and will debut at Laumeier before its presentation at any other U.S. venue.

Hayden’s vision draws from his personal memory and experience as an American and African American, born and raised in Texas. Growing up Black and gay in the South, and later training and working for a decade as an architect before becoming an artist, Hayden’s work merges organic materials with built space, and draws on folk and fine art vocabularies to capture various aspects of the artist’s personal biography and lived experiences.

Hayden often takes forms from everyday objects and reconstructs them, creating sculptures out of wood and other natural materials that become proxies for critical cultural issues. He draws inspiration from a wide variety of sources, including popular culture, traditional crafts, and storytelling traditions. Hayden’s artworks also engage with unseen threats of domestic life or the ideals and inequities that cut across racial lines in the U.S. The artist often grapples with an uncomfortable reckoning between the promise of the American Dream, the persistence of “bootstrap” ideology and the myth making around progress. He also examines the tensions between the enticing lure of social aspiration and the hard realities of inequity. The artist has stated, “All of my work is about the American dream, whether it’s a table that’s hard to sit at or a thorny school desk. It’s a dream that is seductive, but difficult to inhabit.”

The artworks presented in *American Vernacular* generally refer to distinct types of public and private spaces and feature the artist’s take on the trappings of these locations. For example, sculptures made from cast iron pans evoke home kitchens, elaborately decorated basketball backboards and hoops and helmets suggest sports fields and courts, and a row of church pews facing a neon “altar” evokes places of worship. Many works show Hayden’s embrace of the Surrealist approach of combining materials that would not ordinarily be merged, to create unexpected or even jarring sights, such as covering a cap or handbag in tree bark or weaving a basketball hoop out of hair.

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Outdoors, in a wooded area selected by the artist, Hayden has evoked the space of a schoolroom with a selection from the installation *Brier Patch*. Sixteen traditional wooden schoolhouse seat/desk combinations are arranged into four rows, as we would expect to find them in a classroom. But their surfaces unexpectedly erupt into an impenetrable tangle of tree branches. In this work, Hayden suggests that the educational system that is supposed to serve and nurture all children may in fact be scarier and

harder to navigate for some. *Brier Patch* debuted at Laumeier in early November 2023, in advance of the rest of the exhibition.

Laumeier Curator Dana Turkovic states: "I am thrilled to present Hugh Hayden at Laumeier. The unique blend of work presented in *American Vernacular* is the perfect introduction to Hugh's thought-provoking and exquisite sculpture. Both the indoor exhibition and his outdoor installation *Brier Patch* call attention to his unique juxtaposition of nature and aspects of inclusion and belonging. Many of the sculptures in the exhibition intertwine faith, fairytales and athletics utilizing natural materials with powerful resonance. It has been an honor to work closely with and deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum and Madison Square Park Conservancy on these presentations of Hayden's work."

Hugh Hayden: American Vernacular was organized by Sarah Montross, Chief Curator, deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum, The Trustees, Lincoln, MA, in partnership with Dana Turkovic, Curator, Laumeier Sculpture Park. *Brier Patch* was commissioned by Madison Square Park Conservancy, New York where it was first exhibited.

Public Programs

EXHIBITION OPENING DAY / Saturday, Feb. 10 / 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

The public is invited to celebrate the opening of the exhibition Hugh Hayden: American Vernacular. Gallery doors open at 10 a.m., the artist will be present from 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.

CONVERSATION WITH HUGH HAYDEN / Saturday, Feb. 10 / 11:30 a.m. / Kranzberg Education Lab / Free / Space is limited

Join Curators Sarah Montross and Dana Turkovic for a talk with Hugh Hayden about American Vernacular. Reserved seating is available for Laumeier members with an RSVP.

Further exhibition-related programming will be presented. Visit laumeier.org for the most up-to-date information.

About the Artist

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. He has had solo exhibitions at the Madison Square Park Conservancy, The Princeton University Art Museum and White Columns, NY. His work has been included in numerous group exhibitions including Sculpture Center, New York; Hayward Gallery, London; The Shed, New York; Pilot Projects, Philadelphia; Sundance Film Festival, Park City, UT; MoMA PS1,



Rockaway Beach, New York; Socrates Sculpture Park, New York; and Abrons Art Center, New York, among others. He is the recipient of residencies at Glenfiddich in Dufftown, Scotland, Socrates Sculpture Park, and Lower Manhattan Cultural Council.

About Laumeier Sculpture Park

Founded in 1976, Laumeier Sculpture Park is one of the first and largest sculpture parks in the country. Laumeier presents more than 70 works of large-scale outdoor sculpture throughout its 105-acre campus. It serves over 350,000 visitors of all ages each year, with a world-class art collection, indoor and outdoor temporary exhibitions, education programs and public events. Laumeier is an internationally recognized museum, accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. The 501(c)3 nonprofit organization operates in partnership with St. Louis County Parks.

Laumeier Sculpture Park's ongoing operations and programs are generously supported by St. Louis County Parks; with support from the Regional Arts Commission; Missouri Arts Council, a state agency; among other corporations, foundations, individual donors and members.

Exhibitions are supported by Whitaker Foundation, Alison and John Ferring, Ken and Nancy Kranzberg, Joan and Mitchell Markow and Two Sister's Foundation, Emily Rauh Pulitzer, and Mary Ann and Andy Srenco.

Additional support for *Hugh Hayden: American Vernacular* is provided by Theodore and Heather Karatz. Educational and Community Programming for *Hugh Hayden: American Vernacular* was supported in part as a Washington University in St. Louis Center for the Study of Race, Ethnicity & Equity Arts & Culture Community Grant. The CRE² Arts & Culture Community Grant aims to continue and build on the work foregrounded by the Divided City Initiative with the generous support of the Mellon Foundation. This special opportunity is presented in partnership with The Center for the Humanities & The Office for Socially Engaged Practice.

For more about Laumeier Sculpture Park, please visit www.laumeier.org.

Images

High-resolution images available upon request.



Hugh Hayden

Brier Patch, 2022

Cedar and aluminum

Sixteen desks with branches

Collection of the artist, courtesy Lisson Gallery

Commissioned by Madison Square Park Conservancy, New York

© Hugh Hayden, photo courtesy of Laumeier Sculpture Park



Hugh Hayden

New Yorker (detail), 2022

Cherry bark on New York Yankees baseball hat

Loan courtesy of Dr. Joseph Nguyen and Tamie Tong

© Hugh Hayden; photo courtesy Lisson Gallery

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