

moniquemeloche

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NATE YOUNG

moniquemeloche LES | 2 Rivington, New York

March 8 – 11, 2018: 11am to 6pm

Opening Reception: Friday, March 9, 6 to 9pm



Nate Young's ongoing series of altarpiece works exemplifies the conceit at the heart of his practice: the investigation of structures of knowledge, the authority and language of systems, and the illusiveness of meaning. All handcrafted in wood, with graphite drawings and often gold leaf, Young's altarpieces express a highly sincere spiritual drive while also questioning the medium through which that spirituality is conveyed. Like Young's contributions to *Fore* at the Studio Museum in Harlem (2012), these works activate an ontological space where disparate realms of knowing collide. Born from an interest in the theological diagrams and the ecclesiastical architecture Young encountered as the son of a theologian, they tie the aesthetic language of the church to the measured graphic expression of other fields of knowledge. Semiotics, for example, in particular the visual expression of sign and signified as conveyed by Swiss semiotician Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), has a repeated presence in these compositions – a simple oval or circle, bisected by a single line. Young strips away any specific content, however, leaving behind a universal lexicon of primordial signs and symbols – arrows, circles, grids, and negative spaces – that strongly suggest meaning without in fact conveying it; a profound void, at once empty and full, that invites the viewer's activation. His works contain a quiet gravitas and austerity seemingly at odds with their meticulously hand-crafted nature, prompting a post-minimalist interrogation of authority, material, and the artist's hand.

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In this multi-part piece, Young looks to the fourteen Stations of the Cross, an established series of images depicting Jesus on the day of his crucifixion and the accompanying prayers. The concept of the Stations was born of out early Christian rites in which the holy site of the Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem – the actually path that Jesus is believed to have taken on the day of his death – was ritualistically imitated. This could take the form of outdoor shrines, or printed illustrations, or could be more abstractly regarded as a holy pilgrimage taken by true believers to the Holy Land. At once a visual narrative, a guiding text, and a physical journey, then, the multivalent and multiform notion of the Stations of the Cross is fertile ground for Young's inquiry into the structure of meaning and belief, and humanity's aspirations to give form to those grand notions. These fourteen altarpieces – identical in size but differing in composition – have a fixed order, which should be displayed as to suggest a seamless narrative; each element is at once self-contained and part of a larger whole. Rather than illustrating the Christian storyline, however, the elements relate the arc of the viewer's movement through a physical and cerebral space. In this way, the installation moves beyond its religious source material to a larger investigation of seriality, repetition and difference, and the authority of the artist vis à vis the viewer. In his removal of specific content, Young emphasizes our role, inviting our projected meanings and unseen personal engagements; an erasure that in turn generates an expanded and open set of possibilities.

Nate Young (American b. 1981, lives Chicago) received his MFA from the California Institute of the Arts in 2009 and a BA from Northwestern College in Minnesota in 2004. He attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in 2009. Young's recent solo exhibitions include *Cleromancy*, moniquemeloche, Chicago (2017); *re:collection*, VisArts, Richmond, VA (2017), *Stations*, Luce Gallery, Turin, Italy (2016), *The Unseen Evidence of Things Substantiated*, Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia, PA(2015), and *But not yet: in the spirit of linguistics*, moniquemeloche, Chicago (2015). His work has been included in many group exhibitions, including *Four Saints in Three Acts*, DePaul Art Museum, Chicago, (2017); *Chicago Invites Chicago*, Galerie Lelong, New York (2016); *Retreat*, curated by Theaster Gates, Richard Gray Gallery, Chicago (2014); *Tony Lewis and Nate Young*, Room East, New York (2014); the Soap Factory's *Minnesota Biennial* (2013); *Fore*, Studio Museum in Harlem, New York (2012); and *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, California African American Museum, Los Angeles (2012). Young was a 2015 Artist-in-Residence at The Fabric Workshop and Museum, and he is the recipient of the Knight Arts Challenge Fellowship from the Knight Foundation (2014); the Jerome Fellowship for Emerging Artists (2014); and the Bush Fellowship for Visual Artists (2010). His work is in notable collections, including the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Washington, D.C.; Mott Warsh Collection, Flint, MI; and the Fabric Workshop Museum, Philadelphia. Upcoming projects include FRONT International: Cleveland Triennial of Contemporary Art, OH (summer 2018); and a solo exhibition at The De Pree Gallery, Hope College, Holland, MI (2019). Young is co-founder and director of the artist-run exhibition space The Bindery Projects, in Minneapolis. He is Assistant Professor of Studio Arts at the University of Illinois at Chicago.