



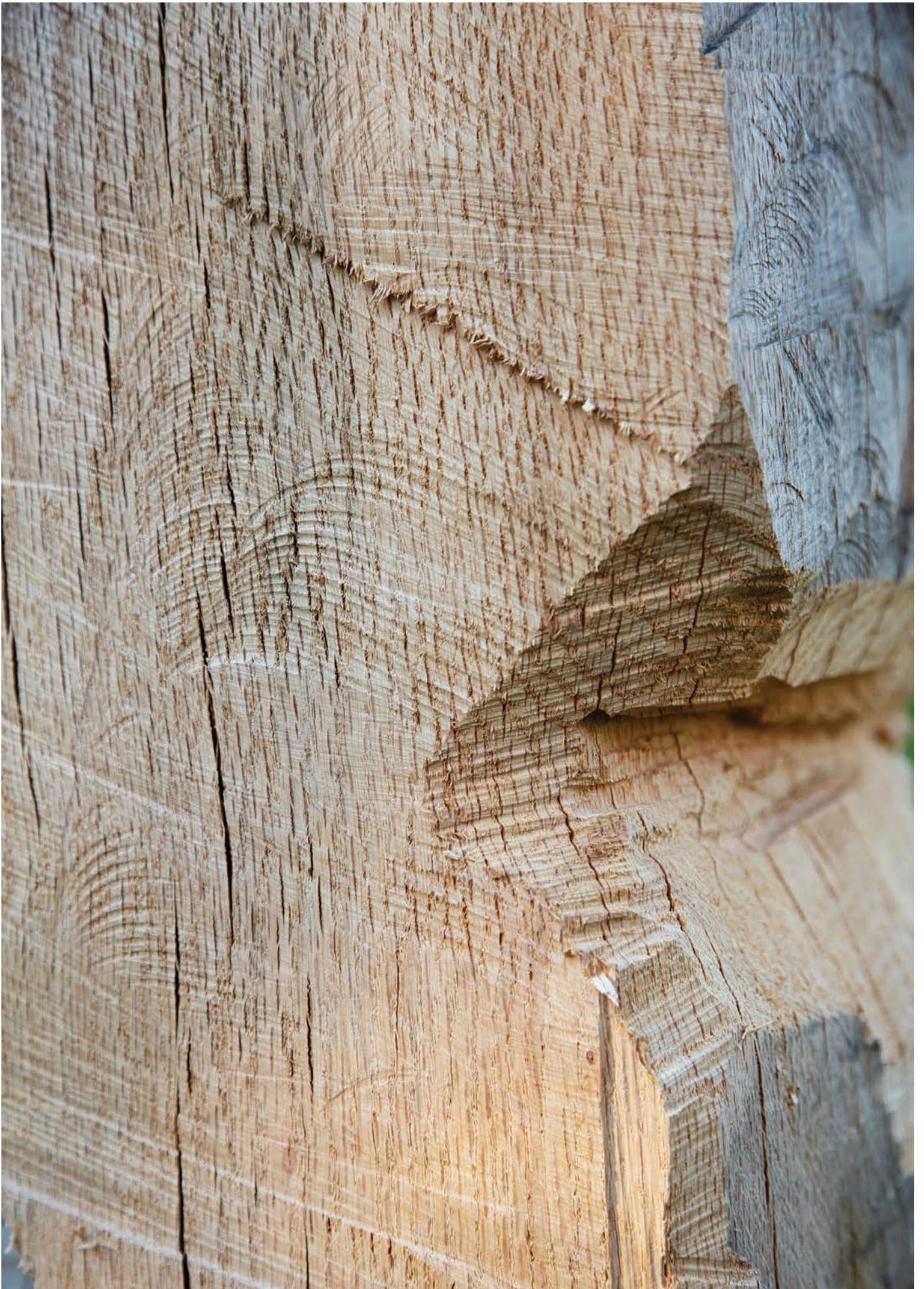
*Hannah...Hector...
Henry...Hermes*

Duck Creek
Art Center

April 23rd -
June 28th

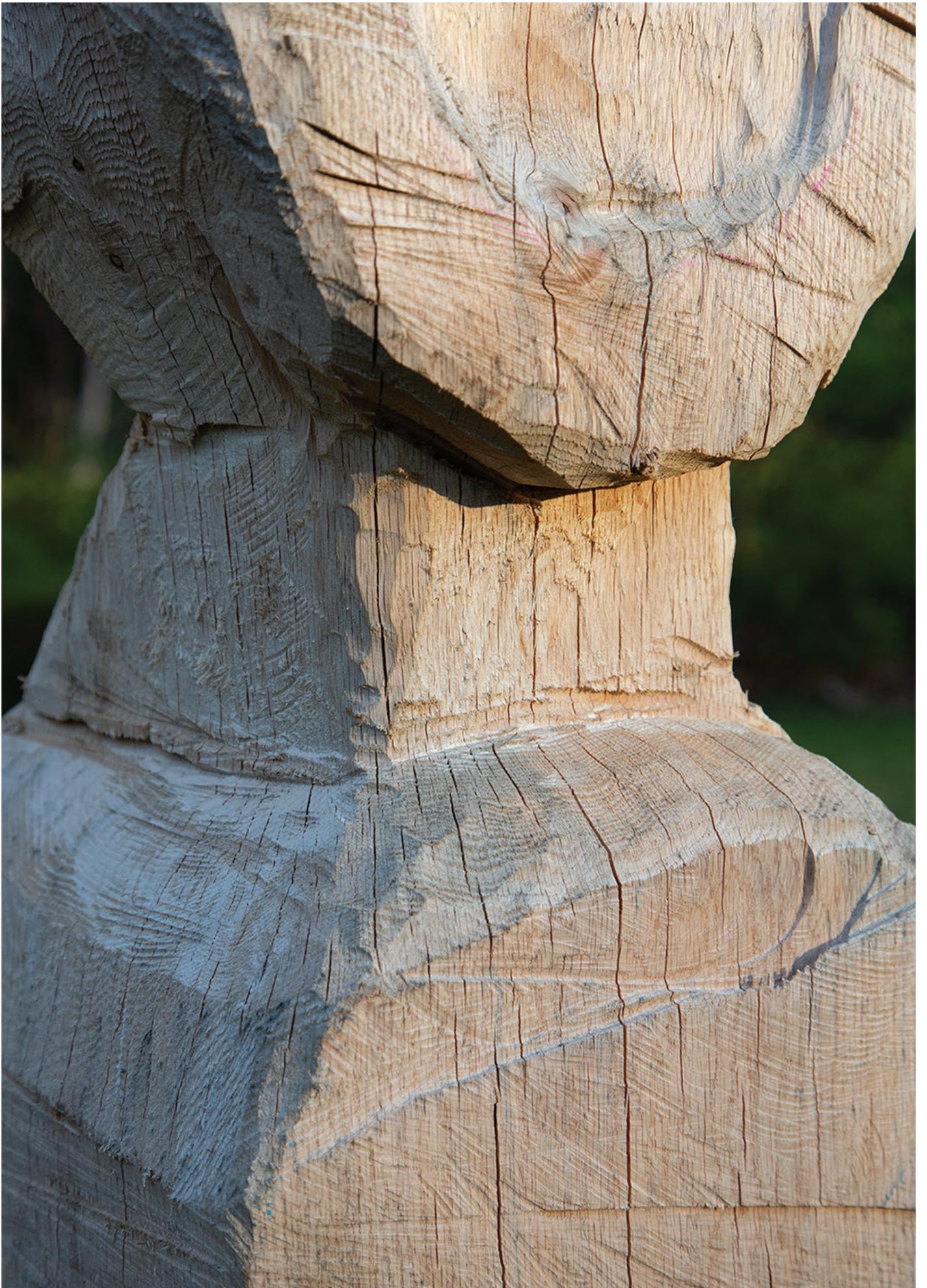
*a show by
Evan Brownstein*











Hannah...Hector...
Henry...Hermes...



Evan Brownstein:

Hannah...Hector...

Henry...Hermes...

The Arts Center at Duck Creek is pleased to present *Hannah...Hector...Henry...Hermes...* an outdoor, site-specific body of work created by artist Evan Brownstein. The exhibit will open on April 23, and will be on view dawn to dusk through June 26, 2022. A reception for the artist will be held on April 23 from 3-5 pm.

Brownstein, a photographer and sculptor, moved to the East End during the pandemic. It was in his outdoor studio in Amagansett where he began to hone in on an unconventional tool: the chainsaw. Using it to carve local felled trees into sculptures, Brownstein conjured the rich history of local artists with his practice. "Making work on the East End of Long Island," he writes, "comes part and parcel with the spirits of Abstract Expressionism. The reference is inescapable and the active and evocative gestural mark making dominates the local art historical landscapes. Working with a chainsaw allowed me to make gestural marks on substantial sculptural materials in a way that was related to how paint might be applied to a canvas in the studio of an action painter."

When the Town of East Hampton cut down a dead walnut tree on the edge of Duck Creek Farm last fall, we invited Evan Brownstein to give it a second life. The first work executed from the walnut was *Untitled (talaria/waiting room)*, a seven-foot-tall, solid wood sculpture accompanied by three carved wooden chairs. A second work, *Untitled (towards a more complete understanding of calm)*, was also created from that same tree. Three more pieces, *Untitled (lamassu)*, *Large Crescent Study* and *Column #2* were crafted with local oak supplied by Mark Daniel's Tree Service in East Hampton. "The chainsaw was one of the few tools I was left with when COVID displaced me from my usual facility-based workflows" Brownstein relayed. "Because of this, the marks I was making with this tool seemed tied to time and place in a way that felt important." While the title of the show points to the mythological images referenced in the works, the gestural cuts of mature maple and oak invoke the abstract expressionist legends who once populated this property.

Evan Brownstein (b. 1982, New York City) received his BA from Sarah Lawrence College, Bronxville, NY and MFA from the San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, CA. Brownstein's first East Coast solo show is currently in production at the Arts Center at Duck Creek, East Hampton, NY. His work has been exhibited internationally at Frieze Masters, London, UK and TEFAF in Maastricht, Holland, as well as at Rainbow Body, curated by Andrew Ananda in Seoul, South Korea. His work has also been published in London-based *Draft Magazine* alongside Joel Sternfeld, Jim Goldberg, Jon Kessler and others. Domestic exhibitions include *Tot Lot+* at No Roof Gallery, San Francisco, CA and group shows at Los Angeles Center for Digital Art, Los Angeles, CA and Greenpoint Gallery, Brooklyn, NY. Brownstein has also been included in the Buffalo Institute of Contemporary Art's public art exhibition Playground.

The Arts Center at Duck Creek is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation operating fine arts programming on the East Hampton Town-owned property known as Historic Duck Creek Farm. Funding for this program was provided by the Willem de Kooning Foundation, the HiLo Fondation, and donations from community members like you.

works



Untitled (Towards a more
complete understanding of calm)

Oak

87" x 18" x 15"





Large Crescent Study
Oak
90" x 29" x 32"





Column #2
Oak
93" x 20" x 17"





Untitled (talaria/waiting room)

Walnut

89" x 27" x 27"





Untitled (lamassu)
Oak
dimensional lumber, casted bricks, hardware
89" x 27" x 27"





Collection of 50 Tin Amultes
Casted Tin
one amulet was offered to each guest in attendance



Artists & Galleries

Evan Brownstein Shows Chainsaw Sculpture at Duck Creek

By [Oliver Peterson](#)

[comments](#)

Posted on [April 27, 2022](#)

The Arts Center at Duck Creek in East Hampton debuted a new outdoor, site-specific collection of sculptures by Evan Brownstein last weekend and it offers something of a master class about how location, material and a particular moment in time can define a body of work. On view through June 26, ***Hannah...Hector...Henry...Hermes...*** features a series of Brownstein's wood sculpture, all created using a chainsaw and large trees on the grounds of Duck Creek and a neighboring property owned by local artist Mica Marder in Springs.

The rough-hewn, gestural works channel the region's deep connections with Abstract Expressionism, while also speaking to a very physical sense of place, as demonstrated by Brownstein's energetic mark making and the decades-old, local oak, walnut and maple trees from which his pieces are formed.

A photographer who began working with wood using more traditional, refined techniques over the past eight years in Los Angeles, Brownstein started exploring the chainsaw by necessity after the pandemic hit. "That's a really important part of the show and part of the underlying theme," he says, noting that he took to photography at 10 years old and continued until he tried making sculpture about a decade ago. "I was working in a wood shop and doing fine finished pieces...using fine furniture techniques," Brownstein says, adding, "I was always tied to a facility (wood shop or darkroom) for my whole life, and if that facility was closed, I basically wasn't working. So, when COVID hit L.A. and everything closed, I spent the first two weeks in my house like everybody else, trying to figure out what was going on. But when I got the bug to start working again, really the chainsaw was the only tool that was available to me, because all the facilities were closed."

Before the pandemic led him to leave California and head to the Hamptons, where he spent summers while growing up in NYC, Brownstein was already well into honing his chainsaw skills. "I started bringing wood into this abandoned lot in Little Armenia in L.A., and I just started making sculpture with a chainsaw. Because of that, all of these marks I'm making on this material, it's really tied to time and place in a way that feels pretty important to me, because the chainsaw entered my work as a result of circumstance," he says. "When COVID hit, I basically came here to get away from it," he continues, pointing out that he arrived last winter and built a studio in the woods of Amagansett in order to continue the work he started during lockdown in L.A. By then, he'd grown to enjoy the chainsaw, both the act of using it and the results it produced. "I'd



always been jealous of painters who could set up wherever and just get to work, where I didn't have that kind of freedom or luxury (with photography and fine woodworking). It felt super liberating to just be able to make work wherever I wanted, whenever I wanted," Brownstein recalls, adding, "The chainsaw is also a really aggressive tool so there's probably some kind of catharsis amid all of the shit that was going on, because of the physicality and how rugged the tool is."

Soon, the artist had new works underway and he applied for a show at Duck Creek, but the community-oriented arts center declined his application because Brownstein had only been in town for a short time. This season, however, fate intervened in the form of a large, dead walnut tree East Hampton Town felled on the art center's property. Executive Director Jess Frost remembered Brownstein used a chainsaw and she invited him to come "give it a second life." Plans for his show soon followed.

Evan Brownstein, *Untitled (towards a more complete understanding of calm)*, 2022, Walnut
Iga Goworek

From that tree, Brownstein carved the first piece in the show, "Talaria," a 7-foot sculpture based on the winged sandal of Hermes, messenger of the Greek gods. He was also able to make three carved chairs and a second sculpture, "Untitled (towards a more complete understanding of calm)," before moving on to different wood.

Each piece in *Hannah...Hector...Henry...Hermes...* beautifully demonstrates the chainsaw's ability to make expressive strokes in the wood, layered with Brownstein's deliberate gestures, the wood's natural grain, imperfections from years of growth and the cracks and weathering (checks and silvering) that come with time outside in this specific place. The final product is a symphony of marks — purposeful, accidental and natural — and it couldn't exist in quite the same way anywhere else in the world.

Brownstein says he smoothed, polished and sealed his early chainsaw pieces, which had their own arresting beauty, but he recognized the power of this rougher, raw-wood approach. "The finished pieces, when they're shiny and smooth and waxed, they're just so easily beautiful in an impressive way, like an ooh and ahh kind of way," he acknowledges. "And it was hard for me to put that away. You get such satisfaction from the viewer when it's all shiny and smooth, so it took some time for me to be like, OK, that's not the only way to make this thing powerful and beautiful."

The sculptures at Duck Creek, Brownstein says, will continue to age and turn gray through the natural "silvering" process, like an old dock on Accabonac Harbor, adding, "Over the season, or two seasons, those will silver and finish themselves naturally." In other words, this work has just begun to evolve.

Hannah...Hector...Henry...Hermes... is on view now at The Arts Center at Duck Creek, 127 Squaw Road, Springs, East Hampton. Visit duckcreekarts.org for more info.



Thoughts in Postscript

Making work on the East End of Long Island comes part and parcel with the company of the spirits of Abstract Expressionism; one feels them curving through the wooded streets and breaking through the branches as streaming low and golden light. If you are to think critically or art historically the reference is unescapable and the active and evocative gestural mark making dominates the localities' art historical landscapes.

As an artist working in sculpture these influences manifest as a unique set of questions, problems, and eventual attempts at solutions. I understood this best most clearly in that sculpture, inherently a slower and more physically arduous medium than painting, does not allow for the quick and loose mark making utilized in gestural abstraction. I took this challenge as a point of departure.

The chainsaw came into my life through some form of synchronicity in that it was one of the few tools I was left with once the COVID-19 pandemic left me bereft of my usual facility based workflows. Presenting itself as an answer in aggression, its high-speed, high-horse powered essence and abilities allowed me to make marks on substantial sculptural materials in a way paint might be applied to a canvas in the studio of an action painter. In this way I found access to the energies tied up in gestural abstract in the sculpture studio. Because of the circumstances that brought the chainsaw into my studio the marks I was making seemed tied to place in a way that felt important, but also were the type of marks that I was drawn to when I thought about what I liked when I look at painting.

These few alliances seemed to cohere to form beginnings of the ground to a body of work.

This said, these ideas notably engage art and meaning making at strictly the levels of technique and art history, purposefully side stepping any logic related to issues of society and culture.

It is not lost on me how this work and these intentions seem to bump up against notions of hegemonic masculinity in two or more ways with, firstly, Abstract Expressionism having been couched in a type of American exceptionalism that focused on the white male, and secondly the use of a power tool that seems to wreak of the hyper masculine, at least in terms of the connotations produced within the dominant discourse.

The use of these references, along with the fact that my work has long taken a stance antagonistic to Institutionalism, is paradoxical in a way that is typical to my practice and personality.

This paradoxical, or seemingly paradoxical engagement with issues of society and culture grows from a Deleuzian understanding of connectivity that believes that counterculture machinery plugs into that of dominant culture and that this is where it derives its power. This means that it is in the subsumption of the tools of its advisory that a combative entity finds dominion.

There is an intention inherent in the desire to inscribe gesture into the surface of a substantial material. This desire aspires to raise the less representational, outside-of-language essence of gestural expression from its usual ephemeral domains. To raise a concept from the ephemeral to the substantial feels political—like a stance is being established and a belief in certain set of values is being asserted.

I believe the questions raised through the inquiry into this less representational realm work to access the gains accomplished by the modernist sculptors, specifically the gains related to the epistemologies of phenomenology. and associated them with less art insular/more sociocultural conversations.

One of these conversations may begin like this:

There is a presence demanded of the viewer when encountering work that makes meaning via phenomenon that begins to dovetail with more Eastern notions of human ontology. Exposing this coalescence, that between phenomenology and Eastern notions of being and presence, became much of the motivation for this work, an agenda in pursuit of a contemporary spirituality. Much reliance in this research has been made on the psychoanalytic, specifically on the Lacanian notions of the symbolic, imaginary and the real.

Thank you to Duck Creek, The Dekooning Foundation,
Jess Frost, Hiroyuki Hamada, Mica Marder and
Mark Daniels Tree Service



end