

ARTSLANT MIAMI

Artist Spotlight: Nate Young at Untitled

by Jesi Khadivi, 12/2/2015



Minneapolis-based artist Nate Young’s recent sculptures and graphite drawings borrow equally from the diagrams of Swiss linguist and semiotician Ferdinand de Saussure, and from the visual material that the artist’s father uses in his sermons. Young evacuates all text from these diagrams, displaying them as pure form. At first glance, the gesture seems to undermine the didactic authority that these diagrams might possess.

However, a closer look at the work reveals that such codes have a material basis and are deeply implicated in the forms, shapes, and materialities they assume. The sculpture *Reliquary for a Declaration #6* depicts five slender circles inlaid in oak. In his move to combine de Saussure’s classic illustration of the relationship between signifier and signified with a common element of Christian church design (i.e. the oak used for pews), Young conflates elements of scientific and religious aesthetic authority. Despite their often-austere appearance, Young’s works also have a highly poetic quality. Young’s *Altar* series comprise delicate graphite drawings in oak frames. The altar works’ oak elements “frame” in more than one sense of the word. Not merely a picture frame, these sculptural structures draw attention to the act of framing—extending its meaning beyond an enclosure to point towards framing as a basic structure that underlies or supports a system, concept, or text. Young’s altars therefore encapsulate the duality of organized religion and spirituality by enveloping an ethereal graphite drawing within a dominating wooden frame.

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451 N Paulina Street, Chicago 60622
312 243 2129 moniquemeloche.com



Sheree Hovsepian and Nate Young, installation view, Monique Meloche Booth B25 at UNTITLED. Art Fair, Miami Beach, 2015.
Image courtesy of the artist and Monique Meloche Gallery, Chicago

Following a break-out solo exhibition with the gallery [Monique Meloche](#) in Chicago this past spring entitled *But not yet: in the spirit of linguistics*, Young had a solo presentation with gallery in the Present Future section of Artissima, Turin last month—an exclusive, invitation only section of the fair dedicated to presenting some of the most compelling emerging artist's working internationally. Those in Miami will be able to see his work in a promising two-person presentation at Untitled, where Monique Meloche will be showing Young's recent works alongside Sheree Hovsepian.

— Jesi Khadivi