

S.M.A.K.

PRESS RELEASE



N. Dash

earth

25.Jun.2022 – 6.Nov.2022

S.M.A.K. is proud to present **earth**, a solo exhibition with new works by the artist N. Dash (born 1980, Miami; lives and works in New York and New Mexico). The S.M.A.K exhibition marks Dash's first solo museum presentation in Europe.

In N. Dash's paintings, materials such as earth, paint, plastic bottles, string, agricultural netting, strips of Styrofoam, cast-off cardboard, and jute, are incorporated into complex, often multi-panel compositions that draw from the languages and methods of sculpture, photography, and printmaking. With a

notable economy of means, N. Dash's work expresses the tension between industrially produced goods and naturally occurring substances in an ecological vision that honors the land and its unseen energies.

The ground for many of N. Dash's compositions is earth from the desert, which is applied in smooth, graded surfaces that crack and fissure during the drying process, creating topological fields. These earthen grounds frequently serve as a base for various layers of ink, graphite, or paint, conjuring the sequential formation of planetary strata. This sense of geologic time is imbricated with materials that evoke biological cycles: N. Dash embeds and removes string from the smoothed-earth grounds, and coats lengths of cloth in pigment to act as wrapped or hanging elements, creating compositions that subtly blend diverse plant and mineral matter.

A preoccupation with undoing and remaking is apparent in N. Dash's practice of creating miniscule fabric sculptures. Working small pieces of machine-loomed fabric between fingers and thumb for long durations until the gridded threads collapse into suggestive, disorderly tangles, N. Dash literally unfastens a structured industrial product to create a new form that magnifies the power of touch, gesture, and ritual. Tiny in scale, gritty and stained, the abject qualities of these prelingual totems appear in finished compositions at a further remove: the fabric sculptures are photographed and then silkscreened as vastly enlarged versions of themselves. In this final stage, each sculpture's protean strangeness acts as a projective device, in which a viewer may identify all manner of imagined forms.

Another silkscreen application frequently appears in N. Dash's work: the transfer of ink onto a prepared earth ground through an open, unaltered screen or through a field of digitally produced rosettes—the structured pattern of dots that is foundational to halftone image-separation technology. The rosette, like many aspects of N. Dash's work, possesses a charged polarity: though it is an industry-standard printing convention, the rosette also has an organic aspect, as its geometric structure resembles the central ovule and petals of basic flower anatomy. As the rosettes are laid down across the ground, the silkscreen image unevenly maps the topography of the surface of the earth, as some areas accept the patterning and others remain bare, creating irregular areas of ink density and emptiness within the scaled-down territory of the painting.

At the center of N. Dash's work is a commitment to the energy of transformation, movement, and care. Transcending a simple nature/culture binary, the earth grounds fracture and set as water changes state through evaporation; multi-panel compositions echo architectural blueprints and man-made shelters, even as the presence and impressions of embedded strings recall irrigation conduits or energy meridians. N. Dash's more recent compositions incorporate new groups of ready-made everyday objects such as rags, rulers, and broomsticks—items used to protect, clean, and order. This simple attitude of custodianship lies at the heart of N. Dash's compositions: by applying the energy of human touch and ingenuity, humble materials are transmuted into transcendent, vital forms.

Biography

N. Dash was born in Miami, Florida in 1980 and earned a BA from New York University in 2003 and a MFA from Columbia University in 2010.

Dash's work was presented in one-person exhibitions at the Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, Ridgefield, WA (2019); Fondazione Giuliani, Rome ((2017); Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA (2014); White Flag Projects, St. Louis, Missouri (2013) and others.

The works have also been featured in thematic exhibitions such as *Open Ended: Painting and Sculpture, 1900 to Now*, SF MoMA, San Francisco, CA (2022); *Stories of Abstraction*, Fondation d'entreprise Pernod Ricard, Paris, France (2021); *Body Ego*, Dallas Museum of Art, TX (2018); *Third Space: Shifting Conversations about Contemporary Art*, Birmingham Museum of Art, Birmingham, AL (2017); *Excavating the Contemporary*, Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam (2015); *Repetition and Difference*, Jewish Museum, New York (2015); *The Possible*, Berkeley Art Museum, Berkeley, CA (2014); *The Independent: Dreams that Money Can't Buy*, Maxxi Museum, Rome, Italy (2014); *Notations: Contemporary Drawing as Idea and Process*, Kemper Art Museum, Washington University, St. Louis, MO (2012); *Transient Response / Land Tender*, High Desert Test Sites, Joshua Tree, CA (2011).

Works by N. Dash are included in the public collections of The Guggenheim Museum, New York, The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, SF MoMA, San Francisco, Sammlung Goetz, Munich, Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, FRAC des Pays de la Loire, Carquefou, The Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, The Margulies Collection, Miami, The Blanton Museum of Art, Austin, The Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, S.M.A.K., Ghent, and others.

Credit Image:

N. Dash, Untitled, 2021

earth, acrylic, canvas, silkscreen ink, jute

Courtesy the artist and Galerie Mehdi Chouakri, Berlin; Casey Kaplan Gallery, New York; Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp