

GALERIE TIMONIER

Nicolas Shake
Various Working Methods
September 7th - October 28th 2023

Galerie Timonier, in partnership with Dylan Brant, is pleased to present *Various Working Methods*: Nicolas Shake's first solo exhibition in New York City as well as the gallery's inaugural presentation.

What is remarkable about Nicolas Shake's sculptures is their emergent authenticity. They can be thought of as sandbox works—artworks motivated by play within definite procedural parameters. This approach might be contrasted with incontinuity parading as originality. In truth, limitation begets originality. It seems that today's artist who possesses the aesthetic trinity of beauty, originality, and quality is most likely a sandbox artist. This is distinct from serialism too insofar as serialism can be thought of as merely permutative—automatic. These artists are experimental. But in the context of a sandbox practice, experiments have a definite conclusion. In other words, the form-driven attitude of a practice with enforced limitations requires that the artist has developed for themselves definite standards of success or failure, without which their work would dissolve into aimlessness. This latter condition is what characterizes the status quo "radicalism" common in today's art.

The core artistic problem of our time regards the overcoming of postmodernism. In postmodernism, all essences are expressed in surfaces, surfaces permuted as pastiche, ad infinitum. In postmodernism, all attempts at authenticity are immediately reduced to stylistic affect. The postmodern cultural landscape is a whirlpool from which nothing can emerge with its authenticity intact. All is churned into style, and no style prevails over any other.

Shake's sculptures presented in *Various Working Methods* are constructed from the signature material of postmodernity: plastic. The sculptures can be cut, pasted, refashioned, bent, and recolored quite easily at any point in the process. Unlike stone, metal, or wood, thermal plastic's forgiving flexibility grants Shake a great degree of creative freedom from start to finish. The challenge is limitation. Faced with a fluid material which could culminate in practically any form, and a cultural landscape which is seemingly ready to accept anything, Shake gives himself over to a relatively specific sculptural project.

The elementary units in Shake's practice are strips of thermal plastic cast from tire tread. Shake's arrival to this sculptural constituent begins with his time after graduating from RISD in 2008, before heading to pursue an MFA at Claremont Graduate University. Returning to his family in his native home of Palmdale, California at the height of the financial recession, Shake began to incorporate found consumer products discarded into the desert into his artist practice. This manifested first in a series of photographs. Shake accumulated this consumer debris into architectural masses in the desert, lit them with work lamps, Christmas lights, and the headlights of his pickup truck, and photographed them. Eventually he began to cast some of the objects — a shopping cart, shovel, or tire — with consumer-grade craft plastic into ghostly shells.

From this abridged narration of Shake's use of found materials, a particular trajectory becomes apparent. Shake's sculptural investigations began with arranged piles of found objects, then moved to cast replications of these objects, before finally arriving at their present state. The formal characteristics of the found objects have been distilled to the extent that Shake has been able to extract from them their most useful formal trait. Contrasted to the piles in the desert, Shake's present sculptures have found a greater degree of inner authority from which they express themselves. The use of found materials has transformed from mere appropriation into adaptation. The tread is a remnant which operates according to new principles. Its form has been sublimated into an abstract language over the course of Shake's artistic development. Those familiar with Shake's work are likely acquainted with his paintings. Those too originate in the Palmdale desert in 2008. There is another story there which accounts for half of Shake's artistic life. The history of Shake's sculptures shows that their aesthetic ambitions did not emerge all at once. Their current prioritization of immediate formal persuasiveness only strengthened over time, through Shake's incessant wrestling with the intellectual content and aesthetic form of his found materials.

Shake's artistic consistency comes into focus when one considers the specificity of his artistic project against the distinct malleability of his material. In the balance between a consistent basic formal structure and a commitment to aesthetic persuasiveness, Shake's sculptures contain a contradictory sense of newness and maturity. His capacity to mediate continuity and change in his practice speaks to his valuation of both discovery and patience. Shake's artistic integrity is a directive for the way through the post-modern hall of mirrors towards a newfound authenticity.

Text by Grant Edward Tyler

Nicolas Shake (b. 1981, Northridge, CA) lives and works between Los Angeles and Pearblossom, CA. He received his BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design in 2008, and his MFA from Claremont Graduate University in 2011. Shake was an artist in residence at the Chinati Foundation in 2019. Recent group exhibitions include: *Asymmetrical Orbits*, University of La Verne Harris Gallery, La Verne, CA; *Planes, Trains and Automobiles*, Galeria Mascota, Mexico City; *I'll Be Your Mirror*, Brant-Timonier, Palm Beach, FL.



Nicolas Shake
Untitled (Red Weathered)
thermal plastic, dye, and dirt, weathered
29 x 30 1/4 x 8 1/2 in. | 73.7 x 76.2 x 21.6 cm. | 2023



Nicolas Shake

Untitled (CPL.W.B.4.21-1)

thermal plastic, dye, dirt, petroleum, pigment, and palm frond
24.2 x 25.5 x 7.7 in. | 62.2 x 64.8 x 19.6 cm. | 2021



Nicolas Shake
Untitled (Patchwork and Gradient)
thermal plastic, and dye
33 x 32 3/4 x 10 3/4 in. | 83.8 x 83.2 x 27.3 cm. | 2023



Nicolas Shake

Untitled (structures of support)

thermal plastic, dye, dirt, and petroleum

49 1/2 x 46 x 13 in. | 125.7 x 116.8 x 33 cm. | 2022



Nicolas Shake
Untitled (green lantern)
thermal plastic, dye, and dirt
26 x 32 x 14 in. | 66 x 81.3 x 35.6 cm. | 2021



Nicolas Shake

Untitled (Blue Bell)

thermal plastic, dye, and dirt, weathered

20 3/8 x 19 1/4 x 6 1/2 in. | 51.8 x 48.9 x 16.5 cm. | 2021