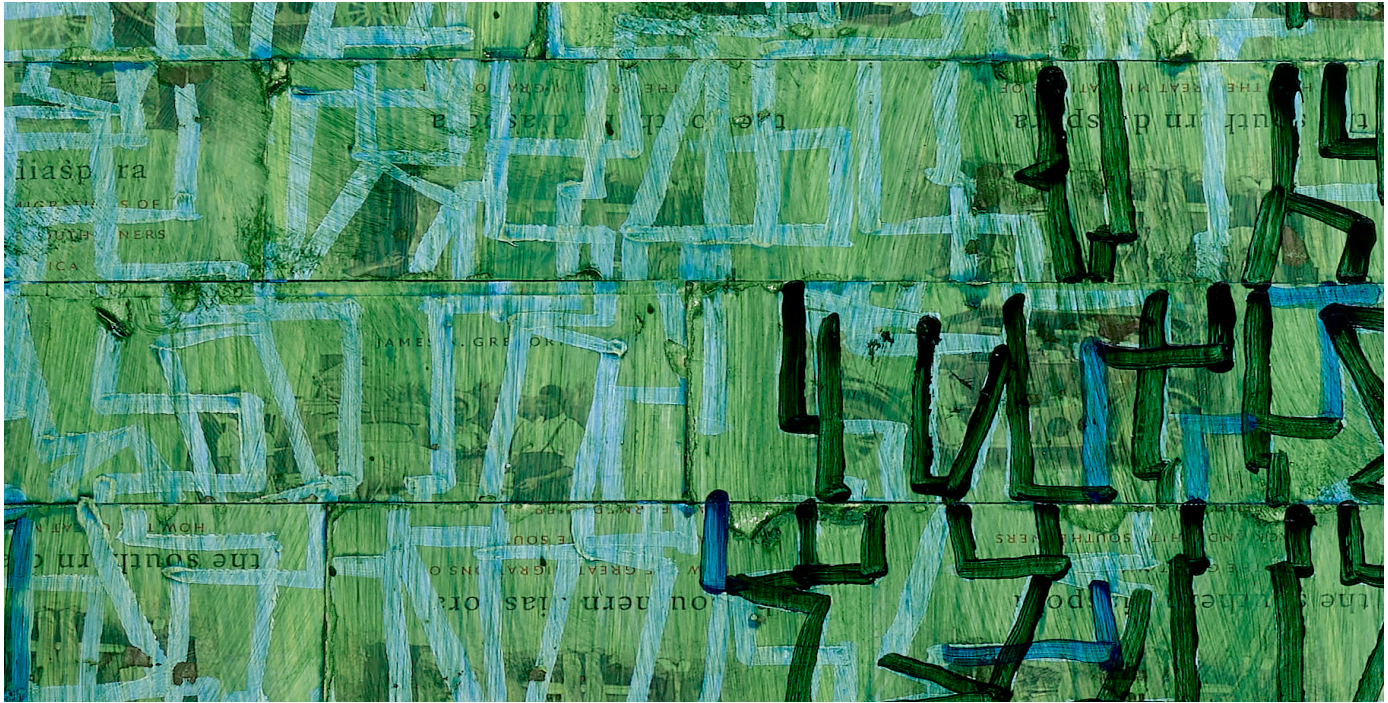




NEUBAUER
COLLEGIUM
FOR CULTURE AND SOCIETY



Rick Lowe, *Notes on the Great Migration 2, 2022* (detail).
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Courtesy the artist and Gagosian.

Rick Lowe

Notes on the Great Migration

Oct 25, 2022 – Feb 10, 2023

For well over three decades, Rick Lowe's name has been closely associated with the social practice paradigm in contemporary art, an activist offshoot of Joseph Beuys's famed *Sozialplastik*, or "social sculpture," which the Houston-based artist helped pioneer. The most widely fêted example continues to be Lowe's *Project Row Houses* (1993–2018), an arts and cultural community located in his adopted hometown's historical Third Ward.

Notes on the Great Migration is Lowe's first solo exhibition in Chicago. Its title is an allusion to the Midwestern metropolis's history as an emancipatory mecca for generations of African Americans from the Deep South. (Lowe was born in rural Alabama in 1961 and grew up on a sharecropping farm.) However, the suite of paintings that constitute these "notes" also incorporate references to the artist's ongoing *Black Wall Street Journey* project, conceived in the context of the exhibition *Toward Common Cause: Art, Social Change and the MacArthur Fellows Program at 40*. (Lowe received a MacArthur Fellowship in 2014.) The collaborative demands of *Black Wall Street Journey* led to the artist's residency as a Neubauer Collegium Visiting Fellow from 2019 to 2021.

Following the critical success of his New York solo debut, *Meditations on Social Sculpture*, on view at Gagosian through October 22, 2022, Lowe's exhibition at the University of Chicago expands the purview of the artist's "return" to painting – the

language of his initial training as an artist at Columbus State Community College in Georgia in the early 1980s. It is tempting, of course, to frame this return to what is in essence a solitary studio practice within the larger context of the Covid pandemic's corrosive impact on socially engaged art strategies. For many months it was impossible for Lowe to physically meet the people who are so integral to so many of his larger-scale, socially complex community projects. But the resultant paintings' gridded, cartographic aesthetic clearly taps into the artist's thirty-year experience navigating and visualizing the fraying fabric of our inner cities. The fact that eight of the paintings in *Notes on the Great Migration* are shown lying face-up on eight moveable tabletops (the eight square tables can be put together to form one large table, which can be used to convene meetings around) calls to mind the talismanic, foundational role of the game of dominoes in Lowe's practice. In some of his recent monumental paintings, the domino stone appears as a signature building block; in the presentation of the paintings at the Neubauer Collegium, we are reminded of the domino table as the microcosm that has engendered so many of Lowe's creative relationships. A complement of eight scroll-like paintings adorns the walls around the tables. Their densely layered visual appearance, full of fragmentary references to diasporas and migrations of all kinds, recall the glyphs and graphs that shape everyday urban living – think of it as a long-form poem of the legible city.

Rick Lowe is a Professor of Interdisciplinary Practice at the University of Houston. A large-scale multi-panel painting of his is currently on view at the Moody Center for the Arts at nearby Rice University. Lowe has exhibited at the city's Contemporary Arts Museum and Museum of Fine Arts, as well as at the Blanton Museum of Art in Austin, Texas; the Museum of Contemporary Arts in Los Angeles; the Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas; and the Phoenix Art Museum. He was a participant in the Gwangju Biennale in South Korea in 1997 and in Documenta 14 in Athens (2017), the site of his ongoing *Victoria Square Project*.

In the spring of 2023, the Neubauer Collegium will publish a monograph highlighting Lowe's work in Athens, Chicago, and Houston.

Curated by Dieter Roelstraete.

MEDIA INQUIRIES

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