

The Jewish Museum

After "The Wild": Contemporary Art from the Barnett and Annalee Newman Foundation Collection

STOP LIST

- 100. Introduction
- 101. Barnett Newman, *Projection of The Wild*
- 102. Sam Gilliam, *Column Series*, 1963
- 103. Keith Sonnier, *Neon Wrapping II*, 2003, based on a 1969 drawing
- 104. Peter Halley, *Untitled Works*, 2005-13
- 105. Terry Winters, *Clouds and Clocks*, 2012
- 106. Lynda Benglis, *Figure 6*, 2012
- 107. Robert Gray Murray, *Double Diamond*, 2013
- 108. Nancy Rubins, *Diversifolia #1*, 2017
- 109. Amnon Ben-Ami, *Cushions*, 2017
- 110. Serge Alain Nitegeka, *Colour and Form L*, 2018
- 111. Judy Pfaff, *Quartet 5*, 2018
- 112. Fred Tomaselli, *Study for June 2, 2018*, 2018
- 113. Sarah Sze, *Red Rotation*, 2019-20
- 114. Mel Kendrick, *Blue Holes II*, 2018

100. Introduction

CLAUDIA GOULD: Hello, this is Claudia Gould, Helen Goldsmith Menschel Director at the Jewish Museum. Welcome to *After "The Wild": Contemporary Art from the Barnett and Annalee Newman Foundation Collection*, an exhibition of works by recipients of The Barnett and Annalee Newman Foundation Award.

The son of Polish Jewish immigrants, a graduate of City College and a life-long New Yorker, Barnett Newman was both a theorist and a trailblazing artist who strove, as he put it, "to paint as if painting never existed before." Newman's extraordinary breakthroughs would come to define Abstract Expressionism and color field painting, influencing generations to come.

From 2004 to 2020, the Barnett and Annalee Newman Foundation provided grants to 47 artists who exemplify Newman's legacy of independence and individual expression. Diverse in style, training, nationality and age, these artists have staked out new territories in both traditional and new media. A major gift from the Newman Foundation to the Jewish Museum includes works from each of these artists, many of whom are new to the museum's collection.

On this audio tour, you'll hear from exhibition Guest Curator Kelly Taxter, and Leon Levy Associate Curator at the Jewish Museum, Shira Backer, as well as 11 artists, some of whom were mentored by Newman himself. And we'll explore the spirit of *The Wild*, one of Newman's most mysterious and unconventional paintings, and how that spirit lives on.

101. Barnett Newman, *Projection of The Wild*

KELLY TAXTER: Artist Peter Halley.

PETER HALLEY: It is a wild painting. And it's really a radical experiment in what a painting can be.

KELLY TAXTER: I'm Kelly Taxter, Guest Curator of this exhibition. You're looking at a projection of *The Wild*, a painting by Barnett Newman with unusual dimensions: 8 feet tall, and a mere 1 ½ inches wide. It was first exhibited in 1951 at the Betty Parsons Gallery in New York, at that time it was *Untitled*. The work reflects some of Newman's ideas about what painting could be. Artist Terry Winters.

TERRY WINTERS: He was serving a new kind of space for painting: painting as an object, painting as an idea, painting as like a physical space.

KELLY TAXTER: *The Wild's* composition consists of a dark orange vertical band, bordered in black. Newman called this band a "zip." Artist Robert Gray Murray.

ROBERT GRAY MURRAY: Those narrow paintings were kind of an attempt of making the painting without the canvas, without the second color.

KELLY TAXTER: For Newman, a straight line was not just a line, but, as he said, "an organic thing that can contain feeling."

TERRY WINTERS: He tried to move abstraction out of the design phase, and into some sort of psychological or emotional space.

KELLY TAXTER: Like many exhibitions that were ahead of their time, Newman's 1951 Parsons show was a critical and commercial failure. Newman would not show this painting again for several years. But in 1958 it reemerged in an exhibition that won him acclaim and a new generation of acolytes. "They say that I have advanced abstract painting to its extreme," he wrote, "when it is obvious to me that I have made only a new beginning."

Around 1960 this narrow painting was given a title: *The Wild*. Artist Sarah Sze.

SARAH SZE: *The Wild* is such a beautiful title because there's no limit to wild.

KELLY TAXTER: The artists in this exhibition—a group spanning several generations—have each in their own way, grappled with what it is to inhabit the spirit of the “wild”—to give form, like Newman’s zip, to something boundless and uncontained, testing their limits and pushing art ever forward.

102. Sam Gilliam, *Column Series*, 1963

KELLY TAXTER: Sam Gilliam was born in Tupelo, Mississippi and grew up in Louisville, Kentucky. He received his art training at the University of Louisville, where many of his teachers were Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany. They provided the academic grounding and support that prepared him for his career as an artist.

Gilliam is perhaps best known for richly pigmented, draped raw canvases hung on walls and suspended from ceilings. But as a young artist in Washington, D.C., Gilliam was still making traditionally stretched canvases. His primary concerns were color and geometry, creating abstractions like the one you see here.

When Gilliam arrived in Washington in 1962, color-field painting was already well established. Morris Louis, Alma Thomas, Kenneth Noland, and other artists of what was known as the Washington Color School, were drawing national attention to the city's modern art scene.

During that formative period Gilliam also made trips to the Museum of Modern Art in New York, where the works of painters like Frank Stella and Barnett Newman would make a lasting impression. Artist Sam Gilliam.

SAM GILLIAM: And it became a very important thing to realize that when I had come to Washington and had more time to see New York and to see the true painting of the '50s in a sense, I began to feel, and quite rightly so, that the David Parks, the Oliveras, and the Diebenkorns were one and the same kind of space and painting that was being advanced by Rothko, by Newman, by Marca-Relli, by Tomlin; and literally, in a way, in terms of even the 19th-century Hudson River school, the sense of the painting – the scale of it – was literally a very frontal, very kind of thin thing that that you really had the confidence to feel that you had experienced. And thus, almost within a year after I'd come to Washington, I was no longer painting figures. I was doing what I felt was necessary to do –facing the presence.

KELLY TAXTER: Just a few years after Gilliam painted *Column Series*, he began to rethink the formal constraints of painting, liberating the canvas from the stretcher entirely. Like Newman's *The Wild*, these works would reshape what painting could look like. And Gilliam would continue to push against the outer limits throughout his six-decade career.

[Oral history interview with Sam Gilliam, 1984 Sept. 18. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.]

103. Keith Sonnier, *Neon Wrapping II*, 2003, based on a 1969 drawing

SHIRA BACKER: I'm Shira Backer, Leon Levy Associate Curator at the Jewish Museum.

Keith Sonnier began experimenting with neon lights in 1968, making him a pioneer in its use as an art medium. This early work shows an affinity with the geometric compositions of Piet Mondrian, the Dutch painter who constructed rhythmic grids of sharp black lines and squares in primary colors. Like Newman's *The Wild*, *Neon Wrapping II* questions the boundaries between media. You might think of it as drawing in space.

Sonnier grew up in Mamou, Louisiana, in the heart of Cajun country, where his father owned a hardware store, and where he was inspired by the neon signs that glowed outside nightclubs. He arrived in New York in the '60s, at a time when artists like Dan Flavin and Donald Judd were experimenting with industrial materials. And while Sonnier's intention here may have been to form straight lines like Mondrian, his materials seem to have a mind of their own. You'll notice subtle curves at the ends of the tubes where they've been affixed to one another with these very rough-and-ready-looking braces. That's because a line, when it's realized in space, actually ends up bending; it has to have tensegrity, the principle of floating compression, to hold itself up.

Barnett Newman once defined his "zips," the vertical lines in his work, as streaks of light, and you might feel a similar aura emanating from these neon tubes. Like Newman, who believed that a line could contain a feeling, Sonnier was interested in the psychological effects of light and color. But unlike a painted line, the glowing bulbs cast shadows that become integral to the work.

104. Peter Halley, *Untitled Works*, 2005–13

PETER HALLEY: You're looking at an urban technological landscape, not just a arrangement of forms on a canvas.

KELLY TAXTER: That was artist Peter Halley. Since the 1980s, Halley has been working with a vocabulary of shapes and lines all his own.

PETER HALLEY: Living in Manhattan, I began to think that geometric abstract paintings were not so abstract after all. They had this strong correspondence to the way the urban landscape is arranged. We spend a lot of our time alone in an apartment, connected to an electric grid and water flowing in from reservoirs and even air, supplied by air conditioning. The telephone might ring. Here we are in these isolated spaces, but we're connected by predetermined pathways.

KELLY TAXTER: Halley began the first of these works with a barred square or rectangle, which he called a "prison."

PETER HALLEY: Below the prisoner cell, there would be a thick line going across, and then taking a left-hand turn up into the cell or prison. And the idea is that these were underground conduits that were providing either electricity or communication to the cell or the prison. Over the years that whole system has sort of exploded and become more baroque and the arrangements became more absurdist.

KELLY TAXTER: Today, in a world that is simultaneously lonelier and more networked, Halley's paintings seem ahead of their time. But in the '80s, critics still expected compositions of shapes and lines to be just that—geometric abstractions that transcended real-world concerns. There was nothing transcendent in Halley's diagrams of prison cells and power lines.

PETER HALLEY: I was really engaged in a conscious attack on the sort of spiritual aspect of abstraction, and I was taking many of the tools of geometric abstraction and saying this is not about expressing spirituality or transcendence, but rather expressing power relations in our contemporary world.

It was provocative. And it was intended to be provocative. We don't have it enough anymore, but I think there's nothing better in the art world than a good argument.

That is a way in which I most relate to Barnett Newman. The paintings he created and what he had to say about them was provocative. A lot of people didn't like what he was saying. And so, for me, he provides a kind of role model.

105. Terry Winters, *Clouds and Clocks*, 2012

TERRY WINTERS: My name is Terry Winters and I'm a painter. I make what many people will consider abstract paintings, but to me they're not very abstract.

SHIRA BACKER: Perhaps you don't see a cloud, or a clock, in Winters' circles and squares. What you're looking at is a repeating, tessellated system, like a mosaic—one in which the rules of geometry coexist with dynamic and seemingly random events, like those that shape clouds.

TERRY WINTERS: The philosopher Karl Popper, speaking about different kinds of scientific descriptions of the world, said that everything was either a clock or a cloud: a rational system versus a chaotic system. And both of those things describe qualities of the world.

I think that both of those things are happening between the mapping of the drawing—I work on groups of smaller black-and-white drawings that are really the first place the images appear—and the painting process itself, which is kind of a chaotic system. Chaotic in the sense of chaos theory. You know, the butterfly effect. The smallest change in the environment affects the eventual outcome. And each of those events pushes the painting further along the trail. And the further along the trail, the circumstances change. So, it's always mutating. It's a possibility of a painting building on itself.

So, you're just sort of like moving the picture along. I mean of course, I'm part of the process. But there's something developing and I'm trying to build that kind of new image of it. And that new image necessarily contains both aspects of the clock and the cloud.

SHIRA BACKER: In investigating what he calls "the reality of the invisible," Winters is carrying on the legacy of Barnett Newman, whose work he first encountered as a teenager at the Guggenheim Museum.

TERRY WINTERS: It just confounded me in a way. But I felt an immediate connection to it. Somehow Newman was projecting some felt totality onto the surface. It just was a new kind of information space for me to think about what a picture and a painting could be. He's big! He's big! He's really a big, big, big figure.

106. Lynda Benglis, *Figure 6*, 2012

LYNDA BENGLIS: There's something underneath and inside. It runs. When I made it, I said, oh, that's my medieval dragon. I look at it, and I just think of the word "ziggurat."

KELLY TAXTER: That was artist Lynda Benglis. In her hands, soft materials like poured latex, polyurethane foam and molten metal are hardened and frozen in time, while hard materials like stainless steel mesh and aluminum become soft and pliant. Here, twisted aluminum takes on a biomorphic shape.

LYNDA BENGLIS: The contradiction of material and illusion, I think I've always been involved with that. The process of form. Symbolic form and growth form.

KELLY TAXTER: As a young artist in New York, Benglis was mentored by Barnett Newman.

LYNDA BENGLIS: Barnett Newman was definitely an Old Testament character. He was so stringent. I was able to hone that focus and make my own formats and he was instrumental in helping me do that. Throwing my paint, rubber on the floor, trying to wrestle with my sheets but wrestling with my dreams, wrestling with my future always, trying to make form out of ideas and trying to understand the process of life. Long discussions about allusion and illusion. Is figure painting dead? What is ground and what is figure? Nobody thought of those ideas but Mondrian, and then you go back, and you go back, and you go back to Giotto, and you go back, and you go back, and you think "ziggurat." What is a profile of a building? A mound or a ziggurat? What are the original shapes?

KELLY TAXTER: This is how conversations would go, over spinach omelets at Katz's Delicatessen, after a late night of drinking and dancing. The young artists in Newman's orbit learned to continually interrogate their work, not just *what* they were doing but *why*. And that rigor has informed Benglis' restless exploration of materials—from beeswax to gold leaf and even video, over a wide-ranging, six-decade career.

107. Robert Gray Murray, *Double Diamond*, 2013

ROBERT GRAY MURRAY: Growing up in Canada, we all did landscape painting. So, it wasn't until I really met Barney that my work started to get really abstract. He used to be rather severe about it. He called landscape painting "souvenir art."

KELLY TAXTER: Robert Gray Murray is known for dramatic outdoor sculptures that synthesize his early training as a landscape painter with the bold statements of color-field painting. He met Barnett Newman in 1959 at a workshop in Saskatchewan, and soon followed him to New York, assisting in the studio while pursuing his own practice. Today Murray lives in Pennsylvania but keeps a summer place on an island in Ontario. Artist Robert Gray Murray.

ROBERT GRAY MURRAY: *Double Diamond* was done up at The Iron Worker, which is a place I often work with when I'm up in Canada. I found these guys originally because I bought a boat from them. So, I said, "Would you entertain the idea of me coming in, working with your guys and making some sculpture?"

Its subject is actually the way in which the pieces, or the elements, are manipulated, or in this case, the way the aluminum is bent. It's really a play off between the two curves, which go in opposing ways.

KELLY TAXTER: Each of Murray's sculptures begins with a small wooden model.

ROBERT GRAY MURRAY: This is an interim version. And no one has expressed an interest in me building a large one yet, so there probably won't be a large one. But I sometimes end up with what I call a Mama Bear and a Papa Bear and a Baby Bear (Laughs) version of the pieces.

KELLY TAXTER: After Newman's death, Murray helped Annalee preserve her husband's legacy, in one instance reconstructing his 1950 sculpture *Here I* for Houston's Menil Museum.

ROBERT GRAY MURRAY: We went to Barney's warehouse to see if by some stretch of the imagination the molds might be there. And sure enough, we found the molds. We shipped the pieces out to the foundry, and I worked with the guys in the plaster room. We rebuilt *Here I*.

108. Nancy Rubins, *Diversifolia* #1, 2017

NANCY RUBINS: I figured out when I was really young that if I wasn't worried about firing things in the kiln, the material itself left me a lot of room for discovery and invention.

SHIRA BACKER: Nancy Rubins is known for enormous sculptures made from found materials: TV sets, airplane parts, and here, life-size cast-metal animals, manufactured to adorn lawns and storefronts.

NANCY RUBINS: The work that you're looking at is a study that eventually became *Agrifolia Majoris*. What this very large sculpture is made of is buffalo, elk, deer, moose, crocodiles and alligators, alligators with the tail going to the left, alligators with the tail going to the right, alligators with their head up. Storks, storks with weird faces. Wolves. Wolves with their heads up. Wolves on the prowl. Wolves sitting down. Wolves howling. Wolves mounted on these weird, rectangular square boxes. Life-sized hogs. Wild boar. Giraffes.

When I start weaving them together, like antlers, and strange legs, and tails that fit into each other, we drill holes and expand wires from those holes, and those elements, those animal forms, are held together with tension and compression. It's an additive process, and me and my crew, and our crane and our forklifts, and our articulated booms, can develop these exquisite articulated cantilevers and attenuations that grow out from the central area of the work.

When I'm making the model, I make these forms to scale and then I pretend that my hand is the crane picking the elements up in the sky, and I can adjust the direction and I can see how these cantilevers can be developed with these different shaped forms. My intent was to take these elements and to develop this highly abstracted form that also gives you the impression that it could keep growing forever.

109. Amnon Ben-Ami, *Cushions*, 2017

AMNON BEN-AMI: My wife went for a trip in Thailand, and she brought back these two cushions. And it took a while and then something caught my attention.

AMNON BEN-AMI: My name is Amnon Ben-Ami. I live in Jerusalem, in Israel.

A lot of my work is still lifes and other objects. It's what surrounds me. It's ordinary things: air conditioner or a chair or a sugar container. Anything, it can be anything.

I depicted these two cushions schematically to the canvas. They're originally rectangles, but I changed them a bit to be squares. The way I paint it is very flat. The composition is very hermetic and symmetric. And there's a strong sense of geometry there. The rest of it is not painted. There's a big contrast between the colors of the cushions and what surrounds them. It's very important to me, the painting and the non-painting in the canvas.

SHIRA BACKER: In depicting an ordinary household object, Ben-Ami creates a work of abstraction.

AMNON BEN-AMI: This term is not clear to anybody. We use it like we know what we talking about, but abstraction is very wide concept. The place where you create from is abstraction, you know? I consider the artist himself as an abstraction of which each work is an individuation of this abstraction.

SHIRA BACKER: Like Barnett Newman, Ben-Ami's work is informed by philosophy—in Ben-Ami case, by the writings of the German philosopher Martin Heidegger, who saw artists and their work as co-dependent. Heidegger wrote: "The artist is the origin of the work," and "The work is the origin of the artist. Neither is without the other."

AMNON BEN-AMI: This is my drive to make art, you know? Some objects you don't like to paint. And some you do. What I feel, it doesn't really matter. And you work. I work a lot. I make a lot of work. But that's (Chuckles) what I chose to do.

110. Serge Alain Nitegeka, *Colour and Form L*, 2018

SERGE ALAIN NITEGEKA: Form and color inform each other; they're the building blocks of how we see space and how we think about space. There's an argument being put forward that things have to make sense: the angles, the cleanness of lines.

SERGE ALAIN NITEGEKA: My name is Serge Alain Nitegeka. I'm an artist based in Johannesburg. I was born in Rwanda, in Kigali in 1983. I left when I was 11, when there was a civil war and genocide. I wasn't allowed to take anything; I think only had the clothes on me. Now I'm older and I look back and think how the body processes such trauma, mental displacement, physical displacement.

KELLY TAXTER: Nitegeka is known for installations that invite the viewer to engage with the experience of forced migration by navigating an obstacle course. You might think of this painting as a map of one such imaginary space—but perhaps one that's a little more inviting.

SERGE ALAIN NITEGEKA: That painting was painted flat. So, it's me looking down on it. There's almost like a planning going on. Where would I enter from, or how would I exit? The quarter and half-circle forms are metaphorical of a door.

KELLY TAXTER: Nitegeka's vocabulary of forms and colors has expanded only recently.

SERGE ALAIN NITEGEKA: For a long time, my palette was strictly black, white and red. The works I was creating were very minimalistic; very brutal, very straight lines. It was just like you go here, you know? But with a curve it's like: Ehh, you can just slide along and, you know, go that way or that way. The curves came along with the softer colors; the blue and the yellow.

I was sitting around with those two colors for a while, maybe two years, before I had the courage to try them. It was only after my first child that something just clicked. And it was like, "Okay, I'm going to open those cans and do something with it." It's almost like letting go. If you look at my personal history, it's acceptance.

111. Judy Pfaff, *Quartet 5*, 2018

JUDY PFAFF: Most artwork looks stingy to me, that you have to know something more than you do already to absorb it, or to enjoy it. This piece especially, it's not taxing. It's easy on the eyes in a way. I said at one point I thought it was sort of pretty, which is something I sort of never think about.

JUDY PFAFF: My name is Judy Pfaff. I mostly do quite large, kind of theatrical installations, room-filling, and kind of one-of-a-kind. There's usually a lot of color. There's usually too much, is what I think I've been told. The piece is like a mini installation in a funny way.

I think of it as kind of like if you had a decorator come to your house, and they opened up a storyboard of what your furniture would look like on top of that rug.

The whole background is from a book of flowers. The things on top of that wallpaper expand, in dimensional ways, the flatness of the background. The lower right, that cluster of paper hats, almost like a chrysanthemum or something, that's just so celebratory-looking to me. That was like the last thing I put in. And I was really pleased how it energized the whole feeling in that piece.

SHIRA BACKER: In frames handmade and painted by the artist, she's hung works painted on vintage ledger paper from Jaipur, India.

JUDY PFAFF: You know that kind of dilemma that you always hear artists talk about? It's like how hard it is to look at a blank piece of paper and begin. These papers have writing and stains and worm holes. I use it because it has this history, and it's small enough that I can't go haywire.

SHIRA BACKER: For Pfaff, each work is an opportunity to journey further into the wild.

JUDY PFAFF: I'm trying to become wilder. Every show I do I introduce a new material. I have nine buildings full of stuff. So yeah, more wild, more, more ideas. "Wilder," what it conjures up. I like the image of that, you know? Wilder.

112. Fred Tomaselli, *Study for June 2, 2018*, 2018

KELLY TAXTER: Artist Fred Tomaselli.

FRED TOMASELLI: I grew up pretty close to Disneyland. Every night at nine o'clock, the fireworks would go off, Tinkerbell would fly through the sky. I thought it was normal.

I came of age in the '70s. There was a general sense of reality malaise that permeated the culture, with Ronald Reagan becoming like a meta-politician, a person who's acting as a president. And I inherited this legacy of this reality compromised world. And I put that into my work.

It started out with me using the tropes that came out of theme parks to talk about the landscape of the unreal that we were living in. That then segued to me putting pills into the work, so instead of going to the bloodstream to alter consciousness, they travel through the eyeball. So, it was a different route to altering perception.

KELLY TAXTER: Fred Tomaselli first earned notoriety with psychedelic collages of pharmaceutical pills and psychoactive plants. You can still find home-grown marijuana leaves in this study for a larger work, but these days he's replaced the pills with headlines from *The New York Times*.

FRED TOMASELLI: I'm really lucky to be an artist and I have this sort of wonderful little envelope that I live in, in my studio, where I get to do what I want and listen to the music I want. And it's a kind of a paradise. But I'm bombarded from the outside by the calamity of the world that comes through my phone and through the radio and through print media. So that's what led to this work.

They're all texts from that day. I cut them up in ways that makes it very difficult to actually read sentences. I wanted it to not make a lot of sense because in the bombardment of the media age that we live in it's increasingly hard to make sense out of what's happening.

KELLY TAXTER: This work may bring to mind fireworks exploding over Cinderella's castle in the Magic Kingdom—or something violent, ripped from the headlines.

FRED TOMASELLI: I'd like to think that it could be both, a sinister and a celebratory event, simultaneously.

113. Sarah Sze, *Red Rotation*, 2019–20

SARAH SZE: I'm interested in any artwork feeling like it's live, that the viewer is in the process of actually putting together the image themselves.

SARAH SZE: My name is Sarah Sze, and I'm an artist.

Red Rotation is scaled purposely so that it kind of fills the periphery of your vision. How do you orient yourself within the image? There is a horizon line that's very deep and far and vast, and then there are objects that feel much closer to you. So, you're kind of teetering between several planes at once.

If you look on the far right, there's a photograph I took of Greenland and that is obeying all these vertical lines of the composition, but it's not obeying gravity. Kind of center, this is an image of my finger pointing into a bowl of water, that actually is from a time-lapse film I took of the sky, kind of breaking a screen. So, you have this radical scale shift. And it's very tactile. It's a really tactile way to experience an image.

KELLY TAXTER: You might think of *Red Rotation* as a collage of the many ways images can be made.

SARAH SZE: On the far left, it has a kind of silver paint, like a printer's plate. When you make a print, they clean the plate by letting paper roll. The image just starts ghosting, ghosting, ghosting. And I was just interested in how images are collected in our own mind and how certain ones ghost and certain ones rise to the top.

KELLY TAXTER: Sze leaves tape as evidence of her process.

SARAH SZE: It's a process of putting together and taking away and decision-making and barely holding together. I want it to be on the edge of self-destruction. But then I edit the tape back and add tape so that it becomes also a kind of mark. So, it's that tension between control and lack of control. This idea of *The Wild*, I think that's very much about when you're making work and when you're viewing work is to be in a place that's open to the unknown.

114. Mel Kendrick, *Blue Holes II*, 2018

MEL KENDRICK: One of the very earliest forms of sculpture or monument-making is stacking stones, and they're all over the world. There seems to be some satisfaction in stacking things. And this, in some way, comes out of that.

MEL KENDRICK: I'm Mel Kendrick, (Laughs) a artist, I guess I could call myself a sculptor, in the East Village. I work primarily in wood.

These are shapes that are taken out of another sculpture. I was cutting holes out of this block of wood, and I thought that the holes were quite interesting on their own. Perhaps even more interesting. And so, I started stacking them. It's about balance, but then the balance becomes almost cartoonlike, because it can't balance that way. That gives it sort of a wacky formalism.

It's key to me that everything in the making of this is visible. I basically have to build the whole thing and then take it apart and make it permanent. So, there's a lot of potential action on the surface. And pretty much I leave it there as part of the work.

You can see, I think, white pencil marks. It may be marked or may be cut with something in mind that disappears in the process. But the history's there. And it comes from that fact that if you're making a sculpture, there always seems to be a stage that is really interesting, but you have to destroy it to keep going where you're think you're going. I make a cut and it doesn't work out; I glue it back together. So, everything is evident more or less in the sculpture.

I hope people see this piece as humorous. Because it's absolutely goofy. It makes no sense whatsoever. And that's a good thing. I'm attacking the wild and cutting it into small, small pieces. Digestible parts. (Laughs) Still from the wild.