

Ian L.C. Swordy

Direct Carving

March 25 - April 11, 2023

Moskowitz Bayse is pleased to present *Direct Carving*, an exhibition of new sculpture by Brooklyn-based artist Ian L.C. Swordy. The occasion marks the artist's second solo presentation at the gallery, and will be installed in our Viewing Room from March 25 – April 22, 2023. We will host an opening reception on Saturday, March 25 from 6-8pm.

Continuing his engagement with the philosophical and aesthetic underpinnings of revolutionary Modernism, Ian Swordy's sculptures consider the labor quotient of direct stone carving, positioning that action as a performative, participatory one. The two pillars of his practice, sculptural collages of found urban detritus and carved stone and marble, find the artist advancing an understanding of artistic intention as actualized by making, just as performance and theater are made real through enactment.

This idea, standing in opposition to current distillates of Dada thought, returns to an approach to sculpture as a two-headed struggle against self and material, toward the triumph of a clawing, sometimes elusive plastic vision; poetry and meaning realized through action by way of countless reductions and responses to stone. His marble and assembled sculptures posit what the forms of Barbara Hepworth or Kurt Schwitters might have looked like if they were carved in prehistoric times or collaged from junk, or, what the punk apprentices in quattrocento Florence did with their spare marble.

Swordy's stone works exist somewhere between the desire for a pristine, polished finish and a fascination with the visible hand. In *Egg Peace*, smooth, finely sanded marble sits on top of a smoothed pad of found walnut, itself perched on a hewn and varnished log left over from a construction site. Angular, jutting, craggy, bulbous, Swordy's broad repertoire of forms and range of materials recalls Brancusi and Arp, and shares those artists' belief in material and form's combined ability to reveal the essence of an abstract object. A series of small wood-and-stone works titled *Dove II-VII* recall that animal in varied states of motion, a continuation of subject matter explored more literally in earlier bodies of work.

Positioning DIY-infused atavism as a path forward, the artist considers the liberties taken in the pursuit of some strains of art-as-idea, and the broader implications of those projects. Punching holes in materialist relativity's closed set of rules and immobile codes, Swordy invites challenge and dialogue. Swordy's earnest pursuit of form refutes the increasingly contested notion of a linear artistic progress and directionality. The chisel is still the chisel; the hand is still the hand.

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Ian L.C. Swordy (b. 1982) earned a BFA from Hunter College (2007), and an MFA from Yale University (2009). His most recent solo exhibition, *Hammer Time*, was presented at Moskowitz Bayse in Los Angeles (2020). Recent group and two-person exhibitions include *Local Objects* at International Objects in Brooklyn, NY (2023), *Totum*, organized by Kyle DeWoody (2021), *The Moonlight Works*, at Moskowitz Bayse (2019), and *Heartist*, at The Hand, Brooklyn (2019). Swordy's first two books, *The Bull Loving Truth* and *Will and Grace* were published in 2016 and 2020 respectively. He lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.