

ART & CULTURE

Artist to Watch: Dan John Anderson's Sculptures Celebrate the Spiritual Essence of Wood

Working from a desert compound in California's Yucca Valley, the artist is presenting a series of bold new totemic works at Night Gallery in L.A. on July 12

BY OSMAN CAN YEREBAKAN

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476 (2024).

PHOTO: NIK MASSEY, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND NIGHT GALLERY, LOS ANGELES.



Dan John Anderson
PHOTO: COLIN SUSSINGHAM

Dan John Anderson finds an unexpected parallel between tuning a musical instrument and sculpting wood. To the Yucca Valley, California, artist, carving blackened cedar, redwood, or walnut into his desired surface can echo a sonic search on a string. “There is a feeling of knowing the right harmony with a back-and-forth,” says Anderson, who is an occasional guitar player. He relishes these “microadjustments,” which eventually lend themselves to what he describes as the “sweet spot” in his work.

Mysterious yet inviting, the sculptor’s midscale abstract forms possess an accentuated technical precision yet also radiate an innate ease, with minuscule and grand gestures reverberating in tandem. At its Independent art fair booth in early May, Night Gallery in Los Angeles exhibited a suite of Anderson’s signature totemic silhouettes, some of which also flirt with industrial design, including *472* (2024), a 19-inch-tall cedar cylinder engraved with rhythmic waves and finished with a flattened top.



466, (2024).

PHOTO: NIK MASSEY, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND NIGHT GALLERY, LOS ANGELES.



331.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE ARTIST.

A familiarity with wood guides the artist in his practice. “I try to find a moment where I am collaborating with the material,” says Anderson, who is gearing up for a solo exhibition at the gallery in July. His childhood in the Pacific Northwest was spent surrounded by trees, a memory that flickers in his oeuvre, and he describes his relationship with each locally sourced log as “subtractive,” which unfolds from the first touch of the chainsaw to the final.

Exhibited in the redwood forest of California's Salmon Creek Farm, *476* (2024) meanders in figurative territory with hints of wings on a corporeal form with bodily accents and colored glass bits. In the blackened cedar sculpture *466* (2024), a dialogue between the maker's hand and that of nature remains rather mysterious; at a relatively low height of 20 inches, the work suggests an act of blossoming from the ground with tentacle-like carvings. In every feat, Anderson finds comfort in letting go of control: "If my plans are too specific," he says, "I am in a tunnel that prevents a discovery."

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