

BLAFFER
ART MUSEUM
UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON
Kathrine G. McGovern College of the Arts

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Blaffer Art Museum Presents Hugh Hayden: Boogey Men
On View June 10—August 21, 2022

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Blaffer Art Museum at the University of Houston is proud to present the major exhibition *Hugh Hayden: Boogey Men*, opening Friday, June 10 from 6-9pm.

Boogey Men features a suite of monumental new works created for this exhibition. In his innovative work across mediums, Hayden creates anthropomorphic forms that explore our relationship with the natural world. Formally trained as an architect, Hayden deploys laborious processes—wood-carving, metalwork, industrial fabrication—that result in dynamic, surreal, and critical responses to personal experience and social and cultural issues. Renowned for his use of wood—taking disparate natural species and manipulating them to reveal complex histories and meanings—Hayden crafts intricate metaphors and meditations on experience and memory that question social dynamics and the ever-shifting ecosystem.

Highlighting a series of newly created artworks that contend with personal subjects and recent political themes, *Boogey Men* is divided into multiple galleries that suggest suburban interior and exteriors, highlighting the artist's interests in socially produced spaces as well as the fraught ideas of the "American Dream" and notions of idealism, culture, wealth, agency, and success.

At the center of the exhibition is *Boogey Man* (2021), a monumental work in stainless steel. Depicting a police car draped in a white cover, this ambiguous, anthropomorphized form takes on a cartoonish, even childlike ghostly presence while also evoking the ominous silhouette of a hooded Klansman—a powerful statement on the role and ongoing state of police brutality in the United States.

An adjacent gallery suggests an interior space, where the artist presents *Nude* (2021)—a skeletal figure made of bald cypress trees, its surfaces proliferated with bifurcating branches. Among other references, the work suggests a family tree: Hayden sourced the cypress trees (a species synonymous with the Gulf Coast and Southern states) from Louisiana, where his mother grew up and where he visited frequently

in his youth. Hanging nearby from the ceiling is *Soul Food* (2021), a cluster of copper-plated pots, pans, and instruments. The visually cacophonous work consists of 12 “musician” and instrument “pairs”—each duo is made up of a cast-iron skillet anthropomorphized with an African mask, as well as the artist’s own mouth and ears. Hayden has long been preoccupied with traditional African artifacts and traditions. In *Soul Food*, these themes come together into a monumental jazz band, speaking to the origins of American cuisine and music.

Hugh Hayden (b. 1983, Dallas) lives and works in New York. He holds an MFA from Columbia University and a Bachelor of Architecture from Cornell University. His work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at the Princeton University Art Museum, New Jersey (2020), and White Columns, New York (2018). Hayden’s work is in the collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Princeton University Art Museum; and the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York.

Hugh Hayden: Boogey Men is organized by ICA Miami and curated by Alex Gartenfeld, Artistic Director. The presentation at Blaffer Art Museum is organized by Tyler Blackwell, Cynthia Woods Mitchell Associate Curator.

Generous support for this exhibition in Houston is provided by Cecily E. Horton, Katharine Barthelme & Shane Frank, Judy & Scott Nyquist, and Dr. Shirley Rose.

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For more information or to request high-resolution images, please contact infoblaffer@uh.edu.

About Blaffer Art Museum

Founded in 1973, the Blaffer Art Museum endeavors to further the understanding of contemporary art through exhibitions, publications, and public programs. As the gateway between the University of Houston’s Central campus and the City of Houston, Blaffer Art Museum is a catalyst for creative innovation, experimentation, and scholarship. Its exhibitions and programs are free and open to the public, create community through dialogue and participation, and inspire an appreciation for the visual arts as a vital force in shaping contemporary culture.

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Visitor Information

120 Fine Arts Building
University of Houston
Houston, TX 77204

Museum Hours:
Tues-Fri, 10-5pm
Sat-Sun, 12-5pm

Admission is always free.

About Kathrine G. McGovern College of the Arts

The University of Houston's Kathrine G. McGovern College of the Arts is a premier institution for education, scholarship, and innovation in the arts, where every day we are cultivating the next generation of creative professionals and unlocking the potential of the arts to impact society and change the world. Our students are forging new frontiers and advancing the arts through academic excellence, innovative programming, and—together with our world renown faculty—ascending to the highest level of contemporary professional practice. Houston is a first choice for the arts. Houston is a city of culture and diversity, a quintessential arts destination, and a gateway to the international arts community. Steeped in the richness of diverse cultures, Houston and its engaging community network provide a citywide laboratory for research, education, and practice in the performing and visual arts.