



DANVILLE CHADBOURNE



THE HIDDEN ACCRETIONS OF AGE 2021

Front Cover: THE INVENTOR OF EVENTUALITIES 2021

Title Page: FALSE MEMORY OF THIRTEEN GREEN SUNS 2020

# DANVILLE CHADBOURNE

## NEW WORKS IN WOOD



September 10 – November 12, 2022

IRVING ARTS CENTER  
3333 North MacArthur Blvd  
Irving, Texas 75062



THE INVENTOR OF PRECARIOUS DESIRE 2016-22

## FOREWORD

The Irving Arts Center is delighted to welcome back Danville Chadbourne for this exciting exhibition of new work that includes large-scale, free-standing and suspended sculptures as well as smaller tabletop works and wall-mounted pieces.

By turns witty and solemn, totemic and playful these constructions in wood embrace both a formal exuberance and rigor along with the mystery and gravitas of relics.

Over the decades, Chadbourne has developed an elaborate iconographic and mythological structure that his work embodies and inhabits – transmitting references that are familiar, yet not, speaking to us of a material culture spanning from the past to the future and a personal and collective connection with the numinous power of artifacts.

It is my hope that visitors will experience much pleasure in viewing this exhibition: taking time to consider the rich organic materials, the meticulous craftsmanship, the evocative titles with their Jungian conundrums, the finely tuned sense of balance and the pleasing tension of stasis and animation in each piece, as well as the intriguing web of associations created by the works in conversation with each other and the space itself.

Marcie J. Inman  
Director of Exhibitions & Educational Programs  
Irving Arts Center



PRAYER MONUMENT TO THE FEAR OF REGENERATION 2014-22

## STATEMENT FROM THE ARTIST

For the last few years I have been preoccupied with wood. To me, it is one of the most magical substances on earth, in all of its manifestations. The plant world from which it comes is critical to our survival on this planet, probably more than most people realize. As an art making material it is also one of the most beautiful and satisfying to work with. It is one of my most direct connections to the natural world.

Wood and clay have always been the dominant materials in my work. Each material has its specific qualities and characteristics which I exploit to my creative needs. I tend to see clay as something with mass and weight, with a kind of stable presence, bounded by gravity and part of the earth. By comparison I see wood as linear, active, dynamic, moving away from gravity with a kind of searching expansiveness. Because wood is the remnant of a once living, active and responsive organism, its life history is what remains. Growth and change are inherent.

My motivations for devoting the bulk of my working time in recent years to this material are many. In addition to the many unfinished works and new ideas I want to explore, the sheer bulk and volume of the various types and configurations of wood elements I have slowly accumulated over the years as “art supplies” is sometimes a bit overwhelming. Most of the wood has been found, deliberately harvested, or given to me. Because it is essentially a free resource it is easy to obtain. Only on rare occasions do I actually purchase wood, and that has diminished over the last period of time. I prefer to use wood that I find in various ways. We live in a culture of extreme waste. Finding crates, shelving, furniture and boards in the trash is not difficult. I also like the fact that this material has had a prior life and function. Incorporating that history into my process of reuse, recycling and reconfiguration adds a subtle but meaningful component to the eventual artwork. It is also more ecologically responsible, something that is increasingly important to me. I do not say this as a topical, fashionable art statement. It is something I have done intuitively all my life. To me, it is the only reasonable, responsible and sane way to function.

Finding an appealing piece of wood and the inventive editing that takes place at the time of each discovery is a critical part of my work. It is important for me to see multiple possibilities in each element, a projection of where this component might be best utilized. When I trim trees on my property, for example, I spend an enormous amount of time carefully selecting, cutting, peeling, aging, and storing various



THE REVELATIONS OF TRUTH AND MYTH 2022



woods that grow in my yard. At this point in time, I have amassed a substantial inventory of parts and pieces of various types of wood. Many of these elements carry the germ of an idea for future use that is the result of the collecting and mental editing process. I look for and/or find certain shapes, gestures and configurations as a natural part of my acquisition process.

As a result of this selective collecting procedure I have an enormous number of potential artworks already in motion. Some of these objects present themselves to me as virtually finished works, with obvious conclusions regarding form and expressive content. Others involve a much more protracted engagement (sometimes over many years) to reach a final, satisfying and authentic work of art. There are many suggestive possibilities, perceptions, interpretations, poetic possibilities and sheer physical labor that take time to achieve. For me this process cannot be forced. It must happen organically in its own time.

The works in this exhibition are the result of my concentration on working with wood over the past few years. Many pieces were started years ago and only recently completed. Others were developed and completed in a relatively short time. When I am focused on a particular endeavor, there seems to be a kind of expansive energy and labor at work. One image or idea triggers another. One decision influences another. One invention creates another. In my ideal universe, this is how things should operate in art and in life.

Several different types of objects make up this exhibition. There are large freestanding sculptures, small scale sculptures, suspended pieces and wall oriented works. This family of related objects is a manifestation of how I see my world. I work on all of these simultaneously, with episodic shifts of concentration. All of this work is very labor intensive. Sometimes the physical process determines what I work on and my physical capacity to continue. Other times I am more focused on ideas and conceptualization. There is also a certain amount of play and invention without any real end in mind. Ultimately, all of these factors have to find a natural balance.

About ten years ago, I produced a group of freestanding sculptures using large chinaberry branches (harvested from my own trees) that were very active and animated. They suggested to me how the illusion of motion and awareness might be interpreted as animate consciousness and, subsequently, the invention of a kind of self-generating mythology.

Several of the new works in this show pick up this thematic perspective. Other large scale works are associated with my interests in monuments and markers, human-made objects that suggest a memorial function or that designate a boundary or ritual space. These are concerns that I have dealt with at length over the years and are still an active part of my thought process.

In 2017 I had a large retrospective at the Martin Museum of Art at Baylor University. The focus was a body of small sculptures in wood (under four feet high) that I began producing in the early 1980s and have continued making since that time. For me, it was fascinating and instructive to look back at this body of work. One thing that struck me most was that there were so many ideas that I would like to have explored more at the time. There were also a considerable number of new works I wanted to pursue based on these older works. It added new possibilities to my already expansive array of small scale investigations with wood. Reacquainting myself with older impulses was indeed part of my enthusiasm for making new small wood sculptures. Another impulse was that over the intervening years, my collection and ongoing acquisition of potential sculpture parts was becoming somewhat of a burden. As a result, I began to deliberately focus on parts that I had accumulated but never used. Beginning in the spring of 2020, I began to find connections and relationships with a wide range of things I had collected over the past 20 or 30 years. Many of them began to come to life (a poetic life, at least) and I finished a substantial body of new small scale works, many of which are part of this exhibition.

In the early 1970s I began producing small suspended sculptural objects, mostly in clay but eventually in wood. There has been a continual stream of these suspended works ever since, sometimes simple and modest, sometimes elaborate and kinetic. These suspended works have become a fundamental part of my visual vocabulary. Made mostly of found objects, carved and painted elements, natural and altered shapes and gestures, with copper and ceramic connectors, I see these works as physical poems about experiences, places, or abstract ideas. This exhibition features several new suspended sculptures that explore notions of ancestry, formal dynamics, the physical memories of a place, or the simple mystery and beauty of organic growth and living gestures inherent in the wood.

Similarly, I have always made wall oriented artworks - drawings, paintings, collages, etc. Many years ago these works became less about



THE PARABLE OF THE FALSE SIGNAL 2019-20

traditional Western conceptions of flat, illusory, two-dimensional images on a blank ground and started to take on the more three-dimensional property of elaborate objects on the wall, a kind of hybrid fusion of all of these distinct categories. I began to see them as sculptures on the wall. Beginning in the late 1980s I began to produce abstract graphic images in ink on shaped wood panels. These became a basic form in my work. Because they were sturdy, hand-constructed panels, they could be expanded to bigger sculptural possibilities by adding relief elements or attachments, or presented as relatively simple graphic images on a flat surface. Since the support was constructed of wood, it introduced the natural patterning of the wood and emphasized its object-ness. I began to explore more elaborate compositional ideas in the construction of the panels themselves, exploiting the knots, grain patterns, color variations and other characteristics of the various types or cuts of wood used. The drawing and painting elements applied to the surface interacted in magical ways. The wood became integral to the image. The wall pieces in this exhibition are representative of the elaborate range these works have taken in recent years.

My preoccupation with wood as a fundamental art material in recent years is also indicative of my concern for the world at large. I grew up in the natural sciences. My father was an entomologist, experimental farmer and orchid grower. When I was young I worked on farms, traveled in rural Mexico, studied biology, chemistry and physics and, since I was about three years old, have always had a garden for producing food. I have traveled around the world as an observer of human culture and history. I have also read and studied a huge amount about the human condition. Our species has not done particularly well in terms of our relationship with the natural world. We are part of that natural world. I, for one, would like to live in a much more harmonious relationship with the natural world. My small act of reverence for the natural world in using wood as an art material has to do with self-reflection and an ongoing meditation on our shared human condition. As the world spins more and more out of control each day, I think it might be a good idea for everyone to do a little self-reflection about our relationship with nature before it is too late. There are still possibilities. My hope is that these objects bring a sense of beauty, conscientiousness and respect for the natural world while there is still some possibility of living in harmony with it.

Danville Chadbourne  
August 2022



GAME WITHOUT END - DISTANT VIBRATIONS 2016-20



PHYSICAL MEMORY - GIFTS FROM THE MYTHIC RIVER 2020

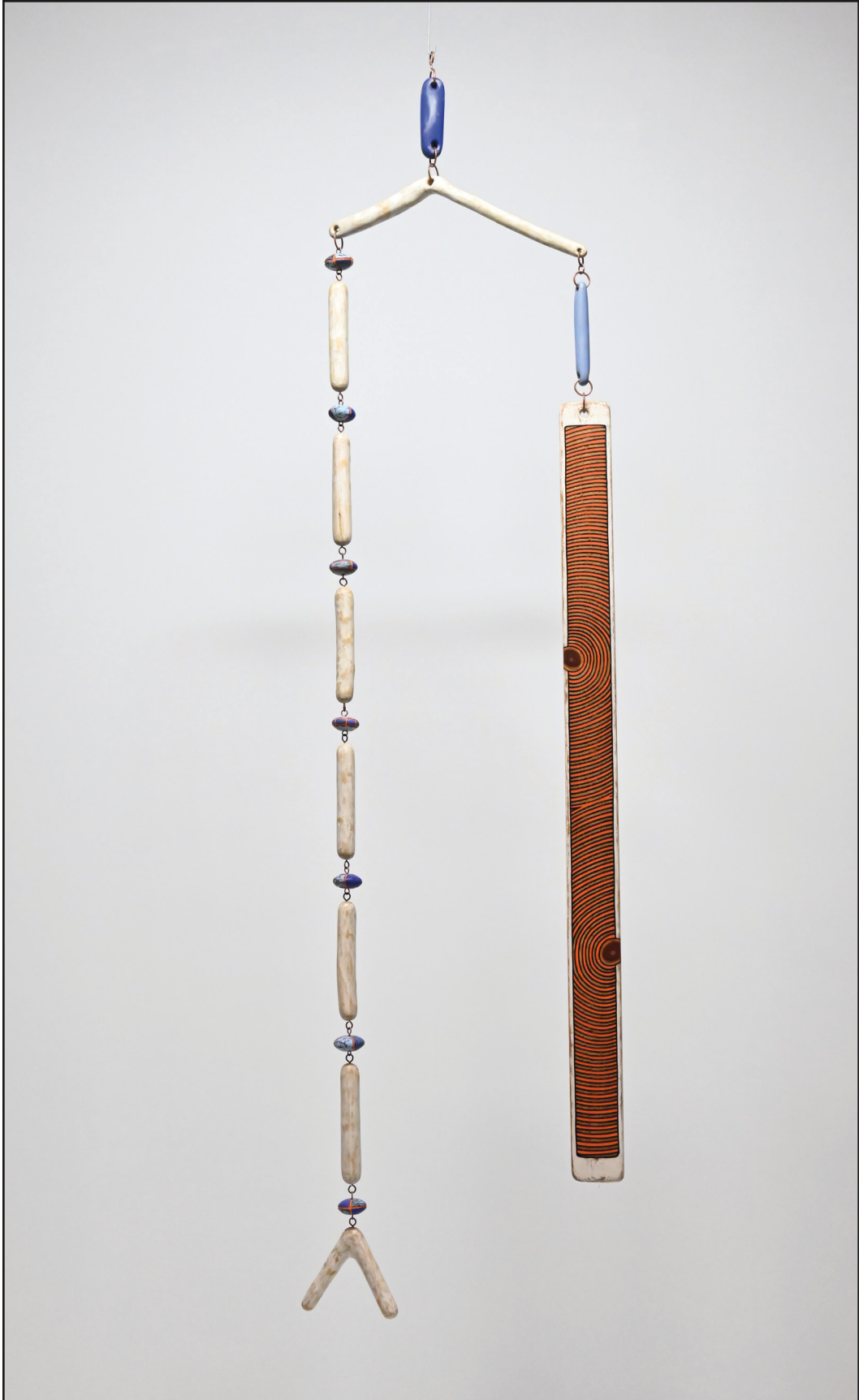


ANCESTRAL OBJECT - THE MYTHIC PROTECTOR 2018-20



THE PONDEROUS SOUL OF INCONGRUITY 2020





EQUIVALENT VALUES - THE PERPETUAL INVENTION OF DUPLICITY 2011-20



THE UNSTABLE CONDITIONS OF THE PARADOXICAL MIRROR 2015-22



METAPHYSICAL PASSAGE 2015-22



DELUSIONS OF IMPROBABILITY 2022



THE MIRACLE OF LIMINAL EVENTS 2014-22



THE UNSTABLE PRESENCE OF QUESTIONABLE MOTIVES 2021



THE UNHURRIED SKIN OF CONTEMPLATION 2020



CONTRADICTIONARY EVENT 2020-22





METAPHORICAL RELIC - INSATIABLE DESIRE 2012-20



INCIDENT AT THE WELL OF MEMORY 2014-20



THE LONG JOURNEY OF THE NUMINOUS PROTECTOR 2014-20



SYMPATHETIC BELIEFS - BORROWED TALISMAN 2020



GAME WITHOUT END - INTERFERENCE 2019-20

## WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

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| <p>1. ANCESTRAL APPARITION - THE DARK BONES OF DISCOVERY<br/>acrylic on wood, porcelain, metal<br/>102" H. 49" W. 21" D<br/>2014</p>                           | <p>15. TEMPORAL MARKER - LOGICAL DISCOVERY<br/>acrylic and ink on wood and earthenware, beads, metal<br/>68½" H. 9" W. 9" D<br/>1997-2020</p>  |
| <p>2. THE BLACK STANDARD OF LOST MEMORIES<br/>acrylic on wood and earthenware, fiber, metal<br/>123" H. 30" W. 15" D<br/>2004-14</p>                           | <p>16. TEMPORAL MARKER - ALTERNATE VISION<br/>bamboo, wood, acrylic on wood and earthenware, metal, beads, lobster claws<br/>67" H. 10" W. 8½" D<br/>1997-2020</p>                   |
| <p>3. THE SLOW CRISIS OF INSTABILITY<br/>wood, acrylic on wood and earthenware, metal<br/>29½" H. 23" W. 19" D<br/>2016-19</p>                                 | <p>17. TEMPORAL MARKER - DIFFICULT DECISIONS<br/>wood, acrylic and ink on wood and earthenware, antler, horn, fiber, metal, lobster claws<br/>69½" H. 14" W. 9½" D<br/>1997-2020</p> |
| <p>4. DEVICE FOR THE CONTAINMENT OF FALSEHOOD<br/>wood, acrylic on wood and earthenware, metal, fiber<br/>47" H. 26" W. 16" D<br/>2015-19</p>                  | <p>18. EUPHORIC DISLOCATION<br/>acrylic and ink on wood, metal<br/>11" H. 31½" W<br/>2019-20</p>   |
| <p>5. GAME WITHOUT END - MODULATION<br/>acrylic and ink on wood<br/>40" H. 15" W<br/>2016-19</p>   | <p>19. THE PARABLE OF THE FALSE SIGNAL<br/>wood, acrylic on wood and earthenware, metal, fiber, beads<br/>31" H. 19" W. 8" D<br/>2019-20</p>   |
| <p>6. PARENTHETICAL DIMENSIONS OF MEMORY<br/>acrylic and ink on wood<br/>27½" H. 12" W<br/>2019</p>  | <p>20. ANCESTRAL OBJECT - THE MYTHIC PROTECTOR<br/>wood, acrylic on wood, gourd, metal, fiber, beads<br/>86" H. 15" W. 14" D<br/>2018-20</p>   |
| <p>7. THE MISPLACED HARMONY<br/>acrylic and ink on wood<br/>17" H. 24" W<br/>2019</p>  | <p>21. EQUIVALENT VALUES - THE PERPETUAL INVENTION OF DUPLICITY<br/>acrylic and ink on wood, acrylic on earthenware, metal<br/>87" H. 24" W. 7" D<br/>2011-20</p>                    |
| <p>8. THE DISCRETE PARAMETERS OF SPONTANEOUS GENERATION<br/>acrylic and ink on wood<br/>23" H. 16" W<br/>2019</p>  | <p>22. PHYSICAL MEMORY - GIFTS FROM THE MYTHIC RIVER<br/>wood, acrylic on wood, stoneware, metal<br/>88" H. 25" W. 18" D<br/>2020</p>  |
| <p>9. THE RECLAMATION OF LOST MYSTERIES<br/>acrylic on wood, stoneware, metal, fiber<br/>81" H. 34" W. 20" D<br/>2014-20</p>                                   | <p>23. THE PONDEROUS SOUL OF INCONGRUITY<br/>wood, acrylic on wood, metal<br/>92" H. 33" W. 28" D<br/>2020</p>   |
| <p>10. THE GLORIOUS SINS OF PAINFUL DESIRE<br/>wood, acrylic on wood, metal, stoneware, coconut shell<br/>67" H. 52" W. 21" D<br/>2018-20</p>                  | <p>24. THE ANXIOUS PRESENCE OF DARK POTENTIAL<br/>wood<br/>28½" H. 13½" W. 8½" D<br/>2019-20</p>   |
| <p>11. GAME WITHOUT END - DISTANT VIBRATIONS<br/>acrylic and ink on wood<br/>46" H. 18" W<br/>2016-20</p>  | <p>25. THE EXPEDIENCY OF THE MURDER OF SLEEP<br/>wood, acrylic on wood and earthenware<br/>30" H. 14" W. 10" D<br/>2020</p>  |
| <p>12. PSYCHIC DIAGRAM - UNCERTAIN FUTURES<br/>acrylic and ink on wood<br/>16" H. 20" W<br/>2020</p>   | <p>26. GAME WITHOUT END - INTERFERENCE<br/>acrylic and ink on wood<br/>28" H. 15" W<br/>2019-20</p>  |
| <p>13. TEMPORAL MARKER - ODD INITIATION<br/>wood, acrylic on wood and earthenware, antler, fiber, metal<br/>68" H. 11" W. 9" D<br/>1997-2020</p>               | <p>27. FALSE MEMORY OF THIRTEEN GREEN SUNS<br/>acrylic and ink on wood<br/>12" H. 34" W<br/>2020</p>   |
| <p>14. TEMPORAL MARKER - IRRATIONAL FIXATION<br/>wood, acrylic and ink on wood and earthenware, fiber, metal, antler<br/>65" H. 12" W. 8½" D<br/>1997-2020</p> |  |

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| 28. SYMPATHETIC BELIEFS - BORROWED TALISMAN<br>wood, acrylic and ink on wood<br>29½" H. 10" W. 4" D<br>2020                                     | 42. THE UNSTABLE PRESENCE OF QUESTIONABLE<br>MOTIVES<br>wood, acrylic and ink on wood<br>75" H. 24" W. 19" D<br>2021  |
| 29. THE LONG JOURNEY OF THE NUMINOUS<br>PROTECTOR<br>wood, acrylic on wood, antlers<br>20½" H. 23" W. 9½" D<br>2014-20                          | 43. COMPLICATIONS OF THE UNKNOWN SIGNAL<br>wood, acrylic on wood and earthenware, beads<br>47" H. 23" W. 14" D<br>2021  |
| 30. INCIDENT AT THE WELL OF MEMORY<br>wood, acrylic and ink on wood<br>20½" H. 13" W. 12½" D<br>2014-20   | 44. THE FAMILIAR EDGE OF INTERPRETATION<br>wood, acrylic and ink on wood and earthenware<br>21" H. 17" W. 5" D<br>2021  |
| 31. THE UNHURRIED SKIN OF CONTEMPLATION<br>wood, acrylic on wood, metal, beads, porcelain<br>25½" H. 10" W. 7" D<br>2020                        | 45. DARK POEMS FOR THE RITUAL OF ACQUISITION<br>wood, acrylic and ink on wood, metal, stoneware,<br>acrylic on earthenware<br>63" H. 57" W. 8" D<br>1995-2022 |
| 32. THE MORPHOLOGICAL DILEMMA OF IMPROBABLE<br>TRUTH<br>wood, acrylic and ink on wood, acrylic on<br>earthenware<br>22" H. 14" W. 9½" D<br>2020 | 46. CONTRADICTIONARY EVENT<br>wood, ink and acrylic on wood, acrylic on<br>earthenware, antler<br>22½" H. 14" W. 11" D<br>2020-22                             |
| 33. THE FRAGILE LESSONS OF REVISION<br>acrylic and ink on wood and earthenware<br>24½" H. 11" W. 4½" D<br>2018-20                               | 47. THE INVENTOR OF PRECARIOUS DESIRE<br>wood, acrylic and ink on wood, antler, metal<br>75" H. 18" W. 17" D<br>2016-22                                       |
| 34. METAPHORICAL RELIC - INSATIABLE DESIRE<br>wood, acrylic on wood and earthenware<br>60" H. 38" W. 16" D<br>2012-20                           | 48. DELUSIONS OF IMPROBABILITY<br>wood, acrylic on wood and plywood, metal<br>83" H. 41" W. 23" D<br>2022   |
| 35. INTIMATIONS OF REPLICATION<br>acrylic and ink on wood<br>29½" H. 14" W<br>2019-21   | 49. METAPHYSICAL PASSAGE<br>wood, acrylic on wood<br>91" H. 39" W. 18" D<br>2015-22   |
| 36. THE DISCRETE ENTICEMENTS OF PARALLEL<br>VISION<br>acrylic and ink on wood<br>15" H. 31" W<br>2019-21  | 50. THE UNSTABLE CONDITIONS OF THE<br>PARADOXICAL MIRROR<br>wood, acrylic on wood, metal, beads<br>86" H. 40" W. 31" D<br>2015-22                             |
| 37. THE FINAL CONTAINMENT OF THE DIMENSIONAL<br>SLIPPAGE<br>acrylic on wood<br>11" H. 32½" W<br>2019-21   | 51. THE REVELATIONS OF TRUTH AND MYTH<br>wood, acrylic on wood, seeds<br>85" H. 29" W. 18" D<br>2022  |
| 38. UNEXPECTED DELUSION<br>acrylic and ink on wood<br>13" H. 36" W<br>2020-21   | 52. THE MIRACLE OF LIMINAL EVENTS<br>wood, acrylic on wood, metal, beads, fiber<br>90" H. 27" W. 14" D<br>2014-22   |
| 39. THE HIDDEN ACCRETIONS OF AGE<br>acrylic and ink on wood, metal, bone, beads, fiber<br>16" H. 20" W. 5" D<br>2021                            | 53. PRAYER MONUMENT TO THE FEAR OF<br>REGENERATION<br>wood, acrylic on wood, earthenware, metal<br>87" H. 27" W. 27" D<br>2014-22                             |
| 40. THE INVENTOR OF EVENTUALITIES<br>wood, acrylic on wood<br>85" H. 48" W. 23" D<br>2021   |   |
| 41. THE PERSISTENT IDEALS OF MISREPRESENTATION<br>wood, acrylic on earthenware and wood<br>22½" H. 18" W. 13" D<br>2016-21                      |   |



Left to right:  
TEMPORAL MARKER - IRRATIONAL FIXATION 1997-2020  
TEMPORAL MARKER - LOGICAL DISCOVERY 1997-2020  
TEMPORAL MARKER - DIFFICULT DECISIONS 1997-2020  
TEMPORAL MARKER - ALTERNATE VISION 1997-2020  
TEMPORAL MARKER - ODD INITIATION 1997-2020



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