

ARTFORUM

Leonardo Drew

SIKKEMA JENKINS & CO.

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Wood—scavenged, sculpted, and otherwise manipulated—is the focus of Leonardo Drew's latest show. Such mediumistic restraint testifies to Drew's talent for imbuing elemental materials with a diffuse, unanchored charge.

Dominating the space is *Number 161*, 2012, a lurching, entropic assertion of wood, alternately burned and painted black, which undulates at a floor-to-ceiling pitch through three of the gallery's five rooms. Near its front, planks project over the viewer in a configuration that resembles a Franz Kline in three dimensions, while sedimented layers of smaller, fragmentary pieces wash over the whole: a diversity of scale that saves the installation's monumentalism from being overbearing. Throughout, unbroken beams flank the gnarled, gestural roots of trees; at moments, a balustrade or other piece of found bric-a-brac emerges. The wood's spectrum of textures—shingled, splintered, puckered, and worn—and subtle discolorations—here, the delicate luster of ash; there, a fuchsia stain, evoking a previous life—betrays Drew's acute sensitivity to materials. Following the work as it weaves through space, the viewer must duck under an overhang to access its backmost iteration. Experienced from the inside, the structure becomes both a shelter and an obstruction: the relic of some portentous event past.

In contrast to *Number 161*, whose emotional force seems excessive at times, the seven wooden sculptures on view exhibit a more modest ambition. Anchored to the wall, the standout *Number 154*, 2012, peels away from its support in rounded, protuberant geometries. Stippled with innumerable wooden sticks, the sculpture's bristled surface resembles that of a dried starfish. Offset by the tendrils and whorls of natural wood, its arms appear eerily animate, as if each were a miniature version of Eva Hesse's *Accession II*, 1968, petrified, turned inside out, and pulled from either end. The work shows what Drew can accomplish within more focused spatial parameters, and the result feels fresh.



Leonardo Drew, *Number 161*, 2012, burnt wood, paint, dimensions variable.

— Courtney Fiske

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