



Daniel Dewar and Grégory Gicquel's Eco-Erotic Sculptures
Frieze, October 2020
(author: Tom Engels)
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frieze



'Animals and Sculpture', Daniel Dewar and Grégory Gicquel's exhibition at CLEARING, is the most recent in the artist duo's series of wooden sculptures (2016–ongoing) taking the form of reliefs and furniture. Combining the artisanal and the conceptual, Dewar and Gicquel's handcrafted pieces feature odd concoctions of natural motifs and human body parts rendered on oiled, carved oak. They seemingly call for interaction – benches to be sat on, drawers to be filled – while remaining in the realm of sculpture.



Daniel Dewar & Grégory Gicquel, *Oak Relief with Body Fragments and Snails*, 2020, oak wood, 54,6 × 43,7 × 16 cm. Courtesy: the artists and CLEARING, New York/Brussels; photograph: Benjamin Baltus

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The works play on the contrast between the sturdy volume of handcrafted furniture and the dynamism of their sculptural surfaces: the wood echoes the material qualities of the slick carp, slimy snails and shiny muscled arms. Through this juxtaposition, Dewar and Gicquel generate a body of work in which material, craft, humankind, fauna and flora are in constant flux, revealing the sensuous in the clunky. This oscillation of species is reinforced by a male torso covered by snails (*Oak Relief with Body Fragments and Snails*, 2020), evoking an unsettling eco-eroticism. Elsewhere, this bucolic interspecies drama takes material form: while in *Oak Relief with Feet* several feet emerge from the surface of the wood as though being born, *Oak Bench with Colorado Beetles*, *Potato Flowers and Snails* juxtaposes an invasive species with its prey.



Daniel Dewar & Grégory Gicquel, *Granite Trough with Pig*, 2020, granite stone, 1.7 x 2.2 x 1.6 m. Courtesy: the artists and CLEARING, New York/Brussels; photograph: Eden Krsmanovic

The exhibition also offers a valuable meditation on dedicated and insourced forms of labour. The stone carved piece *Granite Trough with Pig* – depicting a grazing swine with full udders – is a compelling counterpoint to the show's wooden sculptures, due to the laborious nature of stone carving and the work's immense physical heft. Dewar and Gicquel's work sits between the old-fashioned and the contemporary, the uncanny and the normal, tradition and invention, repulsion and attraction. Precisely in the nexus of those spectra, wood takes turns at chest, snail or drawer. As if fallen out of time, 'Animals and Sculpture' stages the impressive outcomes of a twisted fabulation.