



5 Art Gallery Shows to See Right Now
The New York Times, August 2021
(author: Tausif Noor)
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Julie Mehretu's prints; Lee Lozano's drawings; paintings by the Florida Highwaymen; sculptures by Hugh Hayden; and a survey of protest art.

Hugh Hayden

Through Aug. 13. Lisson Gallery, 504 West 24th Street, Manhattan; (212) 505 6431.
lissongallery.com



Hugh Hayden's "Rapunzel" (2021), painted fiberboard, synthetic hair extensions and metal rim. Hugh Hayden and Lisson Gallery; Mark Waldhauser

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A sinister streak runs through the work of Hugh Hayden. His precise, cleanly executed sculptures, evincing his training as an architect, are saturated with pointed critiques of prevailing American institutions. In “Huey,” his third solo exhibition with Lisson Gallery, Hayden shows the outsized impact of two such institutions — organized religion and athletics — on Black identity and masculinity. Sparsely arranged across three rooms, the sculptures — all from 2021 — use a minimal but careful selection of materials to reinterpret familiar objects in a Gothic sensibility.

In the first gallery, visitors confront an installation of found church pews, refurbished and covered in red nylon bristles; mounted along the right wall are three hairbrushes made from white oak and boar hair, each bearing sharp, steel daggers as handles. These works, part of the series “Good Hair,” refer to Hayden’s experience growing up in the Christian church, with its strict regulations on outward appearance. In the adjoining room, Hayden continues this theme of discipline and ritual with a set of wall-mounted basketball nets fashioned from Gatorade-dyed rattan (“Fruity”) and other organic fibers.

The final space features seven sculptures, carved from Texan and Gabon ebonies. Though the slanted, skewed iterations of doors and chairs draw apt comparisons to the art of Robert Gober, they veer sharply from this legacy in their centering Black visual culture, as indicated by their surface color and the references in their titles — a small black gavel, titled “Uncle Phil,” nods to James Avery’s character on “The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air.” With this attention to detail, Hayden cinches his spot as a noteworthy figure in the lineage of American conceptualism.