



Galleria Giampaolo Abbondio

Jason Middlebrook

info@giampaoloabbondio.com | www.giampaoloabbondio.com

Bio

Jason Middlebrook (b. 1966 in Jackson, MI) received his Master of Fine Arts from the San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, CA and his Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of California at Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz, CA. He completed an Independent Study Program at The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY.

Recent solo exhibitions include Bill Arning Gallery, Houston, TX; Galleria Giampaolo Abbondio, Todi, Italy; Miles McEnery Gallery, New York, NY; David Smith Gallery, Denver, CO; Moss Arts Center, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA; Gallery 16, San Francisco, CA; LaMontagne Gallery, Boston, MA; Jeff Bailey Gallery, Hudson, NY; Lora Reynolds Gallery, Austin, TX; Galleria Pack, Milan, Italy; David B. Smith Gallery, Denver, CO; Lora Reynolds Gallery, Austin, TX; Gallery 16, San Francisco, CA; and the Thomas Cole National Historic Site, Catskill, NY.

Middlebrook's work has been included in group exhibitions at the Children's Museum of the Arts, New York, NY; Dorsky Museum of Art, New Paltz, NY; Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA; Museum of Contemporary Art, Denver, CO; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA; Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, CA; Parco Archeologico di Siponto, Siponto, Italy; Peters Projects, Santa Fe, NM; Pizzuti Collection, Columbus, OH; and the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE, among others.

His work may be found in the collections of the Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, MA; Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY; Denver Art Museum, Denver, CO; Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA; Marte Museum, San Salvador, El Salvador; Redmond, WA; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; NASA Art Program, Washington, D.C.; New Museum, New York, NY; Pizzuti Collection, Columbus, OH; US Embassy, Podgorica, Montenegro; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY, and elsewhere. Middlebrook lives and works in Hudson, NY.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS AND PROJECTS

2024

Solo exhibition, Gallery 16, San Francisco, CA

Solo exhibition, Firetti Contemporary, Dubai, UAE

2023

Small Time, Bill Arning Exhibitions, Kinderhook, NY

2022

Someday Everything Will Be Different, Galleria Giampaolo Abbondio, Todi, Italy

Light Lines, Miles McEnery Gallery, New York, NY

Skies, David B. Smith Gallery, Denver, CO

2020

Another World, Moss Arts Center, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, VA

2019

Miles McEnery Gallery, New York, NY

Gallery 16, San Francisco, CA

LaMontagne Gallery, Boston, MA

2017

Jeff Bailey Gallery, Hudson, NY

The Last Tree on the Planet, Lora REynolds Gallery, Austin, TX

2016

My Grain, Galleria Pack, Milan, Italy

Drawing Time, David B. Smith Gallery, Denver, CO

Time Compression Keeps Me Coming Back for

More, Lora Reynolds Gallery, Austin TX The Small Spaces in Between, Gallery 16, San Francisco, CA

2015

Your General Store, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, NM “Gold Rush,”

Peters Projects, Santa Fe, NM

Jason Middlebrook: Mosaic Tree Stumps, Jeff Bailey Gallery, Hudson, NY

Morgan Lehman Gallery, New York, NY

2014

There is a map in every tree, Monique Meloche, Chicago, IL

Line over Matter, Lora Reynolds Gallery, Austin, TX

2013

The Line That Divides Us, Lora Reynolds Gallery, Austin, TX

My Landscape, Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, North Adams, MA

Underlife, Albright-Knox Gallery, Buffalo, NY

2011

A Break from Content, DODGEgallery, New York, NY

2006

Galleria Paolo Bonzano Artecontemporanea, Rome, Italy

2005

Alchemical Primordality, Galleria Giampaolo Abbondio, Milan, Italy, curated by

Gianluca Marziani

2003

APL #2, Els Hannape Underground, Athens, Greece "Empire of Dirt," Palazzo Delle

Papesse, Siena, Italy, curated by Lorenzo Fusi

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2024

The Art of Nature, The Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg, FL

2023

Hoop Dreams, Emerson Museum of Art, Syracuse, NY

Horizon Line, Joyce Goldstein Gallery, Chatham, NY

Taking Shape, Bernay Fine Art, Great Barrington, MA

2022

Forest Through the Trees, Laumeier Sculpture Park, Saint Louis, MO

Art+Nature+Home, Blue Barn, Stone Ridge, NY

2021

Art+Nature+Home, Foreland, Catskill, NY

2019
Arboreal, Moss Art Center, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, VA

2018

Belief in Giants, Miles McEnery Gallery, New York, NY

2017

New Acquisitions / Nuevas Adquisiciones: UAG Permanent Collection

2015-2017,

University Art Gallery, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, NM

Wood as Muse, The Art Complex Museum, Duxbury, MA, curated by Donna Dodson and Andy Moerlein

Maker, Maker, Children's Museum of the Arts, New York, NY, curated by Paul Laster and Renée Riccardo

Taconic North, LABspace, Hillsdale, NY, curated by Susan Jennings and Julie Torres

Cortesie per gli ospiti, Galleria Pack, Milan, Italy

2016 Casa Futura Pietra, Parco Archeologico di Siponto, Siponto, Italy

2012 La pelle che abito, Galleria Pack, Milan, Italy

AWARDS AND GRANTS

2013

Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant

2010

Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant

Identity Theory

Colliding with Nature: An Interview with Jason Middlebrook

Artist Interviews, Visual Art / By Alexandra Tursi / April 7, 2008 / 7 minutes of reading



Few artists would say they derive inspiration from weeds; Jason Middlebrook could be one of the few who does. Consider Chinese ailanthus, one of the most prolific exotic species. You could find it all over the place in New York City, in subway tunnels, sidewalks and sewers, but the city does its best to keep the floral invader from sprouting up and taking over the Big Apple's many nooks and crannies. It's just one example of humans attempting to control nature, a point of exploration at the core of Middlebrook's artistic experiments.

"Nature is always pressing, always growing up through the cracks," he said. Middlebrook's interest is the instant at which nature and humans collide, whether it be a natural disaster, or a weed growing in a parking lot. He's intrigued by the strategies and tactics we've developed to control and harness nature; how we've tried to keep it from interfering with our order of things.

Middlebrook answered 12 questions for *Identity Theory* about his art, challenging the power of museums and garnering inspiration from materials with a previous life, like Warhol's Brillo Boxes.

What are you currently working on?

A few things. My work has become divided into two areas. I have been doing these site-specific salvage projects for the last couple of years. I just came back from New Orleans where I collected wood and other debris and made a series of benches that will be circulated back into the community once the exhibition is over. I have done a few of them now, and I really enjoy the site-specific community aspect of the process. In Riverside, California I did a project where I brought in four other artists, and we made furniture out of debris from a building that was being torn down for a new museum addition. The other aspect of my work is my studio practice, which usually consists of drawings and paintings that are shown in the gallery context. There is some overlapping, but in the end the two aspects of my practice function differently.

From where do you gather creative inspiration?

Nature, and humans' endless fear and misunderstanding of it.

You work in various mediums--drawings to site-specific installations. What drives you to choose a medium?

Lately it has been recycled material, old wood, trash, objects that had a previous life. Materials that have a history and that still have a future. Old wood mostly.

You grew up in rural and urban settings. How has living in disparate environments informed your work?

I lived in Oakland, California for three years and then New York City for twelve years. All urban environments are in competition with nature, and this has been my focus for some time.

I was raised in a mountain community in Northern California and went to the University of California at Santa Cruz. Nothing could be more beautiful than these environments; however, the city has its beauty as well. New York City inspired me and continues to do so because nature is always pressing, always growing up through the cracks.

In 2004, my wife and I bought a farm house and three acres in upstate New York so I am now living in a setting very similar to my childhood. I have a four-year-old, and I wanted her to experience nature in the same way that I did. There is nothing more important for a child than to be able to play in dirt.

How is the relationship between humans and the environment examined in your work?

The point in which nature and humans collide is where I find inspiration. Natural disasters, weeds taken over a parking lot of a closed store, these are both reminders of the power of nature and man is always trying to establish space within nature. People continue to build on the coast lines and then cry to the insurance companies when their houses fall in the ocean. When that house falls I see many ideas for my art.

I read in an old issue of *Artforum* that your favorite quotation is "Museums are places where art goes to die," said by Alan Watts. What about that quotation resonates with you? How have you explored it in your work?

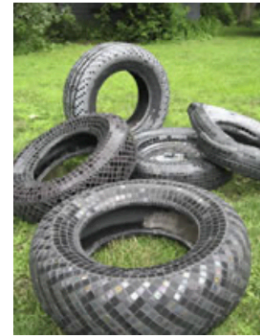
A few years back I was very interested in institutional critiques and discussions revolving around the death of art in museums. I did a few projects in museums that treated the space as a graveyard for art, a final resting place. Museums follow models that force them to protect and archive the work. I understand that this is important so future generations can view the work and appreciate it. I'm much more interested in a combination between showing current work and ideas and educating the public. I don't think museums do enough to challenge the paradigm. Museums have pressure on them to make their board members happy like a corporation. How many times do we have to see a dead artist retrospective just so the market value of the work can remain healthy?

Why revisit Andy Warhol's Brillo boxes in *One Man's Treasure Is Another Man's Trash*?

I have always been interested in Warhol's objects and how they revisited the ready-made. He wanted to transform the consumer object into Pop Art and today they are considered high art. In the eighties, you couldn't give those Brillo boxes away, now they sell for 170K. My goal was to dismantle them again and turn the box form into something functional, such as furniture or a Brillo box planter. I wanted to give Warhol's ready made a real function. One of the issues that I have had in playing with art history is the iconographic stamp that weighs it down. Some Brillo transformations were more successful than others. In the end, my favorite was the Brillo Box Pallet Chair. Pallets are universal and made to ship goods all over the world. I like the tension that this creates and the chair serves a great function. These pieces did not sell, and I look forward to having them back in the studio.

What is the most unexpected response you've received from a viewer of your work?

I once was verbally attacked at one of my openings by a person who thought I had disrespected the museum. My installation was implying the destruction of a museum in the future. There were weeds growing up through the floor, the walls were black and covered with graffiti, there was broken glass all over the floor and there was a leak in the museum. A woman confronted me and was angry that I wasn't showing respect to the museum and its space. It was in Italy, and I listened to her and tried to explain that it was a critique of the museum's authority to determine what should be saved and what shouldn't throughout history. She wanted no part of that and was outraged that I was allowed to disfigure the space.



The Internet has seemingly made the world a more democratic space in which writers, artists and musicians can more easily share their work with the world. How do you think the Internet has created possibilities for artists?

It's truly endless, from emailing images that can be sold to creating web sites that can open dialogues and connect people with an infinite trove of ideas. You can learn so much about an artist's work without ever seeing the work. It has allowed creative people an endless database to reflect upon and grow from; it has united communities and allowed artists to work in isolation.

Name the web sites of three artists you visit regularly? Why?

Alexandra Mir's web site is one that I look at from time-to-time. She is an artist who uses her web site as an active archive of her projects. For years she didn't have a gallery and all her projects were generated by referencing her web site. I don't spend a lot of time on line looking at other artist's web site; however, I really should. I'm planning to build a web site this year and it's time to start researching artists' sites.

Name a book that has inspired your work as an artist?

One of my favorite books is, *The Control of Nature* by John McPhee

What is the best meal you've ever had and with whom did you share it?

My wife and I were camping in Utah once and we had been in a tent for a week. We drove through a town searching for something other than camp food that we had been eating, nuts, beans, hot dogs, etc. We found a great pizza place and for some reason to this day that pizza was unreal. The memory of a meal has so much to do with your frame of mind.

BROOKLYN RAIL

CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON ARTS, POLITICS, AND CULTURE · INDEPENDENT AND FREE

ARTSEEN | JULY/AUGUST 2013

JASON MIDDLEBROOK *My Landscape*

By Jessica Holmes

Interconnections lie at the heart of artist Jason Middlebrook's work. The uneasy coexistence between natural phenomena and human-made objects, art's grappling with the places it inhabits, and the collisions of disparate facets of art history all surface in Middlebrook's paintings, sculpture, and installations. Laboring across a range of media, he applies paint to wood, incorporates trash into sculpture, and makes use of architecturally challenging spaces in a way that methodically explores these various interactions.

In his current exhibition, *My Landscape*, at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (Mass MoCA), Middlebrook has been given the opportunity to examine these relationships on a grand scale. In a cavernous gallery just past the museum's entrance, 11 of the artist's signature, painted, planks of wood lean against the walls. The artist's reverence for his material is evident. The milled boards have been shaped into organic forms, and Middlebrook makes specific note of the type of wood used for each individual work. It's an inconspicuous, yet important detail. When we become aware that one plank is beech while another is English elm, an aspect of each piece's discrete character is illuminated.

In "Finding What's Left" (2013), for instance, Middlebrook has allowed the wood to remain in a roughly hewn shape, onto which he has applied chevrons in white acrylic paint. The board has been edged with black spray paint, giving the possible impression of wood salvaged from a slashed and burned forest. When we discover the work is fabricated from a hunk of old growth redwood, one of the most majestic—and most endangered—species of tree, "Finding What's Left" takes on another, more poignant dimension.

But the planks do not strictly critique human encroachment on nature so much as they examine the various interfaces between the two. Most of the planks convey a sense of optimism rather than dread. Middlebrook's obvious care with his process contributes. In "Negative Spaces Not So Negative" (2013) he has systematically painted jagged, multicolored lines down the center of a piece of maple, creating an optical illusion that makes the two-dimensional, flat surface appear to the eye in three dimensions. Yet the artist's rigorous brushwork never overpowers the wood upon which it is painted.

ON VIEW

**The Massachusetts
Museum Of Contemporary
Art**

May 26, 2013 – April 7, 2014
North Adams



Jason Middlebrook, "Falling Water," 2012-2013. Styrofoam, steel, water, PVC pipe, plastic, pump, water tank, rubber, chicken wire, insulation, paint. Approx. 30 feet high. Photo credit: Karen Pearson. Courtesy the artist and DODGE gallery, New York.

Though several of the planks reach a height of nearly 20 feet, they still sometimes feel dwarfed by the lofty gallery, but the centerpiece of the show tackles the vast room. “Falling Water” (2012-2013), created on-site for MASS MoCA, gives a nod to Frank Lloyd Wright, another artist for whom the nexus of the man-made and nature was of primary concern. Reclamation of leftovers is an intrinsic part of Middlebrook’s practice. Here, he has built with them a monumental fountain in the middle of the gallery. The fountain is largely comprised of massive slabs of Styrofoam that Middlebrook found on the MASS MoCA property, debris from an artwork no longer extant. The Styrofoam slabs are bunched into several cantilevered piles that hang from one of two massive steel rods. Each of these rods is in turn attached to one end of a horizontal hanging bar, so that the entire structure dangles, in the manner of a mobile, from the ceiling. A cascade of water spills from the top, hitting each pile of blocks before disappearing into a hole punctured into the gallery’s floor. Standing at its foot in the cool, clear galleries of this former textile mill, one feels the immense scale of the work while gazing up towards the skylights. The mottled, gray-and-white, Styrofoam bricks seem almost made of stone, and it is possible to momentarily believe we are instead before the face of a mountain watching water cascade from its craggy surface.

Middlebrook’s great strength is his ability to fluidly meld the manufactured with the organic, but these fusions have rarely seemed to impart a political bent. A large hanging drawing, however, indicates that perhaps there might be even more seething below the surface of Middlebrook’s work. “A Fresh Start” (2009 – 2012) depicts a civilization that inhabits a dense archipelago of islands, a world that, as result of global warming, has suffered a devastating flood, and must begin anew. Begun after a recovery project that Middlebrook worked on in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, and inspired by the archipelago city of Stockholm (where the drawing had its nascence), “A Fresh Start” demands that the viewer consider the repercussions of human actions upon the environment. After spending time with the meticulous, tightly packed drawing, one sees the rest of the exhibition with fresh eyes. What can Middlebrook’s work illuminate about the fragile, but often forgotten pact humanity has with nature? Perhaps that by disregarding it, we run the risk of a future where remnants of wood are the only things left from the forests, and all of our waterfalls are made of plastic.



Contatti

Gallerie

Todi (PG): Piazza Giuseppe Garibaldi 7

T: +39 075 376 5324

info@giampaoloabbondio.com

Milano: “Playlist”, Via Archimede 73

T: +39 02 00680350

info@giampaoloabbondio.com

Ufficio

Via F.lli Bronzetti, 8, Milano

T: +39 02 00680350

info@giampaoloabbondio.com