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Dallas Contemporary to Feature the Works of Helmut Lang in a New Exhibition



By Natasha Wolff
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After a well-received show at the Sperone Westwater Gallery in New York City, artist Helmut Lang continues his march to yet another American contemporary art museum. This time, Lang's "Burry" sculpture exhibit has arrived at the industrial Dallas Contemporary museum in Dallas, which marks his first solo exhibition in the United States. Lang's artistic practice is characterized by his use of materials and textures, assembled from diverse sources and repurposed.

"Burry," which runs through August 21, features a new body of work for the Austrian-born artist, one that centers on sheepskin, a soft and warm material that has experienced dramatic transformations through the use of tar. "The fleeces draw on ancient symbolism. The myth of Jason and the Golden Fleece was probably based on the actual practice of using protective sheepskin as way of capturing and separating gold from alluvial fluids," says Neville Wakefield. "As the soft fleeces are hardened into sculpture, they accumulate a different set of meanings—this time the entire mythology of material transformation that begins with the promise of gold and ends with the idea of royal or divine power."



Some of the large rectangular pieces lie on the floor, while others are attached to or lean against the wall, creating a sense between traditional painting and sculptures. “Lang works with form, volume, light, and the material history of objects and things to create enigmatic sculptural presences that hover in the space between abstraction and figuration,” says Wakefield. This has been a labor of love for the East Hampton–based artist. “I made these pieces over a period of eight years,” says Lang. “The first one in 2008, most of the tar planes between 2009 and 2015, and the hanging sculptures and small floor pieces in 2016—I always work on different series of sculptures simultaneously.”

With these layers of different materials comes layers of meaning. “I actually overwork every piece numerous times to push everything as far as I can,” Lang explains. “I’m into the process of transmuting a common substance, usually of little value, into a substance of great value. I’m definitely working at the intersection of the common and the precious. That’s what I am interested in.”

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All images courtesy the artist and Sperone Westwater, New York