

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Jason Middlebrook: *Time Compression Keeps Me Coming Back for More*
June 16–July 23, 2016
Opening reception: Thursday, June 16, 6–8 pm
Artist's talk at 7 pm

Lora Reynolds is pleased to announce *Time Compression Keeps Me Coming Back for More*, an exhibition of new work by Jason Middlebrook, the artist's third show with the gallery.

Jason Middlebrook makes paintings on slabs of wood—most recently, on round cross-sections of trees he hangs on the wall. His painted lines might weave themselves into a maze, echo the rough edge of the slab and repeat to its center, or ripple like water in a bubbling stream.

These abstract paintings reflect Middlebrook's longstanding interest in man's complex (and at times adversarial) relationship with nature. An extreme example of this feud can be found in the struggles of the residents of San Gabriel, as told by John McPhee in his essay "Los Angeles Against the Mountains":

A metropolis that exists in a semidesert, imports water three hundred miles, has inveterate flash floods, is at the grinding edges of two tectonic plates, and has a microclimate tenacious of noxious oxides will have its priorities among the aspects of its environment that it attempts to control.

But as Middlebrook has learned, despite our desire for comfort and security, controlling nature is often out of the question. He was living in Santa Cruz in 1989 when the Loma Prieta earthquake struck, killing 63 people, injuring almost 4,000, and causing \$6 billion in structural damages. Middlebrook recalls being convinced his roof was going to collapse and running from his house out into the street, surrounded by the tremendous and unforgettable noise.

He sees this power, conflict, and mystery when he looks at trees. Each one is an ecological city, home to thousands of interconnected plants, animals, insects, and fungi. They turn sunlight into energy, pump breathable oxygen into the atmosphere, provide the raw materials for much of modern medicine, and surprising new research suggests networks of trees communicate with one another. Some can even live for millennia.

And with every passing year, a tree bears witness to the formidable forces of the natural world as well as the effects of human activity on the environment. Annual growth rings in a tree trunk mark droughts, floods, and forest fires, climate change, and suburbs that encroach further on previously untouched land. Middlebrook lays these dramas bare, lamenting and celebrating the tragedies and wonders of flora, fauna, geology, industry, and urban development. When he brushes acrylic onto a piece of wood—skeins of paint dancing with the grain patterns below—he is painting on top of a symbol of time and history, onto a material that was once alive. Middlebrook treads lightly and with awe.

Jason Middlebrook, born in 1966 in Michigan, lives and works in Hudson, New York. He has mounted solo exhibitions at the New Museum (New York), Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum (Connecticut), Santa Monica Museum of Art, and Savannah College of Art and Design Museum of Art. He has created major outdoor artworks for the Albright Knox Art Gallery (Buffalo), Metropolitan Transit Authority (New York), Public Art Fund (New York), and Sun Valley Center for the Arts (Idaho). His work is in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art (New York), Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston, Princeton University Art Museum, and Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago.