

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Project Room:

Jason Middlebrook: The Line That Divides Us

June 29 - August 10, 2013

Opening reception: Saturday, June 29, 6-8 pm

Artist's talk will begin at 7 pm

Lora Reynolds is pleased to announce *The Line That Divides Us*, a project room exhibition of new work by Jason Middlebrook. This is the artist's first solo presentation at Lora Reynolds Gallery. The show includes a selection of abstract acrylic paintings on large hardwood slabs of maple, walnut, elm, cottonwood, ash, and birch.

Jason Middlebrook's most recent slabs are slender, graceful, tall—eight to ten feet in height—and lean against the wall. Middlebrook paints them with non-representational designs: crisp lines that either curve and undulate or form angular patterns with sharp corners. In some pieces the paint seems to fight—and in others echo—the natural shape, color, and grain of the wood.

Man's relationship to nature has long fascinated Middlebrook. In the past he has been critical of our collective disinterest in taking responsibility for the degradation of the environment. His first paintings on hardwood slabs in 2008, however, marked a more nuanced exploration of our relationship to nature's magnificence.

Middlebrook says he is always trying to understand nature: to call attention to its many wonders, to celebrate, to empathize. His work implores us to do the same. If we look more closely at our surroundings we might be surprised where we recognize ourselves. The shape of a Middlebrook slab often evokes parts of a human body. The painted patterns, while artificial and man-made, are often clearly inspired by the wood's natural marbling and growth rings. And the vast amounts of time required to form the trees from which these slabs were cut is mirrored in Middlebrook's laborious, carefully considered approach to art production.

The origin of our identity lies within Mother Nature but for centuries we have fought her for control and dominance. The result is the slow destruction of the planet. Middlebrook's work suggests our prosperity is inextricable from nature's and in our heedlessness for the environment we are also slowly destroying ourselves. However, his work insists, there is also boundless opportunity for communion and mutualistic symbiosis with the natural world. His celebration of both natural *and* artificial forms reveal Middlebrook's unabashed optimism and his excitement about seeing, being, and coexisting.

Jason Middlebrook was born in Michigan in 1966 and lives and works in upstate New York. He currently has a solo exhibition at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art. He has also had solo exhibitions at the New Museum (New York), the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum (Connecticut), and the Santa Monica Museum of Art. He is slated to participate in a group show at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston in 2014. He has also participated in group shows at institutions including the Whitney Museum of American Art (New York) and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. His work is in the collections of institutions including the Museum of Modern Art (New York), the Albright-Knox Art Gallery (New York), the Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston, and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. In 2010 Middlebrook received the Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant and in 2012 his MTA Arts for Transit commission Brooklyn Seeds was named one of the best public artworks in the United States at the Americans for the Arts Conference.