

LAMONTAGNE GALLERY

555 East Second St. | South Boston, MA 02127



Sean Downey *Hunker Hawser*

Opening Reception:

Saturday April 12th, 6 – 8 pm

Hunker Hawser

*Sunday afternoon under the Douglas Firs and woodchips are everywhere.
Centered in a rough dome of architectural salvage and logs,
a man takes a centerfold ripped from a hippie quarterly and refolds it into origami.
A hooded figure photographs him.
Soft drips indicate a cracked Chemex leaking coffee
onto an open page of Lathe of Heaven.
Caffeine soaks through to the last page of stacked text,
jacking LeGuin's speculative fiction into a flipbook of blooming Rorschach stains.
A shadow, who may be the Green River Killer,
leers through a hexagonal window.
And the soft Doug Firs crowd over them all.
Silhouetted limbs and trunks almost sign a word, but not quite...
Maybe a spray-paint hieroglyph.*

LaMontagne Gallery is proud to present new work by Boston based artist Sean Downey.

Hunker Hawser, in origin, was a New Game for a New Age, a reimagined tug-of-war steeped in herbal communal tea rather than army-issue beef stock. Typical in its Whole Earth valorization of balance over brute strength, the game flexes to accommodate many separate players, forever inclusive, even as one by one, the players fall. But, in this exhibition Downey plays it out alone, and in paint.

These compositions tether floating artifacts of this recent, hopeful past to our present day in dreamlogic juxtapositions, testing their identities like method actors playing impossible roles. Each painting is a ruptured scene, a formal crisis staged on an abandoned set: an overgrown nudist campsite, a faded Woodstock living room, a stump-laden and booby-trapped marijuana plot... but the altruistic players, Pendleton blankets, ladders, acoustic guitars, are caught in a slippery cat's cradle, and cannot seem to answer their "Magic Ifs". Tension overtaxes the hawser, and carved wooden sculptures are yanked off their pedestals and onto futons, pulling tree lines away from the picture plane to bend back over their own horizons. Intended histories are knotted into an impossible presence.

The experimental sports and architectures of those western woods were engineered for its future children, aged new, or now. But such preparations are already out of date when the curtains part to reveal the new child on the scene. The parents' Utopian prototypes, in their time, often fade into disgruntled talismans or discounted camping gear. But something of the new green wish persists in the dried needles on the forest floor, and stream beds cut deeper as they channel the spring melt. In Hunker Hawser, Downey unlaces stiff boots and stretches a lean-to with the laces, unscrews his canteen, and dips back into this winding stream, dropping paint like iodine into murky water, to make the once poisoned now potable.

-Rob Smith

Sean Downey received his BFA from the Kansas City Art Institute, and his MFA from Boston University. His work has been exhibited nationally, most recently at the University of Maine Museum of Art, PUNCH Gallery in Seattle, WA, and the New Art Center in Newton, MA. He is a 2013 recipient of the Blanche E. Colman Award, as well as the Theodore and Jane Norman Award for Faculty Scholarship from Brandeis University. Downey is a founding member of the Boston-based collaborative kijidome, and is currently a Lecturer in Fine Arts at Brandeis University.

Gallery Hours: Wednesday - Saturday, 12 - 6 pm | (617) 464 – 4640
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