

N. Dash

November 22, 2019 - February 16, 2020

The paintings, photographs, and drawings of N. Dash (b. 1980, Miami, Florida, USA) convey a profound tactile sensitivity through the artist's manipulation of materials such as fabric, adobe, jute, polystyrene, paper, and string. Utilizing this variety of media with minute attention to detail, Dash constructs works that engage with visible and invisible forms of energy and movement: of bodily meridians, architectural circulation, and environmental flux. Transmuting rough materials into finished pieces with a sculptural sensibility, Dash's work evokes the materially embodied yet intangible presence of attentive touch.

One of the central components in the body of work is the "fabric sculptures," small forms made by continually rubbing pieces of white cotton fabric between the fingers until they deteriorate into tangles of thread. Imbued with a patina of oil and dirt, and with the labor of continual movement—unseen but still discernible within the fibers—the small sculptures embody a preverbal, visceral, and intuitive system of communication. Distressed and abject, the forms are distilled through archival documentation and subsequently preserved and re-presented as silkscreened images incorporated into paintings.

The ongoing *Commuter* (2010-) series arises out of the artist's work with the fabric sculptures and the related practice of engaging with the potentiality of materials through recurrent manual manipulation. While riding on the subway, walking, and during other daily travels, Dash creates quasi-sculptural works by touching, folding, and unfolding blank pages of paper. This performative movement produces creases and other indices of touch on the increasingly worn sheets. After weeks of repetitive movement, a coating of ink or graphite powder is applied to the surfaces, sealing the resulting patina on the paper. This final step highlights their layered, sculptural qualities and captures the otherwise ephemeral process of construction embedded within the paper. Accepting the element of chance within a highly controlled set of procedures, the series engages with the nature of how materials and time coexist and collide.

Dash's interest in the body's capacity to communicate through touch extends to investigations into other materials and structures. The paintings often feature troweled-on fields of adobe, collected from the high desert and shipped to the artist's studio, which develops grooves and ridges as it dries. Serial lengths of string are frequently embedded into the adobe and then partially removed, leaving thin conduits. In larger-scale paintings, single or multiple panels are sometimes shrouded in lengths of cloth taken directly from the bolt, with selvages left visible. This exhibition includes work that for the first time incorporates agricultural netting, with its trademark safety-orange hue. Used to shield plants from the vagaries of insects, rain, snow, or wind, the netting acts as a protective sheath, just as adobe insulates traditional architectural structures from the elements. Another multi-panel work in the show at MCASB includes a central sculptural section composed of an additional component new to Dash's body of work: cardboard edge protectors, a common packing material that safeguards the corners of quadrilateral objects in transit.

The choice to use such materials, both manmade and natural, common and curiously unfamiliar in the context of these works, invites the viewer to consider what connects us all to the phenomena they evoke: the cycles of nature, the structures and products of human enterprise, and, above all, time, intention, and chance.

N. Dash at Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara (MCASB) is curated by Abaseh Mirvali, Executive Director and Chief Curator, and is an expanded presentation of N. Dash, organized by The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, and curated by Amy Smith-Stewart, Senior Curator.

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1. *Untitled*, 2018, Adobe, silkscreen ink, jute, 80 x 45 in (203.2 x 113.16 cm), Courtesy Patrick and Lindsey Collins.

2. *Untitled*, 2019, Adobe, acrylic, cardboard, jute, 90 x 44.5 in (228.6 x 113.03 cm), Courtesy Maryellen & Frank Herringer Collection.

3. *Untitled*, 2019, Adobe, graphite, string, gesso, jute, Styrofoam, 82.5 x 54 in (209.55 x 137.16 cm), Courtesy the Artist and Casey Kaplan, New York.

4. *Untitled*, 2019, Adobe, acrylic, Styrofoam, jute, 34 x 39 in (86.36 x 99.06 cm), Courtesy Patrick and Lindsey Collins.

5. *Untitled*, 2019, Adobe, acrylic, agricultural netting, jute, 90 x 22 in (228.6 x 55.88 cm), Courtesy the Artist and Casey Kaplan, New York.

6. *Untitled*, 2019, Adobe, silkscreen ink, jute, 90 x 22 in (228.6 x 55.88 cm), Courtesy Brian McMahon Collection.

7. *Untitled*, 2019, Adobe, graphite, acrylic, linen, jute, 48 x 72 in (121.92 x 182.88 cm), Courtesy Elyse and Lawrence B. Benenson Collection.

8. *Untitled*, 2018, Adobe, silkscreen ink, jute, 80 x 45 in (203.2 x 114.3 cm), Courtesy Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp, Belgium.

9. *Untitled*, 2019, Oil, acrylic, pigment, linen, canvas, Styrofoam, 75 x 42 in (190.5 x 106.68 cm), Courtesy the Artist and Casey Kaplan, New York.

10. *Untitled*, 2018, Adobe, silkscreen ink, jute, 39 x 33 in (99.06 x 83.82 cm), Courtesy Miyoung Lee and Neil Simpkins.

11. *Commuter (2)*, 2019, Acrylic, paper, 13.5 x 30 in (34.29 x 76.2 cm), Courtesy the Artist and Casey Kaplan, New York.

12. *Commuter (3)*, 2019, Acrylic, paper, 15.25 x 21 in (38.735 x 53.34 cm), Courtesy the Artist and Mehdi Chouakri, Berlin.

13. *Commuter (1)*, 2018, Oil, paper, 19.5 x 29.5 in (49.53 x 74.93 cm), Courtesy the Artist and Casey Kaplan, New York.

14. *Commuter (4)*, 2019, Acrylic, paper, 12 x 16 in (30.48 x 40.65 cm), Courtesy the Artist and Casey Kaplan, New York.

15. *Untitled*, 2018, Adobe, acrylic, enamel, jute, 54 x 27 in (137.16 x 68.58 cm), Courtesy Private Collection, Belgium; and Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp, Belgium.

16. *Untitled*, 2018, Adobe, string, jute, 54 x 27 in (137.16 x 68.58 cm), Courtesy the Artist and Casey Kaplan, New York.

