



THEASTER GATES (b. 1973)

Convex Concave

brick and wood

34 1/2 x 35 31/2 x 3 1/8 in.

2017

28875

PROVENANCE:

Private Collection, California, 2017

Theaster Gates' practice includes sculpture, installation, performance and urban interventions that aim to bridge the gap between art and life. Gates works as an artist, curator, urbanist and facilitator and his projects attempt to instigate the creation of cultural communities by acting as catalysts for social engagement that leads to political and spatial change.

Gates has described his working method as “critique through collaboration” – often with architects, researchers and performers – to create works that stretch the idea of what we usually understand visual-based practices to be. For his exhibition at Milwaukee Art Museum in 2010, for example, Gates invited a 250 strong gospel choir into the galleries to sing songs adapted from the inscriptions on pots by the famous 19th century slave and potter 'Dave Drake'. For the 2010 Whitney Biennial, Gates transformed the Whitney's Sculpture Court with a spare, architectural installation that functioned as a communal gathering space for performances, social engagement, and contemplation. For the duration of the exhibition Gates collaborated with various creative practitioners on a series of 'monastic residencies', holding live events such as the session by Gates' musical ensemble, the Black Monks of Mississippi. In another recent exhibition at Seattle Art Museum, Gates transformed the gallery into an audio archive entitled 'The Listening Room', incorporating a hand-built DJ booth and a DJ who spun selections from the now foreclosed Dr Wax record store in Chicago, formerly an influential hub for 60s, 70s and 80s music, in particular jazz, blues and R&B.

Gates trained as both a sculptor and an urban planner and his works are rooted in a social responsibility as well as underpinned by a deep belief system. His installations and sculptures mostly incorporate found materials – often from the neighborhoods where he is engaged and have historical and iconic significance. In his series “In Event of a Race Riot” (2011 onward) for example, lengths of decommissioned fire hoses are carefully folded, rolled or stacked and emphatically presented inside gilt box frames. Tactile and sensuous objects in themselves, the hoses have special iconic significance in relation to the civil rights struggles, in particular with regard to the hosing of peaceful demonstrators in Birmingham, Alabama in 1963. The frames act as a device for transformation but also a way to ask the viewer to think again about the still ongoing struggle for civil rights. Other sculptures derive from the stage set for performances, such as the series of shoe-shine sculptures. Made from recycled planks of wood, these over-sized, throne-like chairs emphasise the role of server and served and appear as

both scaffold and monument.

Perhaps Gates most ambitious project, however, is the ongoing real estate development, simply known as 'The Dorchester Project'. In late 2006, Gates purchased an abandoned building on 69th and Dorchester Avenue on Chicago's South Side, collaborating with a team of architects and designers to gut and refurbish the buildings using various kinds of found materials. The building and, subsequently, several more in its vicinity, have become a hub for cultural activity housing a book and record library and becoming a venue for dinners (choreographed occasions entitled 'Plate Convergences'), concerts and performances. Gates describes this project as "real-estate art", part of a "circular ecological system" since the renovations of the buildings are financed entirely by the sale of sculptures and artworks that were created from the materials salvaged from their interiors.

Theaster Gates was born in 1973 in Chicago, where he lives and works. He has exhibited widely, including group shows such as the Whitney Biennial, New York (2010), dOCUMENTA (13), Kassel (2012), 'The Spirit of Utopia' at Whitechapel, London (2013) and Studio Museum's 'When Stars Collide' in New York (2014). Solo exhibitions include 'To Speculate Darkly: Theaster Gates and Dave, the Slave Potter' at Milwaukee Art Museum (2010), Seattle Art Museum (2011), MCA Chicago (2013) and 'The Black Monastic' residency at Museu Serralves, Porto (2014). In 2013, Gates was awarded the inaugural Vera List Center Prize for Art and Politics, and he has since won the Artes Mundi 6 prize (2015). Gates is also the founder of the non-profit Rebuild Foundation and currently Professor in the Department of Visual Arts, University of Chicago.

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