



**For Immediate Release**

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**LAUMEIER SCULPTURE PARK ANNOUNCES OUTDOOR WORK BY  
ARTIST HUGH HAYDEN  
AS PRELUDE TO THE SPRING 2024 EXHIBITION**

**At a Glance**

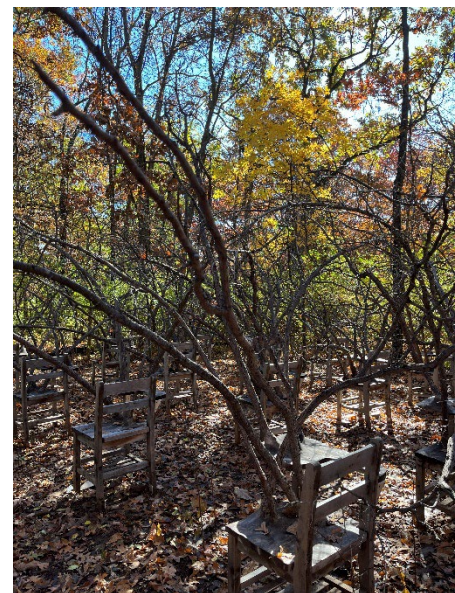
**WHAT:** The presentation of an outdoor sculpture installation entitled *Brier Patch*. This artwork consists of sixteen school desks with built in seats, arranged in a classroom style configuration. Tree branches erupt from the wood furniture. This installation is a prelude to an upcoming mid-career survey of work by Hugh Hayden, to be presented in spring 2024 at Laumeier.

**WHO:** Artist Hugh Hayden (American, b. 1983 in Dallas, Texas. Lives in New York City)

**WHEN:** *Brier Patch* is on view November 6, 2023 through May 12, 2024.

**WHERE:** Laumeier Sculpture Park, 12580 Rott Road, St. Louis, 63127. The work is located in Laumeier's Outdoor Galleries near The Way Field.

**WHY:** Hayden creates sculptures out of wood and other natural materials that become proxies for critical cultural issues. *Brier Patch* refers to the difficulties many people, especially people of color, can have navigating the educational system.



Hugh Hayden, *Brier Patch* (detail), 2022  
Cedar and aluminum  
Collection of the artist, courtesy Lisson Gallery  
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***Detailed release follows***



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**Laumeier Sculpture Park presents *Brier Patch*  
by artist Hugh Hayden**

**St. Louis, MO** – Laumeier Sculpture Park is proud to announce the first Midwest presentation of *Brier Patch*, a sculptural installation by artist Hugh Hayden. The work is on public view from Nov. 6, 2023 through May 12, 2024 in Laumeier’s Outdoor Galleries, near The Way Field.

This artwork is a prelude to Laumeier’s presentation of the exhibition *Hugh Hayden: American Vernacular*, to take place at Laumeier in the Whitaker Gallery inside the Aronson Fine Arts Center from Feb. 10 through May 12, 2024. This exhibition was organized by deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum and will debut at Laumeier before its presentation at any other U.S. venue. This exhibition is Hayden’s first museum survey exploring a decade of his work in a variety of mediums and includes newly commissioned works.

Hugh Hayden often takes forms from everyday objects and reconstructs them. His vision draws from his personal memory and experience as an American and African American, born and raised in Texas. Hayden creates sculptures out of wood and other natural materials that become proxies for critical cultural issues, often inspired by storytelling traditions.

*Brier Patch* transforms a familiar object into a stunning scene. Sixteen traditional wooden schoolhouse seat/desk combinations are arranged into four rows, as we would expect to find them in a classroom. But their surfaces unexpectedly erupt into an impenetrable tangle of tree branches. An environment usually associated with learning becomes an ominous setting.

This work’s title recalls Br’er Rabbit, a character from Southern African American oral folklore, with origins in African, Afro-Caribbean, and Native American cultures. Br’er Rabbit is a trickster who relies on his wits to survive. In one of many stories, he saves himself by convincing a fox who has caught him to throw him into a thick, thorny brier patch. As in that story, this work illustrates how the brier patch can be both a protective place and a site of grave potential danger.

Hayden often grapples with an uncomfortable reckoning between the promise of the American Dream and the myth making around progress. In this work, he suggests that the educational system that is supposed to serve and nurture all children may in fact be scarier and harder to navigate for some.

*Brier Patch* was commissioned by Madison Square Park Conservancy, New York, where it debuted in 2022. The complete work consisted of one hundred desks. Since its debut there,

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smaller collections of the desks have traveled to multiple sites across the country and have been presented in parks and museums in such places as North Carolina and Washington, D.C. Laumeier is the first site for *Brier Patch* in the Midwest. On a visit to Laumeier in 2023, the artist personally selected the location for the presentation of the sixteen desks in the woods, where the surrounding trees would echo and frame the sculptures' forms and materials.

Laumeier's Curator Dana Turkovic states: "I am thrilled to present Hugh Hayden at Laumeier. *Brier Patch* is the perfect introduction to his thought-provoking and exquisite sculpture. Quietly situated along a trail near The Way Field, Hayden's school desks are enhanced with an impenetrable tangle of branches calling attention to his unique combination of ecological concerns and aspects of inclusion and belonging. It has been an honor to work closely with both Madison Square Park Conservancy and deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum on these presentations of Hayden's work."

## **Public Programs**

Multiple exhibition-related public programs—many free of charge—will be presented in 2024. Visit [laumeier.org](http://laumeier.org) for the most up-to-date information on exhibition-related programming.

## **About the Artist**

Hugh Hayden was born in Dallas, Texas in 1983 and lives and works in New York City. He holds an MFA from Columbia University and a Bachelor of Architecture from Cornell University. He has had solo exhibitions at the Madison Square Park Conservancy, The Princeton University Art Museum and White Columns, NY. His work has been included in numerous group exhibitions including Sculpture Center, New York; Hayward Gallery, London; The Shed, New York; Pilot Projects, Philadelphia; Sundance Film Festival, Park City, UT; MoMA PS1, Rockaway Beach, New York; Socrates Sculpture Park, New York; and Abrons Art Center, New York, among others. He is the recipient of residencies at Glenfiddich in Dufftown, Scotland, Socrates Sculpture Park, and Lower Manhattan Cultural Council.

## **About Laumeier Sculpture Park**

Founded in 1976, Laumeier Sculpture Park is one of the first and largest sculpture parks in the country. Laumeier presents more than 70 works of large-scale outdoor sculpture throughout its 105-acre campus. It serves over 350,000 visitors of all ages each year, with a world-class art collection, indoor and outdoor temporary exhibitions, education programs and public events. Laumeier is an internationally recognized museum, accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. The 501(c)3 nonprofit organization operates in partnership with St. Louis County Parks.

Laumeier Sculpture Park's ongoing operations and programs are generously supported by St. Louis County Parks; Regional Arts Commission; Missouri Arts Council; among other corporations, foundations, individual donors and members.

2023 Exhibitions are supported by Alison and John Ferring, Ken and Nancy Kranzberg, Joan and Mitchell Markow and Two Sisters Foundation, Emily Rauh Pulitzer, and Mary Ann and Andy Srenco.

## Images

High-resolution images available upon request.



**Hugh Hayden**

*Brier Patch* (detail), 2022

Cedar and aluminum

Collection the artist, courtesy Lisson Gallery

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