

# JAMES HARRIS GALLERY

604 SECOND AVE  
SEATTLE, WA 98104  
206 903 6220  
JAMESHARRISGALLERY.COM

## PRESS RELEASE



Amir Zaki: (In)formal Matter

March 7—April 20

Opening Reception

April 4, 1:00-3:00 pm

Left: Amir Zaki

“Rock #29” 2016

From the Series *Formal Matter* Ultrachrome Archival  
Photograph

65” x 60”

Edition of 2 + 2AP

Gallery hours:

Wednesday - Saturday 11:00am - 5:00pm

Images are available upon request

James Harris Gallery is pleased to announce the sixth exhibition of works by Amir Zaki. Comprised of two bodies of work, collectively entitled, “Formal Matter,” the series features striking black and white photographs of both coastal rock formations and smooth wood carvings. Together, these images open a discussion of the history and future of not only photography, but also duplicitous version of truth in the modern world. In his work, Zaki strives to disrupt common notions of authenticity, monumentality, and documentation through a hybridization of techniques. The two disparate images are connected through real and fictive space illuminating the truth between the everyday and the ideal.

Zaki’s monumental photographs of jagged rock formations, shaped by time and happenstance, riff on photographic history. He purposely digitally prints them in sepia tones, a nod to turn of the century photographers, who sought out the grandeur of the American West. Zaki’s images are also linked to modernist photographers whose approach abandoned the soft focused pictorialism for highly detailed images. His rock series certainly harkens back to the works of Edward Weston and other photographers of this generation.

Also on view, are large scale images of what appears to be sculptural objects carved out of wood. Isolated on a neutral background, the sculptures are defined by their undulating form, which generate movement through shadows and highlights. This isolation lends to the monumentality of the formations in a similar vein to Bernd and Hilla Becher’s typological architectural photographs. Zaki’s fictive objects were created digitally and act almost as an idealized version of natural formations. In doing so, they demonstrate technology can conquer the irregularity of the natural material. Zaki’s deep love of the history of photography, along with the ever-present drive toward perfection in today’s culture, provide a wellspring of material for the artist to comment on the artifice of our modern world.

Growing up in an ethnically diverse family, Zaki felt alienated by the homogeneity of his Southern Californian home. This tension between alienation and familiarity has developed as a

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fundamental theme running throughout his art practice. Zaki's manipulation of the milky white skies and hazy backgrounds makes determining the scale of either rock and carving a dizzying experience. In Zaki's new body of work, the creation of these objects read as in flux, partly knowable, somewhat obvious yet also opaque, timeless yet exactly of this moment.

Amir Zaki currently lives and works in Southern California. His work is featured in the museum collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art (NYC), Henry Art Gallery (Seattle), New Museum of Contemporary Art (NYC), and the Madison Museum in Wisconsin. Zaki's work is part of Los Angeles' Creative Artists Agency, the Dacra Collection in Miami Beach, and corporate collections at Microsoft, the Progressive Corporation (Mayfield Village, Ohio), and Altoids Curiously Strong Collection (NYC).