

JAMES HARRIS GALLERY

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PRESS RELEASE



Amir Zaki: (In)formal Matter
March 7—April 20
Opening Reception
April 4, 6:00-8:00 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 large-scale photographs of both coastal rock formations and smooth isolated objects that appear to be 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 natural and the ideal.

Zaki’s monumental photographs of jagged rock formations, shaped by time and happenstance, riff on photographic history. He purposely prints them in warm tones, a nod to 19th century photographers (Carleton Watkins, William Henry Jackson and Timothy O’Sullivan), 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 recall the works of Edward Weston and other photographers of this generation. He has transformed this classic subject matter into a personal vision by isolating and distilling the formations into bold monumental forms.

Concurrently on view are large scale images of what appears to be sculptural objects carved out of wood. Placed on a neutral background, each sculpture is defined by their undulating form, which generate movement through shadows and highlights. Titled “Carvings,” these images are forms Zaki has created digitally. Similar in vein to Bernd and Hilla Becher’s typological architectural photographs, his fictive objects were created to act as an idealized version of manmade constructions. By repeating this process through multiple shapes, the “Carvings” become a demonstration in the power of objects how they transcend their reality through the artist’s vision.

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. This tension between alienation and familiarity has developed as a fundamental theme running throughout his art practice. Zaki’s manipulation of the skies and hazy backgrounds makes determining the scale of either rock and carving a dizzying experience. The creation of these objects read as in flux, partly knowable, somewhat obvious yet also opaque, timeless yet exactly of this moment.