
Nathaniel Price: After the Flood

October 18 – November 28, 2021

Abigail Ogilvy Gallery, Boston, MA

On March 13th 2020 the world as we knew it changed – businesses closed, doors were locked and sheltering in place became the new normal as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. On that same day, Nathaniel Price had a new exhibition opening at Abigail Ogilvy Gallery in Boston, MA. The installation was impeccable, the show was documented beautifully—but no one would ever experience it in person. The work stayed up in the gallery with the hope to be able to re-open to the public at some juncture. Then, on April 14, 2020, a major water main broke nearby under Harrison Avenue. The street buckled, cars were swallowed, and water flowed throughout the South End neighborhood. It was as though the floodwaters were a physical manifestation of the fear that had begun to swallow the world.

18 months later, Abigail Ogilvy Gallery proudly presents *After the Flood*, a solo exhibition of new artworks by Nathaniel Price. The title is both a metaphor for life after the height of the pandemic, and also one that resonates with many of the longstanding themes in Price’s work. The artist employs the human form and common materials, such as plaster, concrete, steel wire, wood, paper, pencil and words, to examine our responses to the many storms of our contemporary condition. Stresses, strains, resistance, melancholy, fortitude, echoes of the pandemic, climate catastrophe, and ordinary challenges of a middle-aged life are woven into the artworks on view.

The works are informed by a pursuit of meaning through intellectual and emotional observations that balance themes in psychology, medicine and family dynamics and have been developed over three decades of work that acknowledge the storm that has come while facing the future with a quiet strength and a grey glow.

Nathaniel Price’s statement is oblique but poetically revealing:

A psychologist once said to a troubled child, “Which would you rather do: come to the office, sit down, and talk about yourself and your difficulties, or, come to the office and build things out of matches and Popsicle sticks and set them on fire?”

Included in the show is a series of four meticulously rendered, large format, graphite on paper *As Built Drawings*. The drawings have previously been seen in San Francisco and at the David J. Sencer CDC Museum in association with the Smithsonian Institution. For each drawing in this series, Price formed a life-size silhouette with thousands of hand-drawn anatomical terms that are astonishingly placed in their correct locations throughout the body. Then, through the series, the outlines of the form fizzle, dissolve, and ultimately invert as the words are replaced with descriptions of processes that disturb the body with the inner form hollowed out altogether. Each drawing takes approximately six months to complete over hundreds of hours. Greg Flood of the San Francisco Examiner noted that “the potent mixture of visual beauty and dark subject matter combine in these drawings to stunning effect.”

The pairing of similar forms is a theme that threads through *After the Flood* as with *Noise III & IV*: two life-size forms, shown for the first time, that are wrapped in materials that both define and contain. In one, Price has written thousands of spelling words by hand over several years, creating a grey shroud over the head and torso. The piece underscores Price's interest in the limitations of words and language as tools to understand the world and ourselves. The second figure, cast from the same mold, positioned in 'conversation' with the first is almost caged in a network of unpainted wood, purchased from the local hardware store and crudely screwed together. It is a figure boarded up like a house before a hurricane comes through town.

Nathaniel Price was born in New York City in 1972. The landscape painter Stanley Lewis was a family friend and an influential figure, cultivating Price's early interest in drawing and looking with intention. Price graduated from both Wesleyan University (B.A) and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (M.D). He has had full scholarship residencies at the Chautauqua Institute, the Vermont Studio Center and the de Young museum in San Francisco. In 2009, he moved his studio from San Francisco to Somerville. His works are in the Pritzker family collection, the NYU collection, and the di Rosa Center for Contemporary Art in California. He has been written about in the San Francisco Guardian, The San Francisco Examiner, ARTWEEK, SFWeekly, The San Francisco Chronicle and Art New England. Nathaniel also works as a primary care physician. He teaches at MIT and Harvard medical school where he is an assistant professor. He lives with his wife, Suzanne, and children Abigail, Oliver and Owen in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Nathaniel Price is represented by Abigail Ogilvy Gallery in Boston, MA.



Detail: Nathaniel Price, *Noise III*, 2009-2021,
Lines of written text on cast plaster.