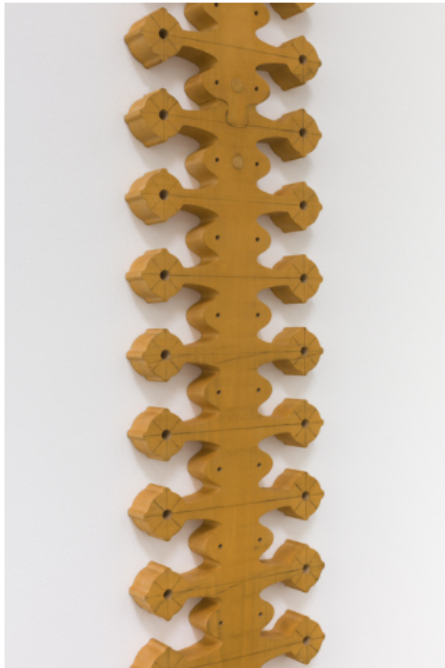


ARTFORUM



Michael Rey, *Yavy-Yavy* (detail), 2020, bass wood, graphite, wax, 12' 2" x 2" x 16".

LOS ANGELES

Michael Rey

PHILIP MARTIN GALLERY
2712 S. La Cienega Blvd
Open by appointment only

In a recent virtual talk with students at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, artist Michael Rey spoke of his work *ZOPTUN* (*Astrolopico*) (all works 2020) as a personal breakthrough. Here he created a painting that is also an object (the four precisely punched holes in its corners call attention to its spatial facticity, which Donald Judd famously excoriated artists for ignoring), an image that is also an abstraction (the raised design of a spiderweb is purposefully shorn from any particular context), and a cipher that is still communicative (the upside-down, reversed text “ZOPTUN” is strictly nonsense but nevertheless possesses graphic force with its sans serif, all-caps type). *ZOPTUN* (*Astrolopico*) joins six other wall-hung pieces in this modest yet probing show at Philip Martin Gallery.

Each painted relief is an opportunity to think with the artist through a set of formal concerns, including iterated and reflected shapes (*Sixob-Maccka* and *Aunilak-Fuppov*); vibrant color (*Dis Zoutoume!*); and dynamic weighting (*Arqpono-Xkollett*). Nearly all of the pieces are covered in a monochromatic coating of oil paint, on which the artist has stamped his signature—a wry critique on craft and standardization. The striking exception is *Yavy-Yavy*, a twelve-foot ladderlike work. For months, Rey kept *Yavy-Yavy* in his home, encouraging his kids to use it as a balance-beam and pull-up bar, thereby marking its surface with their activity. The artist then added graphite lines and covered the work in a thin wax coating, preserving the particulates of

Philip Martin Gallery

play. It is a nice reminder that even a practice as hermetic as Rey's requires the oxygen of interaction.

— *Andy Campbell*