**Curator’s Statement**

The title “Material” does that typical art-scene thing of using a term that lends itself to being read in multiple ways, perhaps to convey the impression that the curator is interested in scholarly complexity. “Material,” as a noun refers to matter, stuff, the elemental parts of a thing. But as an adjective connotes that a thing is significant, consequential, weighty. My use of the homonym is for more than intellectual showmanship. Both of the ways in which the term operates are particularly germane to the artists I’ve placed in this exhibition — Chakaia Booker, Leonardo Drew, and Trenton Doyle Hancock — artists who utilize particular materials to make objects that are of substance, that is to say, meaningful.

Booker, who is likely better known for her work that uses recycled rubber tires, here works with prints made via lithography, woodcuts, and hand-painted chine collé. In many she exploits the skin-like surface of the paper, embossing it so that it begins to take on the look of a more lyrical version of ritual scarification. These textures augment and amplify the imagery of the print. The prints are abstract maelstroms that nevertheless have an underlying structure that manages to contain all their profligate energy.

The underlying structure is salient feature of Leonardo Drew’s wood sculpture. He is well known for his large, engulfing installations that threaten to overwhelm the viewer with a sense of what infinity might feel like. But when he works smaller, as he does here, I get a potent distillation of the feeling of being introduced to the remnants of an old growth forest might have covered the entire earth.

Trenton Doyle Hancock has in the last several years made and elaborated a whole world of his own making: the Moundverse. I’ve been watching and savoring the works of this series, intrigued by how genuinely and mischievous Hancock is, how the characters exist on the verge of being unpalatable, even odious. But the style of painting and the use of everyday plastic bottlecaps that serve as structural and decorative elements within the paintings make his characters denizens of a funky, lighthearted, and comic universe.

The throughline of this work is that all three take their materials so seriously they become meaningful in their studious manipulations — that and they are extremely attentive to the magic that can pour out of the quotidian. Their deep exploration of a material’s possibilities and their crafty sophistication feels substantive, yes. It also feels like something worth celebrating.