

## Breaking Horses: Lionel Maunz at Bureau

by Matthew Shen Goodman

While the streets outside were frigid and empty as New York weathered the polar vortex last Tuesday, artist Lionel Maunz chiseled away at a sculpture's concrete base as he finished installing his new solo show at Bureau gallery. Titled *Semen, Blood, Lava* (2014), the piece is one of eight in "Deluge," the Brooklyn-based artist's third exhibition with Bureau (Jan. 12-Feb. 9). With their minimal palette, the works have a bleak air about them—black iron forms sits on thick, pale concrete bases whose angled sides recall pyramids. Included in the objects are casts, at times distorted and pockmarked, of farrier's tools, children's feet, crude architectural models and, most notably, a number of horses' hooves and heads in various states of decay, often pierced through by rectilinear forms.

"Deluge" takes its title from *The Deluge*, a fresco by Italian Renaissance painter Paolo Uccello showing scenes of violence taking place outside the walls of Noah's ark as the waters begin to rise. Uccello's dark vision of "the hemmed-in architecture of the ark as a tomb rather than a site for salvation," as Bureau director Gabrielle Giattino described it in an e-mail to *A.i.A.*, was an inspiration for Maunz (most directly, perhaps, for the severe concrete slabs).

Of particular interest also was the horse in the fresco; depicted drowning and being beaten with a club, it's one of the reasons why, for Maunz, *The Deluge* "is a locus," he told *A.i.A.*, taking a break from chiseling. "I'd been obsessed with it since I was an undergraduate, and it manages to work with all of these other references I've been thinking about." Those include Nietzsche's horse sacrifice ritual of Ashvamedha, as well as the writings of the American author Peter Sotos on violence against horses.

"Deluge" follows Maunz's shows "Wail Eternal Scorn of Geologic" (2010) and "Receipt of Malice" (2012), and acts in some ways as a continuation of those two shows. At the heart of Maunz's vision is the desire to create "uncompromising work about cruelty," said

Lionel Maunz,

"Deluge," installation view. Courtesy the artist and Bureau Gallery, New York.



Giattino. That's an urge previously actualized in the hostile geological environment conjured by the mine-shaft installation of "Wail" and the grave-like sculptures and gothic drawings that appeared in "Receipt of Malice." With its deteriorating body parts, "Deluge" sees Maunz honing his approach to stark representations of violence, though the architectural bent present throughout previous works remains a touchstone.

The pared-down focus seems to have catalyzed from casting iron, a technique relatively new for Maunz. "I'd always wanted to work with metal," he said. "I'd been working with pewter and other materials with low melting points, but then through a friend I had the opportunity to use a foundry on one of the SUNY campuses. I love iron's weight. It gives a presence to the works. Of course," he said, pointing to the cluster of iron horse hooves in his sculpture *Deluge* (2014), "that's at least 200 pounds, so I'll have to keep on working with other materials for pragmatic reasons."