

# Art in America

## LIONEL MAUNZ

### Bureau, Inc.

Brooklyn-based sculptor Lionel Maunz is particularly attentive to the way architectural space shapes physical experience, as is evident both in the content of his sculptures and in their installation. His first two solo exhibitions with Bureau took place in the gallery's previous location on Henry Street, a cockpit-size room that Maunz filled with stalactitic forms in 2010 and a single coffinlike sculpture in 2012. In these shows, Maunz responded to the small square footage with verticality, exhibiting work with strata of various materials, each loaded with distinct conceptual associations.

In his most recent exhibition (all works 2014), an elegant installation of eight sculptures at the gallery's new, larger space on Norfolk Street, Maunz spread out. While these works similarly deal with themes of exhumation and subterranean discovery, one feels to be more securely at a single elevation—wandering among washed up remains on a postapocalyptic beach rather than descending into the mineshafts or caves suggested by his earlier shows.

The title of the exhibition, "Deluge," is taken from Renaissance painter Paolo Uccello's 15th-century fresco depicting Noah's ark, the flood and its aftermath. In addition to anchoring the sculptures to a single painting, Maunz used restraint with his mediums. Eschewing the material eclecticism of his earlier work, which combined everything from wood and resin to semen and bone, the works in "Deluge" are all made of concrete and black cast iron. The result was a weightier installation, both physically and metaphorically.

Picking up on the central image of a drowning horse being beaten by a club in the Uccello fresco, Maunz's *Regime* is a tableau set on concrete blocks that includes a twisted, distorted horse's head and four hooves that appear to be in various states of destruction. The show's title work similarly comprises a pile of horse hooves. Human feet appear in *Beautiful Child*, *What Crawls Must Be Crushed*, and *Discipline*, a reference, perhaps, to Uccello's depiction of Noah's foot being grasped by a drowning supplicant. Several of the concrete bases of the sculptures recall the carved trapezoidal stones used in much Classical and Renaissance architecture. Uccello imagines the ark both before and after the flood, with the passage of time registered by the changing surface of the ark's walls. Maunz's concrete bases also seem to evoke a single structure altered by time or memory.



View of Lionel Maunz's exhibition "Deluge," showing (foreground) *Regime*, 2014, concrete and iron; at Bureau, Inc.

While the clear formal references in "Deluge" initially seemed to represent a departure from the talismanic, esoteric quality of Maunz's earlier work, this group of sculptures is nonetheless imbued with an intensely personal symbolism that rewards sustained attention. For example, the rectilinear forms that bisect the severed horse's head in *Regime* represent, according to the artist, abstracted architectural models of the apartments and trailers where he grew up. Another geometric model pierces the torsolike form in the totemic *Semen*, *Blood*, *Lava*, but here it is grasped by a distorted hand. By connecting the classical references with more biographical associations, Maunz effectively encourages a meditation on the circumstances of loss and violence that have been at the core of human experience for centuries.

—Diana Kamin