Paul Wallach: LIEU NON LIEU

Fergus McCaffrey, New York
January 9th – March 1st, 2025
Opening Thursday, January 9th 6 – 8 PM

Fergus McCaffrey is proud to present the first United States exhibition of the American sculptor Paul Wallach (b. 1960) in over three decades: *Lieu Non Lieu* (Place No Place). The artist has lived and worked in Europe since 1992, and we hope that this exhibition begins the overdue recognition of Wallach's innovative work in his homeland. The artist will be present at the exhibition opening.

Wallach was born in 1960 in New York and grew up in Philadelphia, where his interest in furniture making and encounters with the works of Constantin Brancusi and Marcel Duchamp at the Philadelphia Museum of Art proved decisive in his future direction as a sculptor. These formative influences established the exacting standards of hand-wrought facture and the conceptual and art historical veracity that are the hallmark of Wallach's work.

Three large scale sculptures, seven wall and floor mounted works, and one text piece are included in the exhibition, all of which were conceived and executed between 1994 and today. These have been installed on both floors of the 26th Street gallery, demonstrating Wallach's deliberate and incremental distillation of form and ideas. Assembled from wood, lead, plaster, gauze, steel, mirror, and glass; the artist's materials acknowledge and extent a distinct art historical lineage that is both tactile and minimal, and grounded in the history of European and American 20th Century sculpture.

Paul Wallach Erster Akt, 2015. Plaster, steel, wire. 181 1/8 x 84 5/8 x 84 5/8 inches (460 x 215 x 215 cm)

Erster Akt (First Act), 2015, is a complex sculptural proposition that began evolution in 1994, which features four curvilinear six foot long cast plaster arcs that stand off-set on the floor. They are suspended and stabilized by corresponding steel blocks fixed from a single centripetal point in the ceiling by steel wires, and the tension between the expansive and contractive horizontal forces of the plaster and steel elements, and the downward force of gravity establishes a delicate equilibrium. *Erster Akt* embodies sculptural impermanence and fragility, made all the more palpable by the contrast between the hard and flexible steel and the brittle and rigid plaster, establishing a haptic field of tension.

The development of *WHERE WHAT WAS*, 2013, began in 2009 and reflects the impulses of Constructivist assemblage from early European Modernism. The sculpture consists of dozens of individually honed wooden bars and blocks that Wallach has refined, reworked and secured together with glue and gauze in a laboriously deliberative process. As the viewer circumnavigates the 10-foot-tall form, the evolving lattice lines of perspectives temporarily converge to create the form of a star, before other dynamic compositional rewards reveal themselves elsewhere within the sculpture.

Paul Wallach Non Lieu, 2024. Wood, mirror, paint. 27 1/8 x 84 5/8 x 12 inches (69 x 215 x 30.5 cm)

Non Lieu (No Place), 2024 is the most recent work in the exhibition and has been in development since 2020. It reflects a new intersection of 'form and function' with aspects of American Minimalist and Italian Arte Povera. Here Wallach has handcrafted

ten downward facing elementary chairs, onto which he has attached a long mirror that ties together the individual elements and extends outward from the left side of the work. Strangely, the forward tilt of the mirror visually negates the wooden structure of the work by reflecting the empty floor on-front, making the sculpture appear both present and absent. Circulation around *Non-Lieu* provokes frustration and wonder, as our efforts and expectations for self-recognition in the mirrored place are denied, and our presence is negated by the sculpture.

Paul Wallach lives and works in Paris. He studied Art at the University of Wisconsin, and Applied Arts at the University of Boston. Solo exhibitions include those at Musée d'Art Modern et Contemporain, St. Etienne, the Domaine de Kerguehennec, Bignan, the Museum Folkwang, Essen, and the Gemeentenmuseum in the Hague. His works are held in the collections of Albright-Knox Museum, Buffalo, New York; Centre Pompidou, Paris, France; Fondation pour la sculpture contemporaine Villa Datris, L'Isle sur- la-Sorgue et Paris, France; Museum Liaunig, Neuhaus, Austria; and Skulpturen Park Köln, Cologne, Germany.

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