

# Cartouche

Laura Naples, Clay Mahn, and Nicole Anastas

MAR 25 - MAY 24, 2024

Uprise Art is pleased to present *Cartouche*, an exhibition of new paintings by Nicole Anastas, Clay Mahn, and Laura Naples.

In her latest paintings, Anastas draws upon her background in fashion and furniture design to create a captivating visual narrative infused with meticulous hand-sewn details. Inspired by the symbolism of the winter solstice, the artworks reflect the cyclical nature of life, transitioning from a sense of initial confinement to the anticipation of expansive renewal akin to the arrival of spring. Her unique process seamlessly integrates traditional techniques such as embroidery and fraying, enriching the canvas with a tactile and multidimensional surface. The predominantly monochromatic palette emphasizes the topography of her paintings, allowing for the interaction of light, form, and texture to shine.

Mahn directs our gaze to the canvas's surface, which he transforms with nuanced variations achieved through the application of chalk and buffed wax. Embracing a philosophy of subtraction over addition, Mahn meticulously sands each layer, gradually revealing underlying forms and compositional motifs. He adds further dimension to his compositions by introducing loose patterning across the canvas - delicate circles meander across the painting's facade, their ethereal and celestial presence providing a striking visual contrast to the weathered texture of the surface. Through his work, Mahn places a deliberate emphasis on process, allowing the materials themselves to narrate their journey in a tangible and tactile manner that challenges the traditional notion of painting as a purely illusionistic endeavor.

Within her larger paintings, Naples embeds small canvas blocks that punctuate the works like gemstones, offering a tactile and visual contrast to the surrounding space. To create each composition, the artist handles, arranges, and rearranges each component with an emphasis on physical movement and playful discovery. The resulting dialogue between the pieces reflects the artist's experiences traveling in Lecce, Italy and evokes notions of porosity, currents, and history. Serendipitous alignments guide the placement of these inlaid "inclusions", highlighting the mysterious nature of first encounters and the lasting imprints they leave behind. Similar to inclusions in diamonds, the irregularities and supposed flaws are identifying markers that underscore the specific series of events, such as the environment, confluence of materials, and asserted pressure, that created each unique work.

Like a cartouche, which demarcates a name or lineage within its circumscribed border and serves as an ornamental embellishment, these paintings by Anastas, Mahn, and Naples unveil the inherent beauty and complexities of their processes, and cement the artist's signature strokes and vocabulary within the artwork surface.