

# Educator Notes

## Nate Lowman: Before and After

December 15, 2017–June 10, 2018



Installation view: Nate Lowman, *Before and After*, 2017. Photo: Tony Prikrýl

## About the Artist

Nate Lowman was born in Las Vegas, NV, in 1979, and lives and works in New York. He received a BS from New York University. Recent exhibitions have taken place at: FRAC Champagne-Ardenne, Reims, France (2016); Dallas Contemporary, TX, Basilica Hudson, New York, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (all 2015); Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice, Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, Belgium (both 2014); Lyon Biennial, France, Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome (both 2013); Brant Foundation Art Study Center, Greenwich (2012); and Astrup Fearnley Museum, Oslo (2009).

## About the Exhibition

This is the first comprehensive museum exhibition that traces the work of New York-based painter, sculptor, and installation artist Nate Lowman. The exhibition explores the concept of desire in Lowman's work, highlighting his frequent use of imagery and language drawn from American popular culture: angels, poppies, hearts, pine-tree air fresheners, smiley faces, iconic celebrities, crosses, and news articles. His work produces nostalgic and often melancholic objects that critique the cult of celebrity, material consumption, and violence. His research and cataloguing are done in an effort to preserve the things of modern life that often go unnoticed, humorously bringing into focus pieces that leave a lasting impression on viewers—ones that provoke longing and a sense of desire.

Lowman's exhibition is presented in a salon-style arrangement, in which artworks are presented in greater density on the wall, extending above and below the typical, single-row display at eye-level found in most contemporary museums. By using techniques such as shaped canvases and photo-transfer process of painting, the artist asks us to look deeper than what our first glance might capture. Beyond what might be a perceived flatness, Lowman's paintings have great variation, complexity, and flaws that are imbued with a sense of humor and curiosity. Further, by mixing unlikely pairings of cultural icons and relics (such as objects of antiquity, hearts, and the Shell Oil Company logo) with his personal memories and perception, the galleries are transformed into spaces that can have different meanings to each visitor.

## Questions for Discussion

- I What do you desire most?
- I How does desire shape your daily behaviors?
- I Can you find flaws in what your desire?

## Suggested Activity

### Before and After Desire

Gather an assortment of magazines, scissors, glue, and poster board.

Symbols are visual representations of ideas and concepts. Identify some common symbols associated with desire such as hearts, dollar signs, and peace signs. Discuss their understood meaning with students.

Ask students to consider what they most desire, and to represent that idea through a found or invented symbol. Students will then sketch that symbol onto a full sheet of poster board and cut it out.

Using the magazines, images/text from the internet, and their created symbol, have students create a collage. Once finished, facilitate a conversation about how it feels to look at all of our desires at once. Did anything change from when you started to when you finished?

Following Page: Nate Lowman, *Before and After*, 2014. Oil, alkyd, resin, tape, paper, and dirt on inkjet on canvas, 36 x 150 x 1 1/2 in (91.4 x 381 x 3.8 cm). Courtesy the artist and Maccarone, New York and Los Angeles

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