

Nate Lowman

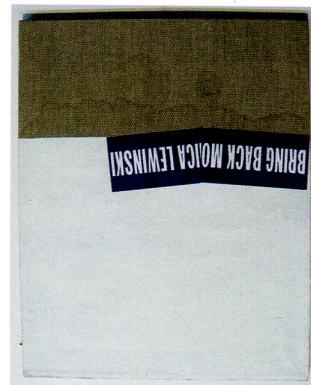
Born in Las Vegas in 1979 but based in New York since 1997, Nate Lowman addresses hot topics and strange omens using installation, collage, and a hand-painted, xerographic dot method of painting to render images of arrested celebrities and tragic nobodies. He clips and collects embarrassments and heralds of doom; photos of natural and unnatural disasters, accidents, and oddities; tombstones, and, in one recurring theme, the US dollar bill folded to reveal a pictogram of the crumbling World Trade Center.

In several recent works, Lowman uses fingerprints, smudges, and daubs of paint that accrue on the canvas after having been laid on the studio floor for periods of time. Scratchy black marks accumulate on soiled surfaces. Brushstrokes made from the gradual, repetitive process of painting and cleaning merge like fragments of lead pulled by a magnet. Some of these paintings' compositional elements occur as a side-product of other projects, as in one untitled, large-scale work from 2013, where an outline of a tree-shaped canvas from Lowman's *Arbre Magique* air freshener series appears faintly in pink paint.

Lowman was raised in the rural California mountain town of Idyllwild, an hour's drive from the desert town of Palm Springs and two hours east of Los Angeles. Car culture and road signifiers often figure in his work—things glimpsed on high-speed turnpikes, or items observed from the backseat of a yellow cab in bumper-to-bumper Manhattan gridlock. With their faded sentiments and slapped-on one-liners, the pithy bumper stickers that creep into some of his works are like tiny, aggressive thought bubbles—absurd propositions about disgraced presidents or encroaching police presence—here to spoil an otherwise serene abstract painting. Lowman has previously invoked other metaphysical highways and roadside sights in the form of rust-stained gas pumps, bullet-hole car decals, and his *Tow Truck Boom* sculptures—freestanding replicas of the pulling apparatus used by New York City tow trucks, presented upright so that they resemble crosses.

Lowman once devoted an entire room of an exhibition to found smiley faces, and stray ones still gather in corners of his studio today. They find their way into occasional paintings and grow in unsettling numbers. As their vacant little eyeballs and grins pile up in obscene numbers, the rumble of human weirdness reaches a deafening roar. Like the sidewalk litter that he sometimes fastens to his paintings' stained, spotted, shot, or shaped surfaces, the smiley faces demonstrate Lowman's eye for the pesky as well as his embrace of distractions—a fervid, acerbic affirmation of his surroundings. Their obsessive lines trace a relentless impulse to filch something of the world and its (dis)contents; pictures borrowed to be returned at an unknown future date.

— Kayla Guthrie



Nate Lowman, *Bring Back*, 2012.
Sticker and gesso on linen.
16 × 20 in (40.6 × 50.8 cm)



Nate Lowman, *[TBT]*, 2012.
Oil, wood, and alkyd on
canvas. 24 × 24 × ¾ in
(61 × 61 × 1.9 cm)



Nate Lowman, *[TBT]*,
2012. Latex and alkyd on
canvas mounted to oil on
canvas. 16 × 21 × 1 in
(40.6 × 53.3 × 2.5 cm)