



ENGAGE Projects

Announcement for Immediate Release:

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RAMBLE TAMBLE

Aaron Spangler

January 10 - February 15, 2025

Opening: Friday, January 10, 5:30-7:30pm



Aaron Spangler, *Down the Road I Go (detail)*, 2024, carved basswood with black gesso and graphite, 21.5 x 16.75 x 3.5 in 54.6 x 42.6 x 8.9 cm

ENGAGE Projects is excited to announce Aaron Spangler's debut exhibition in Chicago, *Ramble Tamble*. Dreamy and foreboding all at once, the gallery will be filled with his hand-carved reliefs that pull from roots in rural life and culture in northern Minnesota. The shiny black surfaces intertwine scenes of the quotidian with the chimeric: cabins tucked away in the deep woods, a face protruding from a tree trunk, a man working in his garage, an abandoned car. Spangler's landscapes are intimate and anti-pastoral; no sky in sight underneath the dense tree canopy gives the landscapes a hushed quality. A crucifix cuts its impression in the earth like a shadow underneath a cluster of three trees, a stark allusion to the religious grip which shapes much of the rural Midwest United States. Relying on traditional hand tools and natural light to define his surfaces, Spangler uses iconographic relief to tell the untold stories of rural life.

Originating from a bumper sticker on the back of a truck in northern Minnesota, the name *Ramble Tamble* evokes a feeling of meandering through a familiar environment: lived-in and falling apart. It prefaces the exhibition with notes of swamp rock and country blues with its reference to the song by 70s band Creedence Clearwater Revival. Working at a saw mill in his early years as an artist, Spangler says he was "entrenched with the characters of the mill and a serious rural education in wood logging and lumbering, but also in narrative and stories and community." Spangler moved to New York City in 1999 where the rural ethos in his bas relief carvings was born. Best known for his largescale scenes of rural life filled with action and conflict, this new body of work is a quiet departure from his previous imagery; he remarks, "This show is about going back to the landscape." The carvings in *Ramble Tamble* tell just one story at a time, acting chiefly as portraits of place.

For further information, please contact info@engage-projects.com



Pairing weaving with his low-relief sculptures for the first time, Spangler collaborates with artist Bruce Engebretson and a long lineage of tapestry knowledge to tell these stories as well. Spangler says, "The weavings are ecclesiastical portals much like stained-glass windows." Playing with asymmetry and fiery colors, the weavings accentuate the high contrast feel of the exhibition. With nearly 50 years of weaving experience, Engebretson began weaving when his older cousin helped him string up an empty picture frame and make a stripped design with leftover knitting yarn. This led to a path of utilitarian weaving on pre-industrial, immigrant-made looms which have been gifted to him or otherwise saved from destruction. Engebretson reflects, "Tapestry weaving is very different from many mediums, especially in that you work on a piece from bottom to top, or one side to the other, without the option of being able to go back and make changes to what you have done. Each pass of thread is consequential and slow."

Spangler's work has been included in group shows including "Working Thought," The Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; Takashi Murakami's "Superflat Collection," Yokohama, Japan; the two-person "American Spect duar oternalar (201-12), Walker A Center, Mineapolis, He alana 208-10, am, N.C.; Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, the Netherlands; and the Smart Museum of Art, University of Chicago. His work belongs to many public and private collections, including The Whitney Museum of American Art, the Hammer Museum, and the Rubell Family Collection, among others. He has received grants from the Joan Mitchell Foundation (2014), McKnight Foundation (2009), Minnesota State Arts Board (1998), and Jerome Foundation (1997). In 2017, Spangler's first large-scale bronze, Bog Walker, was commissioned by the Walker Art Center's Sculpture Garden in Minneapolis, Minnesota.