

MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY

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The New Criterion

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The Critic's Notebook

by *The Editors*

On Matisse's books, Martin Puryear, Ancient Thebes & more from the world of culture.

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Martin Puryear, Tabernacle, 2019. Photo: Joshua White/JW Pictures.



*Martin Puryear, A Column for Sally Hemings, 2019, Cast iron, painted tulip poplar.
Courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery.*

“Martin Puryear,” at Matthew Marks Gallery, New York (through January 30, 2021): When Martin Puryear represented the United States in the 2019 Venice Biennale, the forms and facture of his enigmatic, surrealistic sculptures first appeared as reliquaries for some forgotten feast day. Look closer and it turns out the pageantry of this meticulously crafted work is rooted in the lives of our own saints and sinners. Now at Matthew Marks, a selection of these sculptures are on display stateside for the first time. *Tabernacle* (2019) recalls the hat of a Union soldier concealing a canon. *A Column for Sally Hemings* (2019) matches the rust of a cast-iron shackle with smooth white classical form. Just what they are is part dream, part nightmare, all made real through the obsessive craftsmanship of their constructions. —*James Panero*

Panero, James. “The Critic's Notebook: Martin Puryear.” *The New Criterion*, December 8, 2020.