

PETER YOUNG
“STICK” PAINTINGS, 1970

NOVEMBER 7, 2024 – FEBRUARY 8, 2025



Peter Young (b. 1940)

#36-1970, 1970

Acrylic on canvas stretched on ponderosa pine branches
with beige nylon twine, 21 x 21 inches

NEW YORK – Craig Starr Gallery is pleased to announce *Peter Young: “Stick” Paintings, 1970*, on view from November 7, 2024, through February 8, 2025. Organized in collaboration with the artist, this exhibition brings together a large selection of Young’s so-called “Stick” paintings, a series of unconventional abstract works he produced in 1970, the year he abandoned his position in the New York artworld. This is the first show dedicated solely to this body of work in over fifty years, since they were originally exhibited in 1971. Painted on canvas stretched around branches of ponderosa pine trees, these brightly colored and sculptural works showcase Young’s openness to play with materials, as well as with the influence of tribal and spiritual art.

Throughout the 1960s, Peter Young became a recognized figure in the New York art world. In the span of a few years, his work was presented in the Corcoran Biennial; in two Whitney annuals; in the *Nine Young Artists / Theodoron Awards* at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum alongside Bruce Nauman and Gerhard Richter; and in gallery shows at Leo Castelli and Noah Goldowsky/Bellamy Gallery in New York, Nicholas Wilder Gallery in Los Angeles, and Galerie Ricke in Cologne. The growing attention to his work from collectors and curators, however, began to trouble him. Early in 1969, Young decided to leave New York and spent three or four months in the Talamanca mountains of Costa Rica, where he resided with the indigenous Boruca tribe (also called Brunca or Brunca), known for its intricately carved and painted masks.

In Costa Rica, Young made his first group of “Stick” paintings inspired by the traditional craft practices of his native hosts. In opposition to the hard-edge abstraction popular in New York, Young wrapped canvas around branches of local trees and tied them together with twine, making the whole structure emphatically three-dimensional. He made around a dozen pieces, all but one of which he left in Costa Rica. According to late scholar Ellen H. Johnson, the only example Young brought back to the States—reproduced in the 1969 May issue of *Art in America*—was later gifted by the artist to a friend in England.

Shortly after his return to New York, Young left the city permanently. After stays in Mexico and Spain, he bought land in the mountains of Utah and settled there temporarily. “Without lumber or boards,” Young says in an interview that accompanies this exhibition, “I realized I’m surrounded by a ponderosa pine forest.” Following his earlier work in Costa Rica—as well as the memory of Plains Indian leather shields shown to him by his mentor Luchita Hurtado—Young created a new series of about thirty “Stick” paintings. The present show includes eleven of these historical paintings, including several loans from private collections.

This exhibition is accompanied by the online publication of an interview with Peter Young, and an essay by Ben La Rocco, an artist, writer, and scholar based in Brooklyn, New York.

Craig Starr Gallery wishes to thank Gallery Wendi Norris for its generous support of this exhibition.

About Craig Starr Gallery

Craig Starr Gallery is located at 5 East 73rd Street between Fifth and Madison Avenues. Gallery hours are Monday through Saturday, 11am–5:30pm, and by appointment. For general information, please visit the gallery’s website at www.craigstarr.com.