

Sant'Andrea de Scaphis

MATT BROWNING

WOODEN

OPENING: APRIL 10, 2024

I consider myself a descendant of the Dave Beech coaching tree, and one of the many parables I've picked up during my tutelage has been an alternative story of art and how one might structure an artistic practice. Dave has helped me see that the keywords we use when we talk about art are not simply concepts that we can affirm or negate in the arena of ideas. Rather, each keyword expresses real social relations, and so becomes a durable part of how we describe the real social activities producing and reproducing art.

Instead of telling the story of art as one of a series of negations where, by way of an impressive argument, bad concepts can simply be purged from art in favor of good ones, Dave has prompted me to visualize the story of art as something more akin to sitting at the mixing board in a studio after you've recorded all the raw tracks for a song.

The mixing board has hundreds of little dials controlling hundreds of tracks, and no track can be fully turned off, because it plays an integral role in the song. And so one sits there, adjusting the levels of the beautiful, the interesting, form, content, context, material, figure, ground, intention, chance, genius, inspiration, rigor, technique, abstract, concrete, and all the other dials of all the different relations in art. When we look at art, or talk about art, or write about it, we are adjusting art's levels. And when we make art, we are, for the span of an artwork, or an exhibition, also taking a turn twisting the dials.