

# FORT GANSEVOORT

## Bullett Media

Art & Design

### Artist Anthony James Uses Meditation to Make Sculptures That Are Out of This World

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*Photography: Courtesy Fort Gansevoort*

Anthony James knows how to communicate with other worlds. If not literally, then at least figuratively. The British-born, Los Angeles-based, Central Saint Martins-educated artist, who is best known for burning his 355 Ferrari Spyder and placing it, Damien Hirst-style, into a display case as a kind of Greek sacrifice, meditates every day as a way of getting in touch with the world outside himself.

“You’re supposed to try to put yourself out of the material world into a different dimension, so that time is almost irrelevant. Time is irrelevant when I’m making something because I can make something in a day and sometimes I’ll leave it for a year. It’s instinctual,” he explains. “I don’t really differentiate anything in my life. I try to meditate every day, and I do Kundalini yoga every day, and it ends up in my studio practice because it’s all really the same thing. It’s all just experience.”

We’re standing inside Fort Gansevoort, curator Adam Shopkorn’s multi-level Meatpacking District gallery/shop/BBQ stand, where James’s solo show “Fabulism” will hang until July 8. What, you ask, is Fabulism? “It’s kind of a magical realism, it’s like adding something to the reality. Meditation is going to a place that is out of our reality — so maybe I’m bringing back a certain alien frequency to this material,” James says.



*Photo: Sean Deckert*

The show, which was curated by Lauri Firstenberg of the forthcoming L.A. art production hub there-there, consists mostly of large, curved bronze and steel disks scarred with minimalist markings and occasional splotches of color. The “Shields”, as they’re called, certainly do have an extraterrestrial appeal, with their satellite dish shape and the foreign, almost linguistic designs James has painted, burned, drilled, and on at least one occasion, shot into them. They’re like rugged, cool UFOs for very in-the-know aliens who most definitely come in peace.

And perhaps James is onto something when he posits that time is largely irrelevant when it comes to the business of making things. After all, “Fabulism” combines works from the beginning of James’s career, circa 2003 and 2004, with ones from today — though it’s often practically impossible to tell the difference between the two generations. “It’s weird to see them for the first time in fifteen years,” James says of the older works, which have mostly been in storage. “The interesting thing is that I [was] using the same kinds of materials fourteen years ago as I am now. Wood, aluminum, and steel, and prongs, and brass, it’s the same stuff I do now ... the journey evolves, but the materials that I’m drawn to are the same.”



*Photo: Sean Deckert*

Other works in the show include a wooden box filled with neon tubes arranged geometrically, a sculpture chiseled and chainsawed from a solid block of ebony, and a surfboard-esque sculpture rendered in shiny solid brass. These hard, traditionally masculine materials are especially suited to the space, which has managed to take the raw, industrial vibe that's become de rigueur for cool, new downtown venues and infuse it with a sense of hominess — and no, that's not just the barbecue talking. If Fort Gansvoort is the antidote to the anesthetized white box gallery (and it just might be), James's work is exactly the kind of thoughtful, stripped-down, quietly experimental art that feels the most at home there.

James is also quick to point out that despite their heaviness, his sculptures aren't as masculine as they initially appear. Take another look at their form, he suggests. "When I started making these works in L.A., the first one I thought was very masculine because it was wood and steel but they were domed out, almost like a cathedral dome hung on the wall," he recalls. "And the ones I'm referring to were very big. I feel it's a very masculine work. But a friend of mine came over and said, "This is the most feminine work you've ever done." Because it has that femininity of a cathedral dome."