

# Theodore

373 Broadway, F10, New York, NY 10013 • Tel 212 966 4324 • theodoreart@gmail.com

## Andrew Witkin After (After Ancestors)



**March 1 - April 6, 2024**

**Reception: Friday, March 1, 6 to 8 pm**

Gallery hours Thursday–Saturday 12-6 pm

Door/Elevator buzzer #610

In the early 1500's, Michelangelo painted the Sistine Chapel's ceiling, including a series of lunettes that wrap the chapel ceiling's edges which loosely depict "Ancestors of Christ." When Michelangelo came back decades later and painted the "Last Judgment" in the same chapel, not only did he paint over prior work by Pietro Perugino, but by 1541, he also painted over two of his own lunettes.

In the 1560's, Adamo Scultori, an engraver from Padua, depicted 32 of Michelangelo's figures of Christ's Ancestors, including several from the redacted lunettes. Apparently Scultori had created his images not from direct observation in the chapel, but from existing drawings, either by Michelangelo or by one of numerous other artists who had drawn them (a common situation in the burgeoning world of making, printing, publishing, and selling prints in the 16th century). Measuring approximately 5 x 4 inches each, Scultori's engravings were most often purchased in volumes containing the whole group, but also sold individually. Furthermore, over the centuries, new impressions were printed from the original engraving plates with continual degradation to the details that Scultori had originally inscribed so carefully. Not only did the prints degrade over time but, of course, the physical pieces of paper that they were printed upon, age, change hands, and are "worse for the wear."

Andrew Witkin originally became acquainted with Adamo Scultori while working on a curatorial project at his own gallery (Krakow Witkin Gallery) that was partially inspired by a particular work by Diana Scultori, Adamo Scultori's sister. Both artists relied upon straight, parallel lines to define architectural space. Straight lines, in 16th century engraving, were potentially considered a sign of lack of skill; yet in the 21st century, those parallel lines seem contemporary. But what of the figures? Scultori's renderings were not the most skillful and the identities of the "characters" were unclear at best. By removing the figures, Witkin could focus on what intrigued him about the works.

Witkin initially redacted the figures on actual examples of engravings, but this led to a desire to further alter the imagery, now via scale; increasing size meant a more direct engagement with those timeless lines. Honoring the methods of engraving led the artist to exploring various techniques of plate fabrication, ultimately settling on the commercial process of etching magnesium blocks. The images are the same orientation, not "backwards" as they were on Scultori's printing plates, as Scultori's printed images. Although Witkin's objects are conceivably printing blocks, by having the imagery the same as that on the prints, the artist pauses the cycle of image-production and offers a reconceived printing block as final object.

The works in this exhibition display imagery that was originally painted in the chapel, rendered by an unknown draftsman, engraved by Adamo, photographed and/or scanned in the 21st century by various individuals and institutions, digitally edited by Witkin, transferred to photo-sensitive material, and then etched in a traditional chemical bath. The results are both rooted in history (imagery and organic materials) and thoroughly of the moment (the digital processing is noticeable in the "line quality").

Witkin's exhibition at Theodore presents 27 of the figures from Scultori's engravings. Much like the "removal" of the figures, the exhibiting of an 'incomplete' group allows for the possibility of additional, excluded, and/or lost info to be considered. Perhaps, the project, "After (After Ancestors)," echoes what has come before, reflects what is possible now, and provides shadows for what will come.

Andrew Witkin's exhibitions have happened at the Currier Museum of Art, DeCordova Sculpture Park and Museum, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, University of New Hampshire Museum of Art, as well as at galleries such as Allston Skirt Gallery, Boston, Theodore, New York and James Harris Gallery, Seattle. Works are in the collections of the DeCordova Sculpture Park and Museum, Henry Art Gallery, Seattle, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and the University of New Hampshire Museum of Art. He has executed site-responsive works in locations as diverse as Big Bend National Park, Texas, Damascus, Syria, Naples, Italy, and a long-term project is in the works in northern New Hampshire. Recent exhibitions include Wien Museum MUSA, Vienna; Suffolk University Art Gallery, Boston; and Zilkha Gallery, Wesleyan University, Connecticut.

For images and information, please contact Stephanie Theodore at [theodoreart@gmail.com](mailto:theodoreart@gmail.com)