

Smith, William S., "Larry Bamburg at Simone Subal", *Art in America*, February 2016



## Larry Bamburg

at Simone Subal,  
through Mar. 20

131 Bowery, 2nd Floor

Growth rings record the age of a tree, but they can also register catastrophes: changes in climate, fires, floods. Even sunspots leave their mark. The growth of a tree's swirling internal structures is always molded by external stimuli. This logic underlies the work in "TalctoTile, PL'd to MDO," Larry Bamburg's second solo at Simone Subal. In one diptych, a real cross section of a mulberry tree trunk, mounted in a plastic case as if for study, is paired with a photograph of the same cross section that captures its undulating patterns. This pairing of copy and original highlights the conversion of a natural form into a text, unruly growth into legible data. Based in Marfa, Texas, Bamburg frequently embeds organic materials, including living plants, into formally and conceptually sophisticated sculptural supports. His work seems to develop from a give-and-take process, with material constraints, environmental factors and the artist's decisions all playing equal roles. Several of the sculptures here incorporate talc, a crystalline mineral that can appear green and pink, sandwiched between slabs of homemade soap. One piece is a leaning tower with alternating levels (or rings) of talc and soap set on a base of pink subway-style tiles. The jagged, alien structure that tapers toward its apex is a monument to softness, hygiene and, perhaps, childcare—talc being the unrefined state of baby power. Care and maintenance have a central place in Bamburg's artistic labor, his sculptures emerging from a process of gradual, time-consuming refinement. —*William S. Smith*

Pictured: Larry Bamburg: *TalctoTile PL'd to MDO*, shown in Pink, 2016. Courtesy the artist and Simone Subal, New York. Photo Sebastian Bach