

The New York Times

February 10, 2023

Art Gallery Shows to See in February: SoiL Thornton
By Travis Diehl



SoiL Thornton's *Self flagellation*, 2023, at Maxwell Graham/Essex Street, wears bands of Tropicália colors like a graffiti mural by Marc Jacobs. Via SoiL Thornton and Maxwell Graham, New York

It's a testament to the Neo-Conceptualist SoiL Thornton's mercurial range that the pictures you first encounter at Maxwell Graham, a charismatic survey of silver gelatin photographs by the Vienna Secessionist Cora Pongracz, provoke a double take: Is SoiL making photos now? A green tint radiating from the back-room office, cleared out for the occasion, draws the eye to Thornton's actual show, consisting of a succinct three paintings and a sculpture. A brilliant chroma-key abstraction hits first through the doorway. Its wily title, *A highlight hiding in A projection (eyes closed arm yoga for duration of Mohammed Wardi's track, Al Mursal ~The Messenger~, and plastic suffocation, kindly)*, implies that Thornton painted it blindly, spraying noxious green while Wardi's music played, as if the work were a byproduct of meditation.

Compare that highlighter hue with the hunter green required of all construction fencing in New York City. For *Splintered bouquet of each year of me as you*, Thornton applied a piney municipal shade to a pile of long wooden strips, then nailed a numbered, grass-green livestock tag to one tip of each. The tags are a little brutal, inspiring misplaced sympathy for the wood, so that the sculpture embodies the show's ambiguous taste for pain. In the nearby *Slave > Salve*, Thornton burned the titular phrase into a wooden panel among blow-torched stripes. *Self flagellation* wears bands of Tropicália colors like a graffiti mural by Marc Jacobs. The sticks lie there on the ground like a bouquet of used-up lines, and the green painting glows like it's watching.