

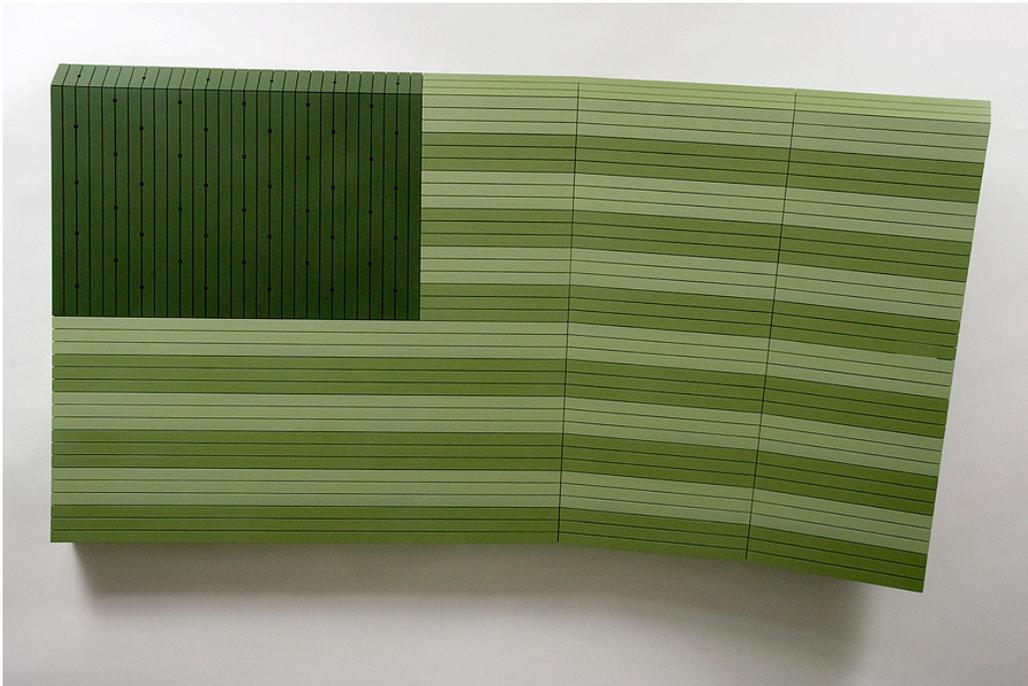
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Art spotlight: Hollibaugh reaps skillful sculptures from wood

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By Bill Van Sicen, The Providence Journal

[Link to images of the exhibition on the website: cadetompkins.com](http://www.cadetompkins.com)



"Field," a painted-wood sculpture by Nick Hollibaugh, is part of an exhibit of his work at Cade Tompkins Projects in Providence

Generally speaking, it doesn't take much to get an artist's creative juices flowing. A few apples, a tree, a passing face in a crowd, — sometimes that's all it takes. Still, it's rare to find an artist whose creative reference points include barns, grain silos and other farm-related structures. It's also rare to find an artist dealing with farm-country subjects who isn't either a painter (à la Grant "American Gothic" Wood) or a photographer.

Nick Hollibaugh, a Providence artist whose work is currently on display at Cade Tompkins Projects, manages to defy the odds on both counts. At a time

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Art spotlight: Hollibaugh reaps skillful sculptures from wood (continued)

when the themes and concerns of contemporary art seem far removed from the American heartland, Hollibaugh draws inspiration from the humble farm buildings and agricultural landscapes he grew up with in rural Indiana. A graduate of the MFA program at the Rhode Island School of Design, he's also a sculptor of considerable skill — a master craftsman whose sleek painted-wood sculptures have roots in both modern-day Minimalism and traditional Shaker-style furniture.

In "Field," one of about a dozen works in the Cade Tompkins show, Hollibaugh applies his distinctive brand of homespun Minimalism to that enduring icon: the American flag. Though it's not clear from the picture, the work is fully three-dimensional, with the upper left corner — the "field of stars" on a traditional flag — shaped like an elongated barn and the stripes suggesting rows of freshly plowed furrows.

The green color scheme, meanwhile, suggests cycles of growth and decay — a reading that's reinforced by the flag's downward slant, which can be read as either a simple rippling effect or, more ominously, as a symbol of sagging national spirit.

Nick Hollibaugh's sculptures remain on view through Nov. 14 at Cade Tompkins Projects, 198 Hope St. in Providence. Hours: Sat. 10-6 or by appt. Contact: (401) 751-4888. (Note: parking and access for the gallery are behind the building, off Fones Alley.)