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Will Boone. Portrait by Stephanie Boone



Boone's *Soldier*, 2014. Courtesy of the artist and Karma

Will Boone: Star Material

This young artist is digging deep and stirring things up

In early September, Will Boone's studio in the Red Hook neighborhood of Brooklyn was jam-packed with spray paint cans and grimy paintings thickly layered with black acrylic letters and numbers (911, xiii) that were about to be shipped to London for his first show at the Jonathan Viner Gallery. "I also have all this stuff that was made by inmates in prison," said Boone, 32, as he walked over to a short shelf bearing a collection of cardboard dominoes, dice fashioned from bread, and other curios—like a coin with a bullet shot through it, and a stuffed snake he picked up in a junk store in Houston, where he grew up. Such obscure bits of underbelly Americana regularly provide inspiration for Boone. The spare, punchy works he makes with just a few lines of orange spray paint, for instance, riff on the markings—he calls them "hieroglyphics"—that vagabonds left under bridges or in train yards in the 1930s and '40s. "They're like survival clues for how to get by," he said. "Like, 'Don't stop—keep going.'" Boone moved to New York five years ago, encouraged by the artist Mark Flood, for whom he was working, and he's quickly gained a following. In December, at the Rubell Family Collection in Miami, he will present an installation built from boxing-gym equipment. He's also experimenting with his symbol paintings, trying out new spray paints, and working on larger canvases. "The place where the thing gets fucked up—that's the moment of beauty," he said.