

Michelle Lopez

Allison Gibson
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Currently on view at Simon Preston Gallery in New York is a solo show of three new works by Brooklyn based artist Michelle Lopez. The exhibition, entitled *The Violent Bear It Away*, directly references Flannery O'Connor's eponymously titled 1960 novel, which deals achingly and complexly with theological themes. O'Connor's title, in turn, references the Bible verse Matthew 11:12 (Douay-Rheims). The theme of

baptism imbues Lopez's new work on view, specifically the piece *Woadsonner* (edit), which is essentially a "reborn" work, executed by Lopez in 2000, which was commissioned by the Public Art Fund. The original piece (*Woadsonner*), a leather-covered car, has been crushed almost beyond recognition and now leans against the gallery wall, almost as if it is about to slide to the floor in exhaustion. One might wonder how this reconfigured sculpture, which seems to have really only been given a hard beating and new positioning, reflects the themes implied by *The Violent Bear It Away*, but as it is explained, Lopez is reacting to her artistic past through her reworking of something that she once created. She has rid the piece of its pop art playfulness and stripped it of the beauty it once held. In effect she has returned the piece, and her artistic practice, to a state of rawness and vulnerability that might parallel that of a spiritual rebirth.



Michelle Lopez received her MFA from The School of Visual Arts, New York and her BA from Columbia University. Lopez has had solo exhibitions at LA×ART in Los Angeles, Deitch Projects in New York and Gallery Paule Anglim in San Francisco,

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among others. She currently teaches at the Graduate Program of Painting and Sculpture at The School of Visual Arts. Her work has been reviewed in Art in America, Time Out New York, The New Yorker and The New York Times.