

PAN

AMSTERDAM

NQ GALLERY



Carved Time

Carved Time
Series of contemporary prayer nuts
Year: 2025
Material: boxwood
Size: various

The original idea for this series of contemporary prayer nuts stems from a simple, yet urgent, point of view: that a single image — despite the noise, abundance and cynicism of our times — can still aid us with direction.

Scattered throughout museum and private art collections around the world, one might encounter fascinating prayer nuts, made in the early sixteenth century: small balls carved from boxwood, about the size of a golf ball. When opened, they reveal meticulously carved scenes from the life and suffering of Christ: sculptural, almost cinematic and laden with symbolism. Images in its most concentrated form: small, precise and meaningful.

Inspired by these small historical objects and now realized in close collaboration between historical research, medical scanning, digital production and 5-axis 'high-speed micro milling' technology, Carved Time came to be: eight

contemporary prayer nuts carved from boxwood.

The first step for realizing this project was to pass one original prayer nut from the collection of the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (object number BK-1981-1 Adam Dircksz's workshop, Delft), through a CT scanner, thus obtaining the highest possible data. This digital scan was next processed to retain the original Gothic tracery, while the interior became completely redesigned.

These new Prayer nuts do not show religious scenes. They portray micro-sculptures of key moments in recent history. Here the focus lies not on the divine that takes center stage, but on the human dimension, vulnerability and conscience.

Carved Time shows us a reminder of sixteen turning points of our recent history. Iconic images, stuck in our minds forever, such as the Tank Man, the Napalm Girl, Abu Ghraib, the Falling Man or the murder of George Floyd. Or the iconic images at the end of the Second World War: Russian soldiers raising a flag over the Reichstag in Berlin, and US soldiers raising a flag on Iwo Jima. Moments when the world fell silent for a moment and had to be readjusted.

Carved Time revisits the centuries-old form of sixteenth-century prayer nuts, once a tool for Christian devotion, and places them at the heart of our contemporary visual culture. An invitation to let us reflect and slow down, to look closely and introspect; to act as a contemporary moral compass.

Additional credits;

- Milling specialist: Jos van den Biggelaar, De Ridder Precisiemachines,
Milling specialist: Bram van den Berg, Nebo Special Tooling B.V.
- CT scans: Canon Medical Systems Europe B.V.
- 3D design: Jeroen Brinkhuis
- Project coordinator, video: Annick Vroom
- Photography: Erik and Petra Hesmerg

Special thanks to Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

