



# SEDIMENTATIONS

Assemblage as Social Repair

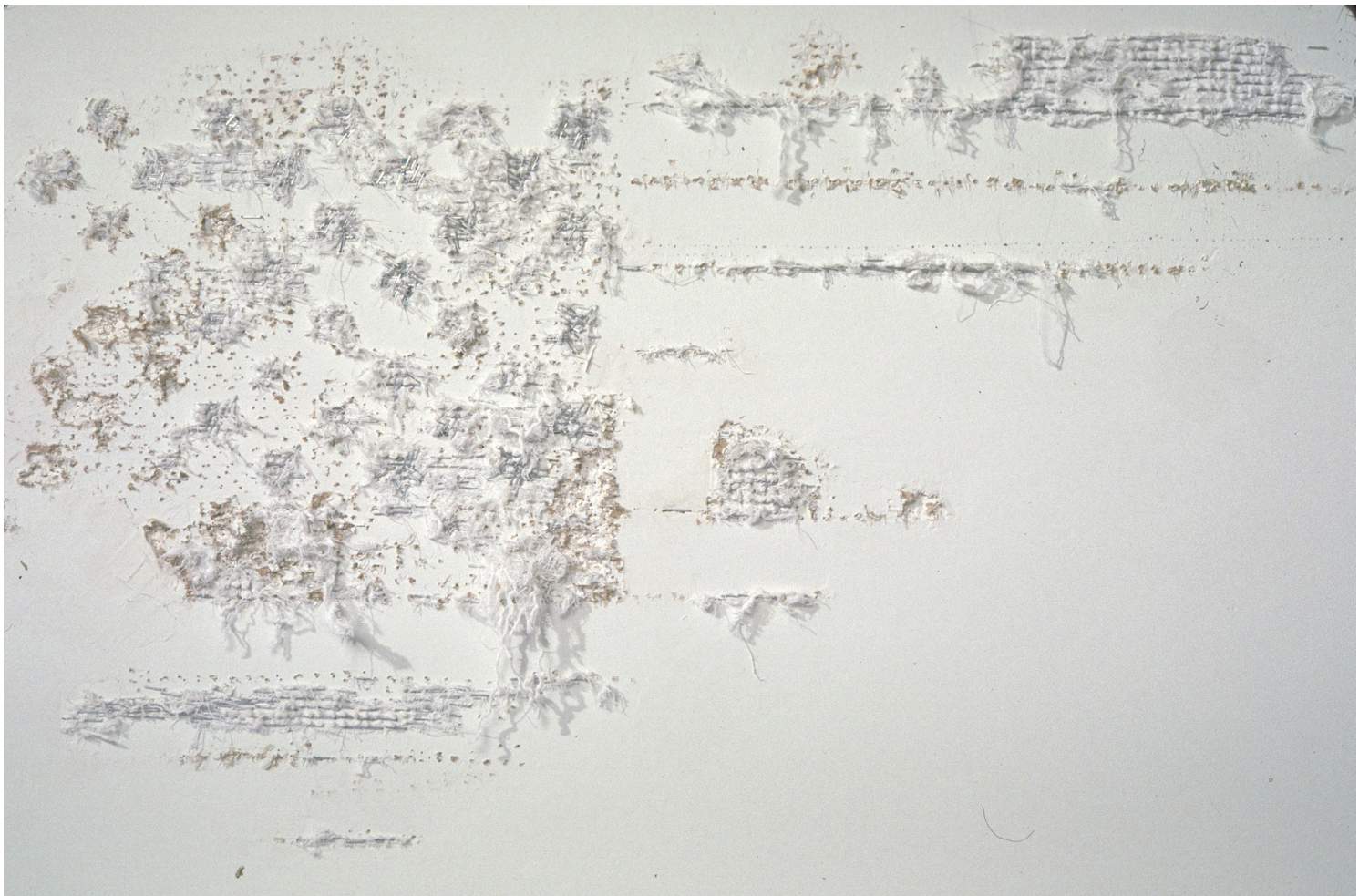




El Anatsui  
Maren Hassinger  
Elana Herzog  
Samuel Levi Jones  
Mary Mattingly  
Lina Puerta  
Michael Rakowitz  
Jean Shin  
Shinique Smith  
Mierle Laderman Ukeles  
Roberto Visani  
Michael Kelly Williams

"The strata of the Earth is a jumbled museum. Embedded in the sediment is a text that contains the limits and boundaries which evade the rational order, and social structures which confine art. In order to read the rocks we must become conscious of geologic time, and the layers of prehistoric material that is entombed in the Earth's crust. When one scans the ruined sites of prehistory one sees a heap of wrecked maps that upsets our present art historical limits. A rubble of logic confronts the viewer as he looks into the levels of the sedimentations. The abstract grids containing the raw matter are observed as something incomplete, broken, and shattered." —Robert Smithson<sup>1</sup>





Elana Herzog, *Untitled #4*, 2001.  
Fragment of cotton chenille bedspread, metal staples, drywall  
Courtesy of the artist. Photo by Cathy Carver.

(opposite, detail) Lina Puerta, *Untitled (Tree and Frame)*, 2014.  
Concrete, polyurethane foam, reed mesh, wire, paint, fabric, lace, leather,  
faux fur, artificial moss and plant; gilded frame, chains, broken jewelry,  
feathers, flocking, Swarovski crystals and beads. Courtesy of the artist  
and Faction Art Projects - Harlem NYC.

WHAT REMAINS is a phrase I keep turning over in my mind. In fact, *What Remains* could have been the title for this exhibition. It can be posed as both a question and an answer for each artwork, for each artist. El Anatsui's scraps of aluminum bottle caps; Maren Hassinger's collected pieces of white trash and pink plastic; Michael Rakowitz's packaging from Middle Eastern food products and newspapers; Jean Shin's leather remnants; Shinique Smith's clothing and rope; Lina Puerta's fake plants, resin, and brocade; Michael Kelly Williams' bits of plastic, strands of hair, and wooden instruments; Samuel Levi

Jones' out-of-date law books; Elana Herzog's construction materials, sheetrock, staples, sequins, and strips of domestic textiles; Roberto Visani's casts of decommissioned guns; and Mary Mattingly's cobalt gun barrels. These remainders make up the physical stuff of art. To describe them as such underestimates what occurs in the process of making art and the aura of these transformed elements, heightened by their new context. Each artist, and each artwork, offers a methodology that somehow addresses a crisis, from the personal and intimate, to the global and collectively consequent.





Mierle Laderman Ukeles, *Touch Sanitation*, 1979-80.  
 July 24, 1979-June 26, 1980. Citywide performance with 8,500 Sanitation workers across all fifty-nine New York City Sanitation districts, Date unknown. Sweep 3, Manhattan 3.  
 Courtesy of the artist and Ronald Feldman Gallery, New York. Photo by Robin Holland.



Mierle Laderman Ukeles, *Touch Sanitation*, 1979-80.  
 July 24, 1979-June 26, 1980. Citywide performance with 8,500 Sanitation workers across all fifty-nine New York City Sanitation districts.

(from left to right)

August 9, 1979. Photo Day 4, Sweep 2, Brooklyn 31. Photo by Marcia Bricker.

May 14, 1980. Photo Day 16, Sweep 10, Manhattan 11.  
 Photo by Deborah Freedman.

August 9, 1979. Photo Day 4, Sweep 2, Brooklyn 31. Photo by Marcia Bricker.

May 15, 1980. Photo Day 17, Sweep 10, Queens 14. Photo by Vincent Russo.

March 24, 1980. Photo Day 13, Sweep 7, Staten Island 2.  
 Photo by Deborah Freedman.

All images courtesy of the artist and Ronald Feldman Gallery, New York.





Mierle Laderman Ukeles' *Touch Sanitation* (1977-1980/2017), though not an assemblage of physical objects, is now displayed as an archive of exchanges—often involving handshakes—with workers from New York City's Department of Sanitation. The crisis, as she recognized it in 1977, was a lack of public understanding and appreciation for the continual labor of maintenance that "garbage men" undertook to keep the city healthy. Her art paid homage to a type of work that is never-ending and invisible, undertaken by the San-Men for the city's residents. I first met Ukeles in 2004, at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia. She came to see Pepón Osorio's exhibition *Trials and Turbulence*, the culmination of his three-year residency with Philadelphia's Department of

Mierle Laderman Ukeles, *Sanman Speaks from Touch Sanitation*, 1979-84.  
Video still  
Courtesy of the artist and Ronald Feldman Gallery, New York.

Human Services, where he focused on the foster care system. I knew a bit about her artwork: that it involved institutional critique, for example, washing the floors of the Wadsworth Atheneum for her 1973 performance, *Hartford Wash: Washing, Tracks, Maintenance—Outside and Inside*. Ukeles mopped the steps outside of the museum and scrubbed the floor inside the galleries with diapers, to highlight the hidden work women have shouldered in the multi-layered obligations implicit to traditional gender constructs. Several years earlier,





El Anatsui, *Metas II*, 2014.

Found aluminum and copper wire

© El Anatsui. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

when I was working with curator Kathy Brew at the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, she had told me how she and her late partner Roberto Guerra worked with Ukeles on a video, *Penetration and Transparency Morphed (Fresh Kills Drainage System)*, in 2001-2002, related the artist's vast project at Fresh Kills Landfill. *Hartford Wash* took place on July 22, 1973, only a few days after Robert Smithson died in a plane crash over Amarillo, Texas, where he was surveying the landscape for an upcoming project, *Amarillo Ramp*. It may be a coincidence that Ukeles' now historic performance happened so close to Smithson's death, but the connection is worth

consideration, in that his death marked a sea change in large-scale public artworks. Since the 1970s, land art and earthworks have expanded from a practice dominated by male artists—Walter de Maria, Michael Heizer, Dennis Oppenheim, Robert Morris, and others—yet artists like Ukeles, Mary Miss, and Nancy Holt were similarly prolific, though less critically acknowledged at the time. By the late 1970s, Ukeles was rethinking land art, having, according to art historian Lucy Lippard, "proposed a series of 'Urban Earth Works' in all





Mary Mattingly, *Eagle Mine, Michigan*, 2016.  
Chromogenic Dye Coupler Print  
Courtesy of the artist.



Mary Mattingly, *Eagle Mine in the Morning*, 2016.  
Chromogenic Dye Coupler Print  
Courtesy of the artist.

operating New York City landfills so that the public could see land art on public transportation without having to hire a private plane."<sup>2</sup> Here again, Ukeles' concern for the class systems of art and life is expressed, from the invisible labor that makes our experience of the museum pristine and rarified, to the geographic inaccessibility of earth works.

Ukeles' *Touch Sanitation* grounds this exhibition in a narrative about the labor of waste management, and the way waste permeates our very existence. In a city like New York, the turnover of refuse is physically present on a daily basis: bags of garbage sit curbside, waiting to be picked up by Sanitation workers. Most bags are opaque, so the details of what is thrown away is somehow obscured, unnoticed even, unless it creates an olfactory effect. This private matter of what we throw away—plastic food packaging, printed matter, food stuff, hygienic products, furniture—is intimately linked with how we conduct our lives. Ukeles began *Touch Sanitation* in the late 1970s, and has continued her involvement with the

Sanitation Department through her decades-long residency in the agency's offices on Beaver Street in lower Manhattan, in the midst of which she was awarded a Percent for Art commission to her portfolio in 1989. Her permanent public art project slated for construction at Fresh Kills—a landfill transitioning gradually into a public park—is titled *Landing*. An architectural installation flanked by two earth works, it was conceived to give people visiting Fresh Kills a place to rest, and take in the complex landscape she describes as an "ecological theater." Working on what might exaggeratedly be described as a geologic timetable (determined, in part, by the site's process of remediation), Ukeles has developed multiple, as yet unrealized proposals for her Percent for Art commission at Fresh Kills. One of which involved creating a paving system made from waste objects, 'offerings' made by the city's residents to the project, as a way of visualizing our cyclical relationship to the landscape in connection with the site's history.





The proposition of making a symbolic gesture to reclaim, or acknowledge, a piece of garbage that would otherwise be thrown away, while not necessarily activist in its outcome, does prompt the public's reconsideration of our relationship to public space. Maren Hassinger's *Pink Trash* (1982) is a brief, but poignant, performance first staged in Prospect, Van Cortlandt, and Central Parks, organized by Art Across the Park. Hassinger, clad in pink—a color also worn by Ukeles in her video *Waste Flow* (1979-84)—collected white pieces of trash like discarded tissues, cups, and cigarette butts, painted them pink, and put them back more or less where she found them. In a 2015 interview with Mary Jones for *BOMB Magazine*, Hassinger was asked about the meaning of *Pink Trash*, particularly regarding its political interpretations. **The artist explained, "it wasn't political, it was more about color theory. Nobody gets that... Politics are always there... I always giggle when I tell people that to do the piece, I had to first remove all the white trash."**<sup>3</sup> Thirty-five years later, in

the spring of 2017, Hassinger restaged the piece in Prospect Park, as part of the Brooklyn Museum's exhibition *We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women 1965-1985*.<sup>4</sup> That the piece was reenacted for an exhibition showcasing feminist, revolutionary art, for one of New York City's largest museums, reflects the heightened sense of institutional status that the piece has accrued, as a performance of women's work. The distinction between Ukeles and Hassinger's approaches is not just in scale, but the very different levels of social engagement of each artist's work—Ukeles' direct engagement with a citywide system, in contrast to Hassinger's seemingly independent interventions.

In 1978, around the same time as Ukeles began working with the Sanitation Department, an artist named Angela Fremont was working for New York City's Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA), in Central Park. When Fremont heard that the Children's Zoo needed a refrigerator to store medicine,



(page 8 and 9)

Maren Hassinger, *Pink Trash*, 1982.

Inkjet print

Courtesy of the artist.



she called a radio show to make an on-air plea for a donation. A flurry of phone calls followed, and Materials for the Arts (MFTA) was conceived. Through its partnerships with multiple city agencies, including the Departments of Sanitation and Education, Materials for the Arts began to receive funding from the Sanitation's Bureau of Waste Prevention, Reuse, and Recycling. This allowed city school teachers free access to art supplies, as part of an effort to restore arts programming.<sup>5</sup> With its current location in Long Island City, housing 35,000 square feet of warehouse space, the organization, which is part of DCLA, redistributes and diverts over one million pounds of waste from landfill each year. In recent years, MFTA has begun an artist-in-residence program, granting recipients unrestricted access to these materials. Lina Puerta, Jean Shin, and Michael Kelly Williams, all of whom are in the exhibition, have been awarded studios there.

Each artist's response to the MFTA residency has resulted in a completely different aesthetic outcome. During her residency, Jean Shin produced *Spring Collection* (2016), an arrangement assembled from leather scraps leftover from Marc Jacobs and other fashion houses' handbag lines. Lina Puerta's installation-based, botanical artworks combine fake plants and moss with elements like costume jewelry, resin, and found wood, visually merging our perception of what is natural, and what is constructed. Aesthetically aligned with his sculptures that incorporate musical references and objects imbued with spiritual energies, Michael Kelly Williams' *Wodakota* (2017), named after the Dakota word for peace, is an assemblage that fuses disparate objects—a viola with a rake—made in honor of, and in solidarity with, the Native water protectors of Standing Rock, North Dakota.

For Jean Shin, having access to donated goods introduced her to a different way of working. Typically, her sculptural



projects involve gathering like objects—in the past she has worked with keys, trophies, clothing, and plates—within the framework of a community whose members are asked to contribute specific items, which Shin then assembles into large scale installations. The solicitation of these offerings means her process is supplied through local, time-based engagement. At MFTA, the daily influx of new donations made for an exceedingly prolific phase in the artist's production. *Spring Collection* makes visible the irregular beauty of remnants left behind in the manufacturing of handbags.<sup>6</sup> The outer edges of the leather reveal the original hide of the animal skin. This series builds on her earlier projects *Alterations* (1999), *Cut Outs* and *Suspended Seams* (both 2004), which involved Shin obsessively assembling formal compositions from the offcuts of altered trousers and blue jeans, and fabric cut from the work clothes of employees at the Museum of Modern Art, respectively.

Shin's interest in fashion industry waste is echoed in Shinique Smith's ongoing series of bales and bundles of apparel. Working with cast off clothing and found textiles, Smith describes how she was struck by a magazine article about the shipping of used garments from the United States to West Africa. **"The article described the journey of a single T-shirt from a woman on the Upper West Side to the African man who bought it," says Smith. "The idea of the transference of the shirt across the Atlantic was really attractive to me."**<sup>17</sup> Referencing the way that recyclables get bundled for collection, and how the homeless assemble their possessions, she began experimenting with forms that evoke the movement and circulation of mass produced garments. What comes across in her sculpture is a spiritual encounter, a recognition, not so different from Ukeles and Hassinger's impulses to honor items that have been relegated to the status of trash. The difference here is that Smith's practice continues to pay homage to the history of these objects, whereas Ukeles' engagement with trash has migrated primarily into public space and the relational sphere, and Hassinger's sculptures often integrate plastic bags and crumpled paper that, while suggestive of trash, are not necessarily reused. The titles of Smith's sculptures, *It's a New Day* (2014), and *Progenitor* (2016), acknowledge both a lineage and a future.



Jean Shin, *Spring Collection (Look 14)*, 2016.  
Leather remnants and upholstery tacks  
Courtesy of the artist.

Working with a diverse range of sources, Lina Puerta, Roberto Visani, and Michael Kelly Williams transform found objects into sculptural forms with varying degrees of recognition. Puerta's compositions draw from the incongruities of the unruliness of nature embedded within urban space. Like weeds growing through cracks in the pavement, her *Botanico* series (2011 – ongoing), appear within the gallery as if emerging from its architectural elements. *Untitled (Tree and Frame)*, 2014, synthesizes a wooden frame with the knotted roots of a tree, acknowledging a natural resource that is ever present in art and domestic space. As the saying goes, we can't see





Jean Shin, *Spring Collection (Look 19)*, 2016.  
Leather remnants and upholstery tacks  
Courtesy of the artist.

the wood for the trees; Puerta's use of natural and synthetic materials conceptually flips the expression, as if we can't see the trees for the wood. Nature is so embedded in our daily lives, we forget its existence. Puerta writes, "Inspired by the physical commonalities between nature and the human body, I create hybrid anatomical and botanical forms that point at the interconnectedness, power and fragility of both nature and body."

In the vestibule of the gallery, several of Puerta's *Botanico* elements spring from the interior architecture, coming out of the proverbial woodwork. The synthetic aspects of Puerta's



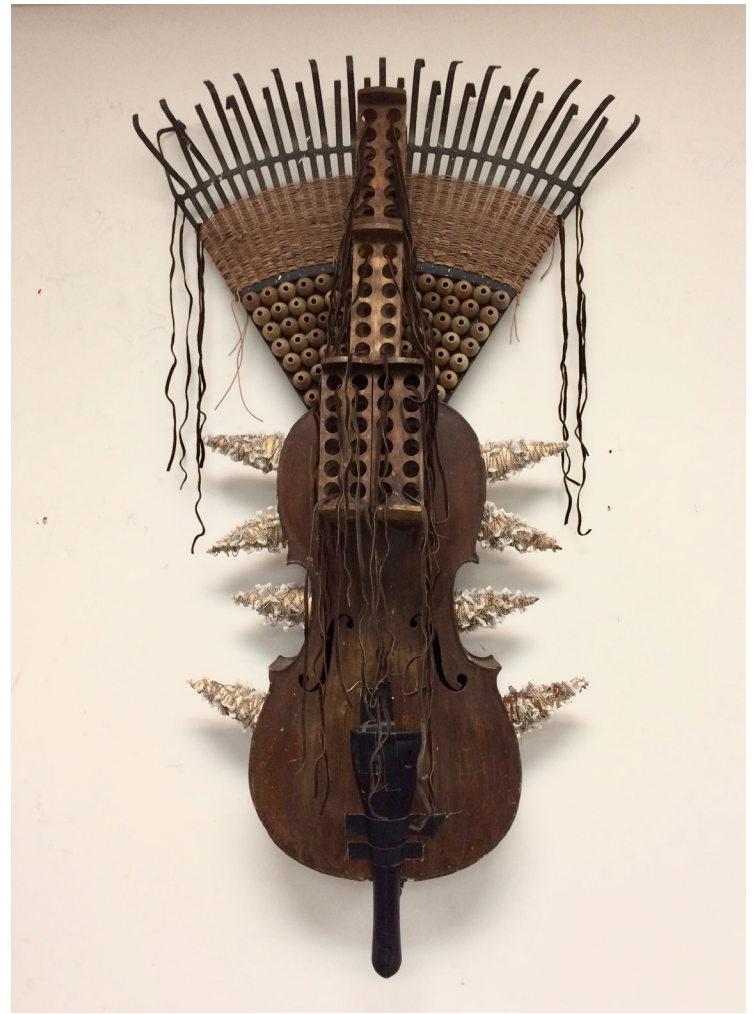
Jean Shin, *Spring Collection (Look 1)*, 2016.  
Leather remnants and upholstery tacks  
Courtesy of the artist.

*Botanico* series suggest a surreal genesis of organic matter, in contrast with Michael Kelly Williams' *Wodakota*, which is made mostly of wood. Anchored by the body of a viola, the discarded musical instrument has reached the end of its useful life. Williams' work *M'Boom* (2016) is a white sculpture made of steel, wood, iron, glass, and brass, a birdcage and drum pedal, festooned with whistles and a crown of black light bulbs. He titled the piece in recognition of the percussion ensemble of the same name, founded in 1970 by revolutionary bebop drummer and innovator Maxwell Lemuel Roach, whose musical career developed in tandem with his advocacy for civil rights and racial equity. *M'Boom* registers as a





Michael Kelly Williams, *Middle Passage*, 2016.  
Wood, mother-of-pearl, iron, hair, copper, wire, plastic, acrylic paint  
Courtesy of the artist.



Michael Kelly Williams, *Wodakota*, 2017.  
Wood, leather, plastic, wire, metal  
Courtesy of the artist.

hybrid musical instrument and ceremonial object, that might come to life at any moment. Williams' titles—*Middle Passage* (2016), *Protect Yo Net* (2016), and *Wodakota* (2017)—serve as a guide to understanding his intuitive process. Creating forms out of unrelated, yet potent objects, that together produce generate an internal logic with particular associations, from Native to African and African American, Williams tells stories vital to the transformation and restoration of American contemporary culture.

Although not immediately apparent, political conflict and war connect artworks by Mary Mattingly, Roberto Visani, and Michael Rakowitz. For the last decade, ecological concerns have been central to Mattingly's artistic trajectory. In spite of being situated on bodies of water, her series of large-scale public artworks, such as *The Waterpod* (2009), should be acknowledged as earth works, each alluding to the impending loss of landmasses due to climate change. Conceived in response to the ongoing crisis of rising water levels, *The Waterpod* envisioned and enacted a solution of how to live in the event that our landscape becomes uninhabitable: take





Michael Kelly Williams, *M'Boom*, 2016. Steel, wood, iron, acrylic, glass, brass, paint. Courtesy of the artist.





Lina Puerta, *Untitled (Tree and Frame)*, 2014.  
 Concrete, polyurethane foam, reed mesh, wire, paint, fabric, lace, leather, faux fur, artificial moss and plant; gilded frame, chains, broken jewelry, feathers, flocking, Swarovski crystals and beads  
 Courtesy of the artist and Faction Art Projects - Harlem NYC.

to the water. Our relationship to water is an essential one, a resource so vital it drives numerous political conflicts around the world. From the poisoned water system in Flint, Michigan where a man-made public health crisis has caused toxic levels of lead in the drinking water,<sup>8</sup> to Syria, where a multi-seasonal drought, from 2006 to 2011, has forced more than 1.5 million people to move from rural to urban areas, exacerbating the region's refugee crisis.<sup>9</sup>

Of course, water is not the only natural resource to be contested. Presented within the exhibition are photographs from a recent series by Mattingly titled *Cobalt* (2017), and *Eagle Mine, Michigan, Eagle Mine in the Morning*, and *Ore Transport Station* (all 2016), that highlight the extraction of cobalt ore from the landscape. Cobalt can be found in the earth's crust in alloys of meteoric iron. Its uses are many: from glazing on roof tiles to the hard surface of iPhone screens, it is a natural resource considered a 'strategic metal' by the United States government, a commodity that is integral to national defense, aerospace, and energy industries. The U.S. military uses more than 60% of the world's supply of cobalt, and, as the artist states, **"In an era nationally defined by industrial labor's exportation, Michigan's Protect and Grow, part of the Michigan Defense Center's "Arsenal of Innovation" is touted as one answer to a challenging consumer-industrial sector in the USA. With Protect and Grow, parts of Michigan's auto industry are transformed to produce military-grade weapons and vehicles."** Mattingly's table of elements (a literal display of elements), photographs, and Cobalt-alloyed gun barrels, help visualize the relationship between mineral extraction and the production of weapons. Roberto Visani's examination of the circulation of firearms in the United States and Africa, specifically Ghana, where he was a Fulbright Fellow in 1999, reveals that in the discussion about guns, the economic and political networks are vast, covert, and intricate.

With an appreciation for American artists like Robert Rauschenberg and David Hammons, and Arte Povera, the Italian movement active from the 1960s to the early 70s, Visani was inspired by the functional potential of the traditional artwork he encountered while doing research in Ghana.<sup>10</sup>

**The thing that I was really interested in when I was in Ghana was how traditional works were 'functional'. Some of them were functional in a practical sense – a ceramic drinking cup would have some kind of pattern on the outside that would have a proverbial meaning. Or bronze weights used to weigh out gold. But other things would be more esoteric or have a spiritual function. So I thought about my own practice from**





Roberto Visani, *Several Versos*, 2016.  
Cast iron  
Courtesy of the artist.



Roberto Visani, *Meeting of Meanings*, 2014.  
Mixed media  
Courtesy of the artist.

**that point of view, and thought about what are the important questions that I have. The work is asking those questions. So in that sense, it's solving a problem.<sup>11</sup>**

The problem that Visani has reflected on since the late 1990s is the impact of guns on our society. Having grown up in South Dakota where guns were part of everyday life (one of Visani's father's hobbies was hunting, and he was fascinated by military culture), the artist's understanding of guns changed dramatically when he learned that slaves were exchanged for weapons as payment.<sup>12</sup> Since then, he has created numerous sculptures based on the architecture of guns, assembled from found items as diverse as crutches, wooden pedals, blades, beaded trinkets, masks, gears, and detritus found in urban spaces. In the exhibition, the majority of his work reflects a pared down, more direct representation: iron casts of decommissioned guns that Visani was granted

access to by the Paterson, New Jersey Police Department. The very idea of decommissioning aligns with his desire to disarm guns, "to make them harmless and safe by making them useful or beautiful." Robert Perrée writes, "By doing that [Visani] protests against the meaningless violence they symbolize. The fact that it fits an African tradition to use found material to make art is not more than an indirect and subservient aspect of his art."<sup>13</sup> *Hot Plate, Paterson Stack, and Versos* (all 2016), read as ruins, the negative space of the sculptures echo fossil-like imprints—a visualization of a post gun society.

In the context of gun violence, a reckoning has begun, facilitated through bystander documentation of overzealous policing, and activist efforts, like those of the Parkland High School students in Florida. In war, combat related violence is one mode of attack. Another is the destruction of cultural



heritage, which enables the erasure of historical memory. In the aftermath of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, more than 7,000 objects of cultural heritage were looted from the National Museum in Iraq. In 2007, Iraqi-American artist Michael Rakowitz began a long term project to reconstruct these lost artifacts, basing his sculptures on the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute database and Interpol's website. In a recent article in *The Guardian*, Rakowitz explained,

**As the artefacts disappeared, I was waiting for the loss to translate into outrage and grief for lost lives, but it didn't happen. So I had the idea of these lost artefacts coming back as ghosts to haunt us.**<sup>14</sup>

*The Invisible Enemy Should Not Exist*, ongoing since 2007, is a project so vast, Rakowitz has said that even with the aid of studio staff, he won't be able to recreate all of the artifacts in his lifetime. Each object is made from Middle Eastern food packaging and newspapers sourced within the U.S., a detail he mentions as signs of the visibility of Arab and Middle Eastern cultures in American cities. Displayed in a museum vitrine are ten objects, titled *May the Obdurate Foe Not Stay in Good Health* (2016). Included are replicas of three hexagonal ceramic tiles from the Turizi Compound, in Damascus; a stone inlay depicting a human headed bull from Ebla, Syria; a painted ceramic bowl from Bab Sharqi, which is the name for the Eastern Gate, located in Damascus; a terracotta female figurine from Halaf, northeastern Syria; three alabaster 'Eye Idols' from the Eye Temple in Tell Brak, located in the Khabur region of Syria; and a gilded glass tile with cross shaped motifs from Maarat al-Nu'man, northwestern Syria.

Although both Rakowitz and Visani's work with cultural artifacts—crafts and guns, respectively—are imbued with an aura of having been excavated, their means of production are strikingly different from one another. Visani's iron casts have an organic, monolithic stone-like quality, as if the imprint of the firearm is all that remains, whereas Rakowitz's brightly colored objects of cultural heritage are so painstakingly assembled that the finely detailed mosaic of food wrappers and newsprint is almost imperceptible. This interplay between minimal and maximal, color and pattern, is at work in both El Anatsui

and Samuel Levi Jones' assemblages. Anatsui and Jones address the circulation of goods on a global scale, by reusing materials perceived to be obsolete, not unrelated to Shinique Smith's interest in repurposing that which has been thrown away. However, both artist's treatment of their chosen materials—bottle caps and books—is decidedly more systematic.

**To organize this mess of corrosion into patterns, grids, and subdivisions is an esthetic process that has scarcely been touched. —R.S.**<sup>15</sup>

In an interview with Ming Lin, Anatsui explained his resistance to describing his practice as one of recycling. "I don't see the difference between my use of bottle caps and the use of wood. We have certain materials we call art materials and some that are not art materials, and if someone uses the latter then we say it's 'recycling.' But, I just don't like this title because there's something political about it."<sup>16</sup> Anatsui speaks about his preference for objects that have a past, that new objects "straight from the source" lack a connective energy, or charge, that comes from the individuals who have interacted with them.<sup>17</sup>

Many of Anatsui's soft murals have a colorful, bauble-like quality, but *Metas II* (2014), is completely monochromatic. As the artist states, "I like gray because it is neutral; it is neither black nor white."<sup>18</sup> Grey may be neutral as a color, but in legal terms, grey areas are uncertain, ambiguous, and subject to interpretation. Samuel Levi Jones' body of work, utilizing out-of-date encyclopedias, law, medical, and other reference books, involves deconstructing the publications into skins that are sewn to the canvas, creating an abstract composition. *Gris* (2017), is a collection of different hues of grey, green, beige, and black, from the pages and binding of Ohio State law books. Many of his 'paintings' incorporate legal printed matter, quietly transmitting aspirations for institutional justice, resulting in what looks like the back of a quilt, gridded, with variations on one or two colors. His works investigate "the monolithic authority of the law 'in terms of who benefits from it and who doesn't'" and "who compiles this stuff and who's controlling the information and the histories."<sup>19</sup>



Michael Rakowitz, *May The Obdurate Foe Not Stay in Good Health - Ceramic tile, Turizi Compound (Damascus)*, 2016.

Syrian and other Middle Eastern packaging and newspapers, glue  
 Courtesy of the artist and Jane Lombard Gallery, New York.



Michael Rakowitz, *May The Obdurate Foe Not Stay in Good Health - Ceramic tile, Turizi Compound (Damascus)*, 2016.

Syrian and other Middle Eastern packaging and newspapers, glue  
 Courtesy of the artist and Jane Lombard Gallery, New York.



Michael Rakowitz, *May The Obdurate Foe Not Stay in Good Health - Painted ceramic bowl, Bab Sharqi (Damascus)*, 2016.

Syrian and other Middle Eastern packaging and newspapers, glue  
 Courtesy of the artist and Jane Lombard Gallery, New York.



Michael Rakowitz, *May The Obdurate Foe Not Stay in Good Health - Stone inlay depicting a human-headed bull, Ebla*, 2016.

Syrian and other Middle Eastern packaging and newspapers, glue  
 Courtesy of the artist and Jane Lombard Gallery, New York.



Michael Rakowitz, *May The Obdurate Foe Not Stay in Good Health - Gilded glass tile with cross-shaped motifs, Maarat al-Nu'man*, 2016.

Syrian and other Middle Eastern packaging and newspapers, glue  
 Courtesy of the artist and Jane Lombard Gallery, New York.



Michael Rakowitz, *May The Obdurate Foe Not Stay in Good Health - Terracotta female figurine, Halaf*, 2016.

Syrian and other Middle Eastern packaging and newspapers, glue  
 Courtesy of the artist and Jane Lombard Gallery, New York.





## Endnotes

- 1 Smithson, Robert. "A Sedimentation of the Mind: Earth Projects." *Artforum* 7, no. 1 (September 1968): 82-91. p. 89
- 2 Lippard, Lucy R. *Undermining: A Wild Ride Through Land Use, Politics, and Art in the Changing West*. New York: New Press, 2014. p. 133
- 3 Jones, Mary. "Maren Hassinger by Mary Jones." *BOMB Magazine*, February 23, 2015. <https://bombmagazine.org/articles/maren-hassinger>.
- 4 Almino, Elisa Wouk. "Maren Hassinger Restages Her 1982 'Pink Trash' Performance in Prospect Park." *Hyperallergic*. July 19, 2017. <https://hyperallergic.com/391340/maren-hassinger-restages-her-1982-pink-trash-performance-in-prospect-park>.
- 5 "MFTA - About MFTA - History." *Materials for the Arts*. Accessed June 6, 2018. <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcla/mfta/html/about/history.shtml>.
- 6 Melamed, Samantha. "How Do 400 Broken Shoes Become Art? Inside Philly Museum's Newest Installation." *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. March 22, 2018. [http://www.philly.com/archive/samantha\\_melamed/philadelphia-museum-of-art-jean-shin-installation-hyunsoo-woo-20180322.html](http://www.philly.com/archive/samantha_melamed/philadelphia-museum-of-art-jean-shin-installation-hyunsoo-woo-20180322.html).
- 7 Pollack, Barbara. "Clothes Connections." *ARTnews*. January 1, 2010. <http://www.artnews.com/2010/01/01/clothes-connections>.
- 8 The Associated Press. "A Timeline of the Water Crisis in Flint, Michigan." *U.S. News & World Report*. June 14, 2017. <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/michigan/articles/2017-06-14/a-timeline-of-the-water-crisis-in-flint-michigan>.
- 9 Suter, Margaret. "Running Out of Water: Conflict and Water Scarcity in Yemen and Syria." *Atlantic Council*. September 12, 2016. <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/running-out-of-water-conflict-and-water-scarcity-in-yemen-and-syria>.
- 10 Ellis, Patricia. "Re-purposing Art: NYFA Artist-in-residence Roberto Visani in Conversation with Patricia Ellis." *Chelsea College of Arts Blog*. February 28, 2017. <http://blogs.arts.ac.uk/chelsea/2017/02/28/re-purposing-art-nyfa-artist-in-residence-roberto-visani-in-conversation-with-patricia-ellis>.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Perrée, Rob. "Roberto Visani: More than a Gun." *AFRICANA.ORG*. October 26, 2016. <http://africanah.org/roberto-visani-more-than-a-gun>.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Armitstead, Claire. "Fourth Plinth: How a Winged Bull Made of Date Syrup Cans Is Defying Isis." *The Guardian*. March 26, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2018/mar/26/michael-rakowitz-invisible-enemy-should-not-exist-fourth-plinth-winged-bull-date-syrup-cans-defying-isis>.
- 15 Smithson, Robert. "A Sedimentation of the Mind: Earth Projects." *Artforum* 7, no. 1 (September 1968): 82-91. p. 82
- 16 Lin, Ming. "Material World: Interview with El Anatsui." *ArtAsiaPacific*. June 6, 2014. <http://artasiapacific.com/Blog/MaterialWorldInterviewWithElAnatsui>.
- 17 Chute, James. "El Anatsui an Artist in Motion." *San Diego Union Tribune*. April 10, 2015. <http://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/entertainment/visual-arts/sdut-museum-of-contemporary-art-san-diego-el-anatsui-2015apr10-htmistory.html>.
- 18 Mahany, Alexander. "'Gray Is the Color of the Insides': El Anatsui at Mnuchin Gallery." *ARTnews*. November 7, 2014. <http://www.artnews.com/2014/10/29/gray-is-the-color-of-the-insides-el-anatsui-at-mnuchin-gallery>.
- 19 Sheets, Hilarie M. "Samuel Levi Jones Unbinds a Fractured History of Justice." *Introspective Magazine*. January 2, 2017. <https://www.1stdibs.com/introspective-magazine/samuel-levi-jones>.
- 20 Smithson, Robert. "A Sedimentation of the Mind: Earth Projects." *Artforum* 7, no. 1 (September 1968): 82-91. p. 89

(front cover)

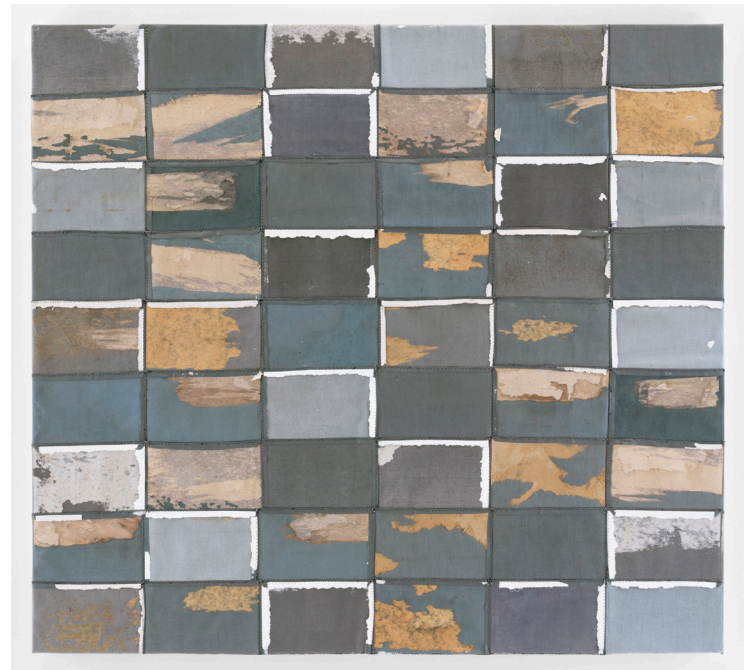
Mary Mattingly, *Ore Transport Station*, 2016.

Chromogenic Dye Coupler Print. Courtesy of the artist.

(back cover)

Shinique Smith, *Untitled (Rodeo Beach Bundle)*, 2007.

Digital c-print. Courtesy of the artist.



Samuel Levi Jones, *Gris*, 2017.

Deconstructed Ohio law books on canvas

From the Collection of Michael Hoeh, New York, NY.

© Samuel Levi Jones. Courtesy of Galerie Lelong & Co., New York.

---

This exhibition would not have been possible without research, curatorial, and editorial input by George Bolster and Anjuli Nanda, installation production by Matt Johnson, and technical support by William Furio. Special thanks to Shelley and Donald Rubin for their commitment to art and social justice.

## THE 8TH FLOOR



The 8th Floor is an exhibition and events space established in 2010 by Shelley and Donald Rubin, dedicated to promoting cultural and philanthropic initiatives and to expanding artistic and cultural accessibility in New York City.

The 8th Floor is located at 17 West 17th Street and is free and open to the public. School groups are encouraged.

Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 11:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M.

[The8thFloor.org](http://The8thFloor.org)



