NEAR AT HAND

NEAR AT HAND

TODD ARSENAULT

ANDY BALE

ANTHONY CERVINO

RACHEL ENG

CURATED BY

Vivian Anderson

Molly Cicco

Phoebe French

McKenna Hillman

Katie Marthins

Sophy Nie

Ava Nienstadt

Cat Orzell

Lily Swain

Grace Toner

Liam Walters

UNDER THE DIRECTION OF

Shannon Egan

THE TROUT GALLERY

THE ART MUSEUM OF DICKINSON COLLEGE

CARLISLE, PENNSYLVANIA

NEAR AT HAND

February 7—April 5, 2025

The Trout Gallery, The Art Museum of Dickinson College

www.troutgallery.org

Published by The Trout Gallery, Dickinson College Carlisle, Pennsylvania 17013

Copyright © 2025 The Trout Gallery.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without written permission from The Trout Gallery.

ISBN 979-8-9869735-3-1

Design Krista Hanley

Photography Andy Bale

Printing Brilliant, Exton, Pennsylvania

Printed in the United States

This publication was produced in part through the generous support of the Helen Trout Memorial Fund and the Ruth Trout Endowment at Dickinson College.

Page iv: Todd Arsenault, L*ow-cost Programmed Decisions* (detail), 2024

Page 2: Andy Bale, *Quirang Walk, Isle of Skye, Scotland* (detail), 2016

Page 6: Todd Arsenault, *Habits, Interests, and Activities* (detail), 2024

Page 34: Andy Bale, *Mekong and Nam Khan Rivers, Luang Prabang, Laos* (detail), 2023

Page 62: Anthony Cervino, *Double Troubled* (detail), 2021

Page 94: Rachel Eng, *Pile* (detail), 2024

Page 124: Anthony Cervino, *When You Wish You Were Here* (detail), 2024

Page 126: Rachel Eng, *Pile* (detail), 2024

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Dickinson College students in the Art History Senior Seminar were tasked with a unique opportunity to curate an exhibition of faculty work in The Trout Gallery. Titled Near at Hand, this co-curated exhibition is a dynamic, multi-faceted collaboration among students, staff, and faculty. Teaching the Art History Senior Seminar this year has been an extraordinary privilege; over a few short months, I've seen the eleven senior art history majors become skilled, confident curators, researchers, and writers: Vivian Anderson, Molly Cicco, Phoebe French, McKenna Hillman, Katie Marthins, Sophy Nie, Ava Nienstadt, Cat Orzell, Lily Swain, Grace Toner, and Liam Walters. They tackled the somewhat daunting concept for this exhibition—works by Studio Art Faculty paired with historical objects from The Trout Gallery's permanent collection—with enthusiasm and dedication. In addition to interviewing the artists and discussing their creative scholarship in depth throughout the semester, the students engaged in extensive research and applied various art-historical methodologies to articulate the theoretical and stylistic connections among the works. Their success as curators, now armed with a range of professional experiences, is due to the commitment and collaboration of many colleagues at Dickinson College.

First, my deepest gratitude goes to the Studio Art Faculty—Todd Arsenault, Andy Bale, Anthony Cervino, and Rachel Eng—for generously inviting students into their studios, spending hours talking, answering questions, revealing their personal experiences, influences, and artistic advice, and in some instances, encouraging them to observe their artmaking processes. The student co-curators collaborated with the faculty on many of the exhibition decisions, including the exhibition's title, graphic design, selection of objects, and design. Ultimately, the faculty expanded their teaching practices, demonstrating how and why the disciplines of Art and Art History overlap and correspond. Because of this crucial intersection between artmaking and historical and theoretical investigation, I am appreciative of the support offered by the art historians in the department: Melinda Schlitt, Elizabeth Lee, Ren Wei, and Ty Vanover. Their dedication and art-historical training of these students, along with additional guidance for their research projects, cannot be overstated. In my first time teaching this seminar at Dickinson College, I have found their pedagogical insights and expertise truly invaluable.

Over the course of the semester, the students also sought assistance from several others on and off campus. Jess Howard, Associate Dean for Research and Instructional Services Library Service, met with the class and provided excellent research instruction and library support. Students contacted other faculty and staff at Dickinson College for consultation and expertise in various areas; Ben Edwards, Professor of Earth Sciences; Matt Biwer, Assistant Professor of Anthropology and Archaeology, and Jim Gerencser, Associate Dean for Archives and Special Collections, answered queries and provided resources for additional research. We are also grateful to Dr. Dorothy Moss, Director of the Hung Liu Estate and her colleagues Brent Foster Jones and Katherine James, for their enthusiasm in including a print by Hung Liu in this exhibition.

At The Trout Gallery, James Bowman, Exhibition Designer and Registrar, provided valuable insights throughout the process to develop innovative, elegant exhibition design solutions, while also preparing The Trout Gallery collection objects for exhibition. I am also grateful to work with Heather Flaherty, Curator of Education, who met repeatedly with the students, advising on educational outreach materials, didactic label writing, and preparation for their Gallery Talks. Her commitment to education and engagement, from intensive training of student interns for tours and programs to working with faculty across campus to bring students to the exhibition, exemplifies the mission and vision of The Trout Gallery. Hadley D'Esopo, Post-Baccalaureate Fellow in Museum Education, and Trout Gallery student interns, many of whom are also the co-curators of the exhibition, brought enthusiasm and creativity to additional outreach opportunities. I truly appreciate Jennifer Marsh, Administrative Assistant, for her tireless attention to the details, large and small, that go into making the exhibition, catalogue, and events successful. I thank Jolene Gregor, Isa Kern, and Sue Russell for overseeing all aspects of visitor services and greeting our visitors with their knowledge and warmth. At Dickinson, we are indebted to the donors whose generosity made these student research opportunities possible, including Eric Denker '75, Lawrence and Carol Zicklin, The Andy Warhol Foundation, Joyce Kozloff, Doctors Meyer P. and Vivian O. Potamkin, Dr. and Mrs. Donald K. McIntyre, and Commodore Jesse Duncan Elliott.

This catalogue would not be possible without Andy Bale, who beautifully photographed all the works of art included in this exhibition. Special gratitude goes to Terri Shadle for her kind assistance. Finally, huge thanks to Krista Hanley, Assistant Director of Design and Print Services, who met with the class twice throughout the semester and invited students to provide sketches and weigh in on various design decisions, from fonts to paper. Krista made the students' introduction to the graphic design process open, enjoyable, and, above all, creative.

SHANNON EGAN, DIRECTOR
THE TROUT GALLERY

SHANNON EGAN

INTRODUCTION

About ten years ago, Dickinson College Studio Art faculty installed an exhibition of their work at The Trout Gallery and selected the title *ELSEWHERE* to reflect the significance of their experiences and perspectives in places beyond Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Similarly, the accompanying exhibition catalogue featured essays about each artist by established writers and professors from far afield. In contrast, this current faculty exhibition, titled *Near at Hand,* focuses on proximity, personal connections, and opportunities to engage first-hand with artists and artworks. *Near at Hand* is co-curated by eleven students in the Art History Senior Seminar at Dickinson College: Vivian Anderson, Molly Cicco, Phoebe French, McKenna Hillman, Katie Marthins, Sophy Nie, Ava Nienstadt, Cat Orzell, Lily Swain, Grace Toner, and Liam Walters. Their exhibition in The Trout Gallery features the work of four full-time studio art professors: Todd Arsenault, Andy Bale, Anthony Cervino, and Rachel Eng. While a curated exhibition and corresponding catalogue is the annual outcome of the Art History Senior Seminar, *Near at Hand* is the first student-curated faculty exhibition. The collaborative nature of the Art and Art History Department inspired the concept for this exhibition, as the students applied the methods and concepts learned in their art-historical coursework to their research and writing about contemporary studio practices, ultimately developing closer relationships and a deeper understanding of the professors' scholarship.

This exhibition celebrates the extraordinary resources that are “near at hand” at Dickinson College. Studio visits with the artists comprised a major component of their primary research for this Senior Seminar, and the students benefitted immensely from the nearness of spaces where the faculty conduct creative scholarship and teach. While the students learned about the artists’ practices and engaged in sustained discussion to analyze, contextualize, and situate their work in a larger art-historical discourse, they also were charged with an innovative and ambitious curatorial undertaking. From 11,000 objects in The Trout Gallery collection, the students selected art and artifacts that resonated materially, thematically, or stylistically with the faculty work on display. Their curatorial choices reflect the diversity of these materials; from Neolithic stone tool fragments and an ancient Roman paver to prints by Georgia O’Keeffe and Andy Warhol, the students carefully handled and examined individual prints, drawings, photographs, and sculptures to consider their significance and relationship to the faculty artwork.

The similarities between historical objects and the professors’ contemporary practices have been both challenging and surprising for student curators. For instance, Todd Arsenault’s paintings in his recent series *Membership Advantages* are multi-layered meditations on how images are remembered, reused, and reimagined for a present moment. In Arsenault’s words, “The essence of my work in many ways is a riff on the chaos of the visual world.” Despite their keen awareness of the current digital landscape and how the computer functions as a tool in his artmaking process, student curators Phoebe French, Katie Marthins, and Ava Nienstadt discovered relevant and markedly different twentieth-century art historical precedents for Arsenault’s work. For instance, French examines Andy Warhol’s interest in consumer culture as an echo of Arsenault’s own oblique inclusion of pop cultural references, including the shared motif of a Coca-Cola bottle that appears in each of the artist’s works. Marthins similarly examines the meaning of Arsenault’s subject matter, especially the Freudian notion of the “uncanny” as a means for explaining and exploring the seemingly strange and sometimes unsettling representations of fragmented bodies in his paintings. A print by Claes Oldenburg, titled *Landscape with Noses,* offers a humorous parallel to Arsenault’s chimerical composition *Common Complaints About the Dominant Culture*, which features an enigmatic scene of hands, a foot, a head of varying sizes grasping, floating, or perhaps sinking into an inky pool of water. Marthins situates her analysis and terminology within Surrealism to further contextualize Oldenburg’s droll play with scale and subject matter and Arsenault’s dreamlike space. Nienstadt turns to an earlier art-historical period to find the influences for Arsenault’s bold use of color and gestural brushwork. In comparing Arsenault’s painterly style to the work of Pierre Bonnard and other late nineteenth– and early twentieth-century French modernists, Nienstadt articulates how Arsenault’s approach to representation and abstraction is rooted in resistance to pictorial conventions.

The Trout Gallery's objects selected by student curators Vivian Anderson, Grace Toner, and Lily Swain vary greatly from one another—a paving stone from ancient Rome, a nineteenth-century American landscape, and a print by Georgia O’Keeffe—but each curator found relevant ties to the multi-media work of Rachel Eng. In discussing *recover,* an installation of unfired bricks of locally-found clay and stacked carefully in the gallery as a surface for a video projection, Anderson considers how Eng’s interest in the connection between the

built and natural environment can be traced to some of the earliest human interventions in the landscape, such as Roman roads and architectural innovations. Swain centers a discussion about the artist's environmental concerns around issues of Indigeneity with a particular focus on the site-specificity of her work in Central Pennsylvania. In discussing the video projection *Gravel Pile*, Swain explains that Eng turns to Indigenous ways of thinking in her artistic practice to confront the western conventions of exploiting the landscape that British artist G.K. Richardson depicts in his 1838 print of Pennsylvania's Wyoming Valley. Similarly, Toner takes a different work from Eng's series, titled *Overburden*, to the opportunity to examine the significance of souvenirs, mementos, and personal objects. In each of their essays, the students took a different approach to how travel and notions of place. Georgia O'Keeffe's *Save Our Planet Save Our Air* coincided with the environmental movement of the early 1970s, and Eng's body of work provides a more current, local, and urgent call to action through what Toner describes as a "complex, multi-sensory experience" of photography, video, and installation.

While Eng's focus is on the environment near at hand, Andy Bale addresses the pressing issues surrounding immigration and displacement that are *now* at hand both nationally and globally. In addition to stunning photographs of the rugged mountains of Colorado, sublime vistas in Scotland, and remote roads in Tanzania, Bale's work represented in this catalogue and corresponding exhibition includes selections from his collaborative project titled *Arrivals: What's Left Behind, What Lies Ahead*. In collaboration with photographer Jon Cox, Bale documents the stories of immigrants, refugees, and displaced Indigenous peoples in Idaho, Slovakia, and Ireland. Student co-curators Molly Cicco and Liam Walters each take different aspects of this large project to consider both the past and present stories shared through Bale and Cox's photographs. Walters, for example, focuses on a portrait of a woman named Palina Louangketh, a former refugee from Laos who is the founding director of the Idaho Museum of International Diaspora. Walters considers how Louangketh's separation from her father as a young child in flight from violence parallels a similar experience endured by Chinese-American artist Hung Liu, whose work is represented in The Trout Gallery collection. Liu's father was imprisoned for being a member of the Chinese National Party, and Liu and her mother later were displaced during the Cultural Revolution. Liu's eventual immigration to the United States mirrors the immigration stories Bale and Cox record in their project. Moreover, Liu's own artwork, like Bale and Cox's, is inspired by the history of documentary photography with a particular focus on marginalized subjects who have migrated from their homes. Walters identifies Liu's print titled *Needlework* in The Trout Gallery collection as resonating with a similar tenacity and dignity seen in Bale and Cox's portraits.

Alongside the photographs of their sitters, Bale and Cox document landscapes in Idaho that reveal traces of the inhabitants histories, creation stories, and present challenges. Co-curator Cicco looks closely at one photograph titled *Forest Fire* to consider in greater depth how Bale and Cox shed light on the profound issues faced by the displaced Nez Perce, Shoshone-Paiute, and Shoshone-Bannock peoples in Idaho, including the consequences of historical conquest and genocide. By comparing Bale and Cox's *Arrivals* series to a photograph by Mexican artist Manual Alvarez Bravo, Cicco offers a nuanced interpretation of the persistence and pride of Indigenous peoples pictured in their photographs.

Finally, three discreet bodies of work in Anthony Cervino's *oeuvre* provide curators McKenna Hillman, Sophy Nie, and Cat Orzell with the opportunity to examine the significance of souvenirs, mementos, and personal objects. In each of their essays, the students took a different approach to how travel and notions of place incite the desire to make tangible the ephemerality of experience and the passage of time. Cervino made his most recent series titled *When You Wish You Were Here* in response to his time at an artists' residency in Longyearbyen, Svalbard, Norway, the world's most northern settlement in this Arctic archipelago. Nie considers how Cervino's sculptures, prints, postcards, and patches engage with the fantasies and real-world consequences of adventure and exploration. For instance, a bronze polar bear pays homage to a history of souvenirs of polar bears, but in Nie's words, "Cervino turns the bronze bear's head around, as if looking back to the destruction that has been brought to the Arctic Circle caused by increasing environmental damage." Hillman focuses on another of Cervino's sculptures that engages with the visual language of souvenirs, a work titled *Stitchless.* Here, Cervino takes a found wooden figurine of a sailor and whittles away the clothes to expose an un-idealized nakedness. In her essay, Hillman expands upon Cervino's humorous work through a comparison with a Neo-Classical, bronze figure of Antinous, the young Greek lover of Roman emperor Hadrian. Through this pairing, Hillman articulates how Cervino's work engages in the fraught middle ground between complex binaries, such as young and old, kitsch and high art, and desirable and ugly. Co-curator Orzell also studies this interest in juxtaposition by comparing Cervino's work *Gathered* to a carefully mounted collection of neolithic stone tool fragments. She explains the significance not just of how Cervino crafted contemporary "arrowheads" from decorative, collectible plates, but also why and how the imagery found on these plates offers a complicated narrative about a certain kind of nostalgic optimism.

In selecting the title of the exhibition, the co-curators discussed the importance of the artist's "hand" in each professor's work and teaching—from casting bronze, to digging up local clay, to printing photographs, and brushing paint. Additionally, the students sought

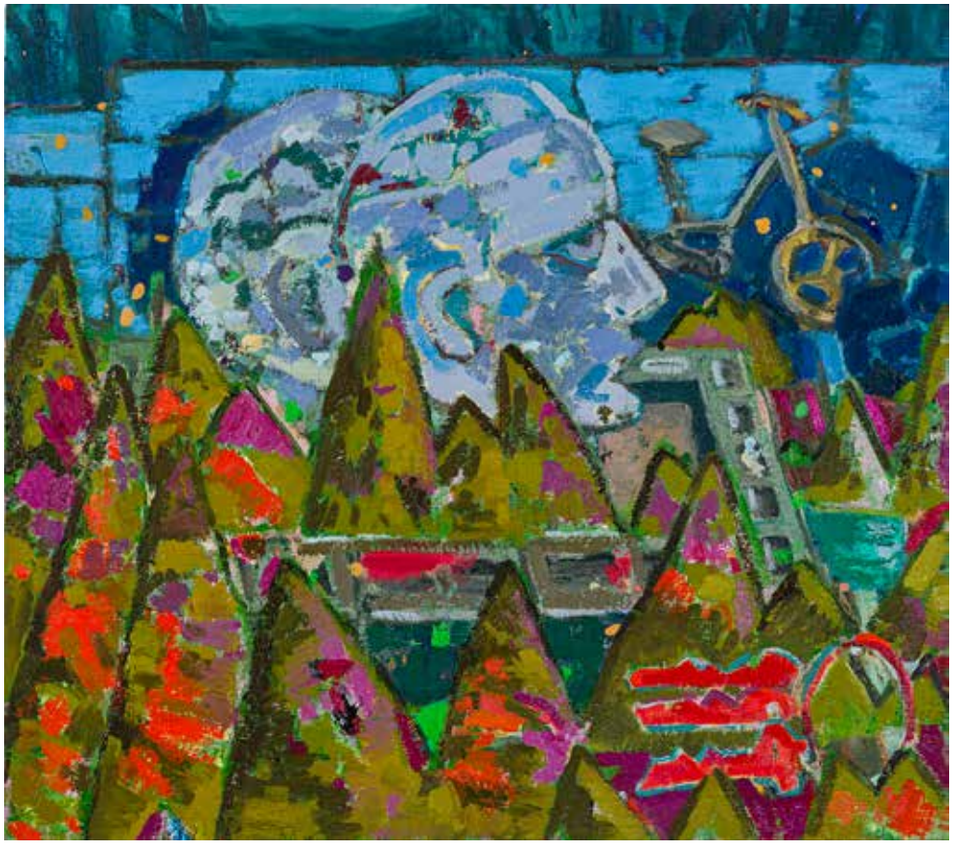
to acknowledge the value of physical proximity during the curatorial process as they explored The Trout Gallery's collections and ventured into the artists' studios. The opportunities for seeing and touching, researching and writing, exchanging and collaborating have expanded their perspectives beyond the initial notion of "nearness." Through sustained discussion with the professors and among the students in the seminar, as well as with Trout Gallery staff and other professors on campus, the students vicariously traveled to the Arctic and out West, along Roman roads, into a Surrealist dreamscape, and on a flight with Georgia O'Keeffe into the clouds. Although these themes and topics encouraged wide-ranging research, the exhibition and corresponding catalogue ultimately reflect the meaningful intersections within the Department of Art and Art History and demonstrate the College's commitment to collaborative, interdisciplinary scholarship.

TODD ARSENAULT

TODD ARSENAULT

Within Crystal Range, 2024, oil on canvas, 66 x 71 in.

TODD ARSENAULT
Cereal, 2024, oil on canvas, 11 x 14 in.



TODD ARSENAULT
The Important Others, 2024, oil on canvas, 34 x 34 in.

TODD ARSENAULT
Simple Tasks, 2024, oil on canvas, 42 x 49 in.

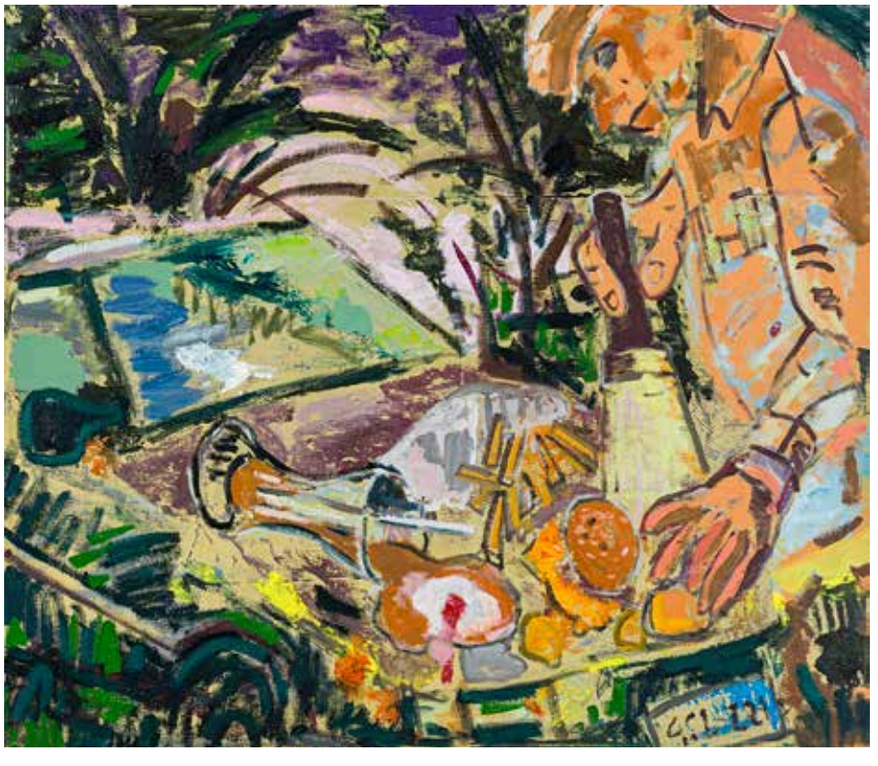
TODD ARSENAULT

Habits, Interests, and Activities, 2024, oil on canvas, 36 x 42 in.

TODD ARSENAULT
The Same Content, 2024, oil on canvas, 36 x 42 in.

TODD ARSENAULT
Growth of Companies Already in the Experiential Field, 2024, oil on canvas, 62 x 80 in.

TODD ARSENAULT
Better Equipped to Meet the Impact of Change, 2024, oil on canvas, 28 x 28 in.



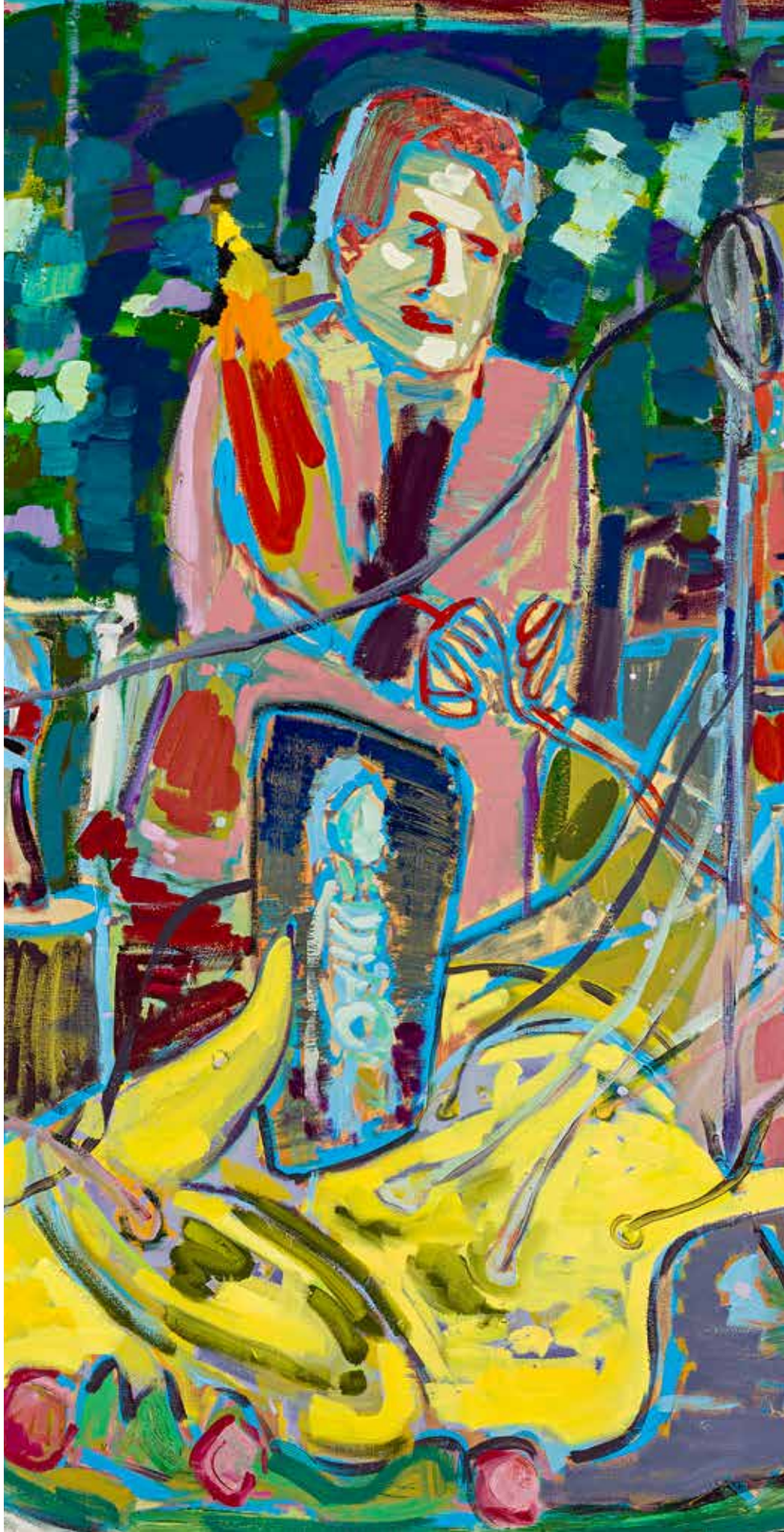
TODD ARSENAULT
Dining Under the Stars, 2024, oil on canvas, 36 x 42 in.

TODD ARSENAULT

Low-cost Programmed Decisions, 2024, oil on canvas, 74 x 80 in.

TODD ARSENAULT

Common Complaints About the Dominant Culture, 2024, oil on canvas, 78 x 64 in.



PHOEBE FRENCH

ART IN THE AGE OF MASS PRODUCTION AND DIGITAL SATURATION: WARHOL MEETS ARSENAULT

Ever wonder what a pig on a table and a wired-up turkey have in common? In the aesthetic worlds of Andy Warhol and Todd Arsenault, these unlikely table guests serve as symbols of much more than just unusual dinner conversation. Warhol's photographed pig in his screenprint *Fiesta Pig* (fig. 1), confronts the viewer with somewhat oblique and definitively quirky consumerist iconography, while Arsenault's oil painting *Growth of Companies Already in the Experiential Field* (fig. 2), comprised of a dynamic assembly of seemingly unrelated objects, raises questions about our tangled relationship with modern media. Together, these works reveal how unexpected pictorial motifs can be understood as nuanced commentary on contemporary culture.

The stylistic and creative processes of Arsenault and Warhol reflect the cultural and technological forces of their respective eras, yet both artists engage in themes of materialism and media in their works. Warhol's use of the screen-printing process, one often associated with mass production, highlights the commodification of art in consumer society in the 1960s and 1970s. In contrast, Arsenault's collage-like approach to painting grapples with today's visual culture, where technology and media saturate the art world and permeate society more broadly. Arsenault's work suggests a tension between digital pervasiveness and a desire for authenticity, as he reintroduces the tactile, handcrafted elements that digital media often overlooks. Despite variations in the cultural landscapes in which each artist was working, as well as technical differences in the mediums and techniques employed, both artists engage in themes of humor and absurdity. A comparison of Arsenault's *Growth in Companies Already in the Experiential Field* with Warhol's *Fiesta Pig* reveals how each artist's dedicated interest in popular culture and media shapes their approach to artistic processes and subjects.

Working during a period of significant social changes such as the rise of television, advertising, mass production, the LGBTQ+ rights movement, and the women's liberation movement, Warhol emerged

(fig. 1) Andy Warhol (American, 1928–1987), *Fiesta Pig*, 1979, screenprint on Arches 88 paper, 21.5 x 30.5 in. (54.61 x 77.47 cm), The Trout Gallery, Gift of The Andy Warhol Foundation, 2014.1.3

(fig. 2) Todd Arsenault, *Growth of Companies Already in the Experiential Field*, 2024, oil on canvas, 62 x 80 in. (157.48 x 203.2 cm)

LEFT: Andy Warhol (American, 1928–1987), *Fiesta Pig* (detail), 1979, screenprint on Arches 88 paper, 21.5 x 30.5 in. (54.61 x 77.47 cm), The Trout Gallery, Gift of The Andy Warhol Foundation, 2014.1.3

RIGHT: Todd Arsenault, *Growth of Companies Already in the Experiential Field* (detail), 2024, oil on canvas, 62 x 80 in. (157.48 x 203.2 cm)

as a pivotal figure in American Pop Art, a movement that emerged in the 1950s and is characterized by its use of imagery from popular culture, mass media, and advertisements. Through his innovative paintings, prints, and films, Warhol conveyed critical messages about the commodification of art and consumeristic society through a variety of subjects from Brillo pads and Campbell's soup cans to celebrities. Moreover, Warhol's use of commercial methods, particularly screen printing, challenged the conventional notions of artistic originality. A key strategy that Warhol integrated into his art was the repetition of images. Art historian Hal Foster highlights Warhol's fascination with this method, citing the artist's statement: "I like things to be exactly the same over and over again. I don't want it to be essentially the same—I want it to be exactly the same. Because the more you look at the exact same thing, the more the meaning goes away..."[1] Here, Warhol exposes his perspective on the effects of consumerism, suggesting that repeated exposure to the same subject diminishes their uniqueness and meaning, "repetition is both a draining of significance and a defending against affect."[2]

Expanding on the idea that repetition erodes meaning and individuality, art historians Thierry de Duve and Rosalind Krauss delve into Warhol's self-reflective commentary, "If you want to know all about Andy Warhol, just look at the surface of my paintings and films and me, and there I am. There's nothing behind it." From this, they conclude, "Between the producer and his production, no difference. All are commodities."[3] By mirroring the production methods of advertising and mass media, Warhol positions himself and his art as indistinguishable from the consumer products they critique, illuminating the ways that material culture reduces art and even individuals to commodities. Although critics may have been apprehensive of Warhol's techniques, particularly his use of screen printing to create works, his distinctive touch is evident within his creative interventions.[4] Warhol's process often involved the layering of colors, collage, and the addition of hand painted details, all of which infused his works with a sense of depth and individuality. As art historian Jennifer Dyer notes, "Silkscreening, a process which allows for maximum precision in repeated images is paradoxically used by Warhol to illuminate differences, almost as if Warhol set out to undermine its precision...Warhol's medium is often stroked across the image unevenly or the squeegee is not cleaned between applications, resulting in varying densities."[5] These deliberate imperfections transform a technique associated with mechanical uniformity into one that emphasizes variation.

Warhol used Polaroid photographs as preparatory compositions for his silkscreen prints. This initial technological mediation with his subjects highlights his complicated interest in the notion of mass production. Archivist Peter Botticelli asserts, "Polaroids played a dual function for Warhol: as a record of what he actually saw through the camera viewfinder, and a single step in his routine process for creating portraits. Beginning in the early 1970s, selected Polaroids were used as the basis for silkscreened images printed on canvas, over which Warhol applied paint with a brush."[6] By using Polaroids as a starting point, Warhol retained the intimate qualities of his subjects while also translating them into highly reproducible prints through the silk-screening method. In works like *Fiesta Pig,* this technique provided the groundwork for Warhol's intersection of image and meaning, blending the personal with the mechanical. The "image" refers to Warhol's repeated use of mass-produced objects such as Fiestaware dishes, and "meaning" emerges through his manipulation of these images.

In a way that might unexpectedly echo Warhol's generative image making, Arsenault's paintings capture both the immediacy of the present and echoes of the past, drawing on a broad range of influences, including imagery from the era of his childhood to create complex, layered compositions. While personal memory has shaped his aesthetic and visual vocabulary to some extent, his works transcend any specific notion of autobiography and instead engage with broader cultural contexts to construct more ambiguous narratives. Featuring a striking use of saturated color palettes along with visible brushstrokes, Arsenault's works incorporate both abstract and representational forms to create enigmatic and captivating compositions. The density of objects and figures crowding the picture plane suggests a sense of controlled chaos, drawing the viewer in with a detailed interplay of color, form, and texture. Arsenault's paintings often juxtapose representations of recognizable objects with imagined spaces, blending unsettling ambiguity with a touch of humor, as can be seen within his work *Growth of Companies Already in the Experiential Field.* Infusing many of his works with a collage-like quality, Arsenault's painterly process is complex. He often finds inspiration from images found in old magazines, media, and the internet to inspire his subject matter. Reflecting on this practice, Arsenault explains, "Everything in culture is and or has been commodified in some form, especially art. This is an important underlying aspect of my work and something that I constantly question,"[7] suggesting his art not only navigates through these collected images but also critiques them.

Similarly to Warhol, Arsenault examines how we, as consumers, are sold things through visual culture and how images elicit desire for endless consumption. Warhol, as a Pop Artist, was particularly interested in representing ordinary commodities in his works, such as cans of Campbell's soup and Coca-Cola, elevating mundane products into iconic symbols of mass culture. Arsenault explores these themes in a more nuanced and process-driven manner, reflecting on the complexities of contemporary visual media. Although their approaches differ significantly, both Warhol and Arsenault employ a generative

process in their compositions. Arsenault describes his method as "mining for images," a phrase that captures his approach to collecting, layering, and transforming visual material. Arsenault often begins his work with a digital collage, where he gathers an array of widely available images, often sourced from websites like eBay. The images that Arsenault utilizes can be seen by millions and are easily replicated, resonating with themes of mass production and repetition in media. This digital collage, however, is just the starting point. Arsenault then translates these initial sketches onto his canvas, creating a textured and singular work of art. The resulting composition is comprised of allusions to images within images that encourage viewers to "dig" through the work both visually and conceptually.

Analogous to Arsenault's digital "mining," Warhol's process begins with photography, often using Polaroids as the basis for his final prints and paintings. Polaroids are inherently one-of-a-kind, as the image cannot be reproduced exactly unless scanned, and any multiplication of the image occurs only during Warhol's printing process.[8] While Warhol begins with an unrepeatable image like a Polaroid and transforms it into multiples, Arsenault instead starts with mass-circulated images and adapting these referents into a unique painting. This contrast reflects their distinct approaches to originality, mass production, and the evolving nature of art in an age of both mechanical and digital reproduction.

When analyzing the visual messages embedded in Warhol's *Fiesta Pig* and Arsenault's *Growth of Companies Already in the Experiential Field*, rich layers of meaning can be uncovered through the lens of Marxist theory. This perspective highlights how artistic expressions may serve as reflections of, or critiques against, the prevailing capitalist structures that govern society. As art historian Roger Cook notes, "Through his open acknowledgment of the commercial nature of art, Warhol broke with the avant-garde's long-standing need to defend itself against the bourgeoise by disavowing economic capital in favor of symbolic capital. He saw, admitted, ruthlessly exposed, and, some would say, exploited the true nature of symbolic and economic capital's involvement with each other."[9] Warhol's print, deeply intertwined with the commercialization and commodification of culture, aligns with Marxist critiques.[10] Similarly, Arsenault's painting interrogates the ways in which technology shapes and influences our socioeconomic landscape. Together, their works invite a deeper exploration of the intricate relationships between art, capitalism, and commodification.

Inspired by a Polaroid taken by the artist, Warhol's screenprint *Fiesta Pig* presents a playful scene in which a pig can be seen eating leftover food scraps from Fiestaware dishes (fig. 3). While Warhol's rendering of both the pig and dishware retain distinct traces of the

(fig. 3) Andy Warhol (American, 1928–1987), *Fiesta Pig*, Polacolor Type 108, 4.25 x 3.375 in. (10.8 x 8.6 cm), The College of Wooster Art Museum, The College of Wooster, Gift of the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc., FA09.02348 ©The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc.

original photographic referent, the surrounding space leans towards abstraction with flat planes of color in the print. Warhol creates a a relatively shallow sense of depth within the composition by employing bands of different colors, red in the background, blue in the middle ground, and green in the foreground. His use of a highly saturated, commercial-like, color palette, inspired by previous work in advertisements, infuses the print with bold, exaggerated vibrancy that sharply contrasts with the muted tones of the original Polaroid.[11] The unlikely presence of a pig in this setting adds an element of humor to the composition, as the juxtaposition of a farm animal in a domestic scene with brightly colored Fiestaware dishes creates a comical contrast.

Bold black outlines around the dishware emphasize the geometric repetition of plates and cups, but the pig, rendered in a softer pink, stands as the focal point in the composition. Pigs are often associated with gluttony, symbolizing overindulgence and the desire for more,

qualities that lie at the heart of capitalism. Considering Warhol's recurrent themes within his works, the pig may be representative of the consumeristic culture of American society. The Fiestaware bowls, the first widely mass promoted dinnerware, further highlight the commercialization of everyday life. By depicting a pig devouring leftover food, Warhol highlights society's appetite for consumption, especially during the economic boom of the 1960s and 1970s. This imagery not only emphasizes the pervasive nature of consumerism but also exposes how it permeates every aspect of life, including the realm of art.

Warhol, despite his humble beginnings as the son of first-generation immigrant parents and being raised during a time of great economic depression, rose to a position of prominence through his art. Warhol entered the art scene in the 1960s, a decade marked by rapid economic expansion.[12] While Warhol's success as an artist may place him among the dominant class, his art can be seen as a critique of the culture of commodification in America at this time. Under Marxist perspectives, art can be seen as an ideological form that dominant classes may use to perpetuate class relations that benefit them or that subversive artists may use to undermine the dominant class.[13] There is a certain irony to be considered since many of Warhol's works were produced through his use of screen-printing, a process that echoes the very consumerism that much of his art critiqued.

Although *Fiesta Pig* may not have been mass produced, the process of screen-printing itself is emblematic of mass production, as it enables a level of replication and manufacturing that was inherent in consumer culture at this time. Warhol's relationship with capitalism was complicated, in that he was both a participant and critic of it. As noted by de Duve and Krauss, Warhol "does not demand that a wrong be righted, nor does he fight against the metamorphosis of art lovers into consumers. On the contrary, he positions them as such, as explicitly as possible."[14] In applying Marxist theory to Warhol's work, his prints can be understood as both a reflection and contradiction of the society in which he was working. In other words, while he embraced the commercial aspects of art, he simultaneously critiqued the culture of commodification that defined his era, blurring the lines between the creator and consumer.

Just as Warhol's work confronts the intersection of art and capitalism, Arsenault engages with the complexities of mass media and its impact on society. The dynamic brushwork in Arsenault's *Growth of Companies Already in the Experiential Field* not only emphasizes a sense of movement in the composition, but also reiterates the theme of energy transmission in the painting. Thin, wire-like lines spill out from the speaker on the left of the composition and whirl across the painting, guiding the viewer's gaze through the scene. These wires function as

(fig. 4) Andy Warhol (American, 1928–1987), *Green Coca-Cola Bottles*, 1962, acrylic, screenprint, and graphite pencil on canvas, 82 3/4 x 57 1/8in. (210.2 x 145.1 cm). Purchase, with funds from the Friends of the Whitney Museum of American Art, 68.25. Digital image © Whitney Museum of American Art / Licensed by Scala / Art Resource, NY

a powerful visual metaphor for the flow of information, illustrating how technology and mass media shape and direct the dissemination of knowledge in contemporary society. At the center of the painting is a vibrant yellow turkey in an ambiguous interior space. The square-like object on top of the turkey is a phone, displaying a picture of a skeleton, perhaps symbolizing the detrimental effects of incessant technology use. Behind the turkey stands a fragmented figure of a man, rendered with multiple colors and precise brushstrokes. The man holds a cable, connected to the computer system to his right, emphasizing the interplay between technology and the surrounding environment. The entire right side of the painting features a

shelving unit filled with computers and other types of electronic lab equipment such as monitors. Wires from these appliances connect to various objects throughout the space including the turkey, the Coke bottle placed atop a table towards the center, and the speaker and fan to the left.

In Arsenault's *Growth of Companies*, the inclusion of a speaker, fan, numerous cords, and other technological ephemera spiraling across the composition can be seen as symbols of the emerging innovations of the late twentieth century, such as the rise of internet and digital culture. The cords, which connect to various elements in the composition, signify how technology powers everything in modern life. The prominent inclusion of these wires reveals the artists fascination with technology, prompting viewers to consider the influence that it has on society. The wires' connection to objects within the composition suggests a broader commentary on energy and how many aspects of life are dependent on technology. Specifically, the Coke bottle, a universally recognizable symbol of consumer culture, represents not only the commodification of everyday life but also serves as an emblem of capitalism. In the composition, even the Coke is depicted as being powered by energy, driving society's machinery forward and emphasizing how consumer culture is intertwined with technological advancements and capitalist dynamics. The inclusion of the Coke bottle in Arsenault's painting draws a subtle parallel to Warhol's well-known painting, *Green Coca-Cola Bottles* (fig. 4), among many other works with the same subject, which similarly reflect the influence of consumerism. Warhol's repetition of the Coke bottle suggests a certain uniformity and accessibility to consumer goods, while simultaneously critiquing the mass production and commodification that characterized his era. Arsenault's singular Coke bottle is wired into a network of objects, symbolizing the dependency on energy that drives today's consumer culture. This shared symbol, though approached differently, connects both artists' works as reflections on consumption across different time periods.

Arsenault and Warhol engage with their respective cultural and technological landscapes, while also illuminating the complex relationship between art, economics, and societal change. Warhol's screen-printing technique critiques the commodification of art and his imagery highlights aspects of consumer culture. Whereas Arsenault confronts the saturation of technology in contemporary visual culture throughout his collage-like painted process. Despite their differing, yet intertwining, methods, each artist possesses an awareness of the contradictions and absurdities inherent in capitalism, such as the desire for products that are often unnecessary, the prioritization of profit over well-being, and the way mass production diminishes individuality while fostering conformity. By employing aspects of humor and irony within their compositions, Warhol and Arsenault invite viewers to reflect on the ways in which art not only mirrors but also critiques the complexities of society's insatiable desire for consumption.

ENDNOTES

1 Hal Foster, "Death in America," *October* 75 (1996): 37–59.

2 Foster, "Death in America," 41.

3 Thierry de Duve and Rosalind Krauss, "*Andy Warhol, or The Machine Perfected*," *October* 48 (1989): 3-14.

4 Roger Cook, "Andy Warhol, Capitalism, Culture, and Camp," *Space and Culture* 6, no.1 (February 2003). 66-76.

5 Jennifer Dyer, "The Metaphysics of the Mundane: Understanding Andy Warhol's Serial Imagery," *Artibus et Historiae* 25, no. 49 (2004): 37.

6 Peter Botticelli, "Documentation for Digitized Artworks: The Case of Andy Warhol's Polaroid Photographs," *Art Documentation: Journal of the Art Libraries Society of North America* 35, no. 1 (2016): 71-85.

7 Todd Arsenault, email to author, October 29, 2024.

8 Polaroid photography uses an instant film process that allows for the immediate development of a photograph. When a photo is taken through a polaroid camera, the film is exposed to light which passes through a chemical coating on the films surface. This chemical reaction develops the image directly onto the film within minutes. The film contains all of the necessary chemicals in a self-contained pod, which spreads during exposure to light, ensuring the development of the photograph without the need for a darkroom or additional processing. The result is a tangible photo that emerges from the camera, allowing instant viewing. For more on this process see Sarah, Kennel, Diane Waggoner, and Alice Carver-Kubik. *In the Darkroom: An Illustrated Guide to Photographic Processes before the Digital Age* (New York, Washington D.C: Thames & Hudson ; National Gallery of Art, 2010), 37-39.

9 Cook, "*Andy Warhol, Capitalism, Culture, and Camp*," 73. According to Cook, economic Capital refers to money whereas symbolic capital here refers to prestige or fame within the art world.

10 Michael Watt, Cothren and Anne D'Alleva, *Methods and Theories of Art History* (London, United Kingdom: Laurence King Publishing, 2021), 71-85.

11 Dyer, "The Metaphysics of the Mundane: Understanding Andy Warhol's Serial Imagery," 35-39.

12 Cook, "Andy Warhol, Capitalism, Culture, and Camp," 67.

13 O.K. Werckmeister, "A Working Perspective for Marxist Art History Today," *Oxford Art Journal* 14, no. 2 (1991): 83–87. See also De Duve and Krauss, "Andy Warhol, or The Machine Perfected," 6-8.

14 De Duve and Krauss, "Andy Warhol, or The Machine Perfected," 9.

KATIE MARTHINS

MAKING THE FAMILIAR STRANGE

Artists of the Surrealist movement often challenged perceptions of reality to create works of art fascinated and unsettled their viewers, provoking a sense of discomfort. Art historian Briony Fer explains that the Surrealists sought to explore the irrational and the unconscious, using the notion of the "uncanny," borrowed from Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, to confront cultural repressions.[1] Defining Freud's term, Fer explains that "*unheimlich*, translated into English as 'uncanny,' is the opposite of *heimlich* ('homely' or 'familiar,' and so 'not strange')."[2] While the Surrealists explored this interest in the "uncanny" to elicit feelings of revulsion or unease, the concept can also be used to describe the strange subjects of Todd Arsenault's *Common Complaints About the Dominant Culture* (fig. 1). In his large-scale painting, Arsenault includes dismembered hands of varying sizes, a suggestion of violence through a blade and hammer, wide variety of scale, and an ambiguous narrative. Arsenault's work does not simply align with Surrealist subjects, but also can be seen as engaging with Pop artist Claes Oldenburg, who toys with the uncanny in similar ways in his print *Landscape with Noses* (fig. 2). Both works incorporate fragments of the human body, an inclusion that, as noted by Fer, "might evoke the uncanny."[3] Oldenburg's playful yet disconcerting arrangement of noses floating in an absurd landscape and Arsenault's abstract oil painting with dismembered hands invite viewers to reconsider the familiar in ways that disrupt traditional narratives and challenge societal norms.

Arsenault's work echoes the uncanny, responding to German philosopher Theodor Adorno's exploration of the idea of ugliness as a voice for the socially disinherited, reflecting a chaos that resonates with modern existential anxieties.[4] Both Arsenault and Oldenburg foreground motifs of the body, using scale and repetition to unsettle the viewer and invoke feelings of anxiety and curiosity. Following Freud's insight that the uncanny is "something secretly familiar," Oldenburg and Arsenault present recognizable elements, such as clearly defined noses and hands, in strange contexts.[5] Their works defy

(fig. 2) Claes Oldenburg (American, born Sweden, 1929–2022), *Landscape with Noses*, 1994, etching and aquatint on paper, 26.313 x 20.125 in. (66.834 x 51.118 cm), The Trout Gallery, Gift of Eric Denker, Class of 1975, 2010.7.6

(fig. 1) Todd Arsenault, *Common Complaints About the Dominant Culture*, 2024, oil on canvas, 78 x 64 in. (198.1 x 162.6 cm)

LEFT: Andy Warhol (American, 1928–1987), *Fiesta Pig* (detail), 1979, screenprint on Arches 88 paper, 21.5 x 30.5 in. (54.61 x 77.47 cm), The Trout Gallery, Gift of The Andy Warhol Foundation, 2014.1.3

RIGHT: Todd Arsenault, *Growth of Companies Already in the Experiential Field* (detail), 2024, oil on canvas, 62 x 80 in. (157.48 x 203.2 cm)

conventional expectations and illuminate the complexity of human experience, making the familiar strangely unsettling.

In addition to subject matter, Arsenault and Oldenburg use a sense of scale to elicit the uncanny. Arsenault's *Common Complaints* boldly engages the viewer and demands attention through its imagery, size, and color. Arsenault does not adhere to a conventional sense of linear perspective and rejects a consistent system, or organization, of scale. The viewer then uncovers several motifs and new forms while one's eyes roam through the scene, unbound by a singular focal point. The recurring hands in the painting are exaggerated and even somewhat cartoonish in style, varying in color and size. One reaches up from the water, another grips a hammer, and a blade violently slices through a pointer finger of a larger hand. However, none of these appendages is attached to the male figure rising from the water. The fragmented hands in the water prompt viewers to question if more bodies are hidden beneath the fluid surface.

The enigmatic narrative implied in Arsenault's work elicits an emotional reaction, reflecting the chaotic nature of modern existence. Moreover, Arsenault's exploration of bodily forms resonates with Freud's belief that the uncanny can evoke feelings of anxiety and repulsion. Fer notes specifically, "dismembered limbs might evoke the uncanny… where the pieces are collaged together in unfamiliar ways."[6] The discomfort from these forms challenges viewers to engage with one's perceptions of identity and societal norms. For example, Surrealist artist Max Ernst also exaggerates the scale of a dismembered body part, to demonstrate the uncanny in his painting *Oedipus Rex* (fig. 3). Art historian Uwe M. Schneede describes how "the layout of *Oedipus Rex* is determined by architectonic elements which are, however, arranged in such a way as to run counter to the visual expectations derived from the system of central perspective developed in the Renaissance."[7] Such a deliberate subversion mirrors Arsenault's technique, where forms are reshaped to disrupt the viewer's understanding of the human body. As Schneede suggests, Ernst's work is marked by a "negation of traditional concepts of art," positioning both artists in a shared dialogue about the tensions and contradictions inherent in their artwork.[8] By employing methods that challenge conventional perceptions, Arsenault and Ernst compel their viewers to confront the unsettling complexities of identity and existence, evoking a sense of "suspended animation" that leads to a deeper kind of contemplation.[9]

(Fig. 3) Max Ernst (German, 1891–1976), *Oedipus Rex*. 1922, oil on canvas, 36.6 x 40.2 in. (93 x 102 cm), private collection, image in the public domain

(fig. 4) Claes Oldenburg, (American, born Sweden, 1929–2022), *Paint Torch*, 2011, steel, fiberglass reinforced plastic, gelcoat and polyurethane, LED lighting, 51 ft. ((15.5448 m), Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, 2011.11 2011 © Claes Oldenburg Photo: Tom Crane

In a way like Arsenault's and Ernst's large, punctured pointer fingers, Oldenburg plays with scale to provoke the uncanny in his *Landscape with Noses*, reflecting his career-spanning interest in absurdity through the unexpected arrangement of differently sized noses that replace traditional landscape elements, like mountains, trees, rocks, and grass. The tawny-brown noses share the same color palette and are each nestled in abstracted swaths of green. Although his is a print, one can imagine how this composition, like others in his oeuvre, could be

conceived of as a large public sculpture. Oldenburg perhaps is best known for these outdoor works, that all begin as hand-drawn sketches, similar in subject and style to *Landscape with Noses.* Curator Janie C. Lee explains how drawings are crucial to Oldenburg's artistic process, as "they develop the thought; they express the artist's fantasies and give birth to his sculpture."[10] One example of an Oldenburg sculpture is *Paint Torch*, a 51-foot-high work that appears to paint the sky outside City Hall in Philadelphia (fig. 4). As a kind of humorous punctuation, Oldenburg also includes a six-foot-high "glob" of paint adjacent to the monumental brush.

The large margin surrounding the relatively small composition in Oldenburg's *Landscape with Noses* emphasizes the exaggerated proportions of noses scattered across a landscape, bridging the gap between notions of the absurd and the serious. The manipulation of space and perspective prompts the noses to float, or protrude, toward the viewer due to Oldenburg's exclusion of a horizon line from the composition. Focusing on green and orangey browns, colors associated with the natural world, Oldenburg's landscape encourages viewers to traverse its surreal terrain. Arsenault's painting promotes an engagement with a similar exploration of unexpected motifs, challenging the notion of a central narrative. The absence of that center in both compositions underscores their intricacies. Both works resist leading the eye too directly to one part of the composition. Freud's concept of the uncanny, specifically his suggestion that unsettling feelings result from the artist's ability to evoke a sense of recognition while simultaneously displacing it into the realm of the strange, provides the parameter for understanding both *Landscape with Noses* and *Common Complaints*.[11]

Along with evoking the uncanny through scale, both Oldenburg and Arsenault elicit the Surrealist fascination with revulsion by presenting bodily functions. The nose immediately amuses the viewer due to Oldenburg's inclusion of green smudges underneath them, resembling snot. Instead of a classic blood red, Arsenault uses a bright pink to create the drops of blood coming from the sliced finger that threaten to soak the figure's head and shoulders. Arsenault's and Oldenburg's interest in redefining notions of the ugly or grotesque, offering an illustration of how French philosopher Denis Diderot defined ugliness, as "grotesque and extremely disproportioned figures."[12] Arsenault's treatment of bodily forms is not simply an examination of the concept of beauty, but can be understood as an expression of larger societal frustrations and challenges dominant cultural narratives. In each work, these fragmented parts, oozing with corporeal fluids, transform the familiar into an abstraction that challenges easy or comfortable recognition.[13] As Fer notes, the disjunction between expectation and perception is emblematic of surrealist principles, "disorienting normal expectations."[14]

(fig. 5) Hans Bellmer (German, born Poland, 1902–1975), *The Doll (La Poupée)*, 1935, gelatin silver print, 18 7/8 × 14 3/8 in. (47.9 × 36.5 cm) © Art Resource, NY

The repetition of human forms in both artworks serves not only to create a sense of revulsion mixed with humor, but also to invite viewers to confront their prior assumptions about normalcy in how bodies are represented. Whether fragmented or full, moving or still, the hands complement each other through their contrasting states in Arsenault's painting, while Oldenburg's differently sized noses create an unexpected terrain. Surrealist Hans Bellmer, best known for his photographs of a doll whose body parts were assembled and juxtaposed in disorienting ways, provides another pertinent precedent for Arsenault and Oldenburg. Art historian Therese Lichtenstein explains that Bellmer's "photographs created such a stir among the Surrealists."[15] Bellmer's dolls (fig. 5) are clearly uncanny, participating in a dialogue about a mass culture that is both "human and mechanical, animated and dead."[16] This ambivalence resonates with Arsenault's and Oldenburg's works, where the grotesque and fragmented body become sites of both fascination and unease, urging the viewer to navigate the complexities of desire and identity.[17]

In trying to decipher Arsenault's composition, viewers move from one form to another, discerning the identity of each object and the overall narrative of the composition. For example, in pushing further

into the background, the viewer finds a man paddling a gondola. As scholars have noted about Oldenburg's work, this sense of discovery, or "making the familiar strange," creates a shared psychological experience that resonates with viewers on a deeper level.[18] To understand the "deeper level," it is important to grasp the influence of Freud and the Surrealists, who were particularly interested in the interplay of fears, anxieties, and desires that lie beneath the surface of consciousness. Surrealism, as defined by artist André Breton, is a disruptive "juxtaposition of two more or less disparate realities," and draws heavily on psychoanalytic theory.[19] Freud viewed Surrealism as a distorted manifestation of displaced wishes and the object as a bodily expression of conflicted desires. Arsenault's and Oldenburg's works echo this sense of distortion and displacement, where familiar forms are transformed into unsettling representations that reflect our subconscious.

As Foster explains, "The definition of Surrealism [is] a disruptive 'juxtaposition of two more or less disparate realities.'"[20] The Surrealists sought to simulate the effects of madness through art, emphasizing the power of the unconscious. In this context, Arsenault and Oldenburg evoke a sense of psychological dislocation, prompting viewers to confront their own buried fears and desires. Thus, the uncanny experience the artists create not only disorients but also invites a deeper engagement with the self, blurring the lines between the known and the unknown. Oldenburg and Arsenault employ the uncanny to challenge viewers' perceptions of reality. The artists push viewers to face their discomforts and interact with the strange aspects of one's experiences. For both Arsenault and Oldenburg, the ordinary is reimagined and the unexpected becomes a source of fascination.

ENDNOTES

1 Briony Fer, et al. *Realism, Rationalism, Surrealism: Art between the Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, in association with the Open University, 1993), 176.

2 Fer, *Realism, Rationalism, Surrealism: Art Between the Wars*, 196.

3 Fer, *Realism, Rationalism, Surrealism: Art Between the Wars*, 196.

4 Robert S. Nelson, Richard Shiff, eds. *Critical Terms for Art History*. 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 283.

5 Fer, *Realism, Rationalism, Surrealism: Art Between the Wars*, 196.

6 Fer, *Realism, Rationalism, Surrealism: Art Between the Wars*, 196.

7 Uwe M. Schneede, *Max Ernst* (New York: Praeger, 1972), 50.

8 Schneede, *Max Ernst*, 5.

9 Schneede, *Max Ernst*, 50.

10 Janie C. Lee, *Claes Oldenburg Drawings: in the Whitney Museum of American Art* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, Distributed by Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2002), 9.

11 Fer, *Realism, Rationalism, Surrealism: Art Between the Wars*, 196.

12 Cited in Nelson, *Critical Terms for Art History*, 283.

13 Fer, *Realism, Rationalism, Surrealism: Art Between the Wars*, 199.

14 Fer, *Realism, Rationalism, Surrealism: Art Between the Wars*, 172.

15 Therese Lichtenstein, *Behind Closed Doors: The Art of Hans Bellmer* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 6.

16 Lichtenstein, *Behind Closed Doors: The Art of Hans Bellmer*, 15.

17 Peter Webb, Robert Short, and Hans Bellmer, *Hans Bellmer* (London: Quartet Books, 1985), 41.

18 Lee, *Claes Oldenburg Drawings: In the Whitney Museum of American Art*, 9.

19 Hal Foster, *Art since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2011), 16.

20 Foster, *Art since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism*, 16.

AVA NIENSTADT

(POST)IMPRESSION: TODD ARSENAULT'S METHODS AND MEDIA AMONGST THE NABIS AND FAUVES

Through saturated colors and a dense collage of varied imagery, two large figures anchor the composition of Todd Arsenault's painting titled *Within Crystal Range* (fig. 1). Although Arsenault is a contemporary painter and responds innovatively to present-day issues of modern life, technology, and consumerism, his work surprisingly echoes late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century French artists. More specifically, Arsenault's work resonates with some of the principles of color and form of the Nabis and Fauvists, artists who championed dynamic brushwork and unmediated color. After a brief discussion of formal parallels between Arsenault's work and that of the Nabis and Fauves. This investigation takes us inside Arsenault's' canvas and artistic process, revealing formal choices that allow him to express powerful themes that resonate with modern experience. Along this journey, Nabi painter Pierre Bonnard's print titled, *Femme Assis dans sa Baignoire (Woman Seated in her Bath)* (fig. 2), provides an effective lens for seeing the connections between Arsenault and his European modernist precedents.

FORMAL PARALLELS: THE NABIS AND FAUVES

Nabis artists shared an interest in creating paintings that eschewed naturalistic representation in favor of minimal linework, flattened compositions, and patchwork assemblages of color that expressed the artist's vision rather than the physical world. As in Arsenault's painting, in Bonnard's print, *Femme Assis dans sa Baignoire*, what may be perceived as an underpainting, or a sketched outline, suggests the effect of the print being unfinished or incomplete. This effect leaves viewers with uncertainty about the portrayed subject of the work and allows them to create their own narrative to fill in visual gaps.[1] The Nabis shared a desire to portray their pure reaction to a scene, rather than its naturalistic representation.[2] The abstract, patterned

LEFT: Pierre Bonnard (French, 1867–1947), *Femme assise dans sa baignoire (Woman Seated in her Bath)* (detail), 1942, lithograph on paper, 9.75 x 12.75 in. (24.765 x 32.385 cm), The Trout Gallery, Gift of the Doctors Meyer P. and Vivian O. Potamkin, 1957.1.20

RIGHT: Todd Arsenault, *Within Crystal Range* (detail), 2024, oil on canvas, , 66 x 71 in. (167.64 x 180.34 cm)

(fig. 1) Todd Arsenault, *Within Crystal Range*, 2024, oil on canvas, , 66 x 71 in. (167.64 x 180.34 cm)

(fig. 2) Pierre Bonnard (French, 1867–1947), *Femme assise dans sa baignoire (Woman Seated in her Bath)*, 1942, lithograph on paper, 9.75 x 12.75 in. (24.765 x 32.385 cm), The Trout Gallery, Gift of the Doctors Meyer P. and Vivian O. Potamkin, 1957.1.20

wallpaper behind Bonnard's woman taking a bath emphasizes a sense of overall flatness in the composition. Likewise, in *Within Crystal Range* Arsenault creates a shallow pictorial plane, in which a couple holding a portrait of themselves appears near the painting's surface. While there is a sense of overlapping planes in his painting, Arsenault does not use linear perspective to create an illusion of spatial recession. Bright blocks of color emphasize the flatness of his pictorial surface, highlighting Arsenault's painterly mark-making. The Nabis were also interested in revealing their material processes rather than creating mimetic depictions of nature.[3]

Arsenault's use of visible brushstrokes and bold, unnatural, color also calls to mind the work of Fauvist artists such as Henri Matisse. In interviews, Arsenault has described how he often continuously adds to a composition, reusing old paintings and adding new compositions on top of the original.[4] The layering of vibrant colors creates a chaotic scene that is both overwhelming and intriguing, and mirrors this description by art historians Yve-Alain Bois and Greg Sims of Henri Matisse's *Bonheur de Vivre* (fig. 3): "Matisse's painting is at once very fast and very slow: it explodes as we look at it, like a firecracker, after which we have all the time we need to lose ourselves in its scattering."[5] This analogy to a "firecracker" is a fitting way to understand the chaotic "scatter" of subject matter and color in Arsenault's work. Focusing on the details of the painting, the woman's figure demonstrates Arsenault's use of layering, which can be seen in the thick daubs of paint that have built up after many applications. Comparably, Bonnard makes his hand evident in the composition through sketchy outlines and dynamic passages of pink and orange hues. Although both Bonnard and Arsenault depict human figures, each distorts their bodies through exaggerated features, loose brushstrokes, gestural marks, and emotive color.

THE NABIS: MISINTERPRETATION AND THE EMOTIONAL AURA

As a member of the Nabis group in Paris, Bonnard, alongside painters Maurice Denis and Edouard Vuillard, joined other students from the Académie Julian who were inspired by the ideas of Paul Gauguin's Symbolist paintings and rejected the concerns defining the Impressionist movement.[6] The Impressionists were focused on depicting everyday life, and they painted *en plein air* to capture specific atmospheric conditions and effects of light.[7] Though the Nabis shared in the Impressionists' interest in contemporary life and rising urbanization, their work focused more heavily on their aesthetic reaction to a moment through flatter planes of color and more personal interpretations of scenes. In a letter to his friend Matisse, Bonnard writes, "I think of a mind cleansed of every old aesthetic convention, and it is that alone that permits a direct view of

(fig. 3) Henri Matisse (French, 1869–1954), *Le Bonheur de vivre (The Joy of Life)*, October 1905–March 1906, oil on canvas, 69 1/2 x 94 3/4 in. (176.5 x 240.7 cm), Barnes Foundation, BF719, © The Barnes Foundation. Succession H. Matisse / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

nature."[8] This "cleansing" allowed Bonnard to skew his focus towards materiality to create a new, unmediated perception of nature. Bonnard and his contemporaries agreed that when creating a scene, the artist employs both subjective and objective misinterpretation. The former refers to the artist's emotions and connections to the subjects they chose to accentuate, and the latter aids them to place objects within a work while keeping a sense of balance in the composition.[9] The Nabis believed that color should express the emotional "aura" of a work of art and convey a sense of meaning rather than to imitate the natural world. The terms "aura" and "emotion" can be understood in contrast to the notion of "reason," which defined the rules of the French Academy, the institution that championed the aesthetic conventions and hierarchies of fine art. By focusing on artworks' emotional effects, the Nabis were actively defying the rules of the French Academy that were set in place for successful artists to follow.[10] In Bonnard's print, this rebellion against academic standards can be seen in the bright yellow and pink hues that define the woman's figure.

Arsenault's choice of vibrant, non-naturalistic color follows Nabis artist Denis's belief that "the painter's power lies in his use of color and form, not in his ability to reproduce semblance of the material world."[11] Expressing the Nabis' idea that the object being represented is not the chief principle of a work of art, but rather the artist's ability to manipulate color and form, Denis's statement actively contradicts the French Academy's regulations around the naturalistic representation of everyday life.[12] The Nabis, and more specifically

(fig. 4) Katsukawa Shuncho (Japanese, 1750–1821), *Scene from the series of Erotic Prints for the Twelve Months*, c. 1788, Ukiyo-e woodcut on paper, 9.625 x 14.25 in. (24.448 x 36.195 cm), The Trout Gallery, Gift of Knut S. Royce, 2013.1.4

Bonnard, believed that at its core, painting is a compilation of colors assembled on a flat surface. It is only with the manipulation of these elements that an objective appears in the work.[13] By working against the meticulously detailed surfaces and invisible brushstrokes valued in academic painting, these artists sought to emphasize painting's materiality and find symbolic and emotive sources of inspiration.

In addition to color and line, Bonnard and Arsenault share a similar approach to perspective and creating a shallow pictorial field in their works. In Bonnard's *Femme Assise dans sa Baignoire*, for example, the viewer is unable to discern if the pink horizontal line above the bathtub represents a change from floor to wall, or simply a divider between the decorative and unadorned sections of the background. The subjects in Arsenault's work appear densely layered, without a clear sense of open or empty space around each figure or object. Moreover, the brushstrokes of pure, unmodulated color reinforce a sense of flatness and surface texture in a composition organized along a diagonal that plunges into the bottom left corner. An abstracted head in the lower, center of the painting interrupts the picture plane, further disorienting the sense of perspectival space.

Neither Arsenault nor Bonnard use a traditional Western perspective in their work. Bonnard looked to Japanese *Ukiyo-e* woodblock prints to emphasize surface patterning and a flattened sense of space in his works. *Ukiyo-e* prints often employ a birds-eye perspective and feature a high horizon line and sharp diagonal as seen featured in this *Scene from the series of Erotic Prints for the Twelve Months* by the artist Katsukawa Shuncho (fig. 4). Additionally, erotic images such as this are a common theme in Japanese woodblock prints, often used as calendar images and popular among a wide range of social classes.[14] The couple in this print is tangled together; both faces look to their right, making it difficult to discern one from the other. Together, they create a series of curvilinear lines marking the outlines of their bodies and drapery. Bonnard features a similar subject and technique in his work, using thick colored lines to contour for the curves of the woman's body and tub as he reveals to the viewer the intimate moment of a woman bathing. As Western influence grew in the East, woodblock designers incorporated Western perspective into their prints alongside, or replacing the bird's-eye perspective, distorting the pictorial plane much like in Arsenault's painting.[15] Arsenault does not make the horizon line distinctly visible. It is assumed to be above the halfway point of the painting, in contrast to Western conventions, where the horizon line is seen below the center of the work with a clear vanishing point. This radical reimagining of perspective in both Arsenault's and Bonnard's works suggests more experimental interpretations of narrative, emotion, and meaning.

THE FAUVES: UNNATURAL COLOR AND FORM

The Nabis closely preceded the Fauvists, a similar group of French artists who further experimented with color and form.[16] In tandem with the Nabis, the Fauves used color to convey emotion, and their depictions of figures are based in feeling rather than representation.[17] In both movements, bodies are abstracted and represented by seemingly disparate strokes of color, rather than the naturalistic and illusionistic forms seen in academic history paintings. This reduction of figures to divided colors and shapes, an abstraction of forms that does not completely obscure their presence, mirrors the artists' experimentation with perspective to rebel against the Academy's pictorial conventions. Fauvist ideals can be seen in Bonnard's and Arsenault's works, as both artists use non-natural, or non-local, colors in their compositions and offer more abstract representations of real-life objects, rather than simulate the world around them.[18] For example, Arsenault portrays the faces in the composition of *Within Crystal Range* with visible green and yellow brushstrokes and similarly abstracts his figures, as seen in the sharp corners and flat color of the woman's skirt featured in *Within Crystal Range*, as well as the surprisingly acid green lines that define the figure's arms and torso. These lines are not naturalistic, but the clearly defined contours signify content and nominally identify the gender and historical time period of the figure.

The distorted presentation of the landscape as viewed in Arsenault and Bonnard's works can be seen as disrupting the conventional idea of "pictorial stability," as articulated by art historian Alistair Wright in his description of Fauve artist Matisse's rejection of linear perspective.[19] Wright explains, "The idea of the architectural, and

of resistance to it, provides a useful vocabulary for the way in which *Le Bonheur de Vivre* undermines the stability of the pictorial field. *Le Bonheur de Vivre*, it seems fair to say, stands against the "architectural" order of academic painting."[20] In the lower right corner of Arsenault's *Within Crystal Range*, an outlined, three-dimensional rectangle can be understood to depict a printer which seems to hover in the foreground of the painting and disrupts the space and scale established by the central figures. Above and slightly to the right of the printer is a somewhat antiquated dial scale with a misshapen object placed on top, appearing to almost float in the composition. Arsenault stated that the object being weighed could be a depiction of a carved rock or marble, but that he intended for it to invoke the fragmentation of the landscape.[21] This fragmentation further distorts the sense of perspective in the painting by suggesting the movement of a mountainous landscape (commonly seen in the background of works) to the foreground of the painting where it appears in a shrunken state.

Analogously with Arsenault's work, Fauvist Matisse used brightly colored lines, rather than shading, to create the figures in his painting *Bonheur de Vivre*.[22] Wright invokes the writings of Post-Impressionist painter Paul Signac (1863–1935) to describe the artist's style in terms that could also be used to describe *Within Crystal Range*: "Matisse turned to flatter areas of color and an increased role for line and contour," eliciting Signac's famous condemnation: "On a canvas of 2.50 meters he has surrounded strange silhouettes with a line as thick as your thumb. Then he has covered the whole thing with flat, smooth colors which, although pure, give you nausea…."[23] While Arsenault's work might not have the same physical effect, the pure colors and thick lines Signac refers to can be found in Arsenault's own rejection of academic realism.[24]

Additionally, Arsenault's use of color is reminiscent of Matisse's approach to depicting landscape and his interest in understanding nature as it was felt, and not as it was seen.[25] Matisse places color opposite from its counterpart to draw the eye in a circular motion around the canvas.[26] For Matisse, landscape was "decorative," which can be defined as a highly stylistic and patterned approach to how shapes and volumes are arranged on flat surface. For example, the teal color that surrounds the couple embracing in the lower right corner is used also in the tree trunk at the left, is scattered across the foliage of the trees, and illuminates the two women at the center of the frame. This circulation of a repeating color appears in a similar manner in Arsenault's painting with the bright sky-blue color seen across the underpainting of the bottom third of the painting, which repeats as a highlight in the foliage of the trees in the upper left and again striped across the woman's jacket.

All three artists—Arsenault, Bonnard, and Matisse—depict figures in a stylistically unique manner, as each rejects traditional academic painting's presentation of the human figure. As Wright states in reference to Matisse's *Bonheur de Vivre*, "Such an attack on the body was… an integral part of any resistance to the architectural. The perfected human figure was the archetype of architectural order. 'The human and architectural orders make common cause, the latter being only the development of the former.'"[27] Matisse's and Bonnard's deconstruction of the human figure resisted the Academy's conventions for depicting idealized bodies.[28] Matisse painted using models, depicting them as they were in the moment in which they were modeling. In the academic painting tradition, the model would have simply been used to create a likeness to a figure of importance, preferably an idealized version. Matisse allows the human form to remain individualized according to his vision of a scene, but he masks the faces of his figures, emphasizing his interest in a more abstract interpretation of emotion and expression. Each figure in *Bonheur de Vivre* is uniquely their own, not meant to invoke the likeness of a prominent person.[29] Unlike the Impressionists, he did not paint life as he witnessed it; the scenes he depicted were recollections of moments he experienced, and he often used his wife Marthe as a muse for his female figures. By focusing on the evocation of a personal memory rather than the physical description of an actual event, Matisse was free to distort bodies according to his vision, often using thick outline and blocks of color.[30] Arsenault's own rejection of art-historical conventions surrounding representation of the natural world can be seen in his use of pre-existing images as reference, rather than physical models. The couple depicted in Arsenault's painting is from an image he saved in his own collection. Arsenault mines pictures and photographs such as this—from advertisements, record covers, auction websites, and clothing catalogues, among other places—as a first step in the artistic process he uses for creating works like *Within Crystal Range*. After selecting the images, Arsenault creates a collage using Photoshop software. He then manipulates the collage digitally, often changing the scale and shape of objects, until arriving at a composition that he will use as a prototype for a painting.[31] By using a distorted image of the human figure in his final painting, Arsenault separates the figure from its original context, an artistic decision similar to Matisse's replacement of idealized figures of known personalities in favor of unknown figures missing identifying characteristics.

In her essay about Bonnard, art historian Karen Wilkin writes, "Even though his densely woven webs of color seem about to unravel into their component touches and hues under the pressure of scrutiny, (the subjects) call up such specific times of the day, such particular qualities of light, and such familiar emotional temperatures that you are

completely persuaded of the reality of their themes."[32] Though written about Bonnard, Wilkin's writing applies beautifully to Arsenault's painting *Within Crystal Range*. While Arsenault's use of bold outline, dynamic color, distorted landscape, and contorted figuration creates a chaotic interplay of disorder and structure, the threads of his subject matter—memory, time, narrative, ephemera—ring true in emotional expression. An analysis of Arsenault's work through the lens of modern art movements such as that of the Nabis and Fauvism reveals the formal choices that contribute to his vision of life experienced in the present day.

ENDNOTES

1 Todd Arsenault, interview with author, October 30, 2024.

2 George L. Mauner, *The Nabis, Their History and Their Art, 1888-1896* (Garland, 1978), 199.

3 Mauner, *The Nabis*, 23.

4 Todd Arsenault, interview with the author, September 13, 2024.

5 Yve-Alain Bois and Greg Sims, "On Matisse: The Blinding: For Leo Steinberg," *October* 68 (1994): 67, https://doi.org/10.2307/778697.

6 Albert Kostenevich, *The Nabis,* 2nd ed. (Parkstone International, 2012), 13.

7 Rachel Berenson Perry details the importance of painting *en plein air* in "The Future of Plein Air Painting," *Painting Indiana: III: Heritage of Place* (Indiana University Press: 2013), http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt16gzgp0.12.

8 Karen Wilkin, "Radical Bonnard," *The Hudson Review* 51, no.2 (1998): 393-400, https://doi.org/10.2307/3853075.

9 Albert Kostenevich, *Bonnard and the Nabis* (Parkstone International, 2012), 12.

10 Kostenevich, *The Nabis*, 44.

11 Mauner, *The Nabis*, 23.

12 Patricia Mainardi discusses Academy Standards in relation to the Impressionism Salon of 1874 in "The Double Exhibition in Nineteenth-Century France," *Art Journal* 48, no.1 (1989): 23-28, https://doi.org/10.2307/776915.

13 Kostenevich, *The Nabis*, 89.

14 Hayakawa Monta, "Uses of Shunga and *Ukiyoe-e* in the Tokugawa Period," in *The Tokugawa World*, ed. Gary P. Leupp and De-min Tao (Routledge, 2021), 656.

15 Kostenevich, *Bonnard and the Nabis*, 26.

16 Charles W. Millard, "Fauvism," *The Hudson Review* 29, no.4 (1976): 576, https://doi.org/10.2307/3850497.

17 Millard, "Fauvism," 577.

18 Millard, "Fauvism," 577.

19 Alastair Wright, "Arche-Tectures: Matisse and the End of (Art) History," *October* 84 (1998): 45-63, https://doi.org/10.2307/779208.

20 Wright, "Arche-Tectures," 49.

21 Arsenault, interview with the author, October 30, 2024.

22 Pierre Schneider, *Matisse* (Rizzoli: 1984), 242.

23 Wright, "Arche-Tectures," 45.

24 Schneider, *Matisse*, 242.

25 Roger Harold Benjamin, "The Decorative Landscape, Fauvism, and the Arabesque of Observation," *The Art Bulletin* 75, no. 2 (1993): 299, https://doi.org/10.2307/3045950.

26 Bois and Sims, "On Matisse," 64.

27 Wright, "Arche-Tectures," 49.

28 Wright, "Arche-Tectures," 49.

29 James D. Herbert, *Fauve Painting: The Making of Cultural Politics* (Yale University Press, 1992), 71.

30 Wilkin, "Radical Bonnard," 395.

31 Todd Arsenault, interview with the author, September 13, 2024.

32 Wilkin, "Radical Bonnard," 395.

ANDY BALE

TOP TO BOTTOM:

ANDY BALE
Quiraing Walk, *Isle of Skye*, *Scotland*, 2016, pigment print on archival bamboo paper, 5.5 x 16 in.

ANDY BALE
Somewhere among the Grasses, *Scotland*, 2016, pigment print on archival bamboo paper, 5.5 x 16 in.

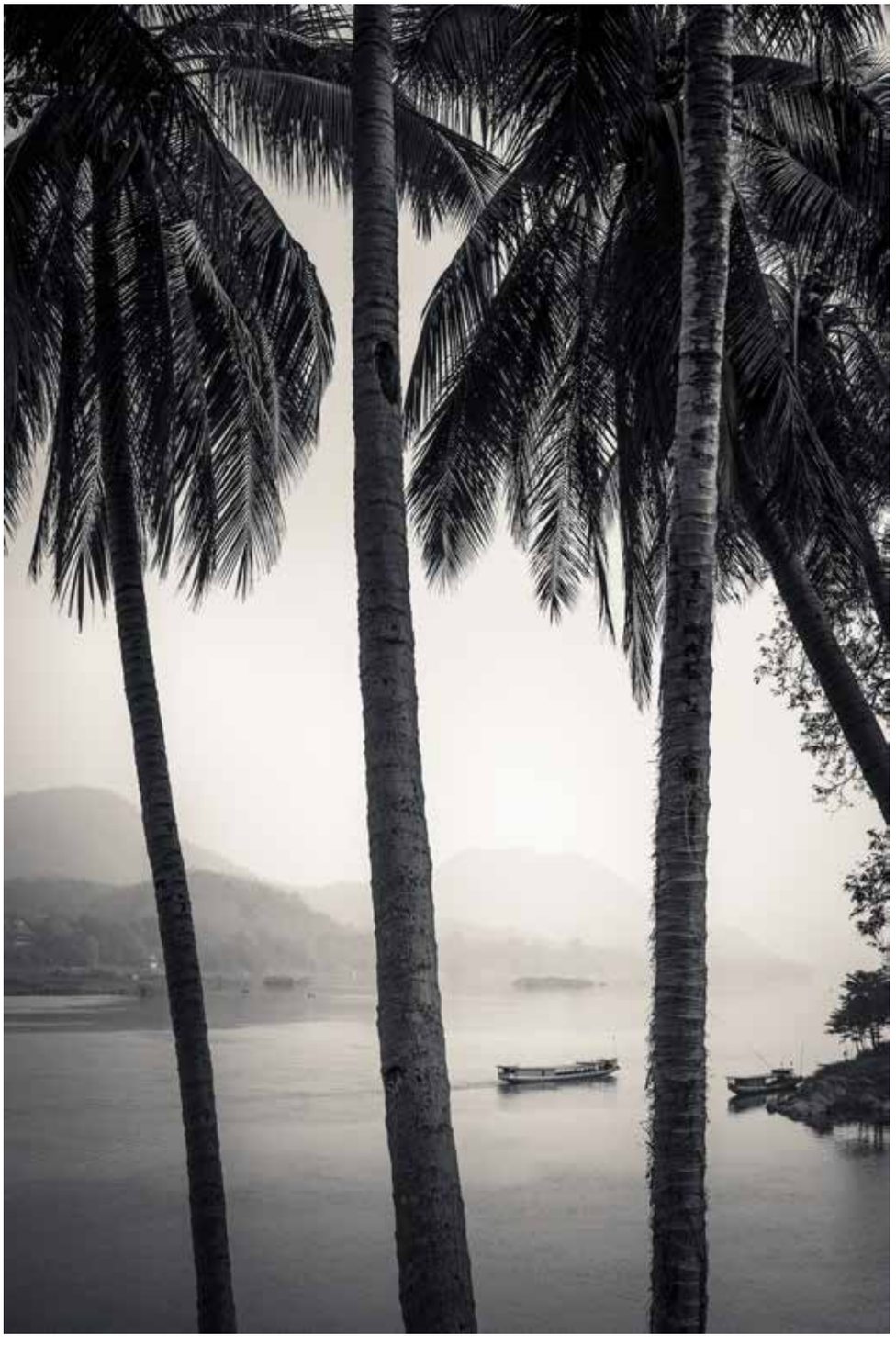
TOP TO BOTTOM:

ANDY BALE
Ice Fishermen, Blue Mesa Reservoir, CO, 2017. pigment print on archival bamboo paper, 5.5 x 16 in.

ANDY BALE
In Search of O'Sullivan, Inscription Rock, El Morro National Monument, NM, 2017, pigment print on archival bamboo paper, 5.5 x 16 in.

ANDY BALE

Giraffes on the Horizon, Serengeti National Park, Tanzania, 2016, pigment print on archival bamboo paper, 9 x 13.5 in.



ANDY BALE

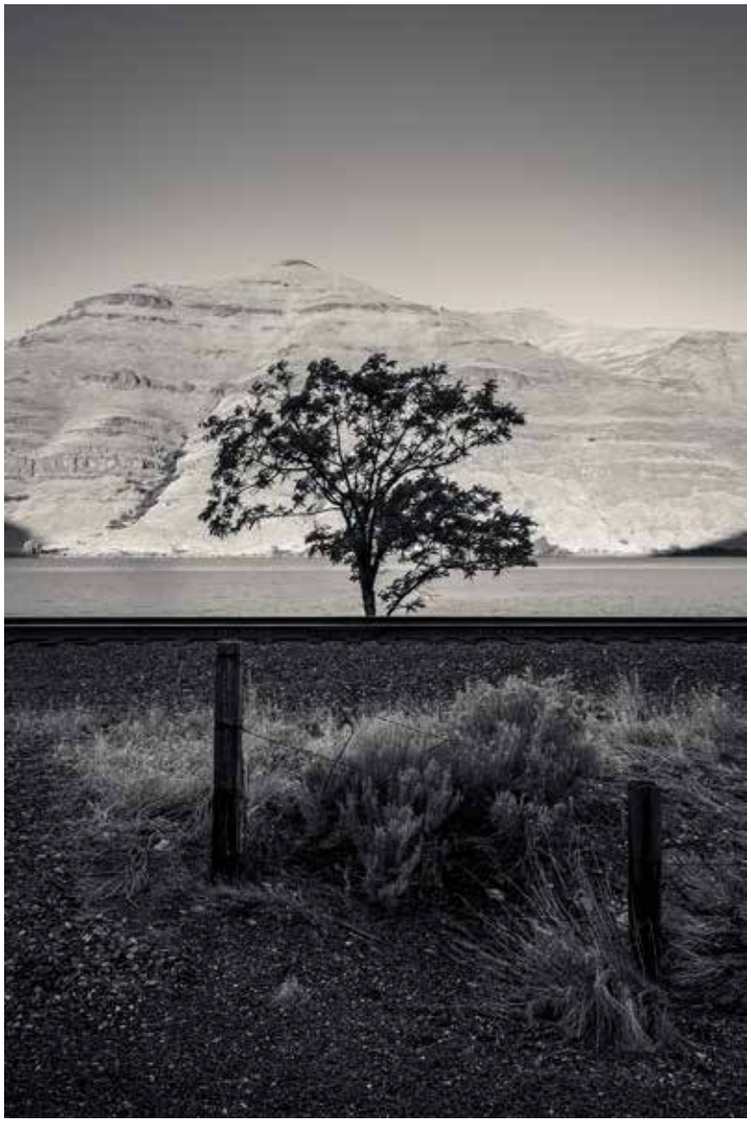
Mekong and Nam Khan Rivers, *Luang Prabang*, *Laos*, 2023, pigment print on archival bamboo paper, 9 x 13.5 in.

ANDY BALE
Goosenecks of the San Juan, *Gooseneck State Park*, *Mexican Hat*, *UT*, 2017, pigment print on archival bamboo paper, 13.5 x 9 in.

ANDY BALE
Glen Canyon Dam, *Paige*, *AZ*, 2017, pigment print on archival bamboo paper, 13.5 x 9 in.

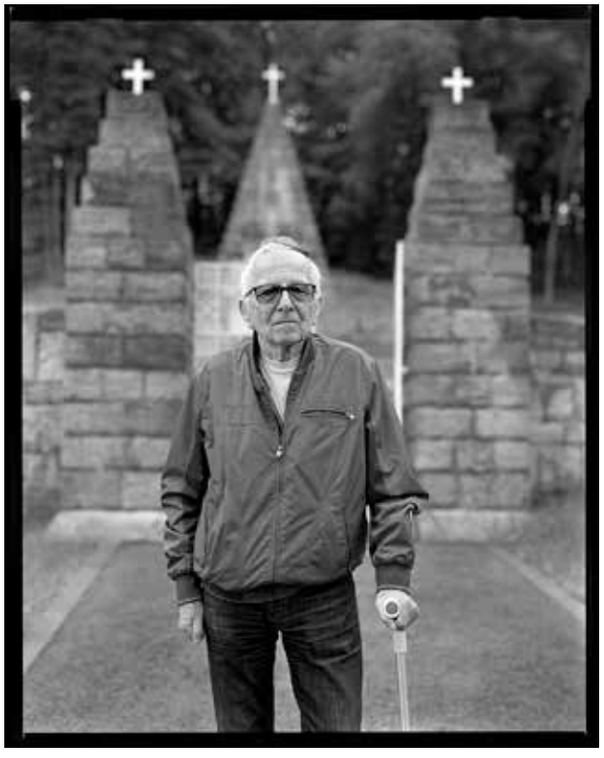
ANDY BALE
Plateau Viewpoint, *UT-313*, *UT*, 2017, pigment print on archival bamboo paper, 13.5 x 9 in.

ANDY BALE
Little Colorado River Gorge, *Navajo Nation*, *AZ*, 2017, pigment print on archival bamboo paper, 13.5 x 9 in.



ANDY BALE
Snake River, Wawawai Road, WA, 2022, pigment print on archival bamboo paper. 9 x 13.5 in.

ANDY BALE
Serengeti Road, Serengeti National Park, Tanzania, 2016, pigment print on archival bamboo paper, 13.5 x 9 in.



ARRIVALS

TOP ROW, L–R

ANDY BALE and JON COX
Juraj, Jewish Diaspora, Monument in Kremnička, Slovakia, 2023, pigment print on archival paper, 8 x 10 in.

ANDY BALE and JON COX
Helen and Chi-Chi, Nigerian Diaspora and Irish, Galway, Ireland, 2024

BOTTOM ROW, L–R

ANDY BALE and JON COX
Vitalii and Luliia, Ukrainian Diaspora, Galway, Ireland, 2024

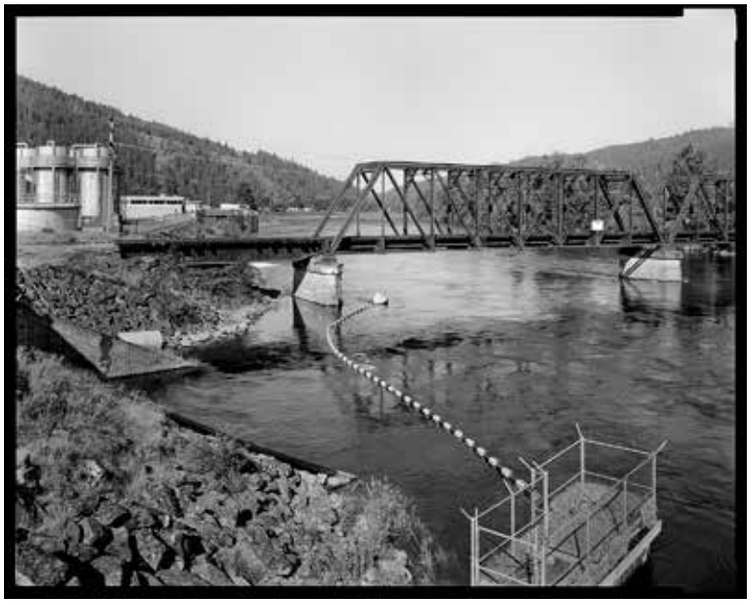
ANDY BALE and JON COX
Marticia, Ukrainian Diaspora, Galway, Ireland, 2024

ANDY BALE and JON COX

Julia and Alina, Ukrainian Diaspora, Martin, Slovakia, 2023, pigment print on archival paper, 8 x 10 in.

ANDY BALE and JON COX
Dworshak Dam from Old ID 7, Ahsahka, ID, 2022

ANDY BALE and JON COX
Battle of White Bird Hill, White Bird, ID, 2022



ANDY BALE and JON COX
Dworshak Dam Fish Hatchery from Old Idaho Route 7, Ahsahka, ID, 2022

ANDY BALE and JON COX
Heart of the Monster, Nez Perce National Historic Park, ID, 2022

ANDY BALE and JON COX
Tai, Nez Perce Diaspora, Boise ID, 2019,

ANDY BALE and JON COX
Claire, Shoshone Diaspora, Duck Valley Indian Reservation, UT, 2019

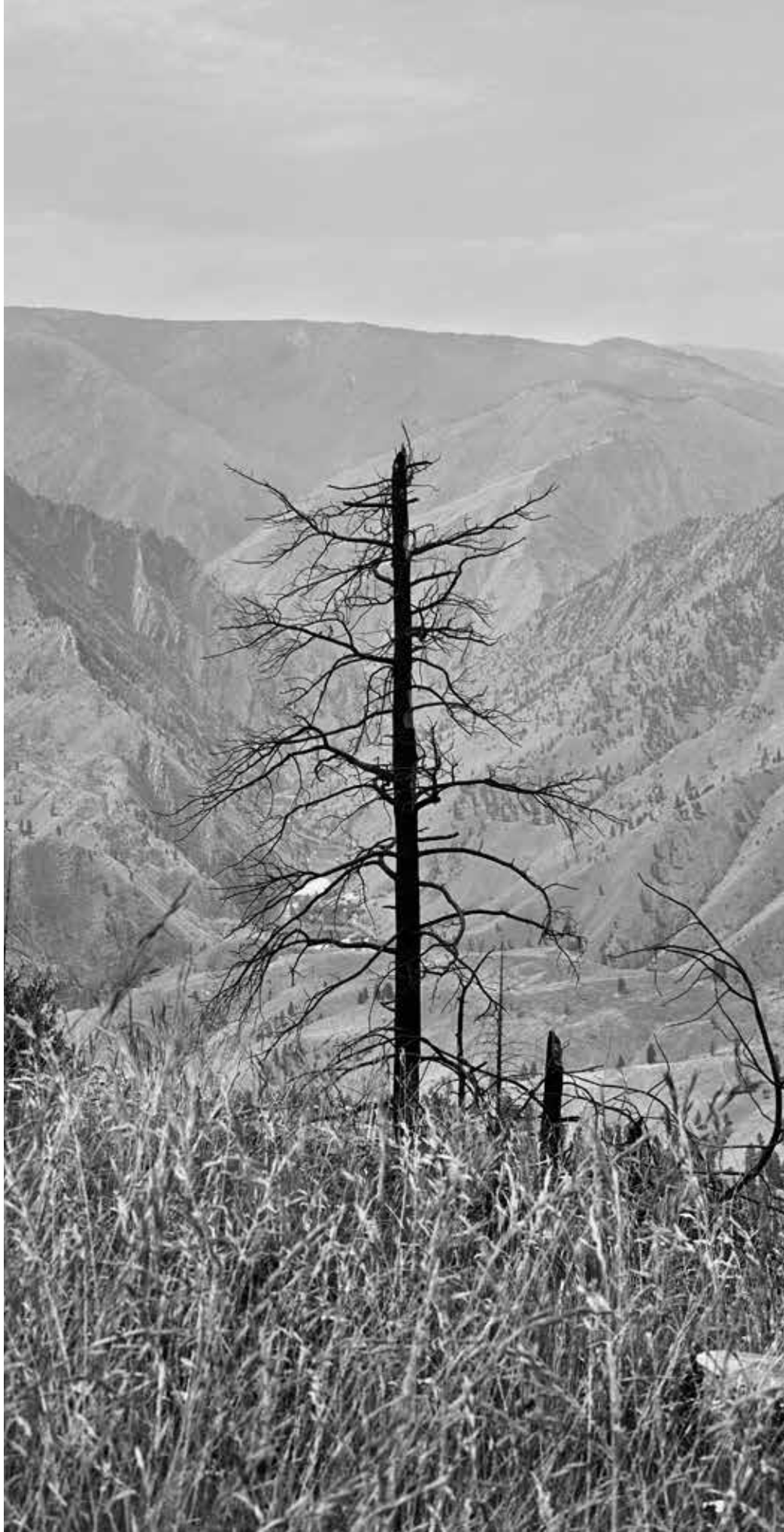
ANDY BALE and JON COX
Knight, Cambodian Diaspora, Banská Bystrica, Slovakia, 2023

ANDY BALE and JON COX
Hadija and Zahara, Somalian Diaspora, Boise, Idaho, 2019

ANDY BALE and JON COX
Mia, Japanese Diaspora, Minidoka Interment Camp, Jerome, ID, 2019

ANDY BALE and JON COX
Majka, Jaro and Karin, Roma Diaspora, Banská Bystrica, Slovakia, 2023

ANDY BALE and JON COX
Geneci and Gerry, Brazilian Diaspora and Irish, Galway, Ireland, 2024



MOLLY CICCO

WHO REALLY OWNS THE LAND: AN EXAMINATION OF INDIGENOUS RIGHTS THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHY

Artists Andy Bale and Jon Cox document various people, cultures, and landscapes in Idaho, Slovakia, Kenya, and Ireland in their collaborative project entitled *Arrivals: What's Left Behind, What Lies Ahead*. The project began in Boise, Idaho in 2019, where they photographed various parts of the Idaho scenery and the people who live there. During their time in Idaho, Bale and Cox interviewed and photographed residents with diverse heritages, including Indigenous communities, Japanese immigrants, and Basque immigrants. Bale and Cox tried to spend at least an hour with every sitter, interviewing them while setting up their portraits.[1] If time became an issue, interviews were completed later by email and/or video. These interviews accompany the individuals' portraits, both in gallery texts and on the *Arrivals* website.[2]

Bale and Cox chose to include landscape photographs in the project in order to create a dialogue, connecting the stories of people with the land they live on.[3] For the artists, a shot had to be visually interesting, while also having a tangible connection to the stories they had collected from their sitters, with a particular focus on connections with the Indigenous communities in the area.[4] According to Bale, the landscapes highlight the "weird dynamic of what they represent and what they have become."[5] Through the *Arrivals* project, Bale and Cox challenge the colonialist narrative surrounding land ownership and usage in the American West, bringing to light the stories of Indigenous peoples, such as the Nez Perce and Shoshone, who live and work on their native lands. Land is not neutral, and neither are the photographs that document it.

Of the twelve photos in the series labeled "The Land" in the *Arrivals* project, only one does not include any obvious indication of human presence: *Forest Fire* (fig. 1) features a single blackened tree in the center of the image. The reason for the fire that burned the tree is unknown, the causes ranging from a possible lightning strike to a neglectful camper. A mountain range extends into the background,

(fig. 1) *Forest Fire, NF-221, Outside of Riggins, ID*, 2022, pigment print on archival paper, 8 x 10 in. (20.3 x 25.4 cm)

(fig. 2) Carleton Watkins (American, 1829–1916), *Yosemite Valley from the Best General View*, 1866, albumen silver print, 16.13 x 20.56 in. (41 x 52.2 cm.), J. Paul Getty Museum

LEFT: Manuel Alvarez Bravo (Mexican, 1902–2002), *Paisaje Chamula* (detail), 1979, Gelatin silver print on paper, 8 x 10 in (20.32 x 25.4 cm), The Trout Gallery, Gift of Lawrence and Carol Zicklin, 1986.1.2.13

RIGHT: *Forest Fire, NF-221, Outside of Riggins, ID* (detail), 2022, pigment print on archival paper, 8 x 10 in. (20.3 x 25.4 cm)

framing the tree's remains in a valley. The foreground is covered by tall grasses waving in the wind, acting as a compositional foil to the darker mountains and tree. The photograph was taken on a relatively clear, bright day, as evidenced by the wispy clouds drifting across the sky. By choosing to focus on the burnt tree, Bale and Cox captured the fragility of nature and the effect that humans have on the environment. Despite the absence of figures in the landscape, the destruction wrought by a forest fire indicates that humans had been there, and possibly even were the source of the fire. The land itself, however, is recovering from the tragedy, as seen in the flowering bush to the left of the charred tree. The photograph reflects the damage that humanity can cause, while highlighting the importance of rebirth and new beginnings.

LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE WEST

Bale and Cox acknowledge that nineteenth-century American survey photography is an important influence on their work.[6] Photographers, such as Timothy O'Sullivan (1840–1882) and William Henry Jackson (1843–1942), accompanied geologists, topographers, and botanists on expeditions in the 1870s, funded by the government to document newly acquired territories in the West. Their goal was to collect information about railway routes and mining prospects, two industries that would lead to the occupation and exploitation of the land. They also sought to gather the locations of Indigenous communities in the area in order to select sites for military installations, and as part of larger national efforts to forcibly remove Indigenous people from their land, whether through displacement or genocide.[7] Beginning in the 1860s, photographers captured the stunning vistas that now make up several national parks, such as Yosemite, which President Abraham Lincoln designated as a national park in 1864. Lincoln's legislation later led to the creation of the National Parks Service in 1916.[8] While the photographs prompted western travel and recreation among many white viewers, the distribution of these images in albums and stereoscopic cards brought the West to life in the imaginations of people living on the East Coast.[9] The non-Native photographers who documented the West continually diminished the presence of Native Americans, reinforcing the myth of Indigenous peoples as "vanishing", often through a pictorial focus on their ancient dwellings instead of visual signs of their present ways of life.[10]

While Bale and Cox do not share the expansionist ideologies of their predecessors, *Forest Fire* is clearly inspired by sublime nineteenth-century compositions. For example, a photograph by Carleton Watkins, specifically his *Yosemite Valley from the Best General View* (fig. 2), depicts a tall, slender pine tree stretching up along the entire height of the photograph. Sheer cliffs cut through the background, with forested mountains bracketing the trunk of the tree. The composition of *Forest Fire* is remarkably similar, despite the two centuries and six hundred miles that separate the two photographs. Yet, the differences are just as notable. Watkins's photo gives the impression of the vastness of the landscape, a panoramic view that underscores the claims that were being made on the landscape by surveyors, developers, and the government. In contrast, the tree in *Forest Fire* is more embedded within the landscape, hidden behind the grasses and ducking below the mountain ridges. The viewer of both photographs is presented with a majestic landscape, but Bale and Cox's composition is more balanced featuring dense foreground grasses opposite expansive mountains. Where humanity is marveling at nature's creation in *Yosemite Valley from the Best General View*, it controls the fate of the environment in *Forest Fire*.

Bale and Cox were also inspired by the compositions of Timothy O'Sullivan, a contemporary of Watkins, who participated in several expeditions to survey the West. His first venture was under Clarence King for the United States Geological Exploration of the Fortieth Parallel, between 1867 and 1869.[11] He returned to the West under the direction of Lieutenant George M. Wheeler as a member of the Geographical and Geological Surveys West of the One Hundredth Meridian from 1871 to 1874.[12] It is during this later assignment that he took *Cooley's Park, Sierra Blanca, Arizona* (fig. 3). Like Watkins' photograph, this landscape features a tree rising before a mountainous background. However, the viewer is immersed in the scene, with the base of the tree visible in the image. Additionally, the presence of humans is referenced just beyond the tree line, in the form of cut

(fig. 3) Timothy H. O'Sullivan (American, 1840–1882), *Cooley's Park, Sierra Blanca Range, Arizona*, 1873, Albumen silver print, 7.94 x 10.81 in. (20.2 x 27.5 cm.), J. Paul Getty Museum

lumber, which sits in a clearing. Bale and Cox's photographs draw heavily on this precedent, often incorporating traces of human interference in their images. In the case of *Forest Fire*, humans are not just the likely cause of the fire, but are understood, in light of the Anthropocene, to have a significant negative impact on the environment.

Aware of more recent ecocritical ideas about "pristine" western landscapes, Bale and Cox also cite photographers belonging to the New Topographics movement as a major influence on their works. In the 1960s and 1970s, a new generation of artists were inspired by Watkins, O'Sullivan, and other nineteenth-century American photographers. Rather than simply continuing to present landscapes as "untouched," these younger photographers focused on the alterations people had made to the idealized landscapes of the nineteenth century, particularly through suburban development.[13] The 1975 exhibition *New Topographics: Photographs of a Man-Altered Landscape* at the George Eastman House International Museum of Photography and Film in Rochester, New York, presented the works of ten photographers who focused on seemingly banal subjects, such as tract houses and gas stations.[14] The photographs included in the show build on the legacy of survey photographers by re-documenting the American West, but they also capture the tension between aesthetic ideals and the desire to accurately document present landscapes. In the catalog to the show, curator William Jenkins writes, "The pictures were stripped of any artistic frills and reduced to an essentially topographic state, conveying substantial amounts of visual information but eschewing entirely the aspects of beauty, emotion and opinion."[15] Bale and Cox continue this interest in reexamining the notion of the sublime landscape in their photographs of Idaho, but with the central aim of including the presence of Native Americans in the process. In the majority of their landscape photographs, the sublime—an aestheticized, romanticized view—is interrupted by man-made structures, such as park benches or a dam. This inclusion of banal, suburban and urban markers of development that are present across America casts a critical eye on changes to the landscape and the country's fraught history of expansion and exploitation.

REPRESENTATION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN PHOTOGRAPHY

Arrivals includes a selection of compelling landscapes, but the larger focus of the project is on the people who live on the land, those who have migrated to the area and who are members of displaced Native American communities. The Native Americans of Idaho include the Shoshone-Bannock, Nez Perce, Shoshone-Paiute, Coeur d'Alene, and Kootenai Tribe of Idaho. Collected in *Arrivals* are the portraits and stories of *Claire* (fig. 4) and *Tai* (fig. 5). In her interview with Bale and

(fig. 4) Andy Bale and Jon Cox, *Claire*, 2019, archival digital print

(fig. 5) Andy Bale and Jon Cox, *Tai*, 2019, archival digital print

Cox, Claire, a member of the Shoshone-Paiute at the Duck Valley Indian Reservation, discussed the movement of her people to the Owyhee Nevada and Owyhee Idaho reservation lands, split across each state. In her interview, Claire stated that the Shoshone, Western Shoshone, and Northern Paiute were placed on the reservation because the Europeans "began to take over the land and decide what they were going to do, because they didn't want the Indians to

(fig. 6) Timothy H. O'Sullivan (1840–1882), *People of the Navajo Nation*, 1873, Albumen silver print, 10. 75 x 7.94 in. (27.3 x 20.2 cm.), J. Paul Getty Museum

live there. They wanted the land."[16] Tai, a member of the Nez Perce, reinforced Claire's point. During her interview, Tai explained that Native Americans are refugees, that "we were displaced on our own land and we still feel the intergenerational trauma of that."[17] She went on, stating "We are still fighting the systems that were put in place to keep us dehumanized, to keep us sterilized as a people, to keep us dispossessed of our land, to keep us disenfranchised from voting in this political system that oppresses us."[18] Tai also discussed the balance between land and people in a TEDx talk she gave in Boise, Idaho. According to Nez Perce legend, humanity was brought into being by the Creator and given gifts from the animals that preceded the creation of people. In return, humans had to take care of the land, preserving the balance.[19] She pointed out that people have not held up their end of the bargain, polluting the land and desecrating Indigenous sacred sites.

Both Claire and Tai reference land ownership and the conflict between Indigenous communities and white settlers in their stories. They each reflect on how the history of westward expansion occurred in the early nineteenth century, when white American settlers moved across the continental United States to claim Indigenous land through conquest and genocide. These settlers felt justified in their actions due to the concept, prevalent at the time, of Manifest Destiny. This concept held that white European settlers were divinely ordained to settle the lands of North America, bringing "civilization"and "order" to what was perceived as "barbarian chaos." Professor of History Robert Johannsen writes that Manifest Destiny, "became and has remained virtually synonymous with territorial expansion."[20] The belief in Manifest Destiny led to the death and forced relocation of thousands of Indigenous Americans from their tribal lands. By telling their stories, both through their own efforts and through projects such as *Arrivals*, Claire and Tai have reinserted themselves and their communities into the history of the West.

In the nineteenth century, the depiction of the land as uninhabited and thus available to settlers was more important than the inclusion of Native Americans, as it supported the narrative that the land rightfully belonged to the newly arrived settlers.[21] Still, the presence of Native Americans were a fact of life for settlers, and visual documentation of their existence. O'Sullivan, for instance, photographed the Indigenous peoples he encountered while surveying the West. A photograph, entitled *People of the Navajo Nation* (fig. 6), depicts four Navajo (Diné) people seated around a structure constructed from sticks and fabric. O'Sullivan's photograph documents Indigenous Americans in their tribal lands at a time where they were being forcibly removed by white settlers. The portraits and interviews of Claire and Tai provide an counterpoint to these historical photographs, as they give a powerful contemporary voice to discuss their heritage and the injustices their communities have suffered.

MANUEL ALVAREZ BRAVO AND PAISAJE CHAMULA

Bale and Cox's project is rooted in a deep interest in the connections between land and its inhabitants. The places they chose to document are closely linked with the history of Indigenous peoples, a conversation about landscape photography and indigeneity. Twentieth-century Mexican photographer Manuel Alvarez Bravo also is drawn to Indigenous cultures and identities in his work. Alvarez Bravo grew up in Mexico City, near the Aztec ruins of Montezuma's pyramid, which has since become a public square known as *El Zócalo* and had a special connection to his nation's history and culture.[22] Growing up

(fig. 7) Manuel Alvarez Bravo (Mexican, 1902–2002), *Paisaje Chamula*, 1979, Gelatin silver print on paper, 8 x 10 in (20.32 x 25.4 cm), The Trout Gallery, Gift of Lawrence and Carol Zicklin, 1986.1.2.13

near this site during the Mexican Revolution exposed Alvarez Bravo to historical, political, and cultural questions of Mexican identity from a young age. His later association with Mexican muralists such as Diego Rivera only strengthened his commitment to creating art embraced a more nuanced definition of Mexicanness and the varied ways that geographical sites revealed aspects of Indigenous Mexican cultures. In an interview with author Frederick Kaufman, Alvarez Bravo explained, "I was born in Mexico, have lived in Mexico, have gone outside Mexico, and have missed my country. I have returned to my country and I am content with my country: good, bad—and worse than bad—still, I am enchanted by my country."[23] His photographs focus on creating order from disorder, inspired by both the chaos of his youth and the complexities of Mexican history, both before and after the arrival of Spanish conquistadors.[24] Alvarez Bravo stated that "the question of art is always a question of culture,"as his photographs intertwine the Indigenous history of the land with the modern Mexico he grew up in.[25] In his landscapes, he includes the people living and working the land, underscoring the relationship between the two. For Alvarez Bravo, the legacy of the people is as equally important as the land itself.[26] Bale and Cox, along with Alvarez Bravo, reflect on their respective countries' history of colonialism in relation to the Indigenous communities that continue to inhabit the land. Through their photographs, they have emphasized the contributions of these communities and cultures.

Bale and Cox did not include people in their landscape photographs of Idaho, whereas the Tzotzil Mayan people of Mexico are the focus of

(fig. 8) Manuel Alvarez Bravo (Mexican, 1902–2002), *Cruce de Chalma*, 1979, gelatin silver print on paper, 10 x 8 in (25.4 x 20.32 cm), The Trout Gallery Gift of Lawrence and Carol Zicklin, 1986.1.2.11

a c. 1970 photograph by Alvarez Bravo. Both the Indigenous peoples of Idaho and the Tzotzil Mayan people suffered significant land losses due to colonialism. Bravo Alvarez captures scattered arrangements of people walking in the countryside of San Juan Chamula in his photograph *Paisaje Chamula* (fig. 7). The region of Chamula has the largest population of Tzotil Mayan people in Mexico, creating a close relationship between its landscape and the Indigenous history of Mexico. The Tzotzil Mayans have reclaimed aspects of their culture from pre-Hispanic conquest, including the church in the center of Chamula. The Tzotzil religion is a syncretic blend of traditional Mayan and Catholic practices as well as more recent additions, however only the exterior of the church references the Catholic faith.[27] Photographs of the interior are not allowed, but descriptions

(fig. 9) Andy Bale and Jon Cox, *The Monster*, 2022, archival digital print

reference a carpet of pine needles and hundreds of candles lighting the space, with statues of saints available for prayers.[28]Attempts by the Mexican government to incorporate the Tzotzil Mayans and other Indigenous groups through centers opened by the Insituto Nacional Indigenista (National Indigenist Institute) were rebuffed by local Indigenous communities, suggesting a continued desire for independence from mainstream Mexican culture.[29]

In his photograph, Alvarez Bravo depicts forested mountains that rise in the background, partially hidden by clouds. Taken from a distance, the photograph places the viewer in a raised position above the subjects and yet far away. The terrain in the foreground is comprised of small plateaus framed by dirt roads, well-worn footpaths winding between them. Travelers walk along those paths, moving in two small groups visible along the road in the foreground and scattered across paths and roads as small indiscriminate forms elsewhere in the photograph. Alvarez Bravo makes it difficult to "know" these people, as they appear veiled or heavily clothed, often with their backs to the viewer. In the center of the composition a large cross-like form stands, perhaps suggesting the presence of Tzotil religion, but not easily deciphered so as to be recognizeable. It is similar in appearance to another cross documented by Bravo in *Cruce de Chalma* (fig. 8), a decorated shrine in Chalma, Mexico. Alvarez Bravo is known for images that resist easy associations between location and culture. In *Paisaje Chamula*, Alvarez Bravo highlights the continuing presence of Indigenous cultures on lands in Mexico and includes markers such as roads and automobile tracks that demonstrate the presence of modern technologies and land destruction. At the same time, the landscape does not present viewers with details that might allow them to interpret Indigenous culture or form an idea of a "type" of people.

While Indigenous religious symbols are not easily seen in Alvarez Bravo's photograph, Bale and Cox photographed a religious site in Idaho in 2022. *The Monster* (fig. 9) features a grassy mound known as the Heart of the Monster, to the left of the frame, encircled by a barely visible fence. Two park benches are seen in the foreground, connected by a paved walkway to each other and to the Heart of the Monster. The physical manifestation of the Nez Perce creation story, the Heart of the Monster is located in Kamiah, Idaho; the heart is, the heart is a rocky mass, covered in short grass and dotted with small bushes. Legend tells of the creation of the Nez Perce tribe, spurred by the heroics of Iceye'ye, the coyote. One day, Iceye'ye was traveling upstream when a magpie informed him that a "big swallowing monster had come through the Kamiah Valley and had swallowed up everything."[30] Deciding he had to do something, Iceye'ye made himself appetizing for the monster to swallow, defeating the monster from within by cutting up its heart. With his friends and family free, Iceye'ye washed his hands in the Clearwater River, creating the Nez Perce people.[31]

The Monster is framed by park benches and a paved walkway, becoming a roadside attraction while still retaining its cultural significance. The equal division of emphasis on the banality of the manmade structures and the sanctity of the site emphasizes its transformation from a religious location to a stop for tourists. This composition underscores the influence the New Topographics had on Bale and Cox. Indeed, New Topographics photographer Frank Gohlke features a similar mound behind a stone foundation in his work *Foundations, near Victor, Colorado*). In the image, the town of Victor can be seen in the background, an urban sprawl of buildings rolling along the hills. Both Gohlke and Bale/Cox's photographs blend the natural rock formations with the man-made structures, creating a seamless transition between natural and artificial while forefronting issues of modernization and cultural change.

CONCLUSION

The *Arrivals* project reinforces the idea that land is not neutral through the documentation of Indigenous stories and their associated landscapes. By photographing the Idaho landscape, Bale and Cox open the door for a conversation about ownership and usage of land, particularly stolen tribal lands. By photographing landscapes associated with local Indigenous communities, Bale and Cox are working to center the stories of their portrait sitters within the land. Similarly, Alvarez Bravo used photography to record the surviving

Indigenous presence in Mexico, bringing attention to the Tzotzil Mayan people and their continuing independence. Both Bale and Cox, as well Alvarez Bravo, showcase the persistence of the Indigenous peoples of the United States and Mexico.

Land ownership continues to be a contested topic. Native American communities have protested several proposed construction projects on tribal lands, including the Keystone XL Pipeline in 2008 and more recently the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) in 2016. While the Keystone XL Pipeline has since been killed, Indigenous communities from around the world continue to protest the active DAPL as recently as June 2024.[32] The pipeline protests emphasize the importance of Indigenous voices when discussing land and land ownership. *Arrivals* brings this idea to the forefront by centralizing the stories of the Indigenous peoples in Idaho. Through their photographs, Bale and Cox have created a visual platform for local Indigenous communities to tell their stories and bring attention to their shared history with the land.

ENDNOTES

1 Andy Bale in discussion with author, November 2024.

2 "Collaborative Work," Andrew S. Bale, https://www.balephoto.com/collaborative-work.

3 Bale in discussion with author, October 2024.

4 Bale in discussion with author, October 2024.

5 Bale in discussion with author, October 2024.

6 Bale in discussion with author, October 2024.

7 Toby Jurovics, "Framing the West: The Survey Photographs of Timothy H. O'Sullivan," in *Framing the West: The Survey Photographs of Timothy H. O'Sullivan* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian American Art Museum, 2010), 28.

8 Susan Hogan, "A Brief Summary of the History and Development of Photography," in *Photography* (Bingley: Emerald Publishing Limited, 2022), 14.

9 Rachel McLean Sailor, "Introduction," in *Meaningful Places: Landscape Photographers in the Nineteenth-Century American West* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2014), xvii-xviii.

10 Martha Sandweiss, "Photography and the American Future," in *Print the Legend: Photography and the American West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 200-203.

11 Jurovics, 9.

12 Jurovics, 9.

13 Juhan Tolonen, "New Topographics: Withholding Judgment," in *Photography and Landscape*, ed. Alfredo Cramerotti (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago, 2012), 158.

14 Tolonen, 155-157.

15 William Jenkins, *New Topographics: Photographs of a Man-Altered Landscape* (Rochester, New York: International Museum of Photography at George Eastman House, 1975), n.p.

16 "Claire," *Arrivals*, March 2, 2024, https://www.idarrivals.org/stories2/anselme-drcz5-yjsgh.

17 "Tai," *Arrivals,* March 2, 2024, https://www.idarrivals.org/stories2/aya-bp26a-5dng6-cz8za-x3f3t-whj8b-35lr4-a68ec-ss6s9-3n58m-g3gdl.

18 "Tai," *Arrivals.*

19 TEDx Talks, "Indigenous storytelling as a political lens | Tai Simpson | TEDxBoise," YouTube video, 5:50-6:05, May 31, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T5RhEStF_bQ&t=363s.

20 Robert W. Johannsen, "Introduction," in *Manifest Destiny and Empire: American Antebellum Expansionism*, ed. Sam W. Haynes and Christopher Morris (Arlington, Texas: University of Texas, 1997), 3.

21 Jarrod Hore, "Tanga Whakaahua or, the Man Who Makes the Likenesses: Managing Indigenous Presence in Colonial Landscapes," in *Visions of Nature: How Landscape Photography Shaped Settler Colonialism* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2022), 108

22 Frederick Kaufman, "An Essay of Memories," *Aperture Magazine* (Spring 1997) 4.

23 Kaufman, 5, 7.

24 Kaufman, 8.

25 Kaufman, 9.

26 Madelyn Priest, "The Cultural Kaleidoscope of Mexico and Manuel Alvarez Bravo's Photography," in *Through the Lens: Studies in Photography* (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: The Trout Gallery, 2009), 41.

27 Lien Luskin and Jon Luskin, "San Juan Chamula: Step into Another World in Mexico's Most Unique Indigenous Town," *Dang Good Life*, March 1, 2020, https://danggoodlife.com/san-juan-chamula-mexicos-most-unique-indigenous-town/#5_The_Church_that_is_a_Temple.

28 Luskin and Luskin, "San Juan Chamula."

29 Stephen E. Lewis, "Introduction," in *Rethinking Mexican Indigenismo: The INI's Coordinating Center in Highland Chiapas and the Fate of a Utopian Project* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 2018), 1-2.

30 Visit Idaho, "Heart of the Monster: A Nez Perce Creation Story," YouTube video, 2:47, November 7, 2022, https://youtu.be/5x5PwxAKMHM?si=L20AZ7KtS-BE0sDM.

31 Visit Idaho, "Heart of the Monster."

32 "Shutdown DAPL Rally in DC June 11th 2024: Indigenous Environmental Network," *Indigenous Environmental Network | Respecting and Adhering to Indigenous Knowledge and Natural Law*, June 7, 2024, https://www.ienearth.org/shutdown-dapl-rally-in-dc-june-11th-2024/.

LIAM WALTERS

EXPLORING HUMANITY AND STORIES IN PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHS

With their current project, *Arrivals: What's Left Behind, What Lies Ahead*, photographers Andrew Bale and Jon Cox record the stories of refugees, immigrants, and displaced peoples.[1] In Bale and Cox's words, *Arrivals* "seeks to inspire engagement and dialogue within every community" by sharing of these stories.[2] The project is multidisciplinary, with interviews of the people Bale and Cox photographed in Boise, Idaho having been made into a documentary also titled *Arrivals: What's Left Behind, What Lies Ahead*.[3] Bale and Cox's documentation of stories for *Arrivals* reflects their interest in the global political and social issues that have led to displacement and diaspora. Their engagement with these personal stories echoes the work of contemporary artist Hung Liu. Though different in her artistic practice and background, Liu also addressed issues faced by refugees and migrants and documented their stories by reimagining and recontextualizing portrait photographs.

One particularly powerful story is told through the portrait of Palina Louangketh (fig.1). Palina, a refugee from Laos now living in the US, was photographed by Bale and Cox in 2019. She stands in the middle of a bridge slightly to the left of the center of the image. The railings and boards of the structure frame her in the composition. These horizontal and vertical lines meeting perpendicular to one another create a sense of dynamism, which contrasts with the calm pose and dignified expression of Palina. The two railings stretching back behind Palina enhance perspective and sense of depth in the image. Not only is Palina framed by the bridge itself, but the trees on her left and the sky above her line up with the open sides and top of the bridge, enhancing the sense of an organic framework around her.

The symbol of the bridge is an apt connection for Palina's story, and the stories of the other refugees, immigrants, and displaced people documented in *Arrivals*. It represents a deep connection between two places and the journey between them. Palina and her mother were forced to leave Laos when communists from Vietnam invaded in 1975 after her father, an officer in the royal military who was going to be executed, fled to Thailand.[4] Laos is a landlocked nation in Southeast Asia, and because Vietnam is located on its eastern border, the North Vietnamese moved arms through Laotian and Cambodian territory during the Vietnam War. These routes are known as the Ho Chi Minh Trail. As a result of the movement of arms to support the guerillas operating in South Vietnam, the US bombed the Ho Chi Minh trail to such a degree that Laos became the world's most bombed country.[5]

(fig 1) *Palina, Laotian Diaspora, Boise, ID,* 2019, pigment print on archival paper, 10 x 8 in. (25.4 x 20.3 cm)

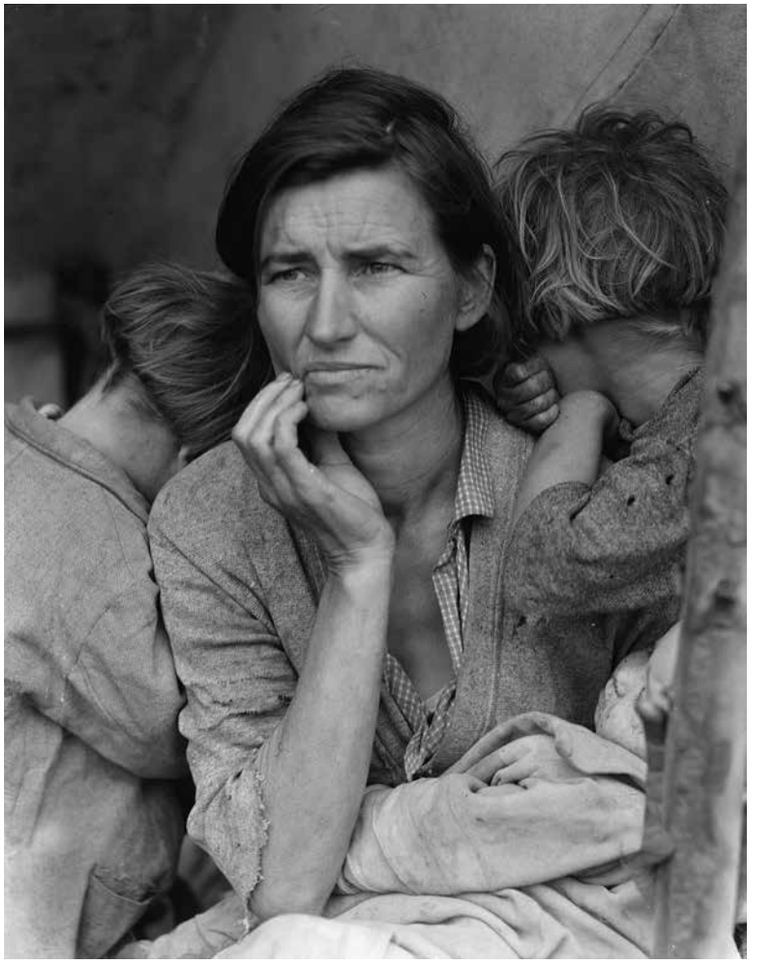
LEFT: Hung Liu (American, born China, 1948–2021), *Needlework* (detail), 2004, lithograph, 19x13 in. (48.2 x 33 cm). The Trout Gallery, Gift of Eric Denker, Class of 1975, in Memory of Ann Dykstra, 2010.5. © Hung Liu Estate/Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY.

RIGHT: *Palina, Laotian Diaspora, Boise, ID* (detail), 2019, pigment print on archival paper, 10 x 8 in. (25.4 x 20.3 cm)

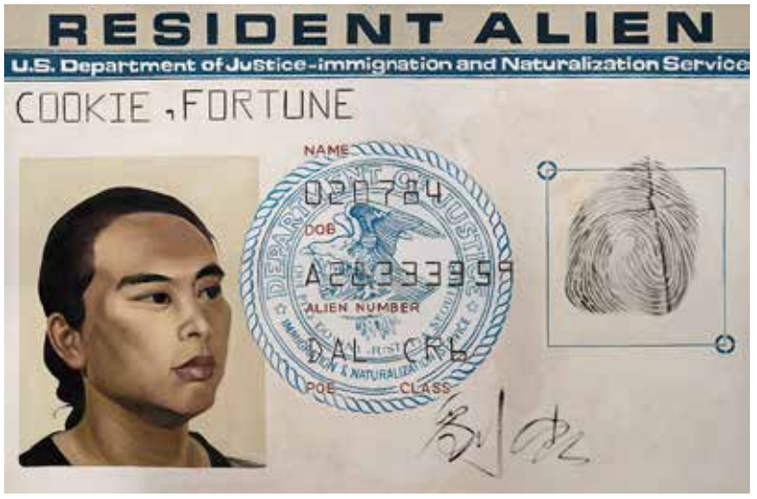
The lasting result of these bombing campaigns is that many Laotian civilians continue to risk injury and lose limbs from encounters with unexploded ordnance. After leaving Laos as a political refugee, Palina now lives in Boise, Idaho. She founded The Idaho Museum of International Diaspora which represents 123 peoples and countries of origin from all over the world and seeks to educate and create a forum for discourse.[6] As a community leader and organizer in Boise, Palina has, according to Bale, an "in-depth knowledge about diaspora across the US and the world," and has also continued many Laotian traditions thanks to her mother.[7] These are some of the reasons she became a central collaborator in Bale and Cox's project.

Palina is taken in the tradition of social documentary photography, which can be defined, in Bale's words as "a straightforward image" in order "to tell a story," with a particular focus on drawing the viewer's attention to social and cultural issues, as seen in works by Lewis Hine (1874–1950), Walker Evans (1903–1975), and Gordon Parks (1912–2006), among others.[8] In line with this interest in photographic history, Bale and Cox also engage with the style of modernist photography in that they utilize methods and techniques inherent to documentary photography of the first half of the twentieth century, with a sharp focus in on their subjects. Specifically, they use an 8x10 large-format view camera situated on a tripod, which is one of the earliest photographic devices and allows for highly detailed, carefully composed images. Because of their use of film, rather than digital methods, Bale and Cox typically take only two exposures for each image.[9] With this camera, the photographer, under a dark cloth, composes the scene on the camera's ground glass, and then moves to the side of the camera, resulting in an unimpeded view between photographer and subject when the shutter clicks.[10] In their final prints, Bale and Cox leave in the black borders of the film's emulsion to emphasize the material and allude to this historical process of photography.[11] Additionally, because they are working with a large-format camera, Bale and Cox line up elements within the image to the frame of the photograph, using gridlines on the ground glass. For example, in *Palina*, Bale and Cox align the horizontal planks of the bridge within the pictorial frame. This interest in the structure of the photograph also draws attention to the formal qualities inherent to the photographic medium. Therefore, Bale and Cox seem to engage in direct conversation with this longer history of portrait photography. However, while many social documentary photographers in the early twentieth century disregarded the identities of their subjects in pursuit of their own aesthetic and ideological goals, Bale and Cox's sitters retain possession of their likenesses and stories.[12] The close collaboration between Bale and Cox and the people they photograph is also evident in the interviews they often do, further highlighting their subject's agency and individuality.

According to Bale and Cox, the portraits of *Arrivals* show how intractable the breadth of human experiences is.[13] Bale and Cox's work centers around finding shared humanity across differences, with their images often depicting resilience, strength, and relationships between people and places.[14] Bale and Cox document transnational perspectives through their travels, which can be understood in the larger context of globalism, but they are largely attentive to the mobility of people and ideas.[15] In addition to spending time in Slovakia, where they photographed Ukrainian refugees and Roma people, Bale and Cox most recently visited Ireland, where they photographed other Ukrainian refugees to exemplify the geographic spread of this diaspora as a result of current conflict. Their first trip for this project was to Boise, Idaho, where many immigrants, refugees, and general diaspora from around the world have been settled.[16] Bale and Cox's photographs reflect on how people in the diasporas contribute to



(fig. 2) Dorothea Lange (American, 1895–1965), *Migrant Mother*,1936, 11.1 x 8.6in. (28.3 x 21.8cm), U.S. Farm Security Administration/Office of War Information. Prints & Photographs Division, Library of Congress, 2017762891.



(fig. 3) Hung Liu (American, born China, 1948–2021), *Resident Alien*, 1988, oil on canvas, 60 x 90 in. (152.4 x 228.6 cm), Collection of the San José Museum of Art, Gift of the Lipman Family Foundation © Hung Liu Estate/Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY.

their new communities and show how their original cultures enhance their new homes. Bale and Cox's work also communicates awareness about past and ongoing conflicts by showing individuals afflicted by these crises. For example, other individuals that Bale and Cox have documented include Viktoriia and Kristina, two Ukrainian now studying in Slovakia, and Zeze, who fled violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo before living in a refugee camp in Rwanda for six years until he found his way to the US.[17]

Bale and Cox follow the objectives of social documentary photography in that a portrait is representative of an individual's larger story.[18] Since the early twentieth century, documentary photographers highlighted the daily lives and activities of people who might be marginalized and whose stories are not heard. For example, during the Great Depression, the government employed photographers to document struggling Americans living in rural areas. For example, photographer Dorothea Lange was hired by the Resettlement Administration in 1935, later absorbed into the Department of Agriculture, in order to show, in art historian Robert Hirsch's words, "urban America a desperate situation and enlist popular support for Roosevelt's new programs."[19] Likewise, historian Alan Trachtenberg describes "visual facts as the occasion for awakening the viewer's awareness of and imaginative empathy with the pictured others and with this the viewer's own social being" as being characteristic of Lange's social photography.[20] For example, Lange's best known photograph, *Migrant Mother*, echoes the Madonna and Child theme and shows a struggling mother of seven, whose name was Florence Owens Thompson (fig. 2). Because of the Dust Bowl, many people migrated to California to harvest crops, which was not affected as harshly as central states. The

(fig. 4) Dorothea Lange (American, 1895–1965), *Members of the Mochida Family Awaiting Evacuation Bus*, *Hayward, California*, 1942, National Archives and Records Administration, Records of the War Relocation Authority, 210-GC-153.

worry on Thompson's face is evident as she must go to great lengths in order to find a way to provide for her children. *Palina* and the larger *Arrivals* project is reminiscent of Lange's documentary photography in that both result in a visual conversation between the beholder and subject, who usually looks directly at the viewer. Lange's work reflects Bale and Cox's goal of documenting stories which is also inherent to Hung Liu's reinterpretation of historical photographs.

Liu often draws on historical photographs and themes of displacement and migration in her work. She was born in China in 1948, and shortly thereafter her father was sent to a prison camp for being a captain in the Kuomintang military, the force fighting against the Communist Party.[21] Like Palina, Liu was raised by her mother who played a significant role in her life. Before she was about to enter college in 1968, Liu was sent to work in the fields, where she spent four years, as part of a Cultural Revolution reeducation program.[22] After struggling to obtain a passport, she left China to study visual art at the University of California San Diego's graduate program.[23] Emblematic of her experience as an immigrant is Liu's painting *Resident Alien* (fig. 3), which can be understood as a commentary on the discrimination she has faced in the US, a place where she hoped to find more freedom than China.[24] Her transnational experience of living as an immigrant in the US parallels the stories Bale and Cox seek to reveal in their portraits.

Similarly to Bale and Cox's ongoing collection of personal narratives, Liu preserves memories and stories of individuals from photographic sources that she rediscovers in archives.[25] When Liu looked at Lange's photographs of poor country children, they brought back memories of her own time working in the fields and wondering whether life would ever improve.[26] Liu found a picture by Lange of a Japanese family awaiting internment especially thought provoking, with the tags they are wearing suggesting dehumanization and a suspension of their rights (fig. 4).[27] Internment also resulted in the forced migration of these Japanese-Americans, which is evidenced by the packed bags at their feet. As art historian Dorothy Moss explains, people depicted by Lange are "often nameless, their lives unheralded," just like the people Liu memorializes through adaptation from historical photographs and those that Bale and Cox document.[28]

(fig. 5) Hung Liu (American, born China, 1948–2021), *Needlework*, 2004, lithograph, 19x13 in. (48.2 x 33 cm). The Trout Gallery, Gift of Eric Denker, Class of 1975, in Memory of Ann Dykstra, 2010.5. © Hung Liu Estate/Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY.

As in Liu's other work, this lithograph print draws on a historical photograph. *Needlework* depicts an elderly woman working at her loom, seated in a chair, with her left hand presumably supporting the fabric while her right is in the act of weaving (fig. 5). The invisible left hand can be seen on top of the fabric as a U-shaped area of dark gray that mimics the shape of a thumb and hand. The blending of the woman and her work is a representation of her concentration and experience. The wrinkles on the side of the woman's mouth and cheeks emphasize a slight smile and concentration on the work before her. Where ink was applied more liberally such as on the woman's left arm, there are round blotches which add another texture to the composition. The circular forms rising up behind her create more depth and have an almost spiritual quality due to their subtlety and buoyancy. Working at the loom would generally be considered a craft, not as high art, as works created by women were not typically as highly valued in a patriarchal society.[29] At the bottom left of the print is a red seal which, in East Asian art, is traditionally an indicator of the artist as well as prominent people who owned the work. This mark emphasizes Liu's connection with China. Due to her transnational identity, she often struggles with feeling like she belongs in a specific place. In fact, Liu's favorite moments occur when she is flying between places, and explains, "I know nobody can reach me, and I am going from one place to the other, so I'm in the middle of nowhere."[30] *Needlework* also echoes the idea of being in between; Liu's identity of being split between China and the US and the subject whose work is between craft and art.[31]

If Bale and Cox's photograph documents the forced movement of Palina, the loss of the place she is from and her arrival in a new location, then Liu's print may represent the loss of a craft. The world constantly loses the stories and skills that the elderly have gathered throughout their long lives. *Needlework* embodies this and documents the craft that this woman possesses which, through her connection to and experience with the loom, is more beautiful and innately human than miles of fabric being churned out by a machine in a factory. Even though the poses of the two women are different, they both present a certain defiance. For the woman at the loom, it is her skill and confidence at her work that demands high regard, while Palina stands proudly despite her difficult experiences as a refugee.

Bale and Cox and Liu are all interested in people's stories that are at once individual and universal. Because the artists draw on social photography, such as Lange's images during the Great Depression and World War II, the artwork presented here also connects the past with the present, asserting that each person's struggle might

be unique, but that collectively, people can be connected across various geographies and time periods. Ultimately, migration is a theme inherent to the work of Cox, Bale, and Liu, as each exhibits profound empathy with their subjects and offers the viewers a similar opportunity to understand more deeply the experiences of immigrants, refugees, or as members of a general diaspora. Liu's assimilation of historical photographs and artistic reflections on her own life create a compelling conversation with Bale and Cox's documentation of diverse human stories and their commitment "to inspire engagement and dialogue within every community, locally, nationally and globally."[32]

ENDNOTES

1 "Palina, Arrivals," Andy Bale and Jon Cox, accessed September 28, 2024, Palina — ARRIVALS (idarrivals.org).

2 "Journey, Arrivals," Andy Bale and Jon Cox, accessed September, 28, 2024, https://www.idarrivals.org/journey.

3 "Journey, Arrivals," Andy Bale and Jon Cox, accessed October 4, 2024, https://www.idarrivals.org/journey.

4 "Palina, Arrivals," Andy Bale and Jon Cox, accessed September, 28, 2024, Palina — ARRIVALS (idarrivals.org).

5 "Legacies of War," accessed October 14, 2024, https://www.legaciesofwar.org/legacies-library/.

6 "Idaho Museum of International Diaspora," accessed October 17, 2024, https://www.idahomid.org/diaspora-in-idaho.

7 Andy Bale, personal communication with author, December 1, 2024.

8 Bale, personal communication with author, December 1, 2024.

9 Bale, personal communication with author, September 12, 2024 and November 9. 2024.

10 Jon Cox, personal communication with author, November 7, 2024.

11 Bale, personal communication with author, September 12, 2024.

12 Bale, personal communication with author, September 12, 2024.

13 Bale, personal communication with author, September 12, 2024.

14 Bale, personal communication with author, September 12, 2024.

15 Michael Cothren and Anne D'Alleva, *Methods & Theories of Art History* (3rd Edition, Laurence King Publishing, 2023), 116.

16 "Palina, Arrivals."

17 "Palina, Arrivals."

18 Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Matthew Brady to Walker Evans*, (Harper Collins Canada Ltd, 1989), 200.

19 Robert Hirsch, *Seizing the Light: A Social History of Photography* (McGraw-Hill, 2009), 234.

20 Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs*, 203.

21 Jacquelyn Serwer, *American Kaleidoscope: Themes and Perspectives in Recent Art*, (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996), 121.

22 Serwer, *American Kaleidoscope*, 121.

23 René De Guzman, *The Art of Hung Liu; Summoning Ghosts* (Berkely: University of California Press, 2013), 22.

24 Thalia Gouma-Peterson, *Hung Liu: A Ten-Year Survey 1988-1998* (The College of Wooster Art Museum, 1998), 11.

25 Serwer, *American Kaleidoscope*,120.

26 Dorothy Moss, *Hung Liu: Portraits of Promised Lands*, (Washington, DC: National Portrait Gallery in association with Yale University Press, 2021), 95.

27 Moss, *Hung Liu: Portraits of Promised Lands*, 104.

28 Moss, *Hung Liu: Portraits of Promised Lands*, 103.

29 Cothren and D'Alleva, *Methods & Theories of Art History*, 110.

30 Thalia Gouma-Peterson, *Hung Liu*, 9.

31 De Saisset, "Painterly Proofs: Prints by Hung Liu" (Museum Santa Clara University, 2022).

32 Bale and Cox, "Project Statement," *The Journey, Arrivals*, https://www.idarrivals.org/journey.

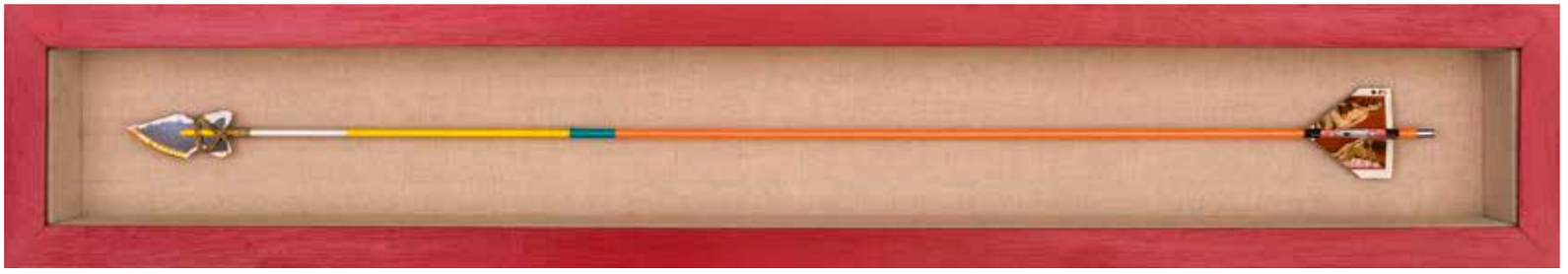
Life can be beautiful shared by two
A world filled with love, ever old ever new
Life can be beautiful
Shared with each other –
Two happy people
Who love one another

ANTHONY CERVINO

ANTHONY CERVINO

Gathered, 2021, decorative plates knapped into a variety of points, rough cut white oak, plywood, paint, linen, glass, 30 x 30 x 8 in.

ANTHONY CERVINO
Beautiful Warning, 2019, found decorative plate knapped into a spearhead, brass, linen, maple, plywood, paint, glass, 12 x 12 x 6 in.



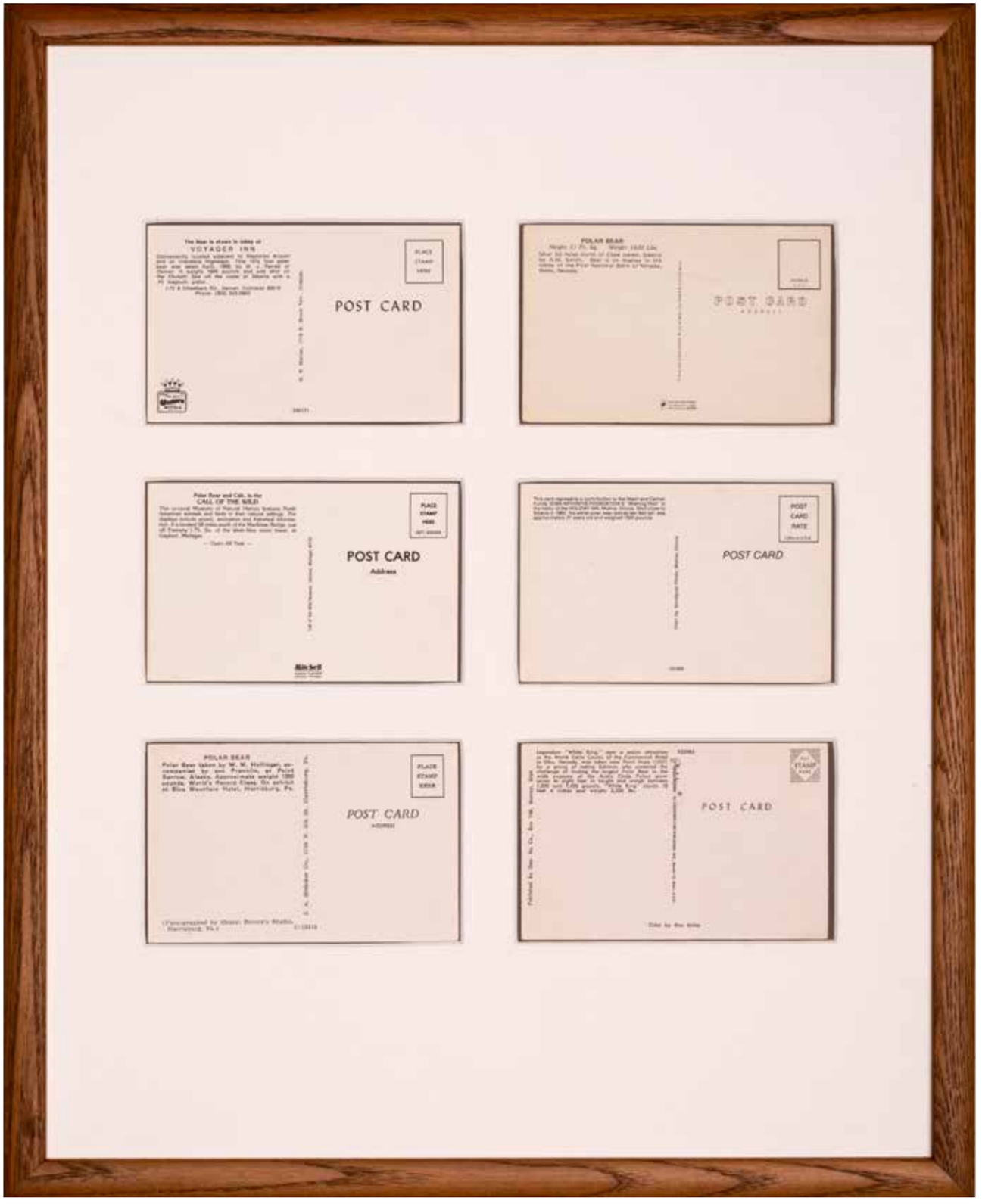
ANTHONY CERVINO
Longer, 2018, found decorative plate knapped into a spearhead, fiberglass driveway markers, duct tape, vintage risqué playing cards, jute twine, linen, shellacked pine, plywood, paint, glass, 60 x 12 x 8 in.

OPPOSITE

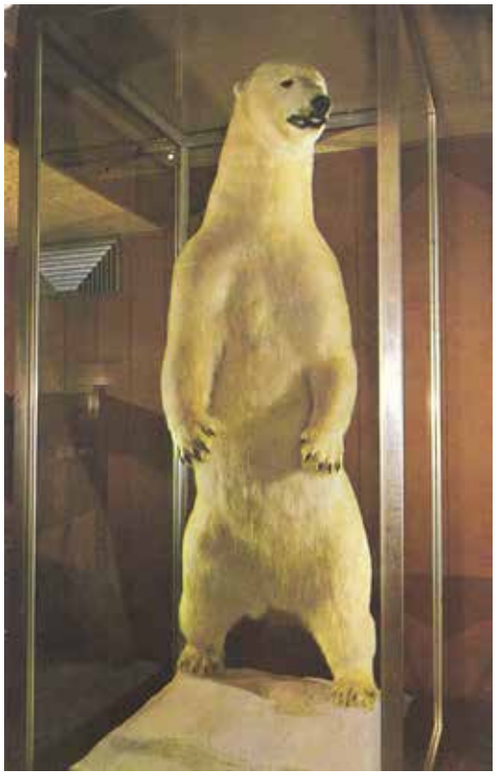
ANTHONY CERVINO
Double Troubled, 2021, vintage decorative plate knapped into a double-headed axe, plastic, rubber, lead fishing weight, daughter's hair, wooden handle, wire, brass, steel hook, dice carved from an avocado pit, curly maple, plywood, paint, linen, glass, 18 x 36 x 9 in.

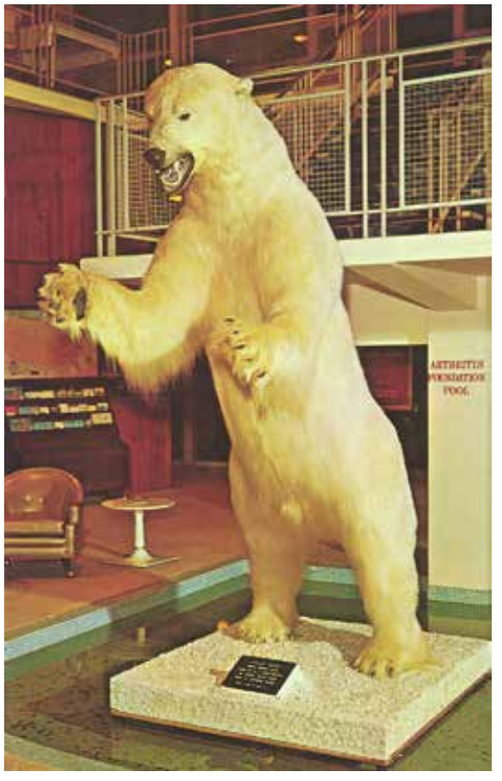
ANTHONY CERVINO
Stitchless, 2023, whittled found wooden souvenir sailor, 10 x 3 x 3 in.

ANTHONY CERVINO
When You Wish You Were Here (Arctic Scientist with Ice Drill, after Arne Tjomsland), 2024, stained wood, faux fur, brass, 10.5 x 6 x 4 in.



ANTHONY CERVINO
When You Wish You Were Here (Wish You Were Here), 2024, six chromogenic prints and a framed display of six vintage postcard backs, each print is 22 x 14 in., framed postcards 21 x 17 in.










ANTHONY CERVINO
When You Wish You Were Here (When You Wish), 2024, six chromogenic prints, each photo is 12 x 16 in.

OPPOSITE

ANTHONY CERVINO
When You Wish You Were Here (Polar Bear Looking Back, after Arne Tjomsland), 2024, patinated cast bronze, 5 x 6 x 3 in.

MCKENNA HILLMAN

STITCHLESS: NAKED SOUVENIR OR MALE NUDE?

Imagine a souvenir shop in a coastal city. In one area sits a collection of carved wooden sailors—fishermen, pirates, captains, all diverse in size, dress, and missing appendages (because, of course, *all* old mariners have lost a leg or an arm). Now add another carving into the assortment: a partially naked captain. That is, in essence, the content of Anthony Cervino's *Stitchless.* A bearded old man with a black pipe in his mouth, standing buck-naked except for his boots and captain's hat. He is not necessarily the souvenir you want to bring home for Grandma, nor the object you would expect to find next to a bronze nude right out of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Roman sculpture gallery. This humorous juxtaposition brings to light a series of complex binaries that help us understand and question culture: feminine/masculine, young/old, desirable/ugly, original/unoriginal, kitsch/art. To some cultural theorists, these binaries are key aspects of our culture. Throughout his oeuvre, Cervino repeatedly turns these binaries on their heads—and none so unexpectedly as in *Stitchless.*

Created in 2023, *Stitchless* is a wooden sailor souvenir whose clothes have been carved away, revealing all but what remains covered by his black boots and captain's cap (fig. 1). Traces of blue and orange paint hint at what his original clothing looked like: a light blue top and an orange coat on top of black pants. Standing around ten inches tall, *Stitchless* is humble. The captain's distant gaze makes no play at grandeur; rather, he is comfortably self-aware. "There is ownership—not shame—in this body too," writes Cervino of *Stitchless*.[1] According to the artist, the title itself is multifaceted, referring to vulnerability (a prominent theme across Cervino's oeuvre), stitches as connectors, and the stitches used in wound treatment. In a way, the title not only refers to the work, but it also calls back to Cervino's intuitive studio practice and the personal connections within his work.

The Neo-Classical sculpture *Antinous* looks very different from *Stitchless*. A twenty-four-inch-tall, bronze male nude, *Antinous* (fig. 2) is lithe, his muscles softly defined, but not enough to disturb the impression of effeminate youth in his perfect skin and full cheeks. He shifts his weight onto his right foot with his left leg slightly extended behind him, creating an "S"-shaped, slightly twisted pose called *contrapposto*. The subtle gesturing of his arm allows the viewer to see the curves of his waist from every angle and imparts the figure with a sense of grace and self-control. The dark, aged bronze is rough in some areas, patches of the base now patinated. The resulting surface imperfections mar the figure's otherwise flawless skin. Bronze can take a variety of finishes; when buffed slightly, it looks softer,

(fig.1) Anthony Cervino, *Stitchless*, 2023, carved wooden sailor souvenir, 10 in. (25.4 cm)

LEFT: *Antinous*, c. late nineteenth century, bronze, 23.25 in. (59 cm), The Trout Gallery, 1957.5.1

RIGHT: . Anthony Cervino, *Stitchless*, 2023, carved wooden sailor souvenir, 10 in. (25.4 cm)

(fig.2) *Antinous*, c. late nineteenth century, bronze, 23.25 in. (59 cm), The Trout Gallery, 1957.5.1.

imitating the appearance of human skin. Antinous tilts his head down slightly, avoiding the viewer's gaze; his expression is slightly mournful, contrasting with the confident, graceful display of his body.

Antinous, also spelled Antinoös, was the young Greek lover of Emperor Hadrian, who ruled Rome from 117 to 138 CE. After Antinous drowned in the Nile in 130, Hadrian honored him with a series of sacred images, mostly statues, and erecting a city near the site of his death and naming it Antinoöpolis.[2] *Antinous* bears a striking similarity to the *Capitoline Antinous* (second century CE) in pose, body structure and expression (fig. 3). *Antinous* was cast in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century by the Neapolitan foundry of Giorgio Sommer & Figlio, purveyors of photographs as well as bronze, terra cotta,

(fig.3) *Capitoline Antinous*, c. 130–138 CE, marble, about 70 in. (180 cm), Capitoline Museum, Albani Collection, MC 741. Photo: Jastro (2006)

or marble copies, in various sizes, of works in the National Museum in Naples. It is one of many nineteenth-century foundries "[s]temming from the nascent tourist industry and building upon the tourist desire to own authentic reproductions."[3] The foundry's inscription is located on the base of the sculpture, behind the figure's right foot. Sommer offered a handful of different sizes and finishes for his bronze figures, such as brown ("Modern"), dark ("Herculaneum") or green ("Pompeii").[4] It is difficult to say whether The Trout Gallery's *Antinous* has a purposeful patina or if it is the result of age. The effect is the same either way: The reproduction of the *Capitoline Antinous* as a souvenir turns the original sculpture into an object for commercial consumption.

Souvenirs are purchased as proof of experience, either as a gift from the travel destination or to reify, or make physical, our memory of that place. As anthropologist Ingrid Thurner explains, souvenirs are the tourist's version of a private museum. They are primarily objects that somehow exemplify the difference between the destination and the tourist's homeland; thus, everyday or otherwise universal objects and ideas are usually exempt from souvenir shops.[5] The bronze *Antinous*, as a copy of an ancient Roman marble sculpture, displays for its Victorian buyer the temporal disconnect between the original and the

(fig.4) Six variations of wooden sailor souvenirs, each approx. 6 in. (15.24 cm), collected by Anthony Cervino. Photo: Andy Bale (2024)

copy, the then and now, through its material, place of purchase, and content. Although the copy increases exposure to the original through cross-cultural, mass distribution, the resulting commodification also cheapens it. Like near-constant reproductions of famous paintings on T-shirts and postcards, the impact of the image becomes weaker; its consideration as "fine art" hinges on its fame and recognition rather than its intrinsic formal qualities.

On top of likely being a souvenir, *Antinous* is complicated by nineteenth-century interpretations of the historical figure. Art historian Bryan E. Burns explores reconstructions of Antinous across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and explains that Antinous became a prominent figure in the development of gay identities, both as a "classicizing icon of male beauty" for artists to emulate and in an explicitly erotic sense. Victorian viewers read in depictions of Antinous an arrogant, beautiful young man who was also deeply melancholy, no doubt a reference to the belief that his death on the Nile was a suicide. The association of Antinous with a particular body type and posture was also extended to Victorian anxiety about homosexuality, adding a sense of danger to the figure so many desired. Burns concludes that the historical figure Antinous is continuously revisited to fit new generations of viewers.[6] Although this bronze representation is likely based on the *Capitoline Antinous*, it was cast with Victorian perceptions of the figure in mind.

While the *Antinous* can be understood as art-turned-souvenir, *Stitchless* is souvenir-turned-art. The wooden sculpture is one of a set of six types of sea-faring men sold as souvenirs along the east and west coasts of the United States (fig. 4). The sailors are mass-produced outside the US, yet they are hand carved, a contradiction that Cervino describes as one of his favorite qualities of these figurines, which he collected as a child growing up in coastal North Carolina.[7] The wood is soft, making it an ideal whittling material; nonetheless, the original carving, visible in the face, hat and boots, is somewhat jagged and unfinished. By removing the captain's clothes, Cervino exposes the pale wood and uses its original color to imitate white skin. The more blended contours of the newly naked body distinguish Cervino's hand from the original carver. Harshness suddenly turns to softness, contributing to an impression of confident vulnerability. The captain's slouched posture speaks to a frankness regarding his own nakedness and a degree of comfort with his own body.

The representational types of Cervino's collectible mariners come from a romanticized conceptualization of the American sailor traced to the early nineteenth century. With the expansion of the Atlantic trade and globalization, literary scholar Jason Berger describes the new role of sailors as "both romantic hero and purveyor of knowledge." From weathered old salts to rabblerousing Jack Tars, the seafaring tales found a market in a fascinated public.[8] Our defrocked sea captain evidently fits into this "old salt" category—an older sailor who shares both stories of his time at sea and the wisdom he gained. As an avid *Moby Dick* fan, I think of Captain Ahab's iron fist aboard the *Pequod*, or of Captain Archibald Haddock in the film *The Adventure of Tintin* (2011), who spends the majority of the film drunkenly regaling the protagonist with tales of his far more honorable ancestor's encounters with pirates.[9] Each of these captains reflect a paternal role, in which his experience, intuition, and skill positions him above his crew.

Stitchless humorously wrecks the traditional image of the sea captain. By stripping the captain of his clothes, Cervino exposes the soft underbelly of his masculinity, giving him "a beer belly and a tiny wiener."[10] The captain's shameless acceptance of his nakedness balances his vulnerability. He faces the viewer head-on, in full ownership of his body. His age and blasé attitude towards his nudity preserves his rough-and-tumble masculinity, stemming from years spent in a historically male-dominated industry. The unspoken dare to judge the unideal physique exposed in *Stitchless* flips the ideal nude exemplified by *Antinous* on its head. There is also a sense of vulgarity in comparing a body rendered undesirable by the inescapable changes of age with one hailed, in Burns' words, for his "sexual allure and lasting presence in myth and sculpture."[11] When looking at the two figures, the absurdity of an "ideal" form becomes obvious.

Gallery director Paul Nicholson described Cervino's 2020 solo exhibition *Hurry with the Furies* as "interrogating kitsch through his humorous and often transgressive substitutions."[12] For philosopher Robert C. Solomon, kitsch "celebrates banality and advocates continuity, conformity, and routine." The sentimentality of kitsch makes it undesirable and tasteless in comparison to a famous artist, whose work is considered tasteful precisely because of a perceived

lack of sentiment or nostalgia.[13] Solomon's assertions about Kitsch recall ideas expressed in art critic Clement Greenberg's essay "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" (1939). Greenberg frames avant-garde and kitsch as opposites: Avant-garde, the culture of the cultivated elite, concerns itself with the process of art, while kitsch, the culture of the masses, produces the effect, explaining itself to the viewer so that they do not have to exert themselves mentally to understand and feel something from it.[14] Although *Stitchless* seems to celebrate nostalgia, it is also laced with irony as it confronts the established hierarchy of art. The mass-produced material in and of itself departs from traditional definitions of art. The artistic, nostalgic impulse to whittle one of many such figurines in Cervino's collection, found primarily on eBay, has transformed it from commercial good to art object—*without* erasing its origins. Already, in material alone, *Stitchless* blurs the distinction between kitsch and high art.

Taking this a step further, Cervino also questions the notion of sentimentality that historically made kitsch unacceptable. By addressing the insecurity of an aging body with a pocketknife, Cervino literally and figuratively removed most of the wistfulness that the typical buyer of the sailor figurines might feel upon seeing them. The nakedness of the sea captain replaces nostalgia with humor and a hint of irony, grappling with aging bodies in timeless gallery spaces. The kitschiness of *Stitchless* enables the interrogation of the very art that the word seems to deny. It also raises another question: If souvenirs can be kitschy, is *Antinous* kitsch? Even more entertaining (or frustrating) for an art historian, does that imply that the Classical works which Sommer & Figlio copied for tourists are also kitsch? Such foundries suggest that even if they are not, they were *treated* as such by monied visitors to Pompeii who wanted to bring something back for their gardens and studies. Emperor Hadrian's sentimental motives for popularizing and deifying his lover's image are also evidence for the kitschiness of both the bronze reproduction, and maybe even the original marble sculpture.

Going by Thurner's definition of a souvenir as a keepsake that somehow represents its place of purchase, the original sailor sculpture defrocked by Cervino was an emblem of the coastal economy where it was purchased and the mythology of sailors. It may be mass-produced, but it is still visibly handmade, adding to the aura of a rustic hobby like whittling that likely attracts buyers. The mass-production and nostalgia of this wooden souvenir would have it excluded by art elitists who historically deemed certain objects as inferior to high-brow art that neither expresses nor elicits trite, simple emotions as nostalgia. Indeed, Solomon traces these arguments to one source: "[T]he suspicion that kitsch and sentimentality are modes of distraction and self-deception, shifting our attention away from the world as it is and soothing us instead with objects that are uncompromisingly comfortable and utterly unthreatening."[15] *Antinous* evades accusations of kitschiness because of its Classical origins, which imply a certain intellectualism in its buyer; *Stitchless* embraces such accusations, using humor to make the captain's nakedness acceptable to the viewer. In doing so, both works reject the notion that avant-garde and kitsch are opposites, instead illustrating the arbitrary distinction between the two.

Throughout this essay, I have called *Stitchless* a naked old man and *Antinous* a male nude. In line with art historical canon, *Antinous* is a traditional male nude. Such representations of men communicated heroism, ideal beauty, or a combination thereof.[16] Antinous' desirability is prioritized above his masculinity, making the bronze one of many idealized nudes. His posthumous deification by Hadrian is one contributing factor, but the other is later European treatments of his likenesses, as discussed earlier. *Stitchless* is stereotypically unideal in physicality. This body would not be found in the same Victorian garden as *Antinous*. The captain is *naked*, his body exposed as opposed to displayed. In this way, Cervino has produced an anti-erotic nude. The naturalistic treatment of an aged male body denies the erotic tones of an ideal nude. That the captain appears aware yet indifferent to the viewer helps divert an erotic gaze. In the context of *Antinous*, the default manner of looking at him was voyeuristic. That is not the case for *Stitchless*. The viewer is made an *accidental* voyeur, likely uncomfortably thanks to modern notions of bodies that are both acceptable and pleasurable to look at, such as the oiled-up athletes on the covers of health magazines or the Instagram models that fill our social media feeds. Despite *Stitchless*' distance from high-art nudes, the act of defrocking a mass-produced souvenir is more original than the nineteenth-century copy of a nude portrait sculpture. Combined with the creation of the *Antinous* as a souvenir, the bronze sculpture can no longer be linked to the prevailing idea of genius by which we value art.

By viewing *Antinous* and *Stitchless* together, contemporary idiosyncrasies and dualities critiqued by Cervino are made obvious. The materiality and content of *Stitchless* blur the line between fine art, folk art, and commodities. It questions what types of objects galleries and museums choose to display. In addition, conventional desirability and masculinity are eschewed in favor of self-ownership, particularly in comparison to the voyeuristic viewing of *Antinous*. Although *Stitchless* disrupts the captain as a symbol of resilience, masculinity, and wisdom, his intact cap and boots insist that such associations are still valued, so long as they are tempered by humility. One could imagine the old salt as a survivor of decades at sea, now retired, or as an aged captain determined to die as he lived, married to the sea. Alternatively, one can giggle at both him and the place he finds himself in: sharing a pedestal with a refined, neoclassical male nude in an academic gallery.

ENDNOTES

1 Anthony Cervino, communication with author, October 2, 2024.

2 Bryan E. Burns, “Sculpting Antinous: Creations of the Ideal Companion,” in *Ancient Sex: New Essays*, ed. Ruby Blondell and Kirk Ormand (Ohio State University Press, 2015), 286–87, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv3s8shv.12.

3 Claire L. Kovac, “Pompeii and Its Material Reproductions: The Rie of a Tourist Cite in the Nineteenth Century,” *Journal of Tourism History* 5, no. 1 (2012): 44, https://doi.org/10.1080/1755182X.2012.758781.

4 G. Sommer & Figlio, Catologo di Bronzi e Terracotta, Naples c.1890-1900, cited in National Trust, “Statuette of Narcissus, or Bacchus. 515072,” accessed October 12, 2024, https://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object.

5 Ingrid Thurner, “Kunst Für Touristen: Die Welt Der Reisenden Im Souvenir” [Art for Tourists: The World of Travellers in Souvenir], *Sociologus* 44, no. 1 (1994): 2-4.

6 Burns, “Sculpting Antinous,” 285–307.

7 Despite extensive searching by Cervino and the author, neither of us has been able to find additional specific information about the producers of these souvenirs. After combing through secondhand vendors online, I was able to find one for sale with an intact label that contained the company name, Nanco, and the production location (Taiwan). See “Nanco—Vintage Hand Carved Wooden Sailor Fisherman Figure In Yellow Coat—6 Inches,” accessed October 2, 2024, https://www.ecrater.com/p/44376160/nanco-vintage-hand-carved-wooden?post2fb.

8 “Jack Tar” was a nickname for common sailors in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Jason Berger, “Antebellum Fantasies of the Common Sailor; or, Enjoying the Knowing Jack Tar,” *Criticism* 51, no. 1 (2009): 30.

9 Herman Melville, *Moby Dick; or, The Whale* (Harper & Brothers, 1851); Steven Spielberg, dir., *The Adventures of Tintin* (Hollywood, CA: Paramount, 2011). Special thanks to my eleventh-grade American literature teacher, Mr. Mattson, for managing to make Melville moderately entertaining to a class of apathetic, half-asleep high schoolers, by showing his enthusiasm through volume and dramatic waving around of an antique harpoon.

10 Anthony Cervino, communication with author, October 2, 2024.

11 Burns, “Sculpting Antinous,” 292.

12 *Anthony Cervino: Hurry with the Furies* (Allentown, PA: Martin Art Gallery, Muhlenburg College, 2020).

13 Anne Rothe, “Trauma Kitsch,” in *Popular Trauma Culture*, Selling the Pain of Others in the Mass Media (Rutgers University Press, 2011), 43, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt5hjdcn.10.

14 Clement Greenberg, “Avant-Garde and Kistch,” *Partisan Review* 1, no. 5 (1939).

15 Robert C. Solomon, “On Kitsch and Sentimentality,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 49, no. 1 (1991): 5, https://doi.org/10.2307/431644.

16 Tamar Garb, *Bodies of Modernity: Figure and Flesh in Fin-de-Siecle France* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1998), 49.


SVÆRHOLTHAVET
NORDKYNHALVØYA
FORSANGER
FJORD
LAKSE
FJORDEN
NORDKYNHALVØYA
SVÆRHOLTHALVØYA
TANA
FJORD
NORWAY
DKAPP TANA FJORDEN

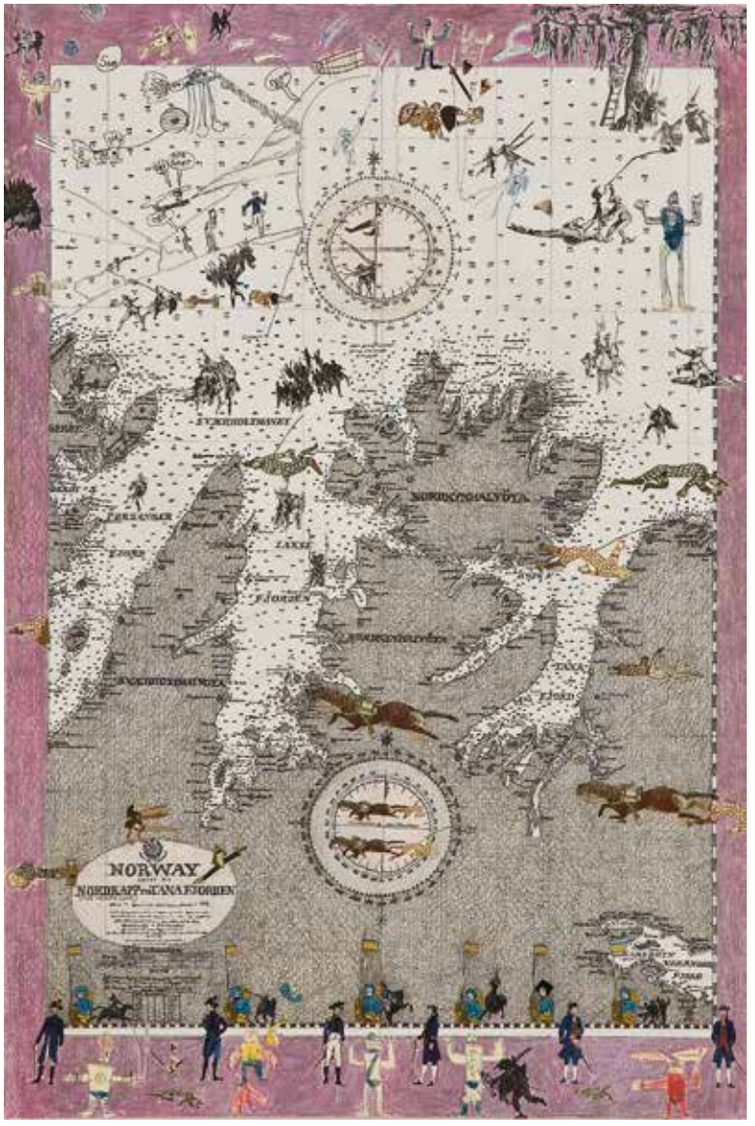
SOPHY NIE

MAPS AND MEMENTOS: THE NORDIC REIMAGINED

Joyce Kozloff invites her viewers into a seemingly mythicized land of battles and conquests in *Norwegian Fjords* (fig. 1), the seventeenth work of her *Boy's Art* series. On a hand drawn map of the Norwegian North Cape, miniature figures of warriors, horses, and kid-drawn superheroes run across the map in chaotic combats. In a different way, Anthony Cervino's *When You Wish You Were Here* (fig. 2, cats. 5, 6, 7, 8) series prompts the viewers to imagine a Nordic adventure. Taking the forms of conventional travel souvenirs like commemorative badges, framed postcards, and Nordic craft items, the objects in the series are either found or made by the artist to memorialize his ephemeral experiences in Svalbard, Norway's northmost archipelago in the Arctic, 1,175 kilometers north from the North Cape.

The Nordic landscape evoked in both Kozloff's and Cervino's works is a direct response to their abroad residencies, with both artists being removed from their familiar surroundings. When making the *Boy's Art* series, Kozloff was on a seven-week residency at the Bogliasco Foundation in Liguria, just after the attacks of September 11, 2001. In her studio with a view of the Mediterranean Sea, Kozloff considered the explorations and conquests that happened on these waters and made drawings of vintage maps and city plans around the globe.[1] To enhance her intended message, she included miniature figures reproduced from her son Nik's childhood superhero drawings, in addition to pop culture imagery and well-recognized, art-historical depictions of battles and warfare.[2] The collaged drawing in *Boy's Art (Norwegian Fjords)* disrupts the viewer's expectations and offers a poignant contemplation on the intersections of war, adventure, and childhood play.

Twenty years later, Cervino went to the place Kozloff had only imagined in her drawings. In January 2024, Cervino visited Svalbard, a tiny Norwegian archipelago in the Arctic Ocean, for an eight-day research trip hosted by the Spitsbergen Artists Residency. He stayed in Longyearbyen, the largest city in Svalbard and the world's northmost permanent town-sized settlement with around 2,400 residents. Traveling during the pitch-black polar night when the sun is always below the horizon, the artist described his experience as a prolonged period of reflection in a "fringe space," where one's sense of time and space is disrupted.[3] Over the next six months, Cervino contemplated this unique experience and returned to Svalbard in July



(fig. 1) Joyce Kozloff (American, born 1942), *Boy's Art #17 (Norwegian Fjords)*, 2002, mixed media on paper, 16.5 x 11.5 in. (41.91 x 29.21 cm), The Trout Gallery, Gift of Joyce Kozloff, 2009

LEFT: Joyce Kozloff (American, born 1942), *Boy's Art #17 (Norwegian Fjords) (detail)*, 2002, mixed media on paper, 16.5 x 11.5 in. (41.91 x 29.21 cm), The Trout Gallery, Gift of Joyce Kozloff, 2009

RIGHT: Anthony Cervino, *When You Wish You Were Here (Arctic Scientist with Ice Drill, after Arne Tjomsland)*, 2024, stained wood, faux fur, brass, 10.5 x 6 x 4 in.

(fig. 2) Anthony Cervino, *When You Wish You Were Here*, 2024, selected works

with a series of works that responded to his winter visit. Particularly inspired by the souvenirs he saw throughout the many giftshops in Longyearbyen, while also tapping into the tradition of storytelling with travel souvenirs, Cervino produced an eclectic collection of objects that intertwines his individual experiences with the larger social and political environment of the Arctic Archipelago.

Taken together, Kozloff's and Cervino's works reveal interesting insights about the Nordic landscape, travel, and exploration. Kozloff makes references to historical sources while imbuing her work with an almost fairytale, fantastical sense of place. Cervino's series speaks to a present-day Nordic environment, where contemporary issues like climate change and capitalism are intersected with personal identity and reflection. However, both artists borrow, distort, and reinterpret the Nordic landscape and history to communicate broader issues of exploration, globalization, commercialization, and identity.

(fig. 3) Olaus Magnus (Swedish, 1490–1557), *Map of the Sea*, 1572, Rome: Antoine Lafréry, Library of Congress, 2021668418

WAYS OF MAPPING: THE HISTORICAL AND THE CONCEPTUAL

Although both artists evoke Nordic geography, Kozloff borrows from the European cartography traditions from the Age of Exploration to the modern period. On the other hand, Cervino utilizes a postmodern method that is object-based and site-specific. Kozloff began each work in *Boy's Art* with a detailed graphite drawing of a military map, their dates ranging from the Han dynasty to the second half of the twentieth century. In particular, the map in *Norwegian Fjords* is originally based on a 1944 map of the North Cape produced by the UK Hydrographic Office. However, the composition of the map, including the compass roses and the mini figures on the map, directly refers to European maps from the Middle Ages and Renaissance, which often included decorative images of cities, local people, and sometimes imaginary monsters. An example can be seen in sixteenth-century Swedish geographer and historian Olaus Magnus' *Carta Marina* (1572), one of the earliest cartographic depictions of the Scandinavia peninsula, which contained detailed drawings of territories, settlements, ships, soldiers, and sea monsters (fig. 3).[4] Displayed in upper-class homes and halls, the maps often showcased the power and knowledge of nobles and royalty who commissioned them.[5] During the Age of Exploration, illustrated maps also became an important tool in European colonial projects and were used to legitimize claims to the colonized territories. For example, when making maps of the Americas, some European cartographers added drawings of European forts and churches onto the landscape, providing a tangible claim that the area was already under the colonists' control.[6]

Kozloff carefully evokes the iconography of atlases from early modern Europe to examine representations of imperial and colonial power through centuries of map-making. In comparison a more accurate depiction of the North Cape, she exaggerated and elongated the rugged coastline, giving the white-colored fjords an almost limb-like appearance, like the claws of monsters digging into the darker landscape. Additionally, the map is sprinkled with miniature figures from various art historical sources like the *Bayeux Tapestry*, an eleventh-century embroidered cloth that illustrates the events leading up to the Norman conquest, and Jacques Callot's *The Miseries and Misfortunes of War* (1633), one of the most famous print series in early modern Europe that capture the mayhem and brutality of the Thirty Years' War.[7] By pulling from historical materials and conjuring allusions to sea monsters, Kozloff reinforces a connection with the European tradition of mapping and the consequent link with conquest. Her unconventional choice to place a large percentage of the figures on water instead of land also echoes the close connection between European colonial history and maritime history.

In addition to appropriating traditional visual sources, Kozloff also borrowed from the childhood superhero battle drawings of her son Nik. Some of these long-limbed and well-armed superheroes in *Norwegian Fjords* are wearing Viking helmets and leather straps, while USA fighter jets are engaged in battle with UFOs. The whimsical combination of a child's drawing with historical references and the twentieth-century hydrographic map creates an unexpected and somewhat humorous juxtaposition. Kozloff notes, "Besides the scrambling of information, there is also a grotesquery to some of these combinations, an enjoyable misplacement." She continues, "I consciously tried to make those unexpected leaps, both to amuse and to provoke."[8] Luring the viewer in with its eclectic combination, Kozloff brings attention to the invisible causalities behind every map, which often goes unnoticed in the name of exploration and discovery. Additionally, this amalgam of battle scenes evokes a sense of universality and timelessness. By combining diverse images, Kozloff suggests the ever-presence of war, violence, and misery throughout human history. The imperfect reproduction of the compass roses and the scientific data on her drawing also distorts its original cartological purpose and encourages exploration across this semi-imaginary landscape.

While early modern Europeans used illustrated maps as a subtle legitimization of conquest, *Norwegian Fjords* straightforwardly depicts warriors, who can be considered colonizers in the sense, battling on a land foreign to them. The claw-like dramatization of the fjords also contributes to a perceived sense of "wildness" in this faraway land, a notion that often has been used as a justification for colonial exploration and occupation. In actuality, just as the Indigenous peoples have been inhabiting the Western Hemisphere long before the Europeans, the North Cape area has been inhabited by the Indigenous Sámi people for thousands of years.[9] Norway's success as a modern state is also thanks to the exploitation of natural resources, as the discovery of North Sea oil and gas deposits in the late 1960s sent the country into one of the wealthiest nations in Europe. Hydrographic maps—such as the one *Norwegian Fjords* is based on—played an important role in the study and extraction of said resources. By making visible the ever-present conflict on the landscape through diverse evocations, viewers are invited to consider the maker and purpose of the mapping tradition. What is hidden behind cartography in the name of progress and victory?

In contrast to Kozloff's historical references, Cervino's mapping is rooted in conceptual art. Throughout his career, Cervino has created sculptures that are either inspired by or repurposed from everyday objects, focusing on object-based explorations and challenging conventional notions of craftsmanship. Like other conceptual artists, his works prompt the viewers to look beyond the physical manifestation of the object and consider the artist's conceptual framework, as well as encourage them to re-evaluate their understanding of art and its purpose.[10] *Wish You Were Here*, a work from the *When You Wish You Were Here* series, exemplifies these ideas. With its title seen as a play on the cliché greeting phrase written on postcards, *Wish You Were Here* includes six photo enlargements of 1960s postcards of taxidermy polar bears from hotels, restaurants, and casinos, which were used as tourist attractions across the United States. Rather humorous and kitschy displays of these wild animals appear on the fronts of the postcards. For instance, in one postcard, the bear is seen with a showgirl posing in its arms, while another photograph captures the bear in front of an artificial ice cave mural. A short explanatory paragraph of the specific details of the bear is often printed on the back of the postcard, including the locations of the establishments, ranging from Nevada and Michigan to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, as well as the weight of the bear, where it was shot, and by whom. Alongside enlarged reproductions of these postcard images, Cervino framed the original postcards, with only their backs visible to the viewer, to emphasize the varied geographic locations of the tourist sites.

In his exhibition at the Spitsbergen Artists Residency, Cervino also printed his own version of the vintage postcards, changing the older text on the backs to the specific information for his 2024 exhibition. As Cervino explains, "By removing the original place names, business addresses, and information about the bear and from where it was 'taken,' symbolically, these updated souvenirs return these bears to their Arctic environment."[11] Therefore, the work is a conceptual play on the geography conveyed through mundane objects like

(fig. 4) On Kawara (Japanese, 1932–2014), *I Got Up*, 1977, Ink and stamps on postcards, in three frames, each postcard 4 x 5 7/8 in. (10.2 x 15 cm), The Museum of Modern Art/New York, NY, Gift of Angela Westwater. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art/ Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY. © One Million Years Foundation

mass-produced postcards. However, because tourists comprised the exhibition's primary audience, Cervino also alluded to an unspoken irony: in a continuously globalized Svalbard, where icebergs continue to melt and fur souvenirs are sold in front of giftshops, where can the bears truly return to?

Conceptual artist On Kawara, one of Cervino's artistic influences, also utilizes objects like postcards, maps, and calendars to explore a personal and historical understanding of space and time. In the series, *I Got Up* (1968–79) (fig. 4), every day for twelve years, Kawara mailed out two commercial postcards to his friends and family. On the back, he stamps the phrase "I GOT UP" along with the time he got out of bed, his name, current address, the date, and the address of the recipient. The work is often displayed with half of the postcards showing their front and half showing their backs. Kawara turns these mass-produced, seemingly ordinary cards into very specific recordings of his return to consciousness each morning.[12] While On Kawara takes found postcards as his medium for examining his personal relationship with time, Cervino uses this similar material to address the notion of place.

EXPLORATION & IDENTITY

Scandinavia and the Arctic have often been associated with fantasy and adventure in the popular imagination. But as Kozloff and Cervino demonstrate, it is not only joy that comes with exploration. In *Norwegian Fjords*, Kozloff intentionally added many handmade elements to make the collaged drawing look more childlike: the border of the map is colored with uneven layers of purple pencil, what should be mathematical measurements and names of smaller ports and cities are illegible scribbles, and the compass roses appear crooked and distorted. Her son Nik's drawings of crude robot characters with exaggerated features and swords also evoke a sense of innocence and nostalgia, while also recalling classic boardgames like Strategoä and Chess.[13] Kozloff's iconography implies a sense of adventure and excitement that defines childhood and adolescence, before adult responsibilities make daring journeys more difficult. Kozloff acknowledges how nostalgia frames this work, calling the microscopic men "touching and valuable, a reminder of my son's childhood and an earlier period in my own life."[14] However, her *Boy's Art* series doesn't shy away from the questioning and criticism of male belligerence. As Kozloff observes, "There is an underlying sadness and strangeness (for me, as a woman) to the inevitably romantic fascination that young boys seem to have for war, something I have long observed but never understood, and I sometimes make art to try to grasp what is unknown to me."[15] Working right after the events of September 11, she offers a feminist response to the increasing militarization in the world. The addition of imagery from both kid's drawings and the conventional canon of art history prompts associations with real wars being fought and their brutal aftermaths. Ultimately, Kozloff's work invites viewers to reflect on their own childhood urges and whether violence is inherent to the human psyche.

Adventure, masculinity, and the realization that comes with maturation are all themes present in Cervino's work titled *I Turned Back* (fig. 2), which was made in response to his guided excursion to an ice cave in Svalbard. During this trek, Cervino felt unwell while walking in pitch black wearing crampons and headlamps; he had to leave the group early. Upon his safe return to the town, the tour guide gave him a fabric keychain branded with the guide company's logo, a souvenir he "earned" for going on the excursion, which Cervino saw instead as a reminder of his defeat. He explains, "It was a participation prize…I could only see it as a token of my failure and, by extension, a critique of my age, my masculinity, my health and my resolve."[16]

(fig. 5) Arne Tjomsland (Norwegian, 1915–1970), *Isbjørn (Polar Bear)*, teak, produced by Hiorth og Østlyngen, 1955, 3.8 x 10.2 in. (9.7 x 15.9 cm)

Eventually, the artist decided to reclaim this experience by creating his own version of the badge, with the phrase "I TURNED BACK SVALBARD" surrounding a symbol he designed: an arrow turning back on itself. Cervino continues, "The reality is that seeking one's edges inevitably leads to reaching one's limits.... Though I was slow to reach the same conclusion, in Svalbard's inhospitable environment, turning back is something one must do sometimes regardless of will, age, or aptitude."[17] During his time in Svalbard, Cervino distributed 400 of these patches as souvenirs to other brave visitors. The history of Arctic exploration, and explorations overall, has been dominated by masculine stereotypes of strength and endurance.[18] By recognizing the defeat, Cervino offers a more complex way of dealing with his identity and masculinity. The badge represents a fascination with the unknown, but also an admission of failure and the acknowledgement that with it derives greater growth.

THE POSTMODERN WAY

Exploration not only comes with personal reflection, but also social and environmental consequences. Both *Norwegian Fjords* and *When You Wish You Were Here* can be considered a postmodern commentary on exploration in the sense that they appropriate imageries, blend "high" and "low" cultures, and embrace multiple perspectives to comment on broader social issues.[19] Having been working with maps for decades, Kozloff borrows visual motifs from other traditions and

(fig. 6) Arne Tjomsland (Norwegian, 1915–1970), *Eskimo with Spear and Seal*, teak, produced by Hiorth og Østlyngen, 1955, 5.9 in. (15 cm)

reinterprets them to make works that are decidedly her own.[20] None of the visual references in *Norwegian Fjords* are strictly "original," yet Kozloff utilizes them in an original way that disarms the viewers with the visual humor, then strips down the layers to have them consider the real causalities of war.[21]

Not far from the North Cape, the archipelago of Svalbard itself is a paradox of larger environmental and political issues. After an American businessman in 1926 established a coal mining base in Svalbard, it became a popular destination for tourism and climate research in the late twentieth century, where the impacts of climate

change and globalization can be felt firsthand.[22] In Cervino's wooden sculpture *Arctic Climate Scientist (with Ice Core Drill, after Arne Tjomsland)* (cat. 5), he shows a clear recognition of the complexity involved in Svalbard's landscape. A skilled craftsperson, Cervino purposely left signs of hand-made quality in the unevenly painted surface, the slight bumpiness on the shoe surface, and the carved creases of the puff of the sculpture. However, the geometric outline of the figure also gives the appearance of ready-made, commercial craft objects. Following postmodern theory, Cervino deliberately blurs the line between notions of originality and signs of mass production. The juxtaposition of the sculpture itself in a way evokes Svalbard's larger tug-of-war between catering to tourism and maintaining local identity.

Arctic Climate Scientist and another work in Cervino's series, a bronze sculpture titled *Polar Bear Looking Back*, are inspired by Norwegian souvenir and toy designer Arne Tjomsland's classic wooden figures and animals from the 1950s and 1960s (figs. 5, 6).[23] Unlike Tjomsland's stylized and streamlined bear figurine, Cervino turns the bronze bear's head around, as if looking back to the destruction that has been brought to the Arctic Circle caused by increasing environmental damage.[24] Moreover, Cervino imparts a sense of monumentality to the sculpture by choosing to cast it in bronze rather than carving it in wood. By imbuing it with new significance, Cervino turns the Tjomsland bear into a singular art object. In fact, the entire series of *When You Wish You Were Here* is a postmodern exploration of the socio-political and ecological landscape of Svalbard. The objects materially function as badges, postcards, and tabletop ornaments, while also being conceptual, site specific, and even performative works of art. In the summer of 2024, most of the exhibition's audience were overseas tourists in Svalbard, who were encouraged by Cervino to take home badges and postcards. The site-specificity of the works also invites another question: does the series lose impact when they are displayed outside of Svalbard, specifically at The Trout Gallery, or do they take on a new-found significance that indicates the reach of globalization?

Kozloff and Cervino's experiences abroad provided them with opportunities to reflect on socio-political landscapes in a destination foreign to them. For Kozloff, this means taking a global approach to examine the origins and absurdity of war throughout human history. For Cervino, it signifies creating mementos objects that represent ephemeral experiences but allude to bigger themes affecting society. Kozloff and Cervino challenge viewers to consider the aftermath of adventure, engaging them through humor and unexpected references. Ultimately, their works serve as both commemoration as well as encouragement, inviting us to question, remember, and reconsider the traces of the past and a longing for a different future, or as the title of Cervino's series suggests, when we wish we were here.

ENDNOTES

1 "Oral History Interview with Joyce Kozloff, 2011 Jul 12-13, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution," Text, accessed October 6, 2024, https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-joyce-kozloff-15963.

2 Kozloff, "Oral History," 28.

3 Anthony Cervino, in discussion with the author, October 2024.

4 For in depth examination of the types of sea monsters in *Carta Marina*, see Chet Van Duzer, *Sea Monsters on Medieval and Renaissance Maps* (London: The British Library, 2013), 81-86.

5 Duzer, *Sea Monsters on Medieval and Renaissance Maps*, 26.

6 For the use of visual representation during European colonialization of the Americas, see Peter C. Mancall, "The Age of Discovery," *Reviews in American History* 26, no. 1 (1998): 38, http://www.jstor.org/stable/30030873.

7 On the interpretation and significance of the *Miseries of War*, see James Clifton and Leslie M. Scattone, *The Plains of Mars: European War Prints, 1500-1825* (Yale University Press in association with the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 2009), 110-121.

8 Robert Kushner, "Gunsmoke," in *Boys' Art* (New York: Distributed Art Publishers, 2003), 6-7.

9 The Sapmi region ranges from northern Scandinavia to Northern Russia. For the history and contemporary challenges of the Sami people, see https://www.iwgia.org/en/sapmi.html. See also Ivar Bjørklund et al., "Sápmi — Becoming a Nation: The Emergence of a Sami National Community," Australian Indigenous Law Reporter 7, no. 1 (2002): 1–14.

10 Peter Osborne, *Conceptual Art, Themes and Movements* (London: Phaidon, 2002), 11.

11 Anthony Cervino (@a_cervino). "Endless variations of postcards featuring cuddly white bears and the aurora borealis dominate the gift shops in Longyearbyen. While sightings of both polar bears and the Northern Lights can be witnessed in Svalbard, they are not exclusive to the archipelago nor likely to be seen…" Instagram, July 28, 2024. https://www.instagram.com/p/C9-6ezQiYANm-Lw0PPCUTurqZaaKcwo_G4jX1A0/?igsh=dDhkYThhcGZzdDc0

12 See Jung-Ah Woo, "On Kawara's 'Date Paintings': Series of Horror and Boredom," *Art Journal* 69, no. 3 (2010): 64, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25800346. See also Nikos Papastergiadis, "Space/Time: Matter and Motion in On Kawara," *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry* 41 (March 1, 2016): 126–35, https://doi.org/10.1086/687095.

13 Phillip Earenfight, "Joyce Kozloff: Mappae Mundi," in *Joyce Kozloff: Co+ordinates* (Carlisle, PA: Trout Gallery, Dickinson College, 2008), 36.

14 Joyce Kozloff, "Introduction", in *Boys' Art* (New York: Distributed Art Publishers, 2003), 5.

15 Kushner, "Gunsmoke," 7.

16 Anthony Cervino (@a_cervino). "When I visited Longyearbyen in January, I signed up for a guided excursion to see an ice cave. Along with fellow artist-in-residence @sjnijdewindt and two other tourists, we set off into the pitch black, wearing crampons and headlamps. The guide—a twenty-something Aussie working…" Instagram, July 27, 2024. https://www.instagram.com/p/C98GdPgCdkpS1qTVR3vBvUcI0aFoXIOxYJsndo0/?igsh=bWViamQ4ajh5cjQ5

17 Cervino, "When I visited."

18 Zdenka Sokolíčková and Thomas Hylland Eriksen, "Introducing the Fieldwalk: Field, Companions and Path," in *The Paradox of Svalbard: Climate Change and Globalisation in the Arctic* (London: Pluto Press, 2023), 4.

19 Anne D'Alleva and Michael W. Cothren, *Methods & Theories of Art History* (London: Laurence King, 2021), 182-183.

20 On Kozloff's other works inspired by maps, see Earenfight, "Joyce Kozloff: Mappae Mundi," 24-43. See also Nancy Princenthal, "Joyce Kozloff: Border Crossings," in *Joyce Kozloff: Co+ordinates* (Carlisle, PA: Trout Gallery, Dickinson College, 2008), 12-23.

21 Earenfight, "Joyce Kozloff: Mappae Mundi," 35.

22 For the impact of climate change on Svalbard's environment and demography, see Gloria Dickie, "The World's Northernmost Town Is Changing Dramatically," *Scientific American*, June 1, 2021, https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-worlds-northernmost-town-is-changing-dramatically/.

23 For more images of Tjomsland's design, see "Arne Tjomsland (1915-1970)—Nordic designs in whale tooth and wood," Dayne's Discoveries, accessed Nov 29, 2024, https://daynesdiscoveries.com/2020/03/27/arne-tjomsland-1915-1970-nordic-souvenir-designs-in-whale-tooth-and-wood/. See also Mats Linder, *Arne Tjomsland—Souvenir design* (Trondheim: Papiret Forlag).

24 Cervino, in discussion with the author, October 2024.

CAT ORZELL

THE TAXONOMY OF MEMORY

Fragments of porcelain decorative plates are carefully displayed in *Gathered*, a work by artist Anthony Cervino (fig. 1). This collection of objects, each flintknapped into spearheads using an archaic technique of hitting a hard material with a rock at critical points to create an object with a sharp point, appears at first as a selection of ancient artifacts, uncannily similar to a "real" display of Neolithic stone tool fragments found in The Trout Gallery's collection (fig. 2). Consisting of eleven archeological stone fragments that date from the Neolithic period and mounted in a line on green velvet, this object was donated to The Trout Gallery by Dr. And Mrs. Donald K. McIntyre, among many other donations make up a large portion of the Gallery's archaeological collection. While the stone fragments were not originally meant to be viewed as a work of art, the presentation of these objects reflects the conventions of museological display. Keenly aware of these precedents, Cervino, as a postmodernist sculptor, refers both to this aesthetic of organizing objects as well as to the ancient method for creating tool fragments. In other words, the ceramic spearheads of *Gathered* were made in the same way that they might have been made in the Neolithic era, but his attention to iconography, contemporary materiality, and his larger artistic processes return the viewer to a present-day meditation on different notions of temporality.

Cervino's work exists in dialogue with the kinds of anthropological museums that collect and display historical objects. The stone tool fragments, identified as Neolithic by the donor, may be dated to approximately 7000–1700 BCE, but even the velvet mount seems ancient; there are indentations and stains which indicate the object may have been handled and displayed in different settings across the decades before its donation to the Gallery in 1997.[1] In the center of the piece is a row of stone objects, vaguely rectangular, some pointed, but all placed so that their bases sit on a straight line. The size of each artifact varies, with the largest piece in the center and the size radiating on each side with the smallest ones on each end, forming a triangular line which draws attention to the pointed tip of the central object. Most of the artifacts appear to have the same or very similar widths, and they all have ridges on the front of them

(fig. 1) Anthony Cervino, *Gathered*, 2019, decorative plates knapped into a variety of points, rough cut white oak, plywood, paint, linen, glass, 30 x 30 x 8 in. (76.2 x 76.2 x 20.3 cm)

(fig. 2) *11 Stone Tool Fragments Attached to Background*, Neolithic, stone, The Trout Gallery, Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Donald K. McIntyre, 1997.1.57

LEFT: *11 Stone Tool Fragments Attached to Background (detail)*, Neolithic, stone, The Trout Gallery, Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Donald K. McIntyre, 1997.1.57

RIGHT: Anthony Cervino, *Gathered (detail)*, 2019, decorative plates knapped into a variety of points, rough cut white oak, plywood, paint, linen, glass, 30 x 30 x 8 in. (76.2 x 76.2 x 20.3 cm)

that create dimension to an otherwise flat surface. Given the slight shadow beneath each fragment, the back side of each piece cannot be completely flat either. Several of the objects have notches on one or both edges that look intentionally serrated, like a knife, but only two objects have defined points at the top. Every artifact is a different color ranging from charcoal, to black, to brown, to a light gray that almost looks white; and they are probably all different types of stone. However, not many people outside of archaeologists or anthropologists would be able to discern what kind of tool each fragment used to be a part of or what their function may have been. One might guess that the serrated edges on the sides of some of them, or the sharp points on the tips of others, could suggest that they used to be weapons, but the display decontextualizes each object. While the documentation that accompanied the donation did not include specific details about where the fragments were discovered, stone age tool fragments have been found across the globe and provide insights into the innovations and physical skills of early human toolmakers. In this exhibition, Cervino's allusion to these artifacts examines the museum itself as a component in making the art object, while also encouragine speculation and reflection on cultures of the past.

Cervino utilizes Stone Age tool-making techniques as a commemoration of both its historical significance in human development and that of the experiential adventures of adolescence. Flintknapping is a process where two solid objects are hit against each other; if hit against a specific point, the force will knock off pieces from one of the objects to eventually create a desired form.[2] Historically, this technique has existed for millennia and is not exclusive to any single culture or civilization. Neolithic humans used these newly transfigured rocks as tools that could serve their daily lives. For instance, pointed shapes might have been used for weapons and hunting; a wedge shape might work as an axe; a serrated edge could be used for processing food, animal hides, and other materials.[3] Knapping may not be tecnhnically considered an art, but it is a skilled craft that one could learn and practice, and reflects humans' innovation, dexterity, and creativity. The practice has become most strongly associated with the Stone Age, though it is not exclusive to that period, but the technique has largely remained the same since its prehistoric origins. Cervino is fond of using simple tools and the dichotomy that exists with people using them: they are as modern as they are ancient, as contemporary as they are historical.[4] While the tools clearly refer to the Neolithic era, the experience of discovering and making arrowheads also abstractly represents the adventures of boyhood. Art historian Margaret Winslow, who wrote the catalogue essay for Cervino's 2020 exhibition *Hurry with the Furies* at Muhlenberg College, describes his concept of boyhood as "more Lord of the Flies than Boy Scouts of America," imagining that his work refers to "boys of adventure, or misadventure, [who] are present in the marks they have left behind."[5] She explores Cervino's work as a study of male adolescence, one where viewers engage in the progression of growing up through themes such as masculinity, fatherhood, family, and the culture of Americana.

Each knapped point mounted in Cervino's *Gathered* originated as a kitschy plate that would have been displayed, rather than functionally used, in the homes of middle-class American families in the mid-to late twentieth century. Cervino acquired stacks of these ceramic collectibles secondhand at antique stores and flea markets, choosing each based on the imagery it featured, which often commemorated real events or people, scenes or characters from popular entertainment, a huge variety of wildlife, and sentimental representations of landscapes, among many other motifs. Starting with an intact plate, Cervino would begin his process with an attempt to isolate a specific section of the plate, the face of a character for example, through strategic shattering. Then, from the resulting fragments he would shape a few pieces into more precise points through careful chipping at the shard's edges. Being quite fragile, the emerging forms often would break unpredictably or in such a way that featured a less desirable section of the image that Cervino had hoped to retain. This reductive knapping process would reduce most of the decorative elements to unidentifiable shards, though enough visual imagery is typically retained on the finished points to convey some qualities of the manufacturer's original iconography.[6] Though classic collectors are usually only attracted to rare and valuable objects, writer and independent curator James Putnam explains in his book *Art and Artifact: The Museum as a Medium* that the process of "selection, arrangement, presentation and labelling becomes essentially an artist's personal construction and concept," using found objects as a working material and presenting them with institutional authority in their display.[7] Cervino has *gathered* these plates, but then, with a method unlike the average plate collector, highlights only small parts of the whole picture printed on each one. In this way, he offers a new story punctuated by the thematic significance of specific subjects.

As seen in the linear arrangements of fragments in both Cervino's work and the Neolithic stone tools, the taxonomical display of each connects to an institutional aesthetic. In other words, this organization echoes the discipline of anthropology, an attempt to systematize and study human cultures and societies, with a focus on material remnants and artifacts. Taxonomy is a manner of organization which categorizes and sorts a collection of objects in an order that improves the understanding of the viewer. Humans, in general, need to find a pattern in order to process the world around them, and museology has become associated with taxonomy

because museums utilize this style of organization to make sense of artifacts that otherwise might not have other comprehensible contexts to non-experts. In Putnam's examination of borrowing the authority of institutional aesthetics, he noticed that museological display can offer a more "aesthetically pleasing presentation merely by isolating an object from its original context and reframing it for more considered viewing" and interpretation.[8] Cervino participates in this larger institutional aesthetic, one that has been examined by other contemporary artists with different outcomes. For example, artist Mark Dion incorporates objects that belong to natural history museums in his installations and stages them in unconventional groupings so that viewers may consider a new interpretation of both the conventions of display and the value of artifacts.[9] Both Dion and Cervino work in dialogue with the visual vocabulary of museology, but while Cervino's work might at first seem to be engaging with Dion's interest in taxonomy, Cervino ultimately expands his subject and material beyond Dion's institutional or historical parameters. In other words, Dion often works collaboratively with natural history museums and zoos to incorporate "real" specimens in his installations, while Cervino fabricates his historical artifacts from objects that are more domestic than insitutional. Cervino creates an archive more personal than what would be found and studied in seemingly objective, scientific libraries and museums and describes the material components of his work as "archaeologic relics of boyhood narratives."[10] Ultimately, the gathered and recycled objects in his work are imbued with personal associations and memories. Putnam explains this approach to the artist's criteria, as the selected objects "reveal the diversity of [the artist's] individual interest, which help to break down the more formal standard classification system" of museums. He continues to frame the artists' processes in relation to these institutional constrains, considering that artists' "frequent preoccupation with the self also works well in helping to deconstruct the impersonal nature of museum displays."[11] Like Dion, Cervino chooses his found objects based on an imagined context and utilizes modes of display as an art form. However, unlike Dion, who often borrows items already existing in museum collections for his own installations, Cervino hunts for "new" objects to create sculptures with a different significance and meaning. Whereas Dion's artistic practice is situated in the act of arranging, Cervino intervenes in the transformation of each object to create a new narrative for collecting and display: he hunts, gathers, transforms, fabricates, *and* displays.

Cervino's *Gathered* serves as a point of connection between institutionalized history and the history that imagined future curators will attempt to narrate through the details of each sculpture. The choice of material is only significant in the context of its taxonomic presentation. The final display of an institutional reproduction, according to Putnam, "may be personal, biographical, or fictional in character, and the style of presentation may contain elements of parody" that mocks the gravitas of the museums it references. In its replication, however, "the objects are presented with [that same] aura of institutional authority, yet play on the contrast between truth and fantasy in their use of either fake or genuine artifacts."[12] While Cervino's sculpture may not contain the remnants of genuine Neolithic stone tools, the ceramic plate fragments provide a fantastical possibility of an imagined past or future in which humans needed to use their decorative plates to arm themselves.[13] Cervino created these imagined weapons with a keen interest in the significance of their imagery, which is still visible through the chipped edges of the broken shards. Taken together, the imagery presents a particular perspective on notions of family, authority, and nature. For example, Captain Kirk, from the television show *Star Trek*, does not just convey the artist's nostalgia for vintage science fiction, but represents a hopeful future with frontiers yet to be explored. Captain Kirk sits directly in line with President Lincoln on Mt. Rushmore, who also serves as a visual association with equality, leadership, and peace. At the same time, Lincoln, along with several fragmented images of landscapes that seem almost straight out of the lyrics to the American nationalistic folksong, "America the Beautiful," convey aspects of American culture and history more broadly. At first, this iconography could be simply a meditation on American material culture, but Cervino alludes to a more nuanced approach to this notion of Americana. If some of the selected imagery evokes a past hope for a new America, *Star Trek* is representative of a future that has eliminated issues of disease, famine, poverty, and discrimination of race, sexuality, and religion. *Star Trek* is a future in which you can be whatever you want to be, a promise told to children, who, as adults, soon realize the limitations of their time. In its utopian, fictional universe, *Star Trek* does not solve the problem of war. Similarly, Lincoln represents the winning of a Civil War in a country where inequality, white suprematism, and racism are still present. In realizing these frustrated hopes for equality, Cervino includes one spearhead depicting a cartoonish image of a city originally produced as one in a series of plates by McDonald's, with skyscrapers and busy streets filled with cars and bright yellow taxis. On the sidewalk, a woman is protesting with a sign demanding peace. This plea, echoed in Captain Kirk's directive for peace and freedom, introduces a somewhat paradoxical message within the larger work, as the "new" suggested function of these "old" ceramic plates, as imitations of arrowheads and spearheads, is one of violence and preparations for warfare. Across his oeuvre, Cervino frequently examines complicated binaries, such as heroes and cowards, masculine and feminine, unity and division, and, of course, past and future. In Cervino's words, *Gathered* itself is representative of a "dystopian yet maybe still positive future ahead."[14] Another theme he examines is

(fig. 3) Anthony Cervino, *Double Troubled*, 2021, vintage decorative plate knapped into a double-headed axe, plastic, rubber, lead fishing weight, daughter's hair, wooden handle, wire, brass, steel hook, dice carved from an avocado pit, curly maple, plywood, paint, linen, glass, 18 x 36 x 9 in. (45.72 x 91.44 x 22.86 cm)

one of fatherhood and familial roles. One spearhead has images of decorative oranges behind the word "mother," which appears to have some sort of description of her role as a planner below it. Another spearhead features a group of four figures and a dog, a scene from the 1982 musical motion picture *Annie*, sitting together as though posing for a family portrait.

Allusions to parenthood are present in a few of the fragments in *Gathered*, but also can be found in other works in the series, *Long Lost*, to which this work belongs. These themes are important to Cervino's current identity, as many of the sculptures in *Long Lost* examine the reflection of his own childhood from the critical lens of parenting his own two daughters.[15] As a series of sculptures, *Long Lost* investigates the idea of memory and how childhood experiences might affect future adventures. In one work from this series, titled *Double Troubled* (fig. 3). Cervino creates a double-headed axe with blades made from another decorative plate. Through careful knapping, the, full image of this plate and its accompanying text are mostly visible to the viewer. On one side of the shaft, a couple leans into each other in an embrace; next to them is a rose bush with four blooms and six rosebuds that have yet to flower. The bottom of the plate includes this quote: "Life can be beautiful shared by two. A world filled with love, ever old and ever new. Life can be beautiful shared with each other—two happy people who love one another…" The contrast of this romantic quote and the flaked edges of what is essentially a weapon is surprising, as it was originally intended to simply celebrate love and marriage. Cervino explains that he "like[s] the idea of a double-headed ax as a metaphor for a complicated relationship," as it prompts the viewer to consider binaries at work within partnerships, through the good times and the bad.[16] Another contradiction in this work are the charms that hang from the bottom of the handle. Among the talismans are two colorful friendship bracelets, a reference to Cervino's two daughters, but these childlike accessories, with their implications of peace and connection, also seem to oppose the purpose and presence of a large weapon. Two dice carved from avocado pits on a linked chain, a lead fishing weight, a rubber drain stopper, and a lock of hair belonging to one of Cervino's daughters are among the other elements attached to the axe handle. These objects serve as a reference to the concept of sympathetic magic, defined by Cervino as "the idea that through ritual, an object can influence action."[17] For instance, someone might wear a pair of lucky socks before every exam, because they superstitiously believe that the socks affect their ability to do well. In *Double Troubled*, each item that dangles from the axe suggests some kind of intensely personal and poignant intention. The relics used for sympathetic magic can be seen, in a way, as approximating the artist's inclusion of preexisting objects in an artwork. As Putnam explains, artists who use found objects in their work "often investigate

themselves and their memory using associations with certain collected artifacts."[18] More specifically, childhood memory and the evocation of adolescence frequently informs Cervino's work.[19]

In *Long Lost,* Cervino's memories of his youth are presented through the lens of parenting his own children and witnessing them experiencing the world.[20] While *Gathered* may exist as a reference to the institutional taxonomy of Neolithic stone tool fragments, each hand-knapped ceramic arrowhead also reflects personal associations and urges the viewer to consider their own impulses toward collecting, finding meaning among mundane relics. Finally, the title of the sculpture, *Gathered*, does not just imply this collection of things, but rather prompts questions about larger experiences and rituals. When people come together for holidays or celebrations, it's a gathering; when you hold someone in an embrace, you're gathering them in your arms; when you're reflecting on something, you're gathering your thoughts. Cervino invites his viewers to "gather" their memories, as he did with his.

ENDNOTES

1 Dr. and Mrs. Donald K. McIntyre correspondence with Peter Lukehart, Director, 1997, Donor files, The Trout Gallery, Dickinson College.

2 University of New England, and Mark Moore, "Techniques." Museum of Stone Tools, March 1, 2023. https://stonetoolsmuseum.com/techniques/.

3 Moore, "Spear and Dart Points," Museum of Stone Tools, July 22, 2021. https://stonetoolsmuseum.com/tool-type/spears-darts/.

4 ACO Community, "ACO Presents: Interview with Sculptor Anthony Cervino." *YouTube*, May 27, 2023. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9anrWX8sANs. 28:41.

5 Margaret Winslow, "Anthony Cervino: *Hurry with the Furies*," (Martin Art Gallery, Muhlenburg College, 2020).

6 Anthony Cervino, interview with the author, September 13, 2024.

7 James Putnam, *Art and Artifact: The Museum as Medium* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2001), 132.

8 Putnam, *Art and Artifact,* 36.

9 Ruth Erickson, *Mark Dion: Misadventures of a 21st-Century Naturalist* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017).

10 Winslow, "Anthony Cervino: *Hurry with the Furies*."

11 Putnam, *Art and Artifact,* 132.

12 Putnam, *Art and Artifact,* 66.

13 "ACO Presents: Interview with Sculptor Anthony Cervino," 30:09.

14 "ACO Presents: Interview with Sculptor Anthony Cervino," 30:20.

15 "ACO Presents: Interview with Sculptor Anthony Cervino," 11:20.

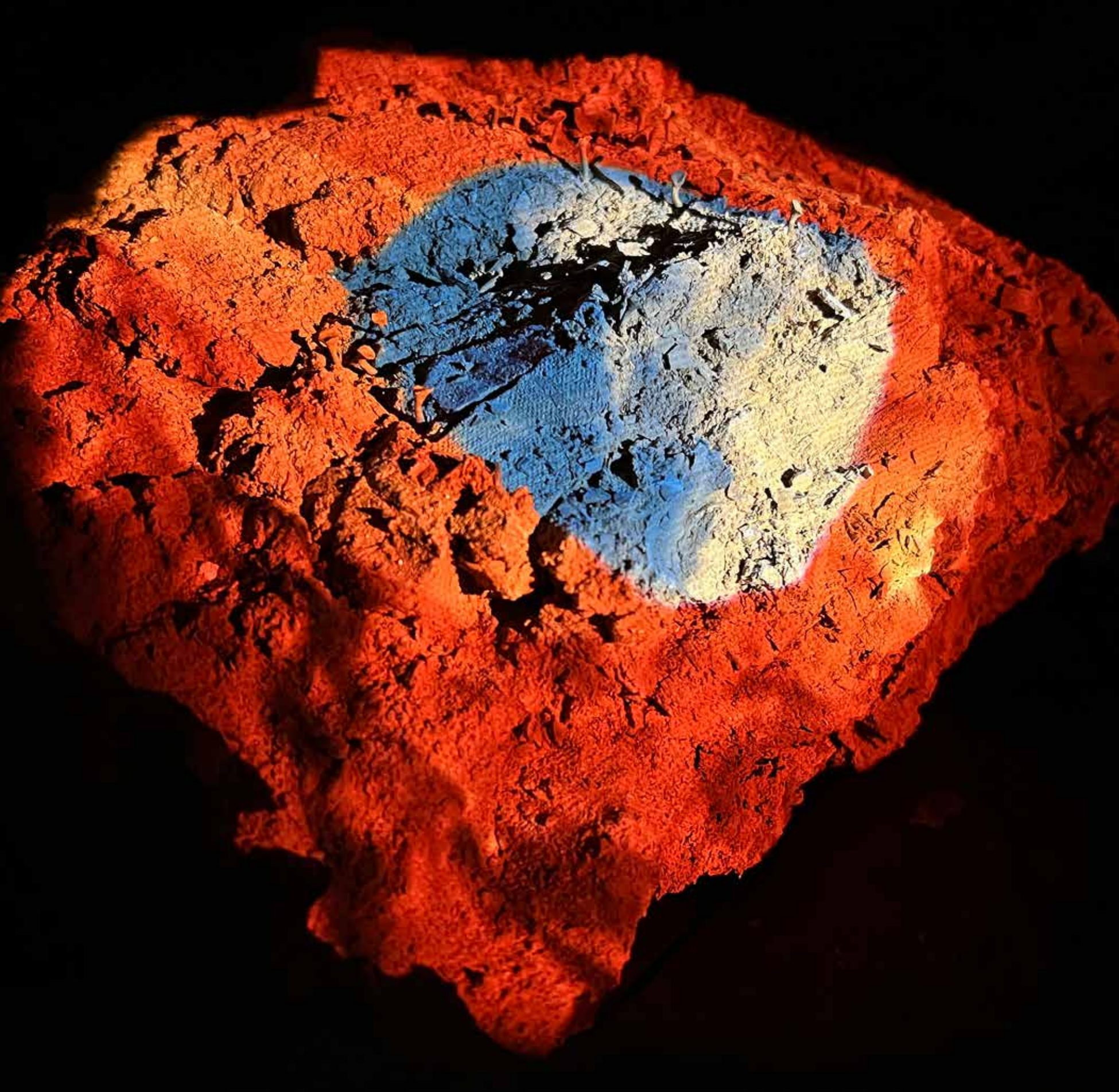
16 "ACO Presents: Interview with Sculptor Anthony Cervino," 27:30.

17 Anthony Cervino, "Long Lost," Accessed December 5, 2024, https://www.anthonycervino.com/long-lost-.

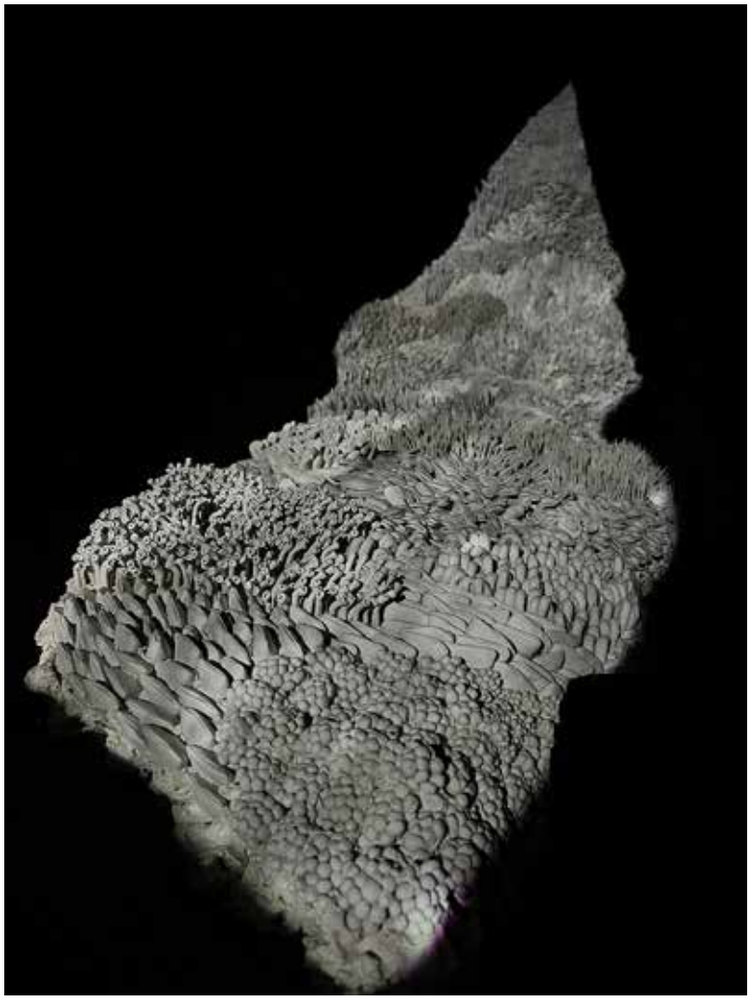
18 Putnam, *Art and Artifact,* 68.

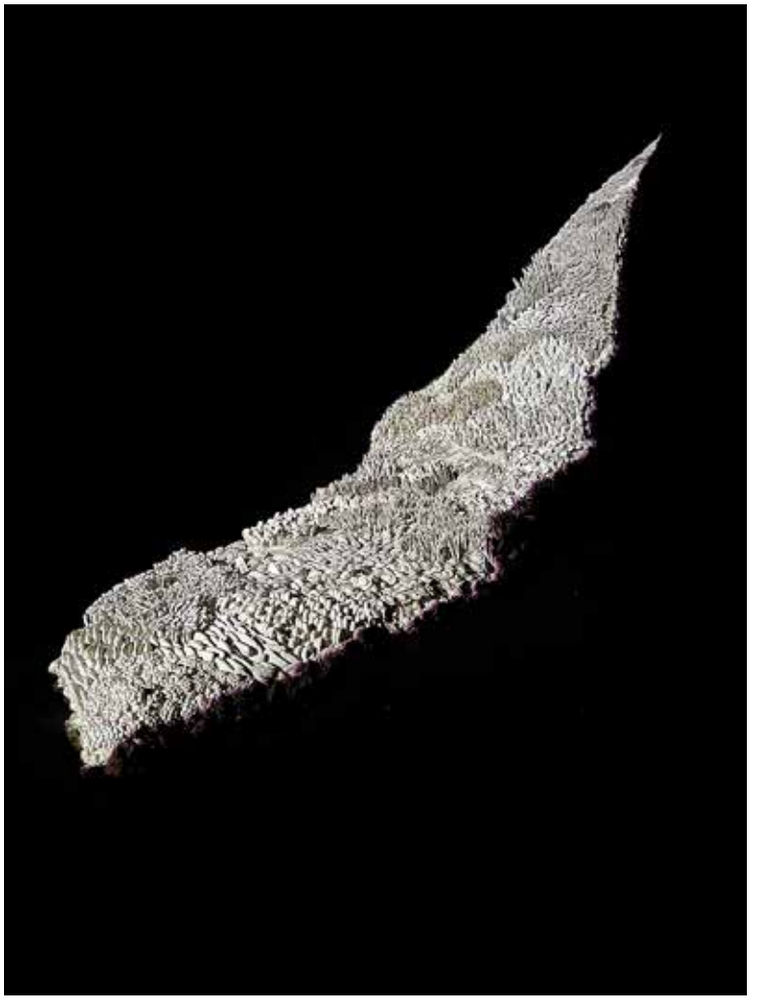
19 Erickson, *Mark Dion: Misadventures of a 21st-Century Naturalist*, 66.

20 "ACO Presents: Interview with Sculptor Anthony Cervino," 11:28.



RACHEL
ENG





RACHEL ENG
Unearth, 2023, unfired clay, video projection, sound, 121 x 32 x 4 in.

RACHEL ENG

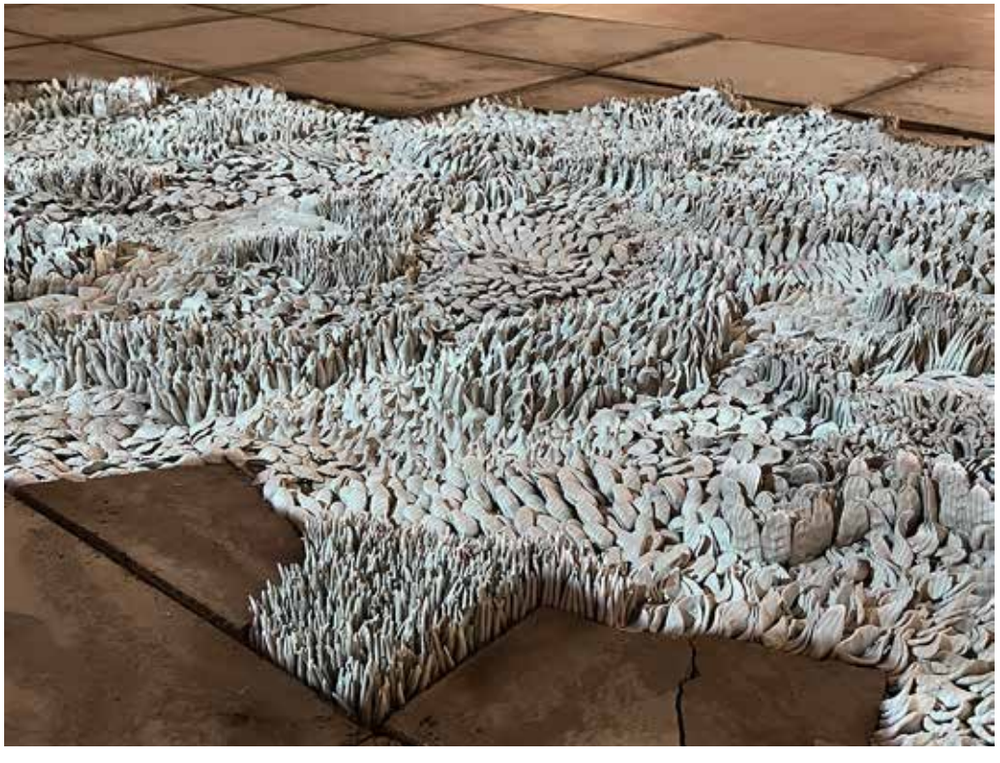
Muhlygrass, 2022, muhlygrass seeds, clay from Charlotte, NC, 60 x 4 x 16 in.

RACHEL ENG
Asphalt, 2024, digital print, Cumberland County, PA, 24 x 36 in.

RACHEL ENG
Gravel, 2024, digital print, Cumberland County, PA, 24 x 36 in.

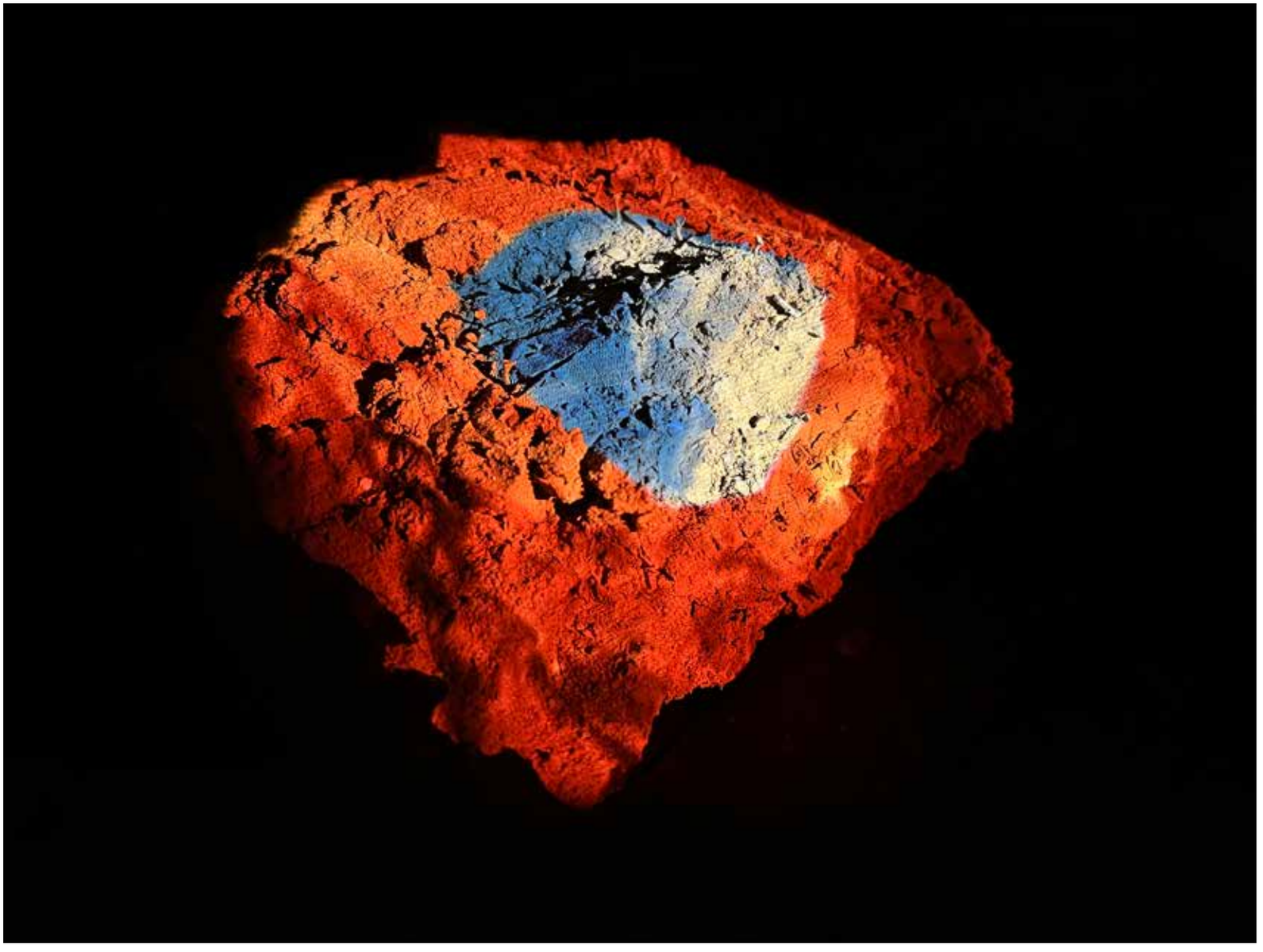
RACHEL ENG

Irrigate, 2022, turfgrass, thread, fringe, drain cover, 72 x 72 in.



RACHEL ENG
Public vs. Private, 2021, concrete, clay, video projection, sound, Depauw University, Greencastle, IN, 120 x 216 x 4 in.

RACHEL ENG
Pile, 2024, digital print, 24 x 36 in.



RACHEL ENG
Pile, 2024, digital print, 24 x 36 in.

VIVIAN ANDERSON

LAYERED RELATIONSHIPS: EARTHLY MATERIALS AND HUMAN PROCESSES

Artist Rachel Eng's installation titled *recover* (fig. 1), an architectural assemblage of hand-pressed bricks, made from locally sourced clay, can be understood as both an examination of the artist's immediate environment and a prompt to consider the larger context of human innovations and interventions in the natural world. For example, when seen in dialogue with an ancient fragment of paving material from Syracuse, Italy, Eng's work invites inquiries about the effect of humans on nature and the materiality and shifting meaning of seemingly common objects, like brick and stone. Centuries separate the two artworks, as *recover* was made in 2024, and the *Paving Material* (fig.2) is an artifact of the Late Antique Period during Roman rule, approximately 250–500 CE. Both works are comprised of organic materials excavated from the ground, one beginning as untouched clay, the other an unassuming stone, and each reflects connections between human labor and the earth. This essay not only maps the creation of each work, but also explores how the material traces of roads and buildings tell the story of human expansion and extraction on the environment, particularly how we interpret the traces left behind.

Eng's *recover* draws specific attention to contemporary perceptions about the potential of land for development. In its construction, *recover* is a perpendicular arrangement of bricks, a corner of a structure that might not at first seem entirely uncommon. However, when placed on the floor of a gallery, these walls become a singular work of art, provoking questions of how Eng procured its materials and then shaped them to form the sculpture. Instead of buying bricks from an outside source, Eng dug clay from a new housing development in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Eng reveals her sourcing from the land by leaving in raw materials, such as rocks, naturally found alongside the clay. This process creates small irregularities in the texture, but the shape of each block remains rectangular, approximate to standard-sized bricks.[1] *Recover* is not held together by mortar; the

LEFT: *Piece of general paving material from Syracuse,* Roman, Late Antique Period, stone, 3.688 x 1.875 in. (9.366 x 4.763 cm), The Trout Gallery, Gift of Commodore Jesse Duncan Elliott, 1958.16.11

RIGHT: Rachel Eng, *recover* (detail), 2024, local clay, seeds, dimensions variable

(fig.1) Rachel Eng, *recover*, 2024, local clay, seeds, dimensions variable

(fig. 2) *Piece of general paving material from Syracuse,* Roman, Late Antique Period, stone, 3.688 x 1.875 in. (9.366 x 4.763 cm), The Trout Gallery, Gift of Commodore Jesse Duncan Elliott, 1958.16.11

interlocked pattern maintains the sculpture's stability and shape.[2] According to Eng, one of the goals of *recover*, is to ask "questions about the history of brickmaking or what our buildings are created from."[3] *Recover* is not Eng's first experiment with site-specific work. Her installation titled *Muhlygrass* (2022) (fig. 3) also incorporates bricks made up of material she found in Charlotte, North Carolina during a residency at the McColl Center. In revisiting the brickmaking technique in a new state, Eng learned about our shared history of the injustices of slavery that are tied to brick-making, where enslaved peoples were forced to labor in brick plantations. When she moved, she felt it necessary to leave her older work in Charlotte and create a new one in Carlisle.[4] Eng's process connects human lives in the modern world with the earth and raw materials.

The display of the *Paving Material* and *recover* next to each other in a gallery setting creates a relationship between the two based on both materiality and cultural value. Though small and encased in a shadow box, the *Paving Material* carries historical weight as a signifier of Roman society. The millennia-long history of road construction relied on the repurposing of organic materials to facilitate transportation and territorial expansion. The invention of Roman roads promoted trade and facilitated the spread of Roman culture through the empire. Rather than seeing the *Paving Material* as simply rubble or a useful piece of road, the seemingly unobtrusive stone is protected in the gallery environment, but also revered for its connection with an ancient civilization known for its technological achievements in building. Thus, the *Paving Material* is very similar to *recover* as the presentation of both within The Trout Gallery offers a comparison about how humans create architecture and infrastructure both within and from the earth, demonstrating how people alter and impact the environment.

R*ecover* indexes a different cultural achievement from more recent history: the increasing rise of suburban developments. The work itself rests upon the floor, both its size and the light from the projection cast upon it drawing attention to its presence and inviting viewers' interaction with the installation. When molding the bricks for this sculpture, Eng embedded local seeds into the compact clay. If returned to the outdoors, the seeds will develop into plant life, thereby destroying *recover*. Due to the seeds being native, they will not disrupt the local ecosystem and will help build a non-invasive, diverse area of plant life on top of the bricks. The temporary nature of *recover* signaled by these seeds is echoed in the video projection of undisturbed land cast upon the sculpture. In this projection, two videos are superimposed on each other, one of Eng doing the digging for clay and one of grass and sky.[5] Specifically, Eng filmed the grounds of the housing development where she dug up the clay before it had been touched by construction. This video highlights how a new

(fig. 3) Rachel Eng, *Muhlygrass*, 2022, Charlotte, North Carolina, local clay, seeds, dimensions variable

housing development requires man-made constructions to be placed within the land, indiscriminately destroying the ecosystem. Because viewers may walk in front of the projection, their interference in the installation echoes the human intervention and destruction of a local site that *recover* represents. Eng's *recover* both challenges the viewer to consider their interactions with the work specifically and the environment more broadly.

In completing the travel and labor required to collect the desired materials for an exhibited work of art, Eng has taken inspiration from Robert Smithson (American, 1938–1973), who is best known for his large-scale Earthworks.[6] Smithson explains the significance of material in his work, particularly how his Nonsite sculptures reveal a complex relationship between geology and industry: "My interest in the site was really a return to the origins of material, sort of a dematerialization of

refined matter."[7] Similarly, Eng is interested in the origins of material in order to emphasize the contrasts between what is natural and artificial, native and intrusive, restorative and destructive. Smithson's ideas of materiality and labor also allows for works to travel and still be recognized as materials from a specific region.[8] Eng's examination of the extraction of natural materials from a specifically human-altered environment echoes the themes in Smithson's Nonsite sculptures.[9] Specifically, Smithson collected materials from the earth, like stone or slate, and installed them in minimalist geometric containers, often accompanied by maps and descriptions of the specific location where the natural resources were found. Similarly, for *recover* Eng moved the clay collected on the site of a housing development to The Trout Gallery in Carlisle. In this way Eng relates her pieces to the "non-site" ideas of Smithson. *Paving Material* also parallels Smithson's definition of "non-site" works as its display in the Trout Gallery changes its function from that of a regular paving material to that of a sculpture. Though the *Paving Material* is of a singular stone and not a hybrid of materials, the stone also acts as a record of Roman life in Syracuse, due to its imperfect shape, which refers to the human interventions that made its presence possible. Through their material presentations, both sculptures bring the outside world into the gallery space and invite investigations about the histories surrounding each work.

Because Eng creates bricks as the primary medium for *recover*, the work can be understood in relation to the history of quarrying and brickmaking in the Cumberland County area, which has a particular abundance of clay and limestone.[10] Both of these materials are important for the aesthetic and construction of local architecture, as seen in many buildings on the Dickinson College campus as well as brick-end barns on neighboring farms dating from the mid-nineteenth century. These barns were often constructed by wealthier farming families to permanently establish their farms in the area. According to historian Rochelle Lea Bohm, the owners of brick-end barns were "were in the top two deciles of assessed wealth."[11] As *recover* is built from bricks and comprised of clay from Cumberland County, the installation engages with the region's history of wealth and resources. Moreover, Cumberland County holds such a surplus of clay that brickmakers did not have a need for a permanent shop in which to house materials. The clay could be sourced from the land directly, so brickmakers traveled between clients to make commissioned buildings.[12] In mimicking nineteenth-century brickmaking traditions, *recover* explores the relationship humans have had with regional terrain and natural resource use over time.[13] Eng's investigation displays how people can easily work in tandem with the earth to construct functional structures. She explains, "I'm eager to draw attention to the beauty and complexity present in the overlooked and unseen."[14] Regarding *recover*, the sculpture draws attention to specific details seen in Cumberland County buildings and, through layers of projections, creates a deeper understanding of their manufacturing history.

A comparison between *recover* and the *Paving Material* was made possible by a significant donation from Commodore Jesse Duncan Elliott (American, 1782–1845) in 1836 to Dickinson College. During voyages to the Mediterranean, Commodore Elliot, who was raised in Carlisle, Pennsylvania and held the rank of Commodore in the Navy, developed an interest in collecting antiquities.[15] During these voyages Elliott stopped in several countries and extracted a multitude of artifacts ranging in both size and value.[16] Elliott abused his authority during this rampant collecting and was subsequently court-martialed. Many of the collected artifacts were donated to institutions, including Dickinson College, which was gifted around eleven fragments, largely from Greek and Roman cultures, like the *Piece of marble from the Parthenon* and part of the body of the *Allegorical Figure of Autumn*.[17] In a letter to the Board of Trustees at Dickinson College, Elliott wrote that he wished to donate "specimens of antiquity"[18] and for these donations to "keep up old associations with my native State."[19] Today, Elliott's acquisitions provide a tangible way to imagine the Roman roads that connected the world and globalized trade.

Although the exact details of where Elliott found the *Paving Material* were not recorded, the attributed location is Syracuse, Italy and the fragment is dated to the Late Antique Period. The city of Syracuse, founded in 734 BCE, was an important port city hosting a multitude of cultures, and there are remnants of the Greek and Roman society still intact in Syracuse today.[20] While the *Paving Material* was made and installed centuries after Syracuse's founding, it still holds value as evidence of Roman achievements in construction. Roads created by the Roman Empire were created to handle great weight such as carriages, and they needed to be stable to carry groups of people. Under the paving stones, a layer of gravel would be laid to ensure stability. The layering of stones also meant the roads could be placed over a multitude of environments, such as heavily forested areas or swampier grounds.[21] The general surveying and preparation of these roads were completed by the military. Therefore, even though the paving materials covered designated areas, the Romans worked with the environment to ensure ease of travel. Road upkeep was conducted by the city or town, and this system of maintenance ensured that all populated areas had a reliable path to traverse easily. Stone masons were required to tend to the paving stones, meticulously cutting the blocks into polygons to be placed into a flat pattern so they might be safely traversed.[22] The standardized sizes required by this system ensured that roads would be reliable, and the stones could be sculpted more efficiently.[23] Even in its current fragmented shape, the

Paving Material displays straight edges, specifically chiseled to this standardized shape.[24]

The connections humans cultivate with the earth's natural resources through the processes of creation are displayed in *recover* and the *Paving Material*. Each object began with materials common in local terrains and then was shaped into its desired appearance by humans. The *Paving Material's* weathered nature is a product of people traveling over its chiseled surface and of the migration of the stone from Syracuse to Dickinson College. In the Trout Gallery, people observe the modifications made to the stone so it could fit into a road. In creating *recover*, Eng's physical and conceptual efforts evoke the nuanced reliance of humans with the earth, the interconnectedness between resources, livelihood, and labor. Eng has stated that the ideas which fueled *recover's* construction were "land use, material histories, life cycles, and climate change."[25] She tapped into each of these by working with local land and plant life in considering the carbon emissions connected to how far her materials travel and where they come from. The ephemerality of *recover*, enforced by the layer of seeds, shows its own lifecycle, beginning with Eng collecting clay and ending with *recover* returning to the ground. By putting *recover* and a Roman stone in relationship to one another, audiences are asked to think about the changing nature of humans' relationships to the earth over the centuries. In mapping each object's geographical and temporal condition, this relationship underscores the continuous impact of humans on the earth.

ENDNOTES

1 Rachel Eng, interview with the author, September 17, 2024.

2 Rochelle Lea Bohm, *The Brick-End Barns of Cumberland County, Pennsylvania: A Symbol of Wealth, Ethnicity, or Efficiency* (MA Thesis, University of Delaware, 2005), 61.

3 Eng, email correspondence with the author, November 8, 2024.

4 Eng, email correspondence with the author, September 17, 2024.

5 Eng, email correspondence with the author, November 25, 2024.

6 Eng, email correspondence with the author, November 25, 2024.

7 Dominic Rahtz, "Indifference of Material in the Work of Carl Andre and Robert Smithson," *Oxford Art Journal* 35, no. 1 (2012): 44.

8 Jeffrey Kastner, "Alone In A Crowd: The Solitude Of Walter De Maria's New York Earth Room And Broken Kilometer," *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry*, no. 2 (2000), 70.

9 "Robert Smithson | Non-Site (Palisades-Edgewater, N.J.)." Accessed November 27, 2024. https://whitney.org/collection/works/5560.

10 Bohm, "The Brick-End Barns of Cumberland County," 18.

11 Bohm, "The Brick-End Barns of Cumberland County," 116.

12 J. William Stair, *The Brick-End Barns of the Pennsylvania Dutch; a Record of Early American Architecture* (Pennsylvania Dutch Folklore Center, Franklin and Marshall College, 1954).

13 Eng, email correspondence with the author, November 11, 2024.

14 "Rachel Eng," Artaxis.org, accessed November 27, 2024, https://artaxis.org/artist/rachel-eng/.

15 John Roth, "*The Elliott Marbles*," *American Journal of Archaeology* 89, no. 4 (1985): 692–93, https://doi.org/10.2307/504213.

16 Roth, "*The Elliott Marbles*."

17 "Collections," The Trout Gallery, accessed November 15, 2024. https://collections.troutgallery.org/objects-1/info?query=mfs%20all%20%22jesse%20duncan%22&sort=0&page=7.

18 "Jesse Duncan Elliot (1782-1845) | Dickinson College," accessed November 15, 2024, https://archives.dickinson.edu/people/jesse-duncan-elliot-1782-1845.

19 "Fate of Gift Sarcophagus Unknown," *Dickinson Alumnus*, September 1936. https://www.flipsnack.com/cisproject/dickinson-alumnus-september-1936.html.

20 UNESCO World Heritage Centre, "Syracuse and the Rocky Necropolis of Pantalica," UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed October 14, 2024. https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1200/.

21 Raymond Chevallier, *Roman Roads* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976).

22 James W. Ermatinger, *The World of Ancient Rome: A Daily Life Encyclopedia* [2 Volumes] (Greenwood, 2015), https://ebooks.abc-clio.com/?isbn=9781440829086.

23 Eric E. Poehler, *'Architecture of the Street', The Traffic Systems of Pompeii* (New York, 2017), https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190614676.003.0004.

24 Ben Edwards, interview with the author, September 26, 2024.

25 Eng, email correspondence with the author, November 11, 2024.

LILY SWAIN

MINING THE ART OF THE SUSQUEHANNA RIVER VALLEY: RACHEL ENG'S *GRAVEL PILE* IN DIALOGUE

On the surface, G.K. Richardson's nineteenth-century engraving, created from a drawing by English artist William Henry Bartlett (1809-1854), is vastly different from Rachel Eng's 2024 video projection. A dialogue between the two works, however, reveals much about the history of land development in the Susquehanna River Valley, particularly its Indigenous past and presence. Both artists take as their subject the valleys through which Pennsylvania's Susquehanna River flows, the Wyoming and the Cumberland, and each work reflects the fraught histories of this landscape. The river's name itself refers to the Susquehannock people indigenous to eastern Pennsylvania. The Susquehannocks and Lenape (Delaware) peoples lived in the area when white settlers first arrived in the late seventeenth century.[1] Movement of European colonizers displaced Indigenous communities, such as the Shawnee, Conoy, Conestoga, and Seneca, to other locations in Pennsylvania and further West.[2] Yet, Indigenous peoples persisted and continue to live in the state despite colonizers' challenges to their existence.[3] Currently, Native Americans living in Pennsylvania face unfair policies. Scholars David Minkerhout and Andrea Franz describe how "Pennsylvania is one of the few states that neither contains a reservation nor officially recognizes any Native American group within its borders."[4] These Indigenous temporalities—past, present, and future—inform the artwork of Bartlett and Eng in different ways. Bartlett, who works from a European perspective, presents the Wyoming Valley as an expanse of cultivated land inhabited by white settlers in lieu of the Indigenous communities that once lived there. In the Cumberland Valley, Eng reconnects the viewer to the land in spite of colonization by incorporating environmentally conscious and Indigenous ways of thinking into her artistic practice.

The toll of colonization was felt not only by human beings, but also by the state of Pennsylvania's lands and waters. Over time, settlers have modified the land, to the detriment of the environment. Looking back to Bartlett's milieu in the nineteenth century, colonizers transformed the land by establishing mines and agriculture.[5] Today, the Susquehanna River's surrounding lands are mainly used for agriculture,

(fig. 1) Rachel Eng, *Gravel Pile*, 2024, video projection

(fig. 2) William Henry Bartlett (English, 1809–1854), engraved by G.K. Richardson, *The Descent into the Valley of Wyoming*, 1838, Hand-colored steel engraving on paper, 8.19 x 10.5 in. (20.8 x 26.67 cm). 1989.1.26, Gift of the Doctors Meyer P. and Vivian O. Potamkin

LEFT: William Henry Bartlett (English, 1809–1854), engraved by G.K. Richardson, *The Descent into the Valley of Wyoming* (detail), 1838, Hand-colored steel engraving on paper, 8.19 x 10.5 in. (20.8 x 26.67 cm). 1989.1.26, Gift of the Doctors Meyer P. and Vivian O. Potamkin

RIGHT: Rachel Eng, *Gravel Pile* (detail), 2024, video projection

real estate development, industrial warehouses, and mining.[6] The relationships of settlers and their descendants with the Susquehanna River Valley can easily be characterized as destructive. But interactions with the land can be approached in alternative ways. For example, according to the University of Queens Office of Indigenous Initiatives, "Indigenous ways of knowing are commonly steeped in a deep respect for the land, and the necessity of a reciprocal relationship with the land."[7] While Richardson's work does not reflect this concept, Eng's understanding of Indigenous respect for the land informs her work, and she resists the narrative perpetuated throughout American history that white domination of land is an acceptable norm.

Drawing on Bartlett's composition as a historical resonance, this paper investigates Eng's contemporary artwork. The analysis descends into the site-specificity of the artworks and the evocation of Indigenous subjects and subjectivity in the Susquehanna River Valley. Next, it considers Indigenous thought on reciprocity in relation to the works of the two artists, followed by a section focusing on the mining-specific term "overburden" as it echoes the colonial burden endured by the landscape. The paper closes with an examination of the layered-ness of histories and materialities in Eng's video projection.

DESCENT

Rachel Eng's recent series, *Overburden*, is an ephemeral, multimedia work comprised of videos projected onto leftover building materials, captured both photographically and by video. One of these projection works dates from 2024 and is titled *Gravel Pile* (fig. 1). For this work, Eng chose a site outside of an expanding neighborhood in Carlisle to stage an interference with the landscape. As the title suggests, a pile of gravel is the focal point and the surface for Eng's projection. The mountain-shaped pile sits in the middle of the composition. Overlapping with the horizon, the pile also directs the viewer's eye to a horizontal row of identical houses that cuts across the middle of the right side of the space. The strict, geometric repetition of the houses contrasts with the irregularly-shaped gravel pile. Another dimension of *Gravel Pile* is the projection, which depicts a close-up field of wheat swaying in the wind. In the center of the pile, another projection, circular-shaped and blue, reads as either drifting clouds or waves crashing onto a shoreline. The artwork underscores the discontinuities between built and natural environments and the environmental impacts of land use.

Eng's *Gravel Pile* prompts a number of questions from the viewer: What is left behind after human manipulation of the earth? How do we reckon with the ways land is controlled by large industries? How can we see and understand the history of the land in relation to its past, present, and future Indigenous occupants? Eng's art draws upon the history of the land it represents as it grapples with these environmental issues. Carlisle's history with the land is especially fraught, as it was the site of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School from 1879 to 1918. The school forced the assimilation of Native Americans brought to Carlisle from across the country. Dickinson College, where Eng works, assisted the School's efforts, and confirms this history in its Land Acknowledgement, which reads "Dickinson College was founded on the unceded territory of the Susquehannock peoples…Dickinson endorsed and gave material support to these cultural eradication efforts…We recognize and take responsibility for the college's support for this attempted eradication of Indigenous peoples."[8] Eng is aware of Carlisle's complicated history with Indigenous peoples; her artwork not only examines the built versus natural environment, but also offers a careful consideration of how this conversation about Indigeneity may continue into the future.[9]

Two hundred years prior to Eng's interventions in the Pennsylvania landscape, English artist William Henry Bartlett fashioned his view of the Susquehanna River Valley, *The Descent into the Valley of the Wyoming* (fig. 2). This 1838 engraving, based on Bartlett's travels to the United States in 1835, depicts a landscape of the valley with the Susquehanna River flowing through it. The image was originally published in the book *American Scenery; or, Land, Lake, and River Illustrations of Transatlantic Nature* written by Nathaniel Parker Willis and distributed in London among a readership that included British nobility.[10] Willis writes in the genre of European "armchair travelling," which commodified American land to be consumed by a foreign audience. This European perspective is especially visible in the book's preface, which envisions how "…that enviable enjoyment [of far-wandering travellers] is brought to the fireside."[11] Bartlett's drawings also fits into the American landscape tradition of the mid-nineteenth century that depicted utopian renderings of local landscapes in an attempt to create a unified image of America.[12] The descriptions of the various landscapes in the book—including the story about Wyoming Valley Shawnee Chief Cornstalk, paired with the engraving—also exoticize Indigenous peoples, exaggerating stories of conquests and murders.[13] Where Eng works from a more ecocritical standpoint, forefronting respect for nature and its Indigeneity, Bartlett centers a colonialist perspective that privileges white settlers and the availability of the land for Western expansion, industrial development, and leisure.

In imagining a journey into Bartlett's print, *The Descent*, the viewer's eye is positioned slightly above a mountain road which twists down into the valley. Log cabins, farmland, and several figures are visible around the road. Ultimately, the road leads to a river-front town, where grey smoke hovers directly above the city. The figures in the left foreground of the print can be identified as white; they are colonizers. Though Indigenous people are absent from the print, Willis'

description evokes them immediately to make for a more dramatic story: "In looking down on this lovely scene, made memorable by savage barbarity...it is natural to indulge in resentful feelings towards the sanguinary race whose atrocities make up its page in story...."[14] The conflicts Willis recalls took place in the eighteenth century when the land of the Wyoming Valley was widely contested, prior to Bartlett's scene of "colonial bliss." Native Americans and white settlers from Connecticut and Pennsylvania died in disputes that occurred between 1770 and 1784. Most notably in 1778, the Wyoming Massacre involved Loyalist and Haudenosaunee allies attacking an American settler militia.[15] Historian Paul B. Moyer explains that these power struggles "could (and often did) take on racial dimensions as frontier farmers challenged government authority, conventional property rights, and the landed foundations of elite power," resulting in embellished characterizations of Native Americans as brutal killers.[16] At the expense of the Indigenous populations of the Wyoming Valley, white settlers claimed the land as their own and developed it into cities and farms, as seen in Bartlett's scene. This engraving idealizes the white colonizer's claim to the Wyoming Valley land while inadvertently providing clues regarding human activity's destructive toll. Fields emptied of trees and clouds of smoke from burning coal float above the city, evidence of the settlers' scarring of the land. Looking at the engraving through the lens of Eng's work, one sees how artists 200 years ago were loath to acknowledge or simply did not understand the problems of colonial land use. With a comprehension of postcolonial and ecocritical theories, Eng works against settler narratives of land domination.

RECIPROCITY

Eng purposefully layers media in her work to critique housing developments and their enduring impact on the environment. Since the original mound of fragmented rocks from *Gravel Pile* now exists only in photo and video format, viewers experience several degrees of separation from the physical site of *Gravel Pile*, reflecting modern society's increasing interface with screens and digital images. The projection of wheat and water onto the gravel as seen in the video represents yet another degree of media removed from the physical, natural world; viewers see a representation of a projected image of nature rather than the natural elements themselves. In response to the continued exploitation and disregard of the natural world by corporations and developers, Eng asserts a physical distance between the viewer and the "real" landscape.

To counter the exploitative mindset of the real estate industry, Eng's artwork also engages with Indigenous thought. In contrast to Bartlett's landscape, with its implicit celebration of Euro-American, exploitative values, Eng draws on Indigenous ways of thinking about the land and approaches the landscape as something to be safeguarded. One of her influences in this line of thought is botanist and author Robin Wall Kimmerer, an enrolled member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. For many Indigenous peoples, land is conceived as an equal partner in exchange with humans, as opposed to an object to be owned and exploited in a capitalistic sense.[17] In her book *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Kimmerer explains this reciprocal nature of Indigenous ecological consciousness:

> Cultures of gratitude must also be cultures of reciprocity. Each person, human or no, is bound to every other in a reciprocal relationship. Just as all beings have a duty to me, I have a duty to them. If an animal gives its life to feed me, I am in turn bound to support its life. If I receive a stream's gift of pure water, then I am responsible for returning a gift in kind. An integral part of a human's education is to know those duties and how to perform them.[18]

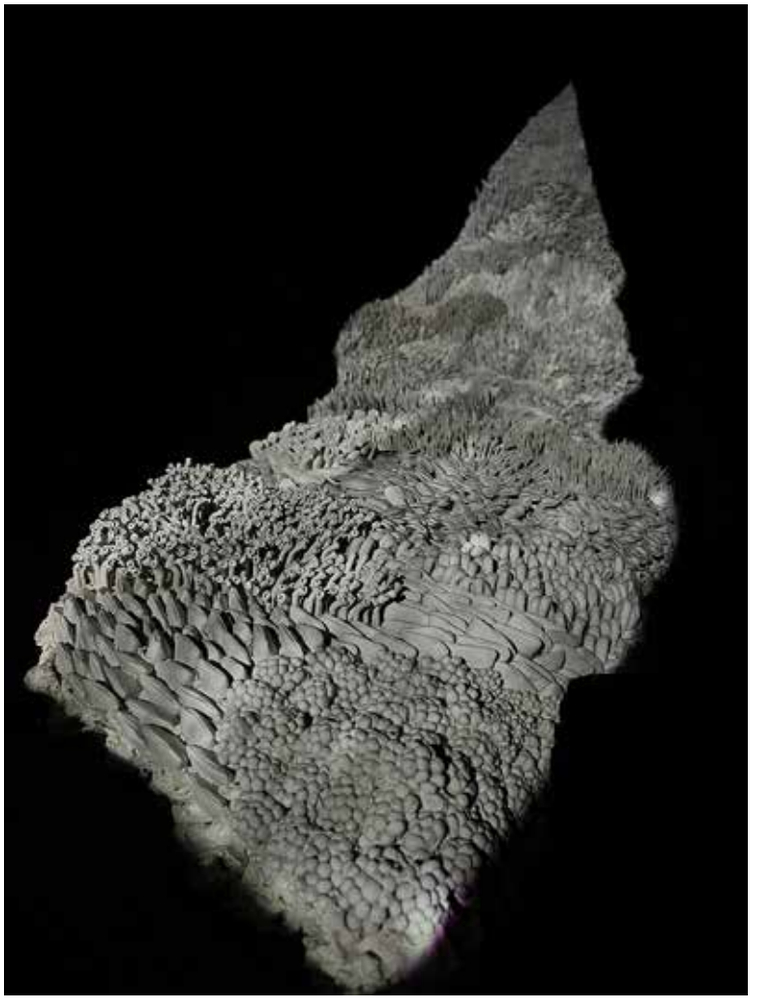
Eng frequently cites *Braiding Sweetgrass* as influential for how she thinks about her artistic practice interacting with the environment.[19] Perhaps Eng's looping, meditative video projections of wheat and water are a digital-age surrogate for the real estate industry's repentance. At odds with how suburban expansion removes gravel, wood, and other materials from the earth without gratitude, Eng offers this moment of solace in nature in the Cumberland Valley.

There is no analogous sense of reciprocity in Bartlett's engraving. What the viewer sees is solely the white colonizer's vision of a "tamed" land: controlled, never respected in an exchange of generosity. One can concentrate specifically on the smog as evidence of the nineteenth-century usurpation of the Wyoming Valley's land. Smoky, grey, semi-transparent clouds drift up from the two cities in the background of *The Descent*. Given the Wyoming Valley's history as a major site of anthracite coal mining, one can deduce that burning coal produced the smog in Richardson's work.[20] Coal burning produces noxious greenhouse gases which contribute to the earth's warming temperatures. Mining coal also generates harmful environmental impacts including water contamination, deforestation, and a loss of biodiversity.[21] Individual Americans have also contributed to the mining industry's impacts on ecosystems by using coal as an energy resource. Anthropologist Paul Shackel describes in his article "Anthracite Mining," that during the American Industrial Revolution in the 1830s, "coal also became an increasingly important source for residential heating and cooking."[22] To this day, homeowners continue to be involved in unsustainable energy practices by consuming non-renewable resources such as coal, natural gas, and petroleum.[23]

OVERBURDEN

Although her imagery may not as clearly illustrate the uses of coal, Eng's *Gravel Pile* also speaks to the subject of mining. The homes in the video were constructed using gravel, a mined rock, as a part of the structure's foundation. Additionally, Eng's *Gravel Pile* is part of a series titled *Overburden*. Overburden is a specific term in the mining industry that refers to the layers of earth above a mineral deposit that must be removed to extract the mineral underneath.[24] In other words, an overburden could also be described as waste or excess, something that no longer has use value. Eng applies this concept in her *Overburden* series by seeking out existing sites of leftover materials, whether it be a pile of gravel behind a new neighborhood or chunks of asphalt or concrete laying in a field. The neglect of these materials reads as a disrespect to the land. As a response, Eng clearly underlines ties between the treatment of land and the treatment of its Indigenous occupants.[25] For example, in her artwork called *Unearth* (fig. 3), Eng designed a site-specific installation in a former coal chute at Atlanta Contemporary Arts Center. She formed fungi-shaped pieces of clay that when arranged resembled the outline of the Weelaunee Forest. This forest is the ancestral land of the Muscogee Peoples and is currently under threat of being transformed into a police training facility, dubbed "Cop City" by protestors.[26] Fungi and coal are both ancient earthen materials; they are evidence of what Eng calls "the tremendous age of this planet and the previous rhythms and cycles that it has gone through before humans."[27] In *Unearth* and *Overburden*, Eng asserts that the use of land for mining must be regarded in the context of the larger environmental cycles that produced these materials in the first place.

Eng investigates coal as an energy-producing resource, but she also explores gravel as a construction and landscaping resource. One way the land of the Cumberland Valley is currently being exploited is through the mining of gravel.[28] In the valley, gravel is used to construct houses and as a decorative feature in their landscaping. While historically, as seen in *The Descent*, homes were fabricated mostly from wood, building a home today requires more synthetic materials and concrete strengthened with gravel for its foundation. As more houses are being built in the Carlisle area, a steady supply of gravel is necessary. The source of Carlisle's gravel can potentially be traced to the nearby Bonnybrook Quarry, a site owned by York Building Products, a company that claims to be one of the largest concrete products manufacturers in the USA.[29] Quarried by extraction or explosives, the process of creating gravel contributes to erosion, the contamination of streams, and noise pollution, negatively affecting the environment surrounding the quarry.[30] Eng's artwork, specifically its utilization of gravel as a material with a particular history, can be analyzed through the larger context of landscape architecture as



(fig. 3) Rachel Eng, *Unearth*, 2023, unfired clay, video projection, sound, 121 x 32 x 4 in. (307.34 x 81.28 x 10.16 cm.), Chute Space, Atlanta Contemporary

well as the labor behind procuring building materials. For example, landscape architect Jane Hutton explains, "At the hinge point between land and commodity, materials teeter uncomfortably between that which is considered natural and that which is not, between that which is intrinsically valuable and between that which is valuable for human use."[31] Hutton interprets landscaping materials in a Marxist fashion: though they come from "nature," they are detached from it because of the use value assigned to them. Looking back to *Gravel Pile*, the gravel is technically natural, yet it reads as unnatural because of its application in construction and landscaping contexts. In Hutton's discussion of landscape architecture, she also explores how the location of natural materials changes their value, suggesting the example of Earthwork artist Robert Smithson's *A Non-Site (Bangor, PA)*. This artwork consists of a wooden box containing pieces of slate

(fig. 4) Robert Smithson (American, 1938–1973), *Nonsite (Slate from Bangor, PA)*, 1973, ©Holt/Smithson Foundation / Licensed by Artists Rights Society

(fig. 5) Agnes Denes (American, born Hungary, 1931), *Wheatfield—A Confrontation*, 1 May 1982—16 August 1982, wheat, 2.2 acres, Manhattan

from a quarry in Bangor, Pennsylvania. Smithson assembled multiple *Non-Sites*, including ones made of rocks or slate from states such as Pennsylvania and New Jersey (fig. 4). His concept highlighted the transformation between where the slate or rocks came from, the "site," and the "non-site," the white-walled, sanitized gallery where they were installed and valued as art rather than raw material.[32] In a similar way, one can trace the gravel in Eng's *Gravel Pile* from its source, likely the Bonnybrook Quarry in Carlisle. Hutton and Smithson would also point out the human labor that goes into the mining, breaking, and transporting of the rocks, as understood in the movement of Eng's gravel from quarry to construction site. Recognizing the human work behind the commodity is one way to undermine capitalistic systems that use materials without concern for larger environmental impacts.

Another way to interpret Eng's use of gravel is through art theorist Lucy Lippard's idea of "undermining," which she develops in her book *Undermining: A Wild Ride Through Land Use, Politics, and Art in the Changing West*. To "undermine" is to subvert, and this can be political or physical, as in the underside of a rock formation eroding. But conceptually, "undermining" acts as a point of view from which artists can resist the existing structures of capitalism.[33] Eng's gravel pile undermines gravel's use in the relatively quick construction of "cookie-cutter"homes. Eng reclaims the gravel, transforming it through layers of media, to expose how material extraction destroys the land. In this way she subverts the material's original purpose. And in conversation with other parts of the video, such as the blinking airplane light and contrails that allude to global warming, and the brightly lit homes which indicate excessive energy usage, Eng undermines a typical scene of suburban America. Her projection on the gravel pile forces every element of the video to be interpreted in an ecologically conscious way.

LAYERING

A focus on natural resources can also be seen in the projection element of Eng's work, which takes as its subject matter a wheat field that she uses to highlight the role of binaries in discussions of the environment. Eng explains this choice by pointing out the neighborhood's former use as farmland. She cites artist Agnes Denes, noted for her Land Art work *Wheatfield—A Confrontation*, as inspiration.[34] Denes planted a wheat field in 1982 on a former landfill in lower Manhattan. In an article titled "The Dream," Denes discusses how *Wheatfield* symbolically reflected Manhattan's connections to trade and consumption, while in its physical presence the waving stems appeared agrarian and paradoxically out of place amongst the skyscrapers. As an ephemeral project lasting only four months, the field was soon re-consumed by the real estate industry.[35] Although several decades separate their work, Eng and Denes share an interest in examining environmental contrasts and binaries. Denes sets up distinctions between the "stone city" and "soft rural land" and "culture" versus "grassroots."[36] These opposites echo Smithson's use of "non-sites" and "sites" to critically examine land use. Eng interprets the present-day climate crisis through the binaries of "real" and "representation" and "developed" and "natural," situating herself within twenty-first century environmental art strategies that subvert unsustainable practices through the use of binary concepts.

Contemporary environmental art has moved past Land Art's foundations in the early environmental movement of the 1970s. Today

the stakes are higher in the increasingly globalized and technologically connected world. Eng grasps the institutional critique of Denes and brings it into the digital age of the twenty-first century. Instead of working with plants as a medium, Eng presents the wheat field solely as an image. As screens integrate further into human lives and objects become more digital instead of "real', perhaps Eng's work connects with a generation of screen-obsessed humans. Distracted by their phones in their glowing houses, people do not acknowledge how their homes and consumerist habits support environmentally destructive industries.

A final natural resource appears in a circular space projected onto the middle of the mound in *Gravel Pile*'s. In the space, what appears to be a wave rolls through a body of water. Eng sees water as "vital to life on our planet," yet she also considers how it is a controlled resource not easily accessible to all.[37] Here she evokes questions about human rights when it comes to resources. We can assume that the people in the homes behind the pile have privileged access to clean, running water. But what about areas of the country or the world that don't have access to safe water? For instance, Native American peoples who live on reservations in many parts of the country have contaminated water sources, leading to lower life expectancies and increased health risks compared to other US populations. In their article "Mining and Environmental Health Disparities in Native American Communities," researchers Johnnye Lewis, Joseph Hoover, and Debra MacKenzie found that Indigenous communities in the American Southwest have been exposed to dangerous levels of metals in their water and soil from abandoned mines.[38] Indigenous peoples bear the brunt of America's polluted waterways, even though many believe in and have advocated for a sustainable, reciprocal relationship with natural resources. Conceiving of water and land as living rhythms and cycles helps us to remember, as Kimmerer would say, our "duty" to them.[39] Eng would agree that Western civilization needs to remember how to give back to the world's waters and lands. By fighting for laws that protect natural resources or by simply tending a garden, in Kimmer's words, to "till, prune, irrigate, fertilize, and weed," people can provide a measure of their thanks.[40] Eng's moving projection nods to the rolling tides and the waving wheat, nudging viewers to recognize and respect the resources that keep us alive.

ENDNOTES

1 David Minderhout and Andrea Frantz, "Invisible Indians: Native Americans in Pennsylvania," In *Human Organization* 67, no. 1 (2008): 61-62, http://www.jstor.org/stable/44127040.

2 John Truden, "Native American Heritage Month Presentation by Dickinson College's CFNP," January 24, 2024, Zoom, Youtube video, 56:32, https://youtu.be/jIpFZZqN3x0, 7:00-7:20. This talk focuses on the history of Indigenous peoples of Central Pennsylvania, but the information is still relevant to a state-wide conversation. By the 1760s, most (but not all) Indigenous people had left PA for Wisconsin or Oklahoma.

3 America Counts Staff, "PENNSYLVANIA: 2020 Census," Census.gov, August, 25, 2021, https://www.census.gov/library/stories/state-by-state/pennsylvania-population-change-between-census-decade.html. Indigenous people make up 1.1% of the state's population according to the 2020 U.S. Census. This number does not include people who reported as mixed-race.

4 Minderhout and Franz, "Invisible Indians: Native Americans in Pennsylvania," 61.

5 Paul A. Shackel, "Anthracite Mining," In *Remembering Lattimer: Labor, Migration, and Race in Pennsylvania Anthracite Country*, University of Illinois Press, 2018, https://doi.org/10.5406/j.ctv5zfv43.5, 7. Extracting coal was a major industry of the Wyoming Valley specifically because it has the largest concentration of anthracite coal found anywhere in the world.

6 "2023 Zoning Maps," Luzernecounty.org, Accessed November 13, 2024, https://www.luzernecounty.org/DocumentCenter/View/31828/2023-Zoning-Maps. ; "Existing Land Use 2015 Map," Cumberlandcountypa.gov, Accessed November 13, 2024, https://www.cumberlandcountypa.gov/DocumentCenter/View/28885/Existing-Land-Use-2015-Map?bidId=. The first resource portrays the zoning of Luzerne County, the county in which the Wyoming Valley is situated. The second resource depicts the same information, but for Cumberland Valley.

7 "Ways of Knowing," Queensu.ca, https://www.queensu.ca/indigenous/waysknowing/about#:~:text=The%20intent%20of%20the%20phrase,from%20human%20interaction%20and%20relationships.

8 "Land Acknowledgement," Dickinson.edu, Accessed October 12, 2024, https://www.dickinson.edu/homepage/1513/land_acknowledgement.

9 Rachel Eng in discussion with the author, September 10, 2024.

10 Nathaniel Parker Willis, *American Scenery, or, Land, Lake, and River Illustrations of Transatlantic Nature*, London: George Virtue, 1840. See List of Subscribers, which includes, for example, Dukes, Lords, Countesses, and Earls.

11 Willis, *American Scenery, or, Land, Lake, and River Illustrations of Transatlantic Nature*, iii.

12 Angela Miller, "Everywhere and Nowhere: The Making of the National Landscape," American Literary History 4, no. 2 (1992): 207, http://www.jstor.org/stable/489986.

13 Willis, *American Scenery*, 53-55. The text accompanying Richardson's engraving refers to the Wyoming Massacre, in which British soldiers and Indigenous people fought settlers in the area, as a "bloody event of Indian warfare." A description of Chief Cornstalk's "atrocious murder" and the use of words like "noble savage" also contribute to the book's exaggerated visions of Native Americans as a violent "other."

14 Willis, *American Scenery*, 53.

15 Paul B. Moyer. *Wild Yankees: The Struggle for Independence along Pennsylvania's Revolutionary Frontier*, 1st ed. Cornell University Press, 2007, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctt7z5p0., 2-3.

16 Moyer, *Wild Yankees*, 9.

17 Lucy Lippard, *Undermining: A Wild Ride Through Land Use, Politics, and Art in the Changing West*, New York & London: The New Press, 2014, 46. Another artist who has worked with similar themes in the realm of environmental art is Jolene Rickard, member of the Tuscarora Nation and a Professor of Art History at Cornell University. Her 1993 photograph-covered sculpture *One Square Foot of Earth or One Square Foot of Real Estate* also employs natural imagery of grass growing through sidewalk cracks and the sky to call out the misconstrued perception by real estate developers of land as something to be bought and sold.

18 Robin Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plans*, Canada: Milkweed Editions, 2013, 115.

19 Rachel Eng, in discussion with the author, Octoer 27, 2024.

20 Shackel, "Anthracite Mining," 7.

21 Ellen Montgomery, "How Coal Mining Harms the Environment," Environmentamerica.org, Published August 23, 2024, https://environmentamerica.org/center/articles/how-coal-mining-harms-the-environment/.

22 Shackel, "Anthracite Mining," 9.

23 "U.S. Energy Facts Explained," Eia.gov, Accessed 27 October 2024, https://www.eia.gov/energyexplained/us energy-facts/. In 2023, the United States relied on petroleum as the most-consumed energy source (38%). Second was natural gas (36%), followed by coal and nuclear electric power (both at 9%). The other 9% of energy consumption was comprised of renewable sources such as wind, solar, hydroelectric, etc.

24 Rachel Eng in discussion with the author, September 10, 2024.

25 Rachel Eng, *Unearth*, Racheljeng.com, https://www.racheljeng.com/unearth.html.

26 Eng, *Unearth*, https://www.racheljeng.com/unearth.html.

27 Eng, *Unearth*, https://www.racheljeng.com/unearth.html.

28 Lippard, *Undermining*, 27. Gravel mining, part of the aggregate industry that also includes crushed rock and sand, is currently the largest mining industry in the world.

29 "Locations," Yorkbuilding.com, Accessed November 27, 2024, https://www.yorkbuilding.com/about-us/locations/.

30 Kafu-Quvane, Babalwa, and Sanelisiwe Mlaba, "Assessing the Impact of Quarrying as an Environmental Ethic Crisis: A Case Study of Limestone Mining in a Rural Community," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 21, no. 458 (2024), doi:10.3390/ijerph21040458.

31 Jane Hutton, *Reciprocal Landscapes: Stories of Material Movements* (Routledge, 2020), 7.

32 Hutton, *Reciprocal Landscapes*, 5.

33 Lippard, *Undermining*, 2.

34 Rachel Eng, in discussion with author, October 27, 2024.

35 Agnes Denes, "The Dream," *Critical Inquiry* 16, no. 4 (1990): 928-929, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1343775.

36 Agnes Denes, "The Dream," 929.

37 Rachel Eng, in discussion with author, October 27, 2024.

38 Johnnye Lewis, Joseph Hoover, and Debra MacKenzie, "Mining and Environmental Health Disparities in Native American Communities," Curr Environmental Health Report 4, no. 2 (2017): 130, doi:10.1007/s40572-017-0140-5. The researchers write that Indigenous people living in these communities in Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming experience higher rates of kidney disease, hypertension, and the risk of developing chronic diseases. Exposure to uranium and other heavy metal waste is at the root of these issues.

39 Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, 115.

40 Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, 124.

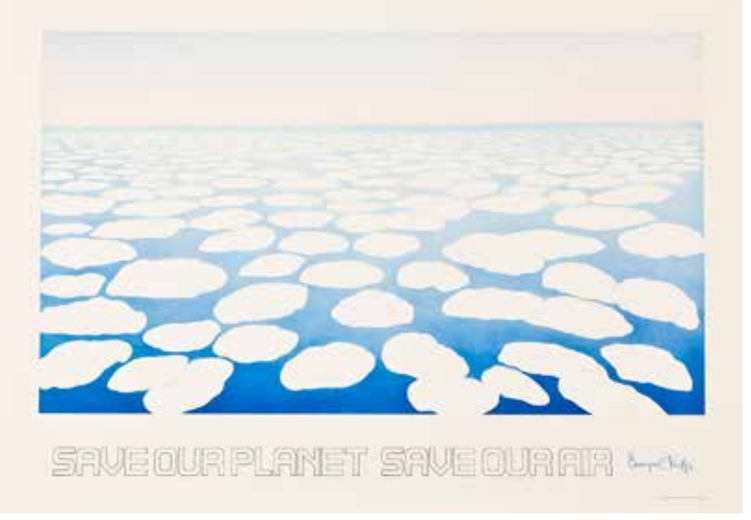
GRACE TONER

FROM SOIL TO SPACE

In 1971, artist Georgia O'Keeffe reframed her aerial landscape of an abstracted, unpolluted sky, as a direct call for environmental action for a print titled *Save Our Planet, Save Our Air* (fig.1). Over 50 years later, Rachel Eng similarly and directly confronts the impact of human activity on ecosystems with her video projection *Asphalt Pile* (2024) (fig. 2). Although the two artists work in very different media, both O'Keeffe and Eng raise awareness about the fragile relationship between humanity and the natural world. Eng works across traditional artistic mediums and uses material such as clay, video projections, sounds and more to create complex textural and visual experiences. O'Keeffe, whose American modernist style paintings remained largely independent of major art movements, contributed to the beginnings of awareness of an ever present global environmental issues.

O'Keeffe's *Save Our Planet Save Our Air* utilizes offset four-color lithograph on paper and was part of an anti-pollution poster series in collaboration with other artists including Roy Lichtenstein, Edward Steichen, Ernest Trova, Alexander Calder and R. Buckminster Fuller.[1] Editor of the magazine *Art in America* Jean Lipman came up with the project, proposing that each poster had a different final word representing an environmental issue after the initial statement "Save Our Planet, Save Our...".[2] O'Keeffe's contribution was inspired by a painting in a series she made between 1963 and 1965 based on her experiences travelling the world, particularly her view from an airplane window. The series included four paintings, all featuring the same types of billowing clouds, but with slightly different lines between atmospheric layers of clouds and sky. While flying back from New Mexico, the artist described the sky as a beautiful solid white that "looked so secure that I thought I could walk right out onto it to the horizon if the door opened."[3] This sight prompted her contribution to the series immediately, and later continued support to the environmentalist movement of the 1960s and 1970s.[4]

O'Keeffe's print depicts a deeply expansive atmosphere filled with abstract, uniform renditions of clouds. The edges of the clouds are clearly defined toward the lower portion of the print, and get softer,



(fig. 1) Georgia O'Keeffe (American, 1887–1986), *Save Our Planet Save Our Air*, 1971, 25 3/16 x 36 in. (64 x 91.4 cm), offset four color lithograph on paper, The Trout Gallery, Gift of the Doctors Meyer P. and Vivian O. Potamkin, 1990.6.7

(fig. 2) Rachel Eng, *Asphalt Pile*, 2024, construction Sites in South Central PA, video projection, photography

LEFT: Georgia O'Keeffe (American, 1887–1986), *Save Our Planet Save Our Air* (detail), 1971, 25 3/16 x 36 in. (64 x 91.4 cm), offset four color lithograph on paper, The Trout Gallery, Gift of the Doctors Meyer P. and Vivian O. Potamkin, 1990.6.7

RIGHT: Rachel Eng, *Asphalt Pile* (detail), 2024, construction Sites in South Central PA, video projection, photography

narrower, and smaller as the eye moves upward toward the uppermost visible boundary of the sky. A deep to pale blue color gradient is used behind the clouds, stretching outward, cut somewhat diagonally below a hazy warm and subdued pastel consisting of light blue and yellow tones. The light source appears to come from the rising sun behind this boundary, as the clouds become sharper and more delineated in the foreground. No highlights or shadows are cast onto the clouds, emphasizing the stark white body of each shape in the repeated pattern. The viewer's eye and attention are intended to be drawn from the bottom up, illustrated by the movement of color through gradation, inviting one to be lost in the vastness of the print. Bold block letters under the landscape read "Save Our Planet—Save Our Air" in black unfilled outline, framed in white to the left of O'Keeffe's signature in blue. The text of the title visually parallels the emptiness of the clouds themselves, both absent of smog and pollution rising toward the hopeful rising run. Every element of the print serves to depict a landscape that balances the otherworldly with the concrete, creating a sublime scene that evokes both awe and a profound sense of the need for its preservation.

While O'Keeffe is up in the clouds, a similar use of shape, repeated pattern, and line can be found in Eng's more "grounded" work. In her recent project, *Overburden,* Eng uses MadMapper video-mapping software to create and combine dynamic shapes and videos before projection onto construction sites and rocky terrain in Cumberland County, Pennsylvania.[5] Eng's *Asphalt Pile* projects a dynamic display over construction debris found in a lot near Dickinson College's baseball field and community garden. She captures the earthy pile at dusk, illuminated solely by the projection's many moving parts, which feature two bold red and orange circles framing the fragmented sections. Fast flowing water cuts through the circles and flashing yellow specks float inside the stationary circles. The two-dimensional shapes enigmatically transform the jagged pieces of asphalt. The contrast between Eng's man-made projection and the local terrain mesh together into one whole interactive viewing experience. The viewers' engagement with this intentional juxtaposition mirrors Eng's artistic process that she describes as an "exercise of heightened observation" and wrote, "A raindrop, a grain of sand, and a microscopic bacterium may go unnoticed, along with a feral cat, a person in prayer or a protestor when they are a single unit. But when gathered together they can possess a monumentality."[6]

While talking to Eng in her studio, she noted that she takes further inspiration from artist Mary Mattingly, whose work similarly concentrates on material and its relationship to site-specific locations. Mattingly's *Pull* is a photograph in a series of snapshots in which the artist dragged large bundles of waste through New York City.[7] The artist's reasoning for the project was to "emphasize the weight of my personal consumption based on these particular objects: how the materials were extracted, where they were manufactured, shipped, and what ecosystems they interrupted along the way."[8] Mattingly's argument is woven into Eng's work, evident even in the title *Overburden*, which suggests the weight and burden of both physical and societal forces from the earth.

The subject of *Overburden* is echoed in the local landscape, where traces of industry contrast trees silhouetted against the sky at dusk. Positioned behind the asphalt pile, tucked into the upper-right corner of the composition, behind a few bare branches is Carlisle SynTec Systems. Serving as a symbolic reminder of the industrial activity that shapes both the physical and environmental landscape of the region, the company is a major manufacturer of roofing materials that has been a prominent industrial fixture in Carlisle for decades. Its presence reflects the area's long-standing ties to manufacturing and the trucking industry, both adding to local economic growth but also environmental challenges. SynTec likely contributes to the area's worsening air quality issues, particularly when combined with the significant role of the trucking industry.[9] The 2023 *State of the Air* report from the American Lung Association highlights Cumberland County's persistent problems with daily particle pollution, earning a D grade for the three consecutive years.[10] This decline is largely attributed to transportation emissions, such as those from heavy truck traffic, and industrial pollutants. Carlisle SynTec's operations, along with the constant movement of trucks in and around the area, release fine particulate matter, which can embed in the lungs and pose severe health risks. Cumberland County's geography situated in a valley exacerbates these issues, trapping pollutants and making it more difficult for them to disperse. This combination of industrial and transportation pollution continues to harm air quality, putting residents, especially those in vulnerable groups, at greater risk for respiratory and cardiovascular conditions.[11]

The faint and almost eerie light emanating from Syntec underscores Eng's emphasis on how the actions of community impact not only the present inhabitants and local environment but also future generations and broader regions. The visual representation cast upon the asphalt, they land below once untouched by human intervention, illustrates the transformation and degradation of this area that has been significantly polluted over time. While discussing the process of setting up the projection and whether she was "technically" allowed to record at the site, she raised the issue of land ownership and access to the space. This notion of property rights raises important questions about shared environments and the impact of harmful materials on neighboring lands and airspace. Rather than offering a direct answer to this question, *Asphalt Pile* serves as a consciousness-raising experience, acting as a pivotal step in a call-to-action aimed at highlighting the

(fig. 3) NASA, *Blue Marble*, View of the Earth as seen by the Apollo 17 crew on December 7, 1972, traveling toward the moon, original orientation (AS17-148-22727), photograph, https://www.lpi.usra.edu/resources/apollo/frame/?AS17-148-22727.

environmental dangers posed by extractive industries and toxins. Eng stated, "I do have questions around public vs. private property and the severance of our connection to place/land because of ownership of property."[12] This statement poignantly articulates the complexities surrounding how land is used and valued in our society, encouraging a deeper examination of the implications of property ownership on our relationship with the environment.

Eng's close examination of issues related to industrial pollution and capitalistic land use can be seen as following in the wake of the environmental movement of the 1970s. In looking again at O'Keeffe's print, it was created amid the first monumental environmental awareness initiative. The first Earth Day was April 22, 1970, and was celebrated based on initial concept of a teach-in to engage the entire United States in environmental activism. Earth Day's influence extended beyond its immediate participants by harnessing the power of imagery. During this moment of rising environmental consciousness, NASA's Apollo 17 photograph of Earth, known as *The Blue Marble* (fig. 3), captured the planet's fragility, becoming a symbol of the growing environmental movement. Campaigns were held to have NASA to release a full image of the Earth, believing that it encourage everyone to recognize the wholeness and fragility of the planet.. This belief materialized with the Apollo image, which played a pivotal role in igniting environmental consciousness tand was used frequently in the promotion of Earth Day.[13]

O'Keeffe uses this method in her own work for the poster series, aligning with the movement's global call for environmental stewardship, as the environmentalist message transcended borders and required collective action on a planetary scale. O'Keeffe's choice to reuse the cloud and sky imagery reflects her belief in clean sky and air as a universal human right. Air pollution specifically was a key environmental concern of the era, one that had seen increased legislative attention through the Clean Air Act of 1970, which was created to address the growing public health concerns caused by widespread air pollution, mainly stemming from industrial emissions and vehicle exhaust. Federal standards to regulate and limit the number of pollutants emitted into the atmosphere were put in place, protecting public health and welfare throughout the United States. The act is from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), working together with state, local, and tribal governments. The EPA created programs such as the National Ambient Air Quality Standards program and the National Emissions Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants, to limit emissions of specific hazardous pollutants. Prior to 1970, the federal government did not have any responsibility for developing ambient air quality standards.[14]

O'Keeffe and Eng, though different in how and when they made their works of art, both explore humanity's precarious relationship with the natural world and share a commitment to environmental consciousness. O'Keeffe's print invites viewers to reflect on an unspoiled landscape, emphasizing what could be lost if pollution remains unchecked. Her work, with its clean lines and repetition of cloud motifs, suggests an idealized vastness and acts as a large-scale call to protect the Earth's beauty. Eng, on the other hand, confronts contemporary environmental issues more directly, integrating diverse and dynamic media like projections and rubble to create a complex, multi-sensory experience. Eng challenges viewers to consider the consequences of daily unchecked consumption and industrial practice's impacts. This contrast—O'Keeffe's quiet idealism versus Eng's jarring realism—underscores a similar message: both artists emphasize the necessity of environmental awareness. While O'Keeffe inspires a nostalgic sense of preservation, Eng's work calls for an urgent reflection on the tangible effects of human activity on the earth today. Together, their works illustrate the evolving narrative of environmental activism in art, from idealized protection to pressing confrontation.

ENDNOTES

1 Mary Lee Corlett, “The Prints of Roy Lichtenstein: A Catalogue Raisonné 1948–1997” (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 2002).

2 “Save Our Planet” Project, Miscellaneous Material, 1970-1972, Box 28, Folder 16, Howard W. and Jean Lipman Papers, 1848, 1916-2000, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/howard-w-and-jean-lipman-papers-9145

3 Georgia O’Keeffe Museum, “Breakfast with O’Keeffe Online: ‘Save Our Planet Save Our Air’”, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CoeNE4j5ars&t=4s

4 “O’Keeffe’s Intersection with 1970’s Environmentalism,” The Georgia O’Keeffe Museum, May 16, 2022, https://www.okeeffemuseum.org/save-our-planet-save-our-air-georgia-okeeffes-intersection-with-cultural-diplomacy-and-environmentalism-of-the-1970s/.

5 1024 architecture and GarageCube, *MadMapper Software*, v. 5.

6 Sarah Fritchey, “Rachel Eng, To Displace Something,” 2.

7 For images of Mary Mattingly’s work, see https://marymattingly.com/blogs/portfolio.

8 Erin Rizzato, “#MARY Mattingly: ‘“often Artists Are in a Dialogic Relationship with the Earth,”’ shotconnect, accessed November 13, 2024, https://www.shotmagazine.it/interviews/512-mary-mattingly-waste-of-time, n.p.

9 United States Environmental Protection Agency, “Documents, Reports and Photographs for Carlisle SynTec Incorporated in Carlisle, Pennsylvania,” last updated September 16, 2024, https://www.epa.gov/hwcorrectiveactioncleanups/documents-reports-and-photographs-carlisle-syntec-incorporated-carlisle

10 Ben Orner, “Cumberland County Air Quality among Worst in U.S. Last Year,” The Sentinel, April 12, 2024, https://cumberlink.com/news/local/cumberland-county-air-quality-among-worst-in-u-s-last-year/article_ef08cd3e-f75f-11ee-a657-b7f2e71c3d41.html.

11 Orner, “Cumberland County Air Quality among Worst in U.S. Last Year,” n.p.

12 Rachel Eng, email correspondence with the author, October 2024.

13 “The History of Earth Day.” Earth Day, January 23, 2024. https://www.earthday.org/history/.

14 “EPA History: The Clean Air Act of 1970.” EPA, October 4, 2016. https://www.epa.gov/archive/epa/aboutepa/epa-history-clean-air-act-1970.html.

ARTISTS' BIOGRAPHIES

TODD ARSENAULT

Todd Arsenault received an MFA in Painting from the Rhode Island School of Design and BA in Studio Art from Dickinson College. He has been teaching at Dickinson since 2005 and is currently an Associate Professor of Studio Art with a focus in painting, drawing, printmaking, and digital media. He has exhibited his work in solo and group exhibitions nationally in New York City venues such at the Massimo Audiello Gallery, David Richard Gallery, Lehman Maupin Gallery, and The Painting Center, as well as Vox Populi in Philadelphia, Silvermine Gallery in New Canaan, CT, and Chazen Museum of Art in Madison, WI. International exhibitions include Galería Fúcares in Madrid and Almagro, Spain and the ARCO art fair in Madrid.

ANDY BALE

Andy Bale earned his MFA from the University of Delaware and his BFA from the Savannah College of Art and Design. He began teaching at Dickinson College in 2006 and is currently a Visiting Lecturer in the Art and Art History department with a focus on photography. His work has been exhibited nationally and internationally in both group and solo exhibitions, and he has held residencies at the fondation d'entreprise espace ecureuil (Toulouse, France; 2008), Savannah College of Art and Design Lacoste campus (Lacoste, France; 2009), and Co-Existence Netii Apa Storytellers Project (Nashulai Maasai Conservancy, Kenya; 2023).

In 2013, Bale began working collaboratively with photographer Jon Cox, Associate Professor at the University of Delaware. This collaboration produced the traveling exhibition, *The Ese'Eja People of the Amazon: Connected by a Thread* was shown throughout the U.S., including the Peruvian Embassy (Washington D.C.; 2017), the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian (Washington D.C.; 2017), and The Field Museum (Chicago, IL.; 2020-2021.) Their current collaboration, *Arrivals: What's Left Behind, What Lies Ahead*, has been exhibited across the U.S. and internationally, including the FX Gallery, Academy of Arts (Banska Bystrica, Slovakia; 2023), the Embassy of the Slovak Republic (Washington, D.C.; 2024), and Atlantic Technological University (Galway, Ireland; 2024.)

ANTHONY CERVINO

Anthony Cervino is an artist-educator who has exhibited his work professionally for over 25 years. A native of Pennsylvania (U.S.A), Cervino completed a degree in sculpture at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. A few years later he received his MFA from Towson University in Maryland before eventually settling in Carlisle, Pennsylvania where has been teaching sculpture at Dickinson College since 2006.

Cervino's sculptures have been shown regionally, nationally, and internationally and have been included in exhibitions at the Susquehanna Museum of Art in Harrisburg, The Gallery at Flashpoint in Washington, DC, the Institute of Contemporary Art at the Maine College of Art, The Indianapolis Museum of Contemporary Art, The Arlington Arts Center, The Minneapolis College of Art & Design, The Petrovaradin Creative Education Center, Novi Sad, Serbia, The Knunstnarhusset Messen Art Center, Ålvik, Norway, Shippensburg University, and Bucknell University, and the Spitsbergen Kunstnersenter, Longyearbyen, Norway, among other museums and galleries.

RACHEL ENG

Rachel Eng earned her MFA from the University of Colorado Boulder and her BFA from Pennsylvania State University. Eng has shown her work in solo exhibitions at Atlanta Contemporary (Atlanta, GA: 2023), The Springfield Museum of Art (Springfield, OH; 2023), Jane Hartsook Gallery (NYC, NY: 2022), and Flecker Gallery (Long Island, NY; 2020). Recent group exhibitions include: AIM Biennial (Miami, FL & Online; 2023), Susquehanna Art Museum (Harrisburg, PA; 2023) Maguire Art Museum (Merion Station, PA; 2023), Rowan University (Glassboro, NJ; 2022), and The Clay Studio (Philadelphia, PA; 2020). She has held residencies at McColl Center (Charlotte, NC), Studio Kura (Fukuoka, Japan), and Watershed Center for the Ceramic Arts (Newcastle, ME), among others. In 2021 she was awarded a Windgate Fellowship through the Center for Emerging Visual Arts in Philadelphia and a Puffin Foundation Grant. Her work is in various private and public collections including the Gyeonggi Museum of Contemporary Ceramic Art (Republic of Korea) and Peninsula College Ceramics Collection (Port Angeles, WA). She currently lives in Carlisle, PA with her family, where she is an Associate Professor of Art at Dickinson College.

THE TROUT GALLERY
THE ART MUSEUM OF DICKINSON COLLEGE

CARLISLE, PENNSYLVANIA