In Practice:
You may go, but this will bring you back

Carlos Agredano
Leslie Cuyjet
Kyrae Dawaun
Dominique Duroseau
Hugh Hayden
Sunny Leerasanthanah
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Katherine Simóne Reynolds

I been in the country, but I moved to town
I’m a toe-low shaker from my head on down
Well you may go, but this will bring you back
Ah, some folks call me a toe-low shaker
It’s a doggone lie, I’m a backbone breaker
Well, you may go, but this will bring you back
Oh, you like my features but you don’t like me
Don’t you like my features, don’t you shake my tree?
Well, you may go, but this will bring you back
Oh, who do, who do, who do workin’
My heels are poppin’ and my toenails crackin’
Well, you may go, but this will bring you back

— American folksong

Let us start with a story of me and my mother

I remember what I feel,
not necessarily what I know

“One run out and go and get the sheet, Kat.” I never knew why we did it, but it was our favorite pastime. Driving around for about two hours looking at houses and talking about them and their beauty. Or at times lack thereof. My mother would pick me up from school, and all of a sudden we were in a neighborhood and she would take me past a house for sale and ask me what I thought about it. We would discuss it, and if she liked it I would run out of the car and grab the one sheet in front of the house and hold a new kind of life in my hands. These were times where I, as young as eight years old, would feel a falter in the parental hierarchy between my mother’s allowance of my opinion pertaining not just to our life but to a dream of hers. That dream being homeownership. I understood the weight in this allowance, given we moved around quite
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often, usually out of my mother’s boredom or disinterest with where we were currently staying. I sometimes fail to know what kind of holiday presents my mother wants, but I do know she loves English Tudors with a mixture of brick and stone on a corner lot with a wide entryway and an accent door. As a child, I could spot an English Tudor a mile away, and I would see my mother’s eyes light up with possibility. This is how we spent time together; we would find ourselves living in these fantastical spaces. By the end of the ride, I’d’ve collected about five to seven one sheets, or five to seven possibilities of a different me, or five to seven insights into my mother’s idea of progress. But I was a kid, and so I just wanted to know if I could paint my new bedroom red.

The way in which my imagination gripped onto me in an allowance of space and possibility was intrinsically where I needed to be. I still find myself in the spaces where I don’t necessarily know where the beauty lies or why it is so important to me — this need to understand and hold onto “beauty” as a form of understanding the purpose of a person/object/home. The placemaking was saturated by the proximity of my passenger-side worldview of beauty. I was convinced that homes looked the most beautiful passing by them — the motion does something to the perception of what makes something not just livable but admirable. Making it hard to decipher between potential and reality. This illusion was the most apparent while driving through a “McMansion” subdivision, an exploitative space of potential. A space of a comfortable facade mixed with stale siding. The front of the homes provides the visualization of upward mobility, with a strong brick face veneered with PVC shutters and hollowed columns to greet passerby or the Joneses. The sides and the back are banal, bringing home the makeshift uniformity. In other words, McMansions are the fast fashion of architecture. While the selling point is curb appeal, the actual foundation is lacking in support, which my mother would point out to me as subsidence, the gradual caving-in or sinking of an area of land. You could see this by looking for the garage doors that would not close all the way down. She would say, “You can tell they just put these homes up without any care at all,” and I would make the connection between care and lack thereof from not only a consumerist point of view but also one of aesthetics. Do we associate care with how something presents, or is it our own relationship to the care that we have seen from others?

My mother is not blaming the homeowner but the system. A system that has infiltrated our own view to make a supportive foundation something that is an option as opposed to a necessity. Within the small town where I grew up, it was of no surprise to me that these homes were found near the military base, where families were used to picking up and leaving at a moment’s notice. How
do you establish a care politic in the home if the home is always changing? I too understand a distanced and complex relationship to a constantly moving care system that actually isn’t care but more tied to a maintenance of self, and shifting your understanding of space/place. Especially when a Black family emerges from the interior of one of these homes onto the lawn and our gazes meet. There is a felt difference between me being in the car as onlooker and them being on the lawn as inhabitant. Watching each other for a split second. Is it recognition or acknowledgment? Gripping the one sheet tighter in my hand, passing by another garage door left several inches unclosed, I never was able to know the difference.

The Placeness in Space

In these brief onlooking moments of recognition/acknowledgment, where are we placing the body’s relationship to place? Katherine McKittrick states: “With this in mind, a black sense of place might not… be read as an authentication of blackness, or a truth-telling conceptual device, or an offering of a ‘better’ place; rather a black sense of place locates the ways in which anti-black violences in the Americas evidence protean plantation futures as spaces of encounter that hold in them useful anti-colonial practices and narratives.”

Through this reading of the family emerging from the house, the home isn’t the authenticating factor of Blackness, or otherness, but the fact that these McMansions were built on a fantasy of a white capitalistic gaze is. The ancestral entrapment around recognition is the haunting presence within the Black domestic space that finds itself being seen as Presentability Politics. The works of Chiffon Thomas and Leslie Cuyjet create a dynamic atmosphere that complicates their relationship to domestic spaces.

Thomas’s work asks, What do you want to be close to? Or better, What do you have the ability to be close to? Thomas presents visual representations of beings in a perpetual state of entrapment, “impossible bodies” representing the physical and psychological state marginalized people contend with in sociopolitical systems. Proximity becomes the problem when there is an inability to excavate a form of vulnerability within any crevice of the home or body. These forms and the environment they inhabit elicit aspects of embodied trauma and debilitation, as the bodies are encased in architectural structures prohibiting movement. The construction of these bodies comes from a laborious and taxing practice of looking at the interior exteriorly. We find the inside on the outside, but it is impenetrable, materially hard flesh that Thomas has made of domestic and fabricated material—fabric, leather, hand-embroidery,
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handmade paper, New England (colonial) architectural columns, plaster casts of columns from buildings, milk crates, and various found materials.

In contrast to Thomas’s installation, movement is found in Cuyjet’s site-specific video installation *For All Your Life Studies*, but the inability to move past is shared. A small Black child is seen forever swimming in an endless public pool, cheered on by a sea of garbled white voices. Here Cuyjet has manipulated home videos to address the complex socioeconomic relations in Black upward mobility. Is there a difference between the violence within the vulnerability of being on dry land versus being in a graveyard parading as the sea? While Black bodies in water have historically charged overtones, Cuyjet attempts to disarm and confuse the narrative with imagery from her childhood, showing carefree joy amidst a swimming competition. Her research is guided by the nautical roots of life insurance, a contract built out of necessity for families with sailors lost at sea. Researching the New York Life Insurance Company, she discovered it once sold policies for the shipment of slaves — damaged goods, in this case. Cuyjet’s personal narrative becomes the timestamped VHS current: as a descendant of slaves, as well as coming from middle-class wealth attained from her grandfather selling Black people life insurance policies, her story frames this intersection of past and present.

Seen and the Scene

Whether this consists of spreading overarching general ideas or hanging on to the concrete, the law of facts, the precision of details, or sacrificing some apparently less important thing in the name of efficacy, the thought of opacity saves me from unequivocal courses and irreversible choices.

— Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*

Exposure. Typically utilized in the positive, about finally being seen and the initial taste of recognition. But to be exposed is to the subject’s detriment. While setting the stage as a faux-marble countertop, Kyrae Dawaun’s installation engages concepts of nourishment and neglect through the materiality of homemade cereal and lead dioxide paint. *won’t be home — it’s on the counter* refers to a space of forced allowance. There is(n’t) a choice. From the countertop, Dawaun serves his own puffed-wheat cereal recipe, sealed within illusive “fun-sized” boxes, alluding to the nature of the home as a place where a meal, and a space, is for what you need and not what you want. The play on the amount of
cereal makes one understand the capitalistic gaslighting that goes into calling something that is meant to sustain life “fun-sized.” As if to assume the subject knows there’s a “real-sized” in the world. In conjunction with the exhibition, Dawaun made ten individual boxes available for purchase in the bookstore, furthering his investigation into accessibility politics, sustenance, and agency.

There is no sediment within the ambient, unsettled scene of Catalina Ouyang’s multimedia installation common burn. Ouyang complicates an “atmos-feeling,” as Amiri Baraka would say, steeped here in a reverse/inverse time frame through rotating projectors orbiting counter to one another, projecting either La Passion de Jeanne d’Arc (Carl Theodor Dreyer, 1928) or Le Lit de la vierge (Philippe Garrel, 1969), each progressing for ten seconds, then rewinding by three. Images of martyr-making and LSD-laden saviorism coincide with the spectator’s body as it passes through the space, as if in an attempt to guide one through a journey with no ending. This scene is built comfortably on a shifting astral plane because it has nowhere else to go. The installation transparently honors its own artifice. Ouyang’s and her mother’s voices can be heard rising from the darkened water inside a well. As they read Anne Boyers’s poems “No” and “What Resembles the Grave but Isn’t,” the women’s conversation is vulnerably unedited. The “burn” from a circle of fire whose video image is projected from below the well is heard through a soundscape consisting of recordings of fire and objects burning during countless protests of racialized murders from 2014 to 2021. The frequency is altered to hit triad chords that sound comfort within the discomfort. Irresolution becomes the only feeling you can attempt to grasp ahold of.

Having the Last (and only) Word

When there is immense loss, or when working from loss, there is a tendency to approach the beginning already with a “healthy” resolution in mind. One that is wrapped up in a bow and performs closure the way we believe we desire it to. In this desperation, there are fixed ways that we have been taught to cope within the emotional purgatory. In Sunny Leerasanthanah’s video installation Wuthichai (Exit Interview), male actors improvise responses to prompts that the artist reads onscreen, almost like a call-and-response. Scripted, the answers change in tonality with each interview, the performers being of different ages and vulnerabilities. The actors play the role of Leerasanthanah’s father, who is now deceased, and are asked a series of questions: “Is there anything you want to tell me?” “Are you afraid of expressing your feelings?” The purpose of the dialogue is to represent something that never happened, suggesting that the relief
the artist seeks is not to know the answers but to ask the questions in the first place.

And what happens when you speak to the emptiness? Literal emptiness — as in no one is around or no one sees/hears you. Dominique Duroseau’s *a trail of black crumbs for them to follow home* asks if presence is permanent. She leans into the manic but wants to be seen not just in that way, instead more generally. Is it acting out if no one gives you a stage? Duroseau’s audio installation is a continuation of her series of interrogative works regarding Black presence, Black existence, and Black erasure through a series of interventions. Four speakers are installed throughout the galleries, implicating the viewer’s lack of awareness of their perception of Blackness. The project unpacks dimensions of subjectivity while uncovering the eroticism within Black femme loneliness. These messy masturbatory monologues evoke a vain indulgence akin to performing for a large crowd of no one.

**Being at Rest**

Hyperawareness is essential yet at the same time selective and telling of a socioeconomic background. You are only aware of the dangers (or fears) you can place. The prejudice brought to the “unclean” is egregiously violent and silent. Not even a gaze can be shared for fear of having an interaction with the residue of poverty, more from a fear of having to contend with a radical politic that one is unable to uphold. Looking at the ubiquitous New York City subway bench — intended for public use but designed to inhibit sleeping — Hugh Hayden’s work *Municipal Respite* interrogates the passive aggression within a neoliberal society. Utilizing a hand router, Hayden has carved thorns into the seats and backs of the subway bench, denying the viewer a comfort not everyone is able to acquire.

André Magaña’s multipartite installation brings us to a place of nostalgia as archive: the fabrication of identity through terracotta, sandstone, and obsidian-colored 3D-printed vessels and objects that reference the Colima ceramics found in West Mexican shaft tombs. Mimicking the texture of the SculptureCenter walls, the vessels bring themselves into full focus through one’s own understanding of Mexican-American comfort food, while simultaneously enacting a sculptural discipline — the local ceramics tradition of the artist’s ancestors. The digestion of a faraway, fabricated memory complicates the role of the vessel, which lives not within an archive but within a personal narrative of displaced familiarity. This doubling of lived experience is paired with the need to preserve the ancestral relationship as an authenticating factor, allowing the object to operate in a nonlinear timeline as it rests within
the space. Magaña’s vessels serve as a reminder of a transient cultural tradition: moving in, moving out, and coming to stillness with an archival sense of being. The work traces the dispersion of contemporary Mexican-American experiences.

The Complications in Healing

“They said with wonder and admiration, you are still alive, like hydrogen, like oxygen,” writes Dionne Brand in her poem “Verso 55.” There is a resilience that is glorified by the marginalized and capitalized-on by white supremacy to create an opaque veil that obscures the time it takes to actually heal and break through. We possess many bodies within us that are also still in the healing process, but they remain embedded in our stories past, present, and future.

Ebbing and seeping through the barriers, water always finds a way in and out. Installed at the reception desk of SculptureCenter, Carlos Agredano’s installation *Shipped*—a block of ice slotted inside a delivery box—reflects on detention practices in the United States, including the utilization of shipping technology to surveil customers. Perception and duration play a key role in the sculpture, as the viewer may be completely unaware of the process that is going on in front of them, beside them, coming towards them. A leaking package means there is something wrong inside, and what was supposed to contain it failed to do so. Agredano uses water sourced from Ellis Island and the Rio Grande and a box bearing the recognizable logo of Amazon, which provides Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) with a vast ecosystem of data to track undocumented people. Just as the water will find a way out, so will the oppressed.

*Fear of Softness (No. 3)* speaks to Quay Quinn Wolf’s longstanding interest in complicating our associations between menswear and societal notions of masculinity. How soft can you allow yourself to be and still withstand the world? This softness becomes an indicator of a feared difference, that difference being queerness. Wolf moves through Blackness as queerness, and queerness is Blackness with tactility. An XXXL North Face men’s jacket is embroidered with hundreds of fragile pearl beads and set atop a heavy steel car-panel repair stand. The scarification evoked by the beaded ornamentation on the body of the jacket showcases the allowance of affection for a healing/scarred body.

Abigail Lucien’s installation *Holding Your Name Like Butter in Your Palm*, comprised of solid cocoa butter bricks, functions as a space where Black individuals can grieve and process. What does it mean to build a space from something that can melt in your hand so easily? Healing is as ephemeral as the cocoa-butter scent that wafts through the installation. Chronicling the time
from the onset of the COVID-19 outbreak to the work’s installation, the initials of every Black person killed by police are hand-carved into the bricks. Bricks left uncarved will stand for the immeasurable lives lost to the virus, while the presence of the large remaining mass of cocoa butter insinuates that there will be more bricks to construct in due time. The essence of the installation is to be reflective and restorative, making a statement on the importance of valuing Black life within and outside the context of an art institution. There is life, there is death, and they reside in the same home.

Returning to my mother and me

While exiting the subdivision towards our actual home, and staring at the endless adjacent cornfields, I would always wonder when the next pop-up subdivision would arrive. My mother claimed they “built these houses overnight,” and I was interested in seeing what other world I could create from a real-estate listing. There wasn’t a time I didn’t believe my mother would purchase her dream home; I always saw it for us in the end, even though it hasn’t manifested just yet. The last time I visited home as an adult, I took my mother on a drive in one of her favorite neighborhoods. We looked at about twenty-five homes — no more one-sheet runs for me — but just over a small hill on a corner lot sat the perfect English Tudor. My mother looked at it and said, “You can just tell the care they put into this home. There’s not a single crack in the foundation.”

1 “You May Go, but This Will Bring You Back” is one of the folksongs collected, sung, and recorded by the cultural anthropologist, writer, and filmmaker Zora Neale Hurston, who in 1938 signed on to a Florida Folklife project sponsored by the Works Progress Administration. For more information, see “Mark of Zora,” Library of Congress website, accessed April 30, 2021, https://www.loc.gov/collections/florida-folklife-from-the-works-progress-administration/articles-and-essays/a-florida-treasure-hunt/mark-of-zora/.


3 The video and soundscape are projected from an iPhone located beneath the water, which is made of resin, inside the well, which is made of paper pulp.
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Abigail Lucien
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In Practice: You may go, but this will bring you back 15
In Practice: You may go, but this will bring you back 17
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Quay Quinn Wolf
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Installation view
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André Magaña
28 SculptureCenter

Kyrae Dawaun
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André Magaña
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Hugh Hayden
Installation view
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In Practice: You may go, but this will bring you back.
Chiffon Thomas
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Checklist

Carlos Agredano  
*Shipped*, 2021  
Water and soil sourced from Ellis Island, NY, and the Rio Grande near Brownsville, TX; found Amazon box  
Dimensions variable

 Leslie Cuyjet  
*For All Your Life Studies*, 2021  
Two-channel HD video, color, sound  
7:30 minutes  
This work was supported with residencies at MacDowell and Movement Research. Leslie would like to thank her family, Sebastián Patané Masuelli, Kat Reynolds, and Alexis Wilkinson.

 Kyrae Dawaun  
*won’t be home — it’s on the counter*, 2021  
Puffed Wild Hive spelt berries, “fun-sized” boxes, wood, limestone, lead dioxide, chair  
Dimensions variable  
*(Text Ephemera,)* *won’t be home — it’s on the counter*, 2021  
Paper stock, puffed spelt cereal, flashé  
4 ¾ × 2 ¾ × 1 ¾ inches (12.1 × 7 × 4.4 cm)  
Edition of 10

 Dominique Duroseau  
*a trail of black crumbs for them to follow home*, 2021  
Audio installation, vocal performances, audio journal entries, speakers, MP3 players, leather cords  
Dimensions variable

 Sunny Leerasanthanah  
*Wuthichai (Exit Interview)*, 2021  
Two-channel HD video, color, sound 48 minutes  
Installation with watch, journals, video camcorder and tape, medicine bag, pills, pill splitter, incentive spirometer, wallet, ID cards, glasses and case, shoes, shirts, pants, shorts, hangers  
Dimensions variable  
Written, Directed, and Edited by Sunny Leerasanthanah  
Titles, Captions: Sunny Leerasanthanah  
Actors: Phupiriya Chakkaphark, Spike Fazzalari, Pakapong Phiewkham, Sorawat Ruangamporn, and Watson Sriboonwong  
Camera Operator, Assisting Script Editor: Sorn Bunnag  
Sound Mixer, Lighting: Dan Fethke  
This project is made possible in part by the Queens Council on the Arts with public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.

 Abigail Lucien  
*Holding Your Name Like Butter in Your Palm*, 2021  
Cocoa butter, bronze, sea salt, chicken feet, matches, soy wax, acrylic and vinyl on steel  
Dimensions variable

 André Magaña  
*CHICHAWREDA DERRITIENDO*, 2021  
Carpentry putty, acrylic, epoxy-finished thermoplastic  
19 × 22 × 5 inches (48.3 × 55.9 × 12.7 cm)  
*CHICHAWREDA MARCHITO*, 2021  
Carpentry putty, acrylic, epoxy-finished thermoplastic  
14 × 22 × 14 inches (35.6 × 55.9 × 35.6 cm)  
*CHICHAWREDA REPOSADO*, 2021  
Carpentry putty, acrylic, epoxy-finished thermoplastic  
5 × 21 × 19 inches (12.7 × 53.3 × 48.2 cm)
Checklist

GUARDIAS (NISIKIERSA HACIENDO SU TRABAJO), 2021
Carpentry putty, acrylic, epoxy-finished thermoplastic
Dimensions variable

LA CHICHAWRREDA MAS BELLA, 2021
Carpentry putty, acrylic, epoxy-finished thermoplastic
5 × 21 × 21 inches (12.7 × 53.3 × 53.3 cm)

LA NETA (IBARRA), 2021
Carpentry putty, acrylic, epoxy-finished thermoplastic
5 × 17 × 17 inches (12.7 × 43.2 × 43.2 cm)

LOS HUEZOS DE LA SOCIEDAD! #1, 2021
Carpentry putty, acrylic, epoxy-finished thermoplastic
62 × 9 × 9 inches (157 × 22.9 × 22.9 cm)

LOS HUEZOS DE LA SOCIEDAD! #2, 2021
Carpentry putty, acrylic, epoxy-finished thermoplastic
9 × 49 × 7 inches (22.9 × 124 × 17.8 cm)

LOS HUEZOS DE LA SOCIEDAD! #3, 2021
Carpentry putty, acrylic, epoxy-finished thermoplastic
60 × 9 × 12 inches (152 × 22.9 × 30.5 cm)

OREJAS GUARDADAS, 2021
Carpentry putty, acrylic, epoxy-finished thermoplastic
Two elements, each 12 × 19 × 3 ½ inches
(30.5 × 48.3 × 8.9 cm)

PALETAPAYASO (EL EXTRA), 2021
Carpentry putty, acrylic, epoxy-finished thermoplastic
2 × 10 × 4 ½ inches (5.1 × 25.4 × 11.4 cm)

PALETAPAYASOS, TRES COCITAS, Y UNA ABUNDANCIA DE ESKWIRR, 2021
Carpentry putty, acrylic, epoxy-finished thermoplastic
Dimensions variable

VEROELOTES Y REBANADITAS
N-TRE BOTELLALMIBARASPADO Y SUPERMICHELADA, 2021
Carpentry putty, acrylic, epoxy-finished thermoplastic
Dimensions variable

VEROMANGABAZACONKORCHODELOTE PERRIMASCARRAHUMAGEYESPEL-ORRICOPERRABAZA, 2021
Carpentry putty, acrylic, epoxy-finished thermoplastic
59 ½ × 24 × 24 inches (151 × 61 × 61 cm)

Catalina Ouyang
“...that everything is a weapon, the objects themselves, and with them the fact of civilization, are annihilated: there is no wall, no window, no door, no bathtub, no refrigerator, no door, no chair, no bed.”*, 2019–21
Wood, polymer clay, graphite drawing of a Shang Dynasty bronze head, deconstructed maple frame with matte, red crayon, tiger balm, digital image of the artist’s grandfather (1929–May 2, 2020), dye-infused aluminum, thumbtacks, acrylic
Dimensions variable

common burn, 2020–21
Two-channel video installation, altered complete footage of Le lit de la vierge (1969, Philippe Garrel), altered complete footage of La Passion de Jeanne d’Arc (1928, Carl Theodor Dreyer), two projectors, clockwise motor, counterclockwise motor, plywood, hair, leather, beeswax, gel medium, paper pulp, resin, water, 风油精, digital screen, audio recording of the artist and the artist’s mother reading and discussing Anne Boyer’s “No” and “what resembles the grave but isn’t” over Zoom (May 2020), audio recordings of fire transposed in tritone-based chord progressions, ambient sounds from live recording of Mazzy Star playing “Common Burn” (2012)
Dimensions variable
reliquary janus, 2021
Carved wood, gray wolf skull, plaster, horse hair, polymer clay, epoxy clay, acrylic, deconstructed stop loss trap
36 x 12 x 6 inches (91.4 x 30.5 x 15.2 cm)

Chiffon Thomas
Bound to Burden, 2020
Plaster, leather, thread, paint, wood, charcoal
28 x 10 x 13 ½ inches (71.1 x 25.4 x 34.3 cm)

Perceptive Industry, 2020
Plaster cast of milk crate wooden architectural columns, paint, charcoal, flex foam, concrete
74 x 16 x 16 inches (188 x 40.6 x 40.6 cm)

A buried home, 2021
Ceiling tin, flex pillow foam, embossed paper
Dimensions variable

A subaltern’s attempt to speak, 2021
Foam, rigid plastic urethane, concrete, paint, charcoal, saw dust, milk crate
45 x 23 x 33 inches (114 x 58.4 x 83.8 cm)

Decompression (where the heavy hearted lounge), 2021
Concrete, rocks, flex pillow foam
Dimensions variable

Returning to a former self (reinstatement), 2021
Foam, rigid plastic urethane, concrete, paint, charcoal, saw dust
38 ½ x 22 x 22 inches (97.8 x 55.9 x 55.9 cm)

The Maintenance of Life, 2021
Plaster, wood, flex pillow foam, foam, rigid plastic urethane, ceiling tin, wire rebar, embossed paper, paint, charcoal, concrete, saw dust, fabric, leather, embroidered floss
Dimensions variable

Quay Quinn Wolf
Fear of Softness (No. 3), 2021
Pearl-embroidered men’s The North Face puffer jacket, auto body repair stand
Dimensions variable
 Courtesy the artist and Jack Barrett, New York

Unless otherwise noted, all works courtesy the artists
In Practice: You may go, but this will bring you back
Mar 25–Aug 2, 2021

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