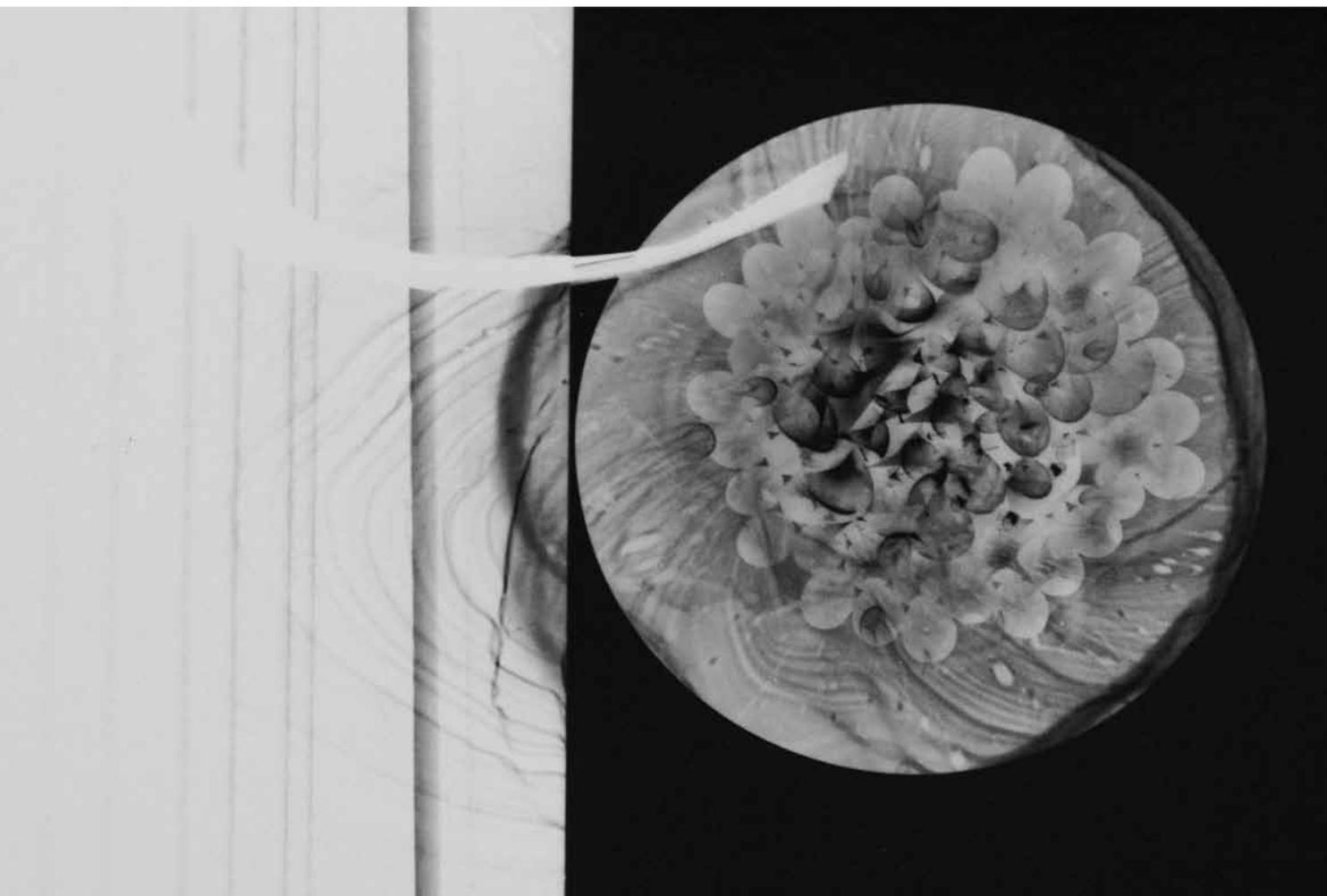


**SculptureCenter**  
Kelly Akashi: Long Exposure



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Affairs**

**Kelly Akashi: Long Exposure**  
**September 18–December 18, 2017**

**Curated by Ruba Katrib**

**SculptureCenter**  
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# Kelly Akashi – In the middle

## Ruba Katrib

There are several ways to reveal the interior of something. The thing can be cut open. It can be broken apart. It can be seen through imaging technologies, such as X-ray and ultrasound. A microscope can discern a certain level of activity just below the surface. For Los Angeles-based artist Kelly Akashi, this line of inquiry leads to a very precise practice of revealing the interior of her works without ever carving them open. Her dissection work is never so crass. Viewers may not even realize that they have been given entry into the internal dynamics of her works—even though this admission is, in a sense, the subject of her work.

Working in SculptureCenter's lower-level galleries, Akashi has composed an exhibition that pulls out the formal qualities of the space, while transcending its confines. In response to the various arches that punctuate the architecture, Akashi has created circular cherry wood and brass structures that contain arrangements of glass and wax objects, among other elements, and become containers open to air, light, color, and thought. Akashi has filled some of the glass forms with water, glass balls, or copper foil, but for the rest, they reflect the space within and outside the sculpture. Combustion, transparency, and transmutation are pervasive themes in *Long Exposure*. However disparate Akashi's mediums—glass, wax (in the form of candles), photography, bronze, film, and textiles (in the form of ropes)—they are all intimately interrelated.

Fire, and its capacity for light and creative destruction, is a key element. In perhaps the clearest example, Akashi makes wax candles that are periodically lit, the heat of the flame melting the wax to create evolving forms. In a work like *The Chandlery, 2017*, the candles stand alone on existing shelving in the exhibition space to effect transformations within the architecture. Another work, *Carbon Copy, 2017*, features a suspended cast bronze branch wrapped with twisted green candles that highlight the twigs but also resemble some kind of growth or parasite. The candles are lit every once in a while, which further fuses them with the bronze form and drips wax onto the floor below to create another component. The wax drip is carried through in the outdoor work *Big Drip, 2016–17*, a bronze cast of a large-scale accumulation of melted wax. The reversal within Akashi's work—bronze is used to cast wax instead of wax being used to cast bronze—equalizes the relationship between the two materials. While often divorced outside the foundry, Akashi playfully reunites wax and bronze in a process that reveals their inherent qualities and requirements.

The flow of heat and fire continues in the exhibition through works such as *Shadow Film, 2017*, which consists of a 16mm film and a perforated copper foil screen. The film switches between black-and-white and color footage of flames and a wider view of a fire. When projected, the imagery is superimposed on the hanging copper screen and also behind it on the wall as it passes through the cutout shapes. The flicker of the projected light enhances the flame imagery Akashi has captured, creating a material demonstration of the inherent connections between fire and image-making. The copper screen abstracts and layers the image; the flames dancing on its semi-reflective surface are a reminder of the conductive qualities of the material itself. Copper foil reappears within the exhibition in the sculptures *Local Weed* and *An Archive from Two Perspectives, both 2017*, bringing its thermal and electrical functions to the material narrative of the works.

The transition of energy occurs as well in the sculpture *Long Exposure, 2017*, which shares the title of the exhibition. Installed within one of the entranceways near a skylight, the work is comprised of a bronze tree branch covered in solar panels and wires, from which a glass orb is suspended. Hidden inside the orb is a light source powered by the solar panels. Akashi has harnessed another source of fire, energy from the sun, and transformed it into artificial light. The title *Long Exposure* evokes an analogue photographic process in which the camera shutter is left open to gather all available light on the film. This technique is conventionally used when the ambient light is low. Of course, leaving the shutter open means that anything moving within the frame will be out of focus or will leave a trail of ghostly impressions in its path. The related durational aspects of Akashi's piece involve the length of time necessary for light to travel from the sun and for the solar panels to generate enough energy to activate the light source. When there isn't enough sunlight to power the panels, the light dims, signaling the work's responsiveness to the world outside the exhibition space.

Light is also essential to the photograms on view. To make them, Akashi placed her glass sculptural forms on light-sensitive photographic paper and exposed them to light. These cameraless images are produced solely by light passing through the glass and encountering obstructions in the swirls of color, texture, and viscosity embedded within it. By connecting glass-making with image-recording, Akashi conceptually links sculptural and photographic processes. All of her works, in some way, record and illuminate their own making, and restore the inherent relationships between objects and materials that have been unlinked as they circulate in the world. In this instance, instead of using glass as the lens of a camera or enlarger, Akashi makes it the subject of the image. Shining a light through the glass to capture its form, she documents a place somewhere between the external realm in which the object exists and the inner sphere of its material capacities. While leaving the glass intact, Akashi metaphorically peels it apart to show its inner layers, manifested in the complex play of nuanced shades of light and dark.

Akashi's unpeeling of her materials provokes questions into how and why objects come to be and how they are understood through everyday use. Her glass forms appear as part of her photographic work and are also integrated into her sculptural arrangements. The forms themselves are often mid-sized to large; some are bulbous, others are long and stretched, some are colorful, and others are clear. Most of the glass objects are built up from smaller bits, or are comprised of a single part worked to its last shape before reaching a breaking point. The fragility of the glass forms is put in a direct relationship with the hardness of the surfaces that Akashi sets them on. In her work *Double Penetration, 2017*, a glass orb is suspended within a tiered structure, floating between two circular cherry wood platforms. Lengths of rope and cable enter the transparent yellow globe through various openings, resting inside it and falling from it to coil on the lower tier. The orb is visually connected to this tablelike structure, but it hangs above it rather than rests upon it. The behavior and interaction of mass and gravity is put on display within a highly specific structure. In the sculpture *An Archive from Two Perspectives, 2017*, Akashi bisects an oval cherry wood table. Each semi-circular table, positioned against a wall of the exhibition space, holds glass forms, a framed ortho-litho film print photogram of a leaf, and rope. One hornlike glass form has a bronze cast of Akashi's finger sticking out of its opening. Akashi regularly incorporates casts of her hands and fingers, literally inserting the artist's hand into the work. Through this gesture she points to her investigation into process and to the indexical connections she is making. The fingers direct viewers into the work, asking them to read her materials, and to look more closely.

The presence of Akashi's own finger cast in bronze underlines the interdependent connections between the materials she uses and the forms they take. Her works revel in micro interactions, spinning out through the various details and associations she can actualize within a tangible form. Akashi slows down and speeds up the processes of turning a material or an effect into a thing, creating a growing lexicon of inherent and internal material qualities.



Installation view.



*Feel Me*, 2017, details.





*Finger Figure*, 2017, detail.



*Long Exposure*, 2017, installation view.



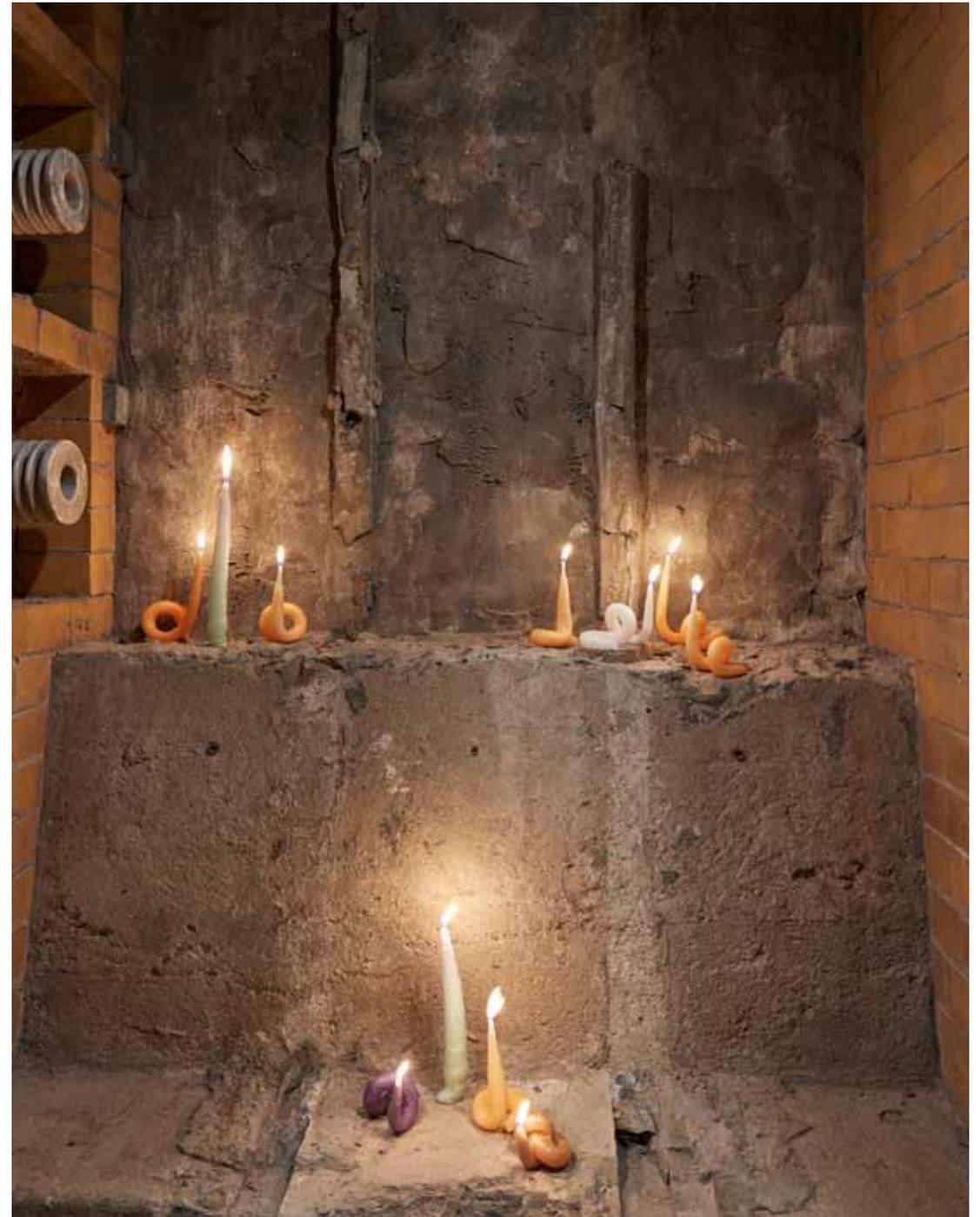
Installation view.



*Double Penetration*, 2017, detail.



*Image of Two Things*, 2017, installation view.



*The Chandlery*, 2017, installation view.



Installation view.

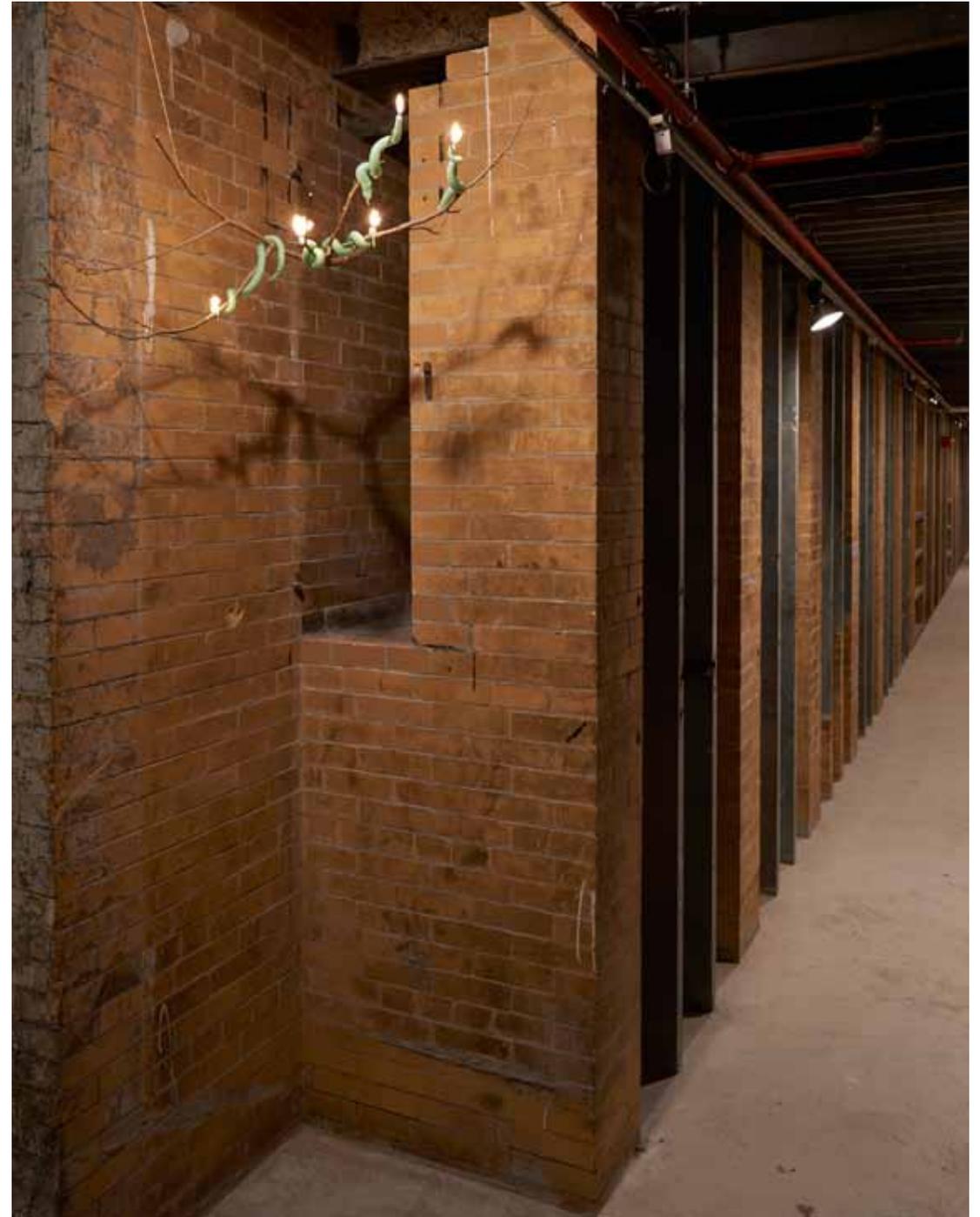


Left: *Candle Candle Stand*, 2017, installation view. Right: *Be Me (Flame)*, 2017, installation view.





*Shell Shelf*, 2017, installation view.



*Carbon Copy*, 2017, installation view.





*An Archive from Two Perspectives*, 2017, installation view.



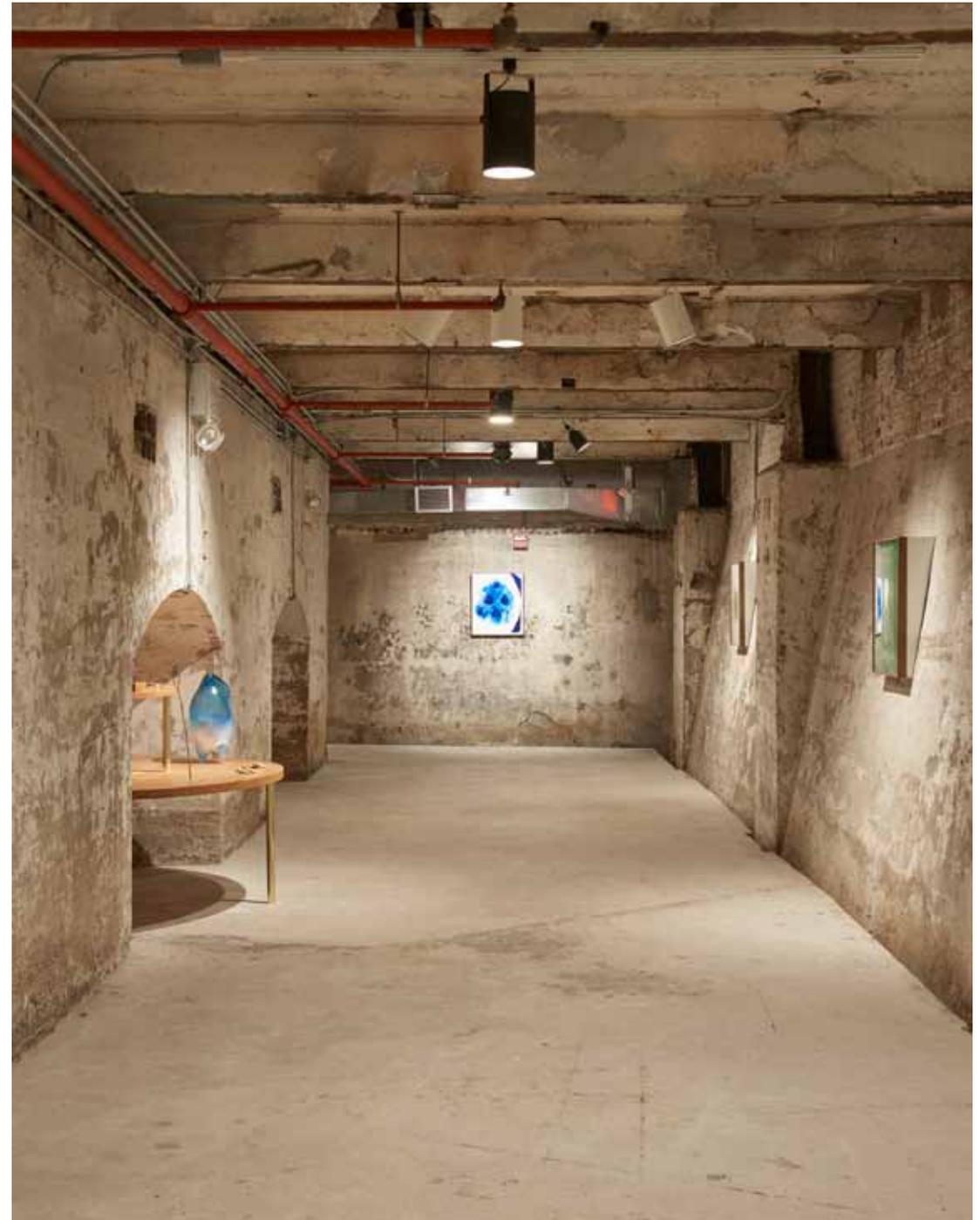
*An Archive from Two Perspectives, 2017, detail.*



*Shadow Film*, 2017, installation view.



*Image of Three Things, 2017, installation view.*



Installation view.



*Table of Contents*, 2017, installation view.



*Table of Contents*, 2017, detail.



Installation view.



*Local Weed*, 2017, installation view.

# Checklist of Works in the Exhibition

## *An Archive from Two Perspectives,* 2017

Cherry wood, brass, glass, two walnut framed ortho litho film prints, bronze, rope, copper foil  
Dimensions variable

## *Be Me (Flame),* 2017

Bronze, glass  
Dimensions variable

## *Be Me (Heat),* 2017

Bronze, glass  
2.25 x 8.5 x 5 inches  
(5.7 x 21.6 x 12.7 cm)

## *Big Drip,* 2016-17

Bronze  
28 x 58 x 45 inches  
(71.1 x 147.32 x 114.3 cm)

## *Bubble Basin,* 2017

Glass, wax, cotton wick, water  
Dimensions variable

## *Candle Candle Stand,* 2017

Wax, cotton wick, bronze  
Dimensions variable

## *Carbon Copy,* 2017

Bronze, wax, cotton wick, bronze wire  
Dimensions variable

## *Cellular Impressions,* 2017

Ortho litho film, walnut frame  
10.5 x 8.5 x 1.5 inches  
(26.7 x 21.6 x 3.8 cm)

## *Double Penetration,* 2017

Cherry wood, brass, glass, bronze wire, rope  
79 x 39 inches (diameter)  
(200.7 x 99.1 cm)

## *Feel Me,* 2017

Bronze, rope, concrete  
Dimensions variable

## *Finger Figure,* 2017

Bronze, bronze wire rope  
Dimensions variable

## *Image of a Thing,* 2017

Color photogram, walnut frame  
24.25 x 20.25 x 1.5 inches  
(61.6 x 51.4 x 3.8 cm)

## *Image of a Thing,* 2017

Color photogram, walnut frame  
24.25 x 20.25 x 1.5 inches  
(61.6 x 51.4 x 3.8 cm)

## *Image of a Thing,* 2017

Color photogram, walnut frame  
24.25 x 20.25 x 1.5 inches  
(61.6 x 51.4 x 3.8 cm)

## *Image of Three Things,* 2017

Color photogram, walnut frame  
24.25 x 20.25 x 1.5 inches  
(61.6 x 51.4 x 3.8 cm)

## *Image of Two Things,* 2017

Silver gelatin photogram, walnut frame  
19.25 x 15.25 x 1.5 inches  
(48.9 x 38.7 x 3.8 cm)

## *Image of Two Things,* 2017

Silver gelatin photogram, walnut frame  
19.25 x 15.25 x 1.5 inches  
(48.9 x 38.7 x 3.8 cm)

## *Image of Two Things,* 2017

Silver gelatin photogram, walnut frame  
19.25 x 15.25 x 1.5 inches  
(48.9 x 38.7 x 3.8 cm)

## *Life Forms,* 2017

Bronze  
3.25 x 9 x 7.5 inches  
(8.25 x 22.9 x 19 cm)

## *Local Weed,* 2017

Glass, copper wire, copper foil  
11 x 8 x 8 inches  
(27.9 x 20.3 x 20.3 cm)

## *Long Exposure,* 2017

Bronze, glass, solar panels, light, rope  
Dimensions variable

## *Shadow Film,* 2017

16mm film, projector, copper foil, copper rod, whipping twine, brass clips  
Dimensions variable

## *Shell Shelf,* 2017

Bronze, glass  
7.5 x 9 x 11 inches  
(19.1 x 22.9 x 27.9 cm)

## *Table of Contents,* 2017

Cherry wood, brass, bronze, beetle, copper foil, glass, wax, cotton wick, water  
52.5 x 77 x 38.5 inches  
(133.4 x 195.6 x 97.8 cm)

## *The Chandlery,* 2017

Wax, cotton wicks  
Dimensions variable

## *The Chandlery,* 2017

Wax, cotton wicks  
Dimensions variable

All works courtesy the artist and Ghebaly Gallery, Los Angeles

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