

In Practice: Other Objects

Natalie Ball

Takming Chuang

Niloufar Emamifar

LaMont Hamilton

Ariel René Jackson

Katherine Simóne Reynolds

Aliza Shvarts

Rosa Sijben & David Bernstein

Sara Stern

Kenneth Tam

Kiyan Williams

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Published by
SculptureCenter
44-19 Purves Street
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ISBN: 978-0-9998647-4-6
Design: Chris Wu, Yoon-Young Chai,
and Ella Viscardi at Wkshps
Copy Editor: Lucy Flint
Printer: RMI Printing, New York

All photographs by Kyle Knodell, 2019
unless otherwise noted.

In Practice: Other Objects

In Practice: Other Objects presents new work by eleven artists and artist teams who probe the slippages and interplay between objecthood and personhood. From personal belongings to material evidence, sites of memory, and revisionist fantasies, these artists isolate curious and ecstatic moments in which a body becomes a thing or a thing stands in for a body.

The works in the exhibition address the capacity of objects—whether personal, collective, ambiguous, or arbitrary—to assume the body’s agency and testify about experience, recollect the past, mediate intimacy, and move politically. Rather than seeing the body as a stable form or coherent whole, *Other Objects* posits the body, and therefore the person it corresponds to, as a fluid and fragmentary medium—one materially contingent on the objects with which it shares space.

The subtitle *Other Objects* is taken from a phrase of Martiniquais philosopher Frantz Fanon, whose 1952 book *Black Skin, White Masks* offers a trenchant exploration of the psychic toll levied by colonial domination, dehumanization, and anti-Black racism. Fanon writes: “I came into the world imbued with the will to find a meaning in things, my spirit filled with the desire to attain to the source of the world, and then I found that I was an object in the midst of other objects. Sealed into that crushing objecthood, I turned beseechingly to others.” For Fanon, “being through others,” or becoming an “object among other objects,” shatters the psyche and devastates the sense of selfhood.

The works selected for the exhibition argue that the oscillation between body and thing demands a revised understanding of each. The works attend to categories of objects, including objects of the Other, that trouble the limits of personhood and reveal our dependence on material things to enact collectivity, forge intimacy, challenge the visual, and spur new political imaginaries. While seemingly inanimate and silent, objects stir with the ability to agitate, speak, remember, and rebel. They serve as surrogates for bodies denied social agency and as talismans for playful and radical reimaginings of the present.

Natalie Ball

With a foundation in visual archives, materiality, gesture, and historical research, I make art as proposals of refusal to complicate an easily affirmed and consumed narrative and identity without absolutes. I am interested in examining internal and external discourses that shape American history and Indigenous identity to challenge historical discourses that have constructed a limited and inconsistent visual archive.

Playing Dolls is a series of assemblage sculptures as Power Objects that are influenced by the paraphernalia and aesthetics of a common childhood activity. Using sculptures and textile to create a space of reenactment, I explore modes of refusal and unwillingness to line up with the many constructed mainstream existences that currently misrepresent our past experiences and misinform current expectations.

Takming Chuang

Shelf Life is an installation of twenty-one sculptures shelved along the recesses of a narrow corridor in the basement of SculptureCenter. Fluorescent lights illuminate forms that resemble vessels, body parts, and artifacts. Made of unfired clay contained within a plastic skin, their supple forms will wrinkle, blister, discolor, and harden during the course of the exhibition.

Shelf Life is modeled after two disparate spaces that regulate value. Supermarket aisles display consumables with limited immediate value whereas museum display cases present value as permanent. *Shelf Life* stages a hybrid of both to critically consider the correlation between change and value, of bodies as well as art objects.

Niloufar Emamifar

LaMont Hamilton

In *J.W., R.H., H.D., E.R., NHP* (*whispering of the self to the self*), the soft touch of 100 ostrich feathers, the chiming of 1,200 bells, and the ethereal sound of vocal artists Yaw Agyeman, Wesley Chavis, and Anaïs Maviel create an immersive, meditative space.

The initials in the title stand for Jay Wright, Robert Hayden, Henry Dumas, Ed Roberson, and Norman H. Pritchard, some of the many poets who have informed my practice. This work is a portrait of their influence on me and an example of my commitment to the working principle of Transrealistic Poetics. In this flux world, meditation is a radical act.

The vocal element is the result of another type of collective meditation. Each of the vocal artists responded to a score composed of lines from the

aforementioned poets and an Anthony Braxton–style notation. The results were composed by me as a 25-minute track. The bells, of varying tones, further the meditation.

Ariel René Jackson

Its Extended Remnant is a video installation of my grandmother’s rusted swingblade made into a palimpsest. The swingblade has been given a chalk appendage that conjures and celebrates the relic’s departed life as it transitions to its next. My grandparents were successful farmers until racist loans and illiteracy caused them to lose much of their land, only to be confronted every day on their porch by their lost legacy. Their memory poetically lives on through oral interpretations of defunct tools, furniture, and clothing.

This work of remembering, working, and dressing the dispossessed’s possessions carries a complicated understanding of joy. Joy in this practice comes from fully recognizing the body beyond its limits of existence. There is a cry in the installation to watch over the dead by hiding the body in the land, refusing a demand for transparency entrenched in a colonial mindset that seeks to construct an idea of what the Other is.

Katherine Simóne Reynolds

On my mind as of late has been labor. Physical labor. In the sense of household labor. The monotonous action of vacuuming, ironing, “straightening” up.

Witnessing and acknowledging service.

I investigate the items and movements of this labor, with the quote from my grandmother “Don’t ever be someone’s maid” clanging in the background as I straighten up my and my partner’s bedroom.

There is something to being a Black woman seen cleaning a house she doesn’t own.

You Smell Like Iron utilizes sourced and taken photographs of Black women with long nails with quotes I heard growing up from my Aunties, Ma, and Grandma: “Actin’ fast” or “You smell like iron.”

There are also hairbrushes and satin pillowcases on the floor that are sprayed, with “faux stone” spray paint, with the messages “Who did it? What for? And please don’t do it again.” The hairbrushes appear on ironing boards with the message “I told you, I’m fine,” which can also be heard in the three-channel video piece from each woman in different beauty-shop landscapes.

I am wanting to use cast-iron irons and wrinkled shirts on spray-painted ironing boards. Cast iron plays a key role in displaying weight and strength.

There seems to be a need to be presentable not only in the house but outside as well.

Using the medium of readymade sculpture, I accentuate the domesticity of needing to appear like everything is all there and together, while also revisiting past feelings of “being seen cleaning.” It begs the question, who is actually in control here? And who are we trying to be “presentable” to?

Presentability Politics

Authority

Aliza Shvarts

Anthem is part of my ongoing research into testimony and its gendered and racial exclusions. The work is a comparison of the different sexual assault evidence collection kits or “rape kits” used in each US state. For this installation at SculptureCenter, the exterior containers are hung on the wall at eye level, and refabrications of the interior contents are piled on a low plinth for visitors to handle.

Produced by commercial companies and state agencies, the kits vary in language, content, and form. A kit might contain seven or twenty-one steps; it might use legal or medical language (“victim” vs. “patient”) and gendered or gender-neutral terms (“panties” vs. “underwear”). As an object, a rape kit is a crucial site where physical experience is transformed into testimony—one that has the power to support or supersede the survivor’s own voice. Yet in whose voice, and on whose behalf, does the object speak?

Rosa Sijben and David Bernstein

Something To Hold On To is both a series of objects and a condition for their display. The objects—haptic, pleasurable, curious, and abstract forms—are offered to visitors to hold while they explore the exhibition. These objects can give visitors a feeling of groundedness. If there is a moment of doubt, or confusion, at least they have something to hold on to.

The forms for these objects originate as abstractions of familiar things in everyday life. They could be thought of as tools for projection—things that produce association and memories. Perhaps they can be an escape, a way for someone to pretend to be busy, to take away the awkwardness of a situation, like a cigarette or a pen might do. They can give a sense of security and comfort, and perhaps they will spark a story that one visitor can share with another.

We hope that this small act of care gives a sense of connection and joy.

Sara Stern

Filmed in a former stove factory turned loft apartment complex in Richmond, Virginia, *COMPANY* addresses trends in adaptive reuse architecture through a moving-image work that weaves together magical realism, dark humor, and

references to 1920s films including *Modern Times* and *Metropolis*. Such films mark a moment when innovation and growth provoked new understandings of personhood and allowed society to imagine machines and automated systems as animated beings whose complexity exceeded the capacity of ordinary people to account for it.

The video enacts a choreography of reuse across a series of vignettes. A stove produced on the premises returns nearly a century later to roam its birthplace, admiring all the new amenities. A line of loft inhabitants with vintage stove legs for hands and feet moves slowly along the hallway of the former foundry, tapping walls and floor in sync. A Bauhaus-inspired dancer performs a property dance.

A site-responsive architectural intervention of weathered steel walls leads into the installation, an allusion to SculptureCenter's Corten steel entrance added in 2014, pointing to the museum's own history of adaptive reuse.

Kenneth Tam

In *All of M*, the high school prom serves as a vehicle for examining the role of social ritual in forming male identity and the physical trappings that enable sites of male homosocial belonging. The prom is generally understood as a coming-of-age event where adolescents dress up and perform as adults for one night, ritualistically marking the movement from one stage of life to another. In *All of M*, however, a diverse group of high school seniors are brought together with adult men to enact a different version of the prom.

The subjects' participation in this reperformance speaks to the anxieties tied to normative gender expression while also suggesting possibilities for reimagining both this ritual and themselves. Inner tubes filled with sand function as bodily surrogates in the video, and larger versions appear as sculptures in the installation. Their origins in the world of DIY gym equipment videos circulated on YouTube contrast with their languid yet eroticized presentation. In *All of M*, the performance of male subjectivity is seen as contingent and open to change.

Kiyan Williams

Dirt Eater resurfaces the practice of geophagy—consuming dirt—among enslaved Africans in the Caribbean and American South. In the project, I reference nineteenth-century drawings of enslaved Black people wearing punishment masks for eating dirt. I visited plantation ruins in my ancestral homelands in St. Croix, United States Virgin Islands, to source soil and debris for the work. The earth sculpture memorializes the Indigenous practice and transgressive act of consuming dirt, which was prohibited under the

slavery regime. In the accompanying video performance, I engage in geophagy while wearing a punishment mask that I made from steel and patina.

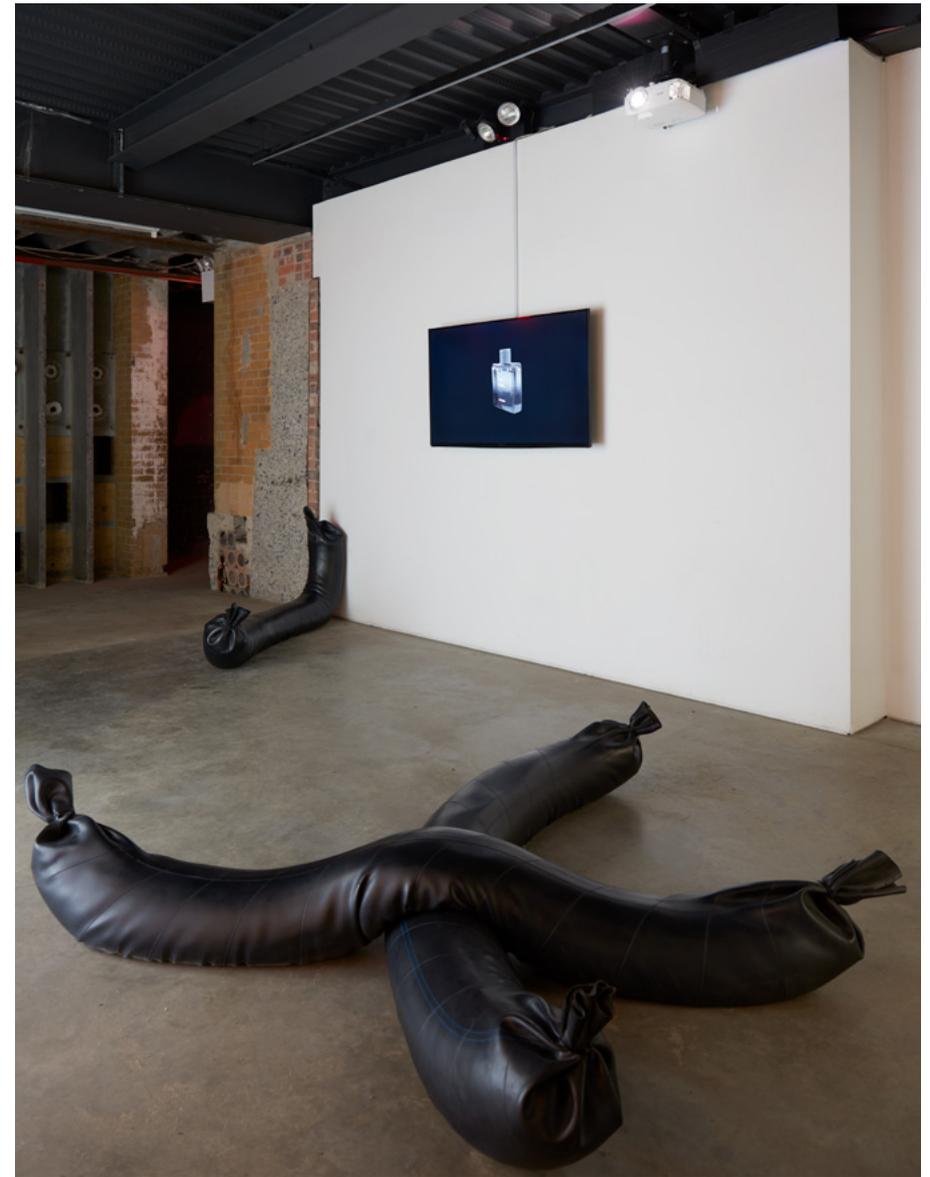
Dirt Eater highlights my process of using archival sources and site-specific soil to unearth Diasporic history. The work is a part of my ongoing use of dirt and soil as material and metaphor for imagining alternative ecologies and counterhegemonic relationships and encounters with land that subvert the civilization/nature binary within the Euro-Western social order.



Rosa Sijben and David Bernstein,
Something To Hold On To,
2018–19, installation view and
detail (opposite).



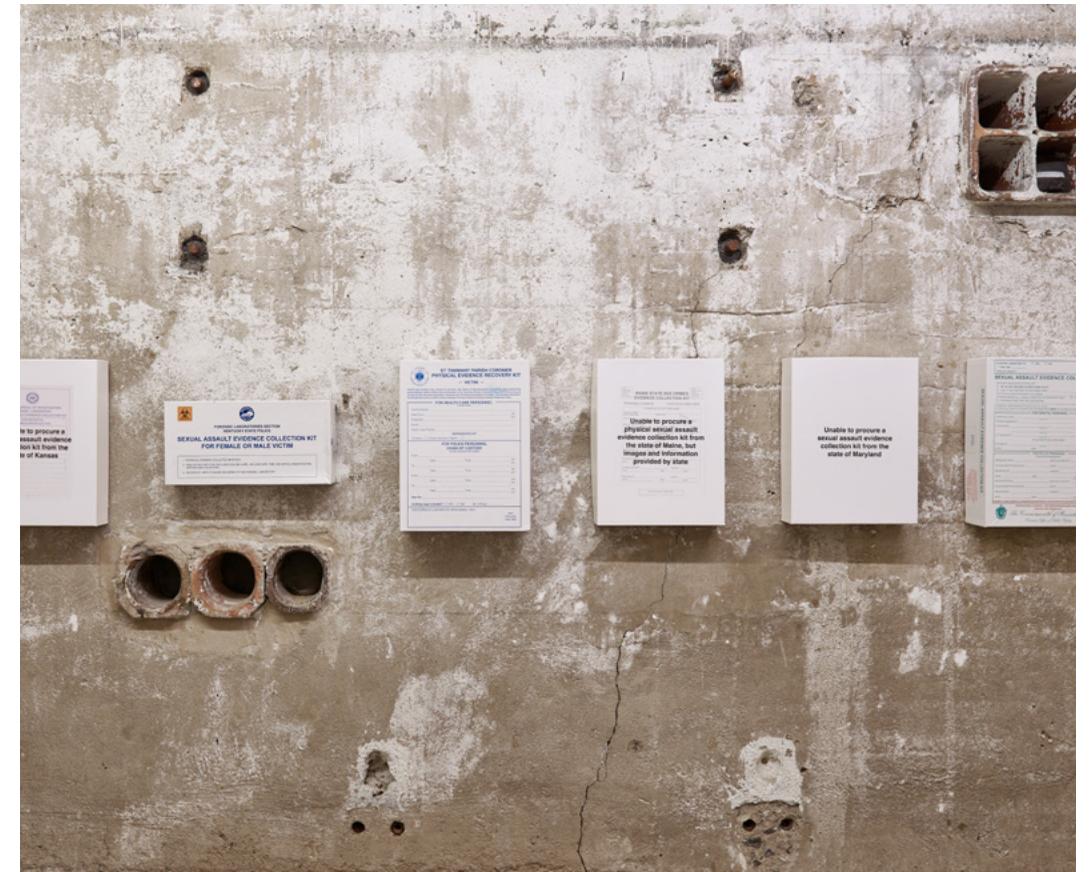
Kiyan Williams, *Dirt Eater*, 2019,
installation views.



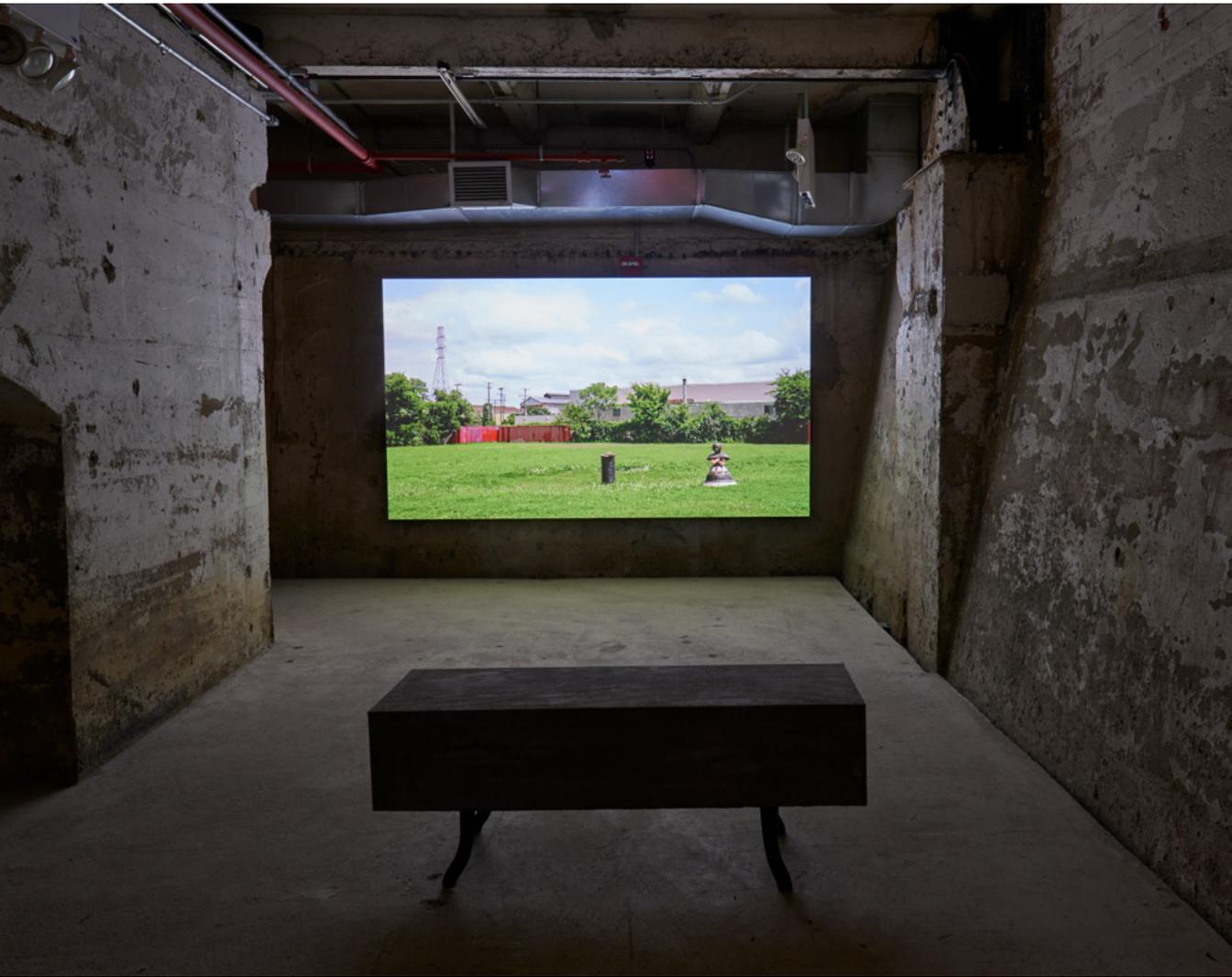
Kenneth Tam, *All of M*, 2018,
installation views.



Takming Chuang, *Shelf Life*,
2019, details.



Aliza Shvarts, *Anthem*, 2019,
installation view and detail.



Sara Stern, *COMPANY*, 2018,
installation views.



Photo: Sara Stern



Katherine Simóne Reynolds,
You Smell Like Iron, 2018,
installation view.



Katherine Simóne Reynolds, *Ironing
Board Sculpture 2*, 2018, detail. From
You Smell Like Iron, 2018.



LaMont Hamilton, *J.W, R.H, H.D, E.R, NHP (whispering of the self to the self)*, 2019, detail (opposite) and installation view.



Natalie Ball, *Playing Dolls*, 2019,
installation views.



The Impossible Theater; (5th Rev. ed.)

From June to September 2016, Niloufar Emamifar conducted a series of interviews with A. Zolfaghari, the former manager of *Ferdowsi* (formerly *Royal*) movie theatre in Tehran, Iran. The interviews were intended to gain permission to film inside the building and project the resulting documentation on the screen of the movie theatre for a runtime of 1hr30min. Emamifar began a parallel public art project during the pre-production of the video. In August 2016, a public sculpture was assembled in a vacant lot between two retail spaces on Shariati Street, Tehran. The sculpture was composed of one borrowed air conditioner from an insurance office in Tehran, scaffolding from a rental company, IRANBAST, and borrowed electricity from a neighboring mechanic shop. No application was filed to receive a temporary permit from city council. The cost of the rented scaffolding was equivalent to 30 USD. Per negotiations with each business, no payment was credited either to the office space owning the air conditioner or to the mechanic shop for the electricity. The air conditioner was purchased in the early 2000s from the company, Arj, the same that provided air conditioners to the Ferdowsi movie theatre in Tehran in the 1970s. The air conditioner that became part of the public sculpture had been used in the insurance office from 2000 onwards. The assembly of the rented scaffolding and installation of the borrowed air conditioning unit were made in collaboration with two people from the IRANBAST company and all the formal decisions were made collectively and on-site. The final form was a cube made of the scaffolding supporting the air conditioner with a small sitting area attached. The installation occurred over the course of one hour and the air conditioner ran during the operating hours of the neighboring store, blowing cool air at passersby the vacant lot. There were five eyewitness reports of individuals sitting with the sculpture. The elements of the sculpture were taken apart by an unknown person after 48 hours without any parts missing, destroyed, or stolen. Emamifar did not witness the collapse herself. Subsequently, she inquired if it would be possible to purchase a portion of the remnant scaffolding from the IRANBAST company. At first, the company rejected the request claiming that the material was only issued for rental use. After some deliberation, they finally agreed to sell a portion of the scaffolding at a price of 4 USD. The acquired scaffolding was cast in a bronze shop located in the central district of Eslamshahr County, Tehran Province, a week later for 30 USD. Emamifar did not witness the casting process. The air conditioner was re-assembled and returned to the insurance office in northeast Tehran and continued to function on-site until November 2018. The bronze cast of the scaffolding and the original iron scaffolding were shipped to Los Angeles in September 2016. The original ironcast, the bronze scaffolding and the engine of air conditioner were shipped to SculptureCenter in November 2018. Upon arrival in New York, the bronze cast and the cast iron scaffolding were melted into ingots at the General Refining Corporation located in Hempstead, New York for 400 USD. Emamifar did not witness the melting process. In 2019, Emamifar will propose to sell the cast iron scaffolding to the Pollock Krasner Foundation under conditional terms and in exchange for the removal of a link from the foundation's website.¹

¹ <https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Pages/Programs.aspx>

Niloufar Emamifar, *The Impossible Theater*; (5th Rev. ed.), 2016–19, detail and installation view (opposite).

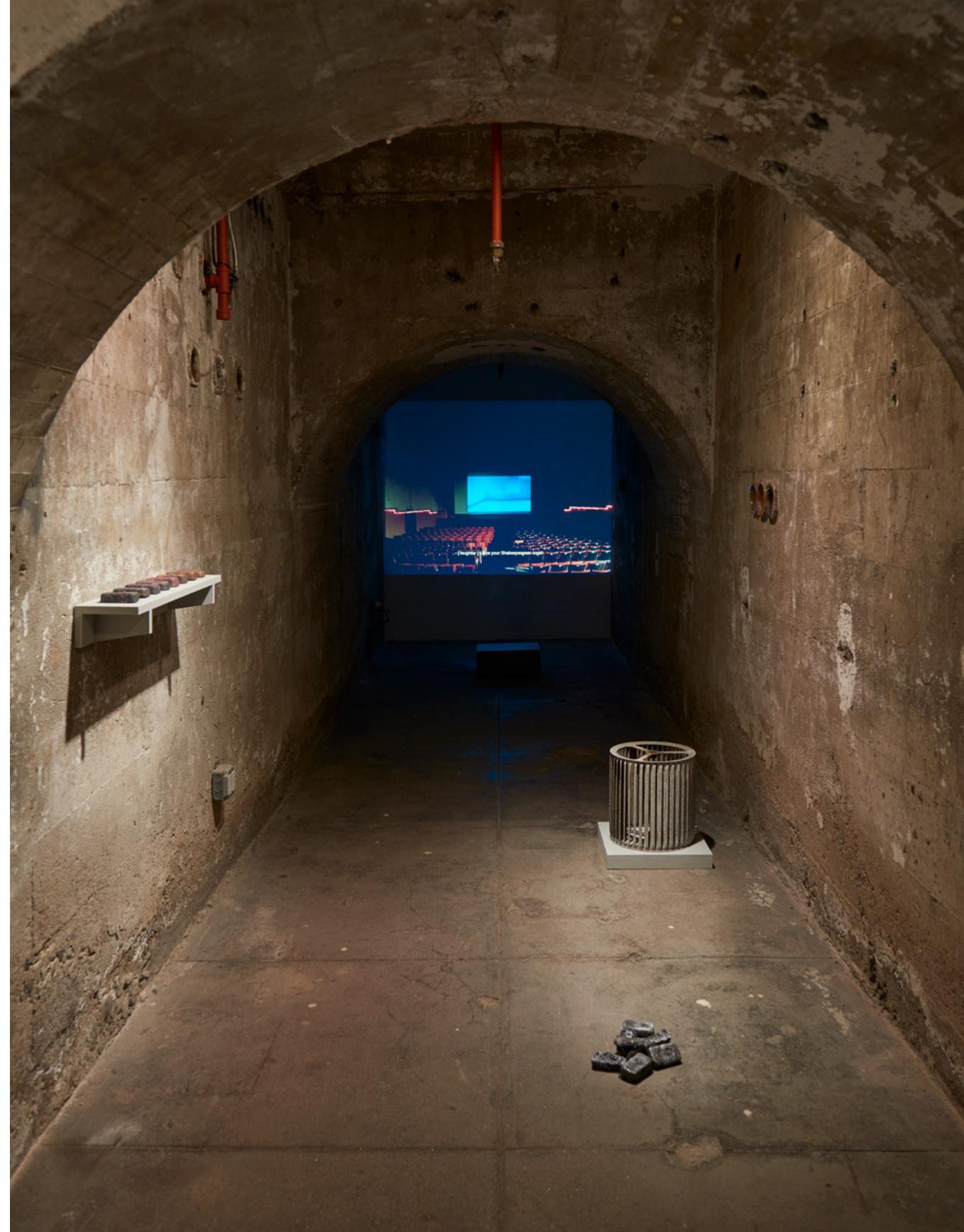




Photo: Chauncey Velasco and
Ariel René Jackson



Ariel René Jackson, *Its Extended
Remnant*, 2019, installation views.

Checklist

Natalie Ball

Playing Dolls, 2019

Acrylic paint, charcoal, permanent marker, lambskin, smoked winter elk hide, tarp, cotton textile, cotton quilt pieces, lodge pole pine, U.S. Army Indian Campaign Medal ribbons, waxed thread, Tom & Jerry resin pins, baby shoes, acrylic paint, waxed thread, clay, deer fur pompom, cut seed beads, deer hide, cowry shells, permanent marker, child's military uniform jacket, smoked fawn hide, metal pins
Dimensions variable

Lodge pole pines, Christmas tree stand, child's military uniform pants, vintage moccasin with synthetic hair, doll head, coyote teeth, metal pins, permanent marker, acrylic paint, ponytail balls, U.S. dollars and coins, cigarettes
Dimensions variable

Takming Chuang

Shelf Life, 2019

Installation of 21 sculptures in unfired clay and plastic wrap, MDF shelves, fluorescent lamps
Dimensions variable

Niloufar Emamifar

The Impossible Theater; (5th Rev. ed.), 2016–19

Video, sound, 8 iron ingots melted from cast iron scaffolding, 8 bronze ingots melted from bronze cast, galvanized iron element from air conditioner, printed statement
Ingots 3.4 × 1.9 × 1 inches each (8.6 × 4.8 × 2.5 cm), galvanized iron element 13 × 12 × 12 inches (33 × 30.5 × 30.5 cm), printed statement 8.5 × 11 inches (21.6 × 27.9 cm)
Video: 15:20 minutes
Soundtrack: 4:31 hours

LaMont Hamilton

J.W. R.H. H.D. E.R. NHP (whispering of the self to the self), 2019

Installation with ostrich feathers, bells, recorded sound, light
Vocals by Anaïs Maviel, Wesley Chavis, Yaw Agyeman
Composition by LaMont Hamilton
Dimensions variable

Ariel René Jackson

Its Extended Remnant, 2019

Grandma's rusted swingblade, chalk mold, soil, chalkline, PVC ball, chalkboard paint, rope, wood engraving of Senegalese woman in rice field from Judith Carney's *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas* (2001), video projection
Audio mix by Mike Wyeld
Dimensions variable
Video: 4:00 minutes

Katherine Simone Reynolds*You Smell Like Iron*, 2018

Installation with the
below works:

Dalychia is Fine, 2018

Video with color/sound
9:09 minutes

Dyne is Fine, 2018

Video with color/sound
8:14 minutes

Garment Sculpture 1, 2018

Heat transfer on silk blouse,
shoes, dollar bill nail, resin
Dimensions variable

Ironing Board Sculpture 1, 2018

Ironing board, faux stone spray
paint, heat transfer on lace and
felt, cast iron iron, box of fake
nails, finger hooks, chain
Dimensions variable

Ironing Board Sculpture 2, 2018

Ironing board; faux stone spray
paint; heat transfer on lace, felt,
and polyester/spandex blend;
blond wig; brush; cast iron iron;
wire hanger; garment; boxes of
fake nails; finger hooks; chain
Dimensions variable

Lola is Fine, 2018

Video with color/sound
7:39 minutes

Nail Portrait 2, 2018

Framed digital photograph, tulle
30 × 24 inches (76.2 × 61 cm)

Nail Portrait 3, 2018

Framed digital photograph, tulle
30 × 24 inches (76.2 × 61 cm)

*Who did it? What for? and please
don't do it again.*, 2018

Satin pillowcases filled with
sand, faux stone spray paint
Dimensions variable

Thank you to Lola, Dyneishia,
and Dalychia for all of your
talent, beauty, and friendship.

Aliza Shvarts*Anthem*, 2019

Sexual assault evidence
collection kit exterior containers,
reproductions of sexual assault
evidence collection kit interior
contents, white envelopes, clear
plastic bags, white and brown
paper bags, paper bindle, scans,
8.5 × 11 × 2-inch set-up boxes,
inked prints on paper
Dimensions variable

Rosa Sijben and David Bernstein*Something To Hold On To*, 2018–19

Epoxy, different types of wood, glass,
anodized aluminum, bronze, epoxy
clay, self-drying clay, polyurethane,
elastic, Sugru
Dimensions variable

Sara Stern*COMPANY*, 2018

HD video with color/sound, concrete
and cast iron stove leg seating,
weathered steel walls, credits video
Dimensions variable

Video: 13:00 minutes (looped)

Sound mix by Gisburg

Kenneth Tam*All of M*, 2018

HD video installation with sound,
inner tubes, sand

Dimensions variable

Projected video: 11:50 minutes

Animation: 1:55 minutes

Courtesy the artist and
Commonwealth and Council,
Los Angeles

Kiyan Williams*Dirt Eater*, 2019

HD video with color/sound
7:28 minutes (looped)

Dirt Eater, 2019

Soil, clay, steel, patina, bricks,
wax, kanekalon, incense, wood,
steel armature
72 × 36 × 36 inches
(182.9 × 91.4 × 91.4 cm)

Except where noted, all works
courtesy the artists

In Practice: Other Objects

Jan 14–Mar 25, 2019

In Practice: Other Objects is organized by Gee Wesley, 2019 In Practice Curatorial Fellow.

Lead underwriting support of SculptureCenter's Exhibition Fund has been generously provided by the Kraus Family Foundation with major support by Robert Soros, and Stephanie and Tim Ingrassia.

The In Practice program is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts and The Pollock-Krasner Foundation. Additional gifts by Andreas Beroutsos, Alex Bilboa, Lewis Canfield, William Cotton, Joan Davidson, Henrique Cesar de Castro, Dorinda Elliott, Dennis Freedman, Saskia Friedrich, Aurelien Jehan, Diana King, Andre LaFontaine, Maximilien Moris, Nazhand Art and Culture LLC, Sheri Pasquarella, Lowell Pettit, Robert Pruzan, Herbert Sambol, and Miyoung Lee Simpkins and Neil Simpkins. Additional support for Rosa Sijben and David Bernstein's project is provided by the Mondriaan Fund.

SculptureCenter's programs and operating support is provided by the Lambent Foundation Fund of Tides Foundation; public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council; the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature; the National Endowment for the Arts; Danielle and Drew Anderman; Andreas Beroutsos and Abigail Hirschhorn; Irene and Allen Brill; Laren C. and Jesse M. Brill; Lee and Robert K. Elliott; Elizabeth and Adrian Ellis; Charlotte Feng Ford; Fred Wilson; the A. Woodner Fund; New York City Council Member Jimmy Van Bramer; and contributions from our Board of Trustees and Director's Circle. Additional funding is provided by the Milton and Sally Avery Arts Foundation and contributions from many generous individuals.

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