

NINO MIER
GALLERY

BLAIR SAXON HILL

INFO@MIERGALLERY.COM
WWW.MIERGALLERY.COM
7277 SANTA MONICA BOULEVARD
LOS ANGELES, CA, 90046
T: 323-498-5957



Blair Saxon-Hill creates collages and assemblages from found materials such as fine fabrics, rare books, coat hangers, sticks, rags, and other common household items, allowing the forms and material histories of the objects to inform her construction process. Drawing from art historical lineages from Arte Povera and Cobra to the proto-surrealism of Arcimboldo, Saxon-Hill's works meld figuration and abstraction to comprise an ever-expanding cast of wild, queer, and raw characters. Saxon-Hill's visual language is abstracted, generative, and comedic, assembling subjects from disparate, colorful parts.

"As an artist, I act as a researcher, a wanderer, a hunter, an irreverent butcher, a matchmaker, a gambler, and a psychic. I respond to this remarkable world by continuing to collect from its deep pools of value and disregard with the aim of sincerely reformulating the bizarre, subtle, elegant, broken, and in love to focus on the humanity of our time in this grotesque political climate. The cast of characters I have developed over the last few years are queer, surreal, humorous, gritty, and urgent. The sculptures anticipate their relationship to a staged performance and work to ensure that they are capable of conversing with the daily news in installation. At times the figurative assemblages are marching in protest around gallery walls or otherwise are organized as a pedestrian frieze. Adding to dimension, the sculptures can be 'read' and further understood through the distinct material lists for each piece which are often long and poetic as they name selected finery and detritus alongside more traditional studio materials."

- Blair Saxon-Hill

Blair Saxon-Hill (b 1979, Eugene, Oregon, US; lives and works in Portland, Oregon) has received the Oregon Arts Commission Fellowship, the Ford Family Foundation Grant, and the Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters and Sculptors Fellowship. She has exhibited with Nino Mier Gallery, Los Angeles; Pace Prints, NYC; WSU Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, WA; and JOAN, Los Angeles, among others. Saxon-Hill was also included in the 2021 New Museum Triennial, Soft Water, Hard Stone. Her work has been covered by ArtForum, Frieze Magazine, LA Weekly, and The Brooklyn Rail, among other publications.



SELECTED WORKS



Blair Saxon-Hill

Grapes, 2022

Fabric collage on canvas wrapped panel

77 1/4 x 51 1/4 x 2 3/4 in (framed)

196.2 x 130.2 x 7 cm (framed)

(BSH22.014)



Blair Saxon-Hill
Fish With Oysters, 2022
Fabric collage on canvas wrapped panel
77 1/4 x 51 1/4 x 2 3/4 in (framed)
196.2 x 130.2 x 7 cm (framed)
(BSH22.013)



Blair Saxon-Hill
Welcome Home, 2022
Fabric collage and rope on canvas wrapped panel
77 1/4 x 51 1/4 x 2 3/4 in (framed)
196.2 x 130.2 x 7 cm (framed)
(BSH22.008)



Blair Saxon-Hill
Melon, 2022
Paper collage on canvas wrapped panel
14 x 11 x 2 in
35.6 x 27.9 x 5.1 cm
(BSH22.017)



Blair Saxon-Hill
Bananas, 2022
Paper collage on canvas wrapped panel
14 x 11 x 2 in
35.6 x 27.9 x 5.1 cm
(BSH22.028)



Blair Saxon-Hill
Asparagus, 2022
Paper collage on canvas wrapped panel
14 x 11 x 2 in
35.6 x 27.9 x 5.1 cm
(BSH22.030)



Blair Saxon-Hill
Emergency Contact (Moon), 2021
hydrocal, gouache, foamcoat, wood, mosquito net
pants, rubber boots, exercise band, tulle from a skirt, ce-
ramic, acrylic paint
63 x 19 x 6 in
160 x 48.3 x 15.2 cm
(BSH22.001)



INSTALLATION VIEWS



Installation view of Blair Saxon-Hill's
Shrimthead Momma
(October 15 - November 12 2022)
Nino Mier Gallery, Glassell Park, CA



Installation view of Blair Saxon-Hill's
Shrimthead Momma
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Nino Mier Gallery, Glassell Park, CA



Installation view of Blair Saxon-Hill's
Shrimthead Momma
(October 15 - November 12 2022)
Nino Mier Gallery, Glassell Park, CA



Installation view of
BLAIR SAXON-HILL
As If Without Us We Could Be We
(December 1, 2018 - January 5, 2019)
Nino Mier Los Angeles, CA



Installation view of
BLAIR SAXON-HILL
As If Without Us We Could Be We
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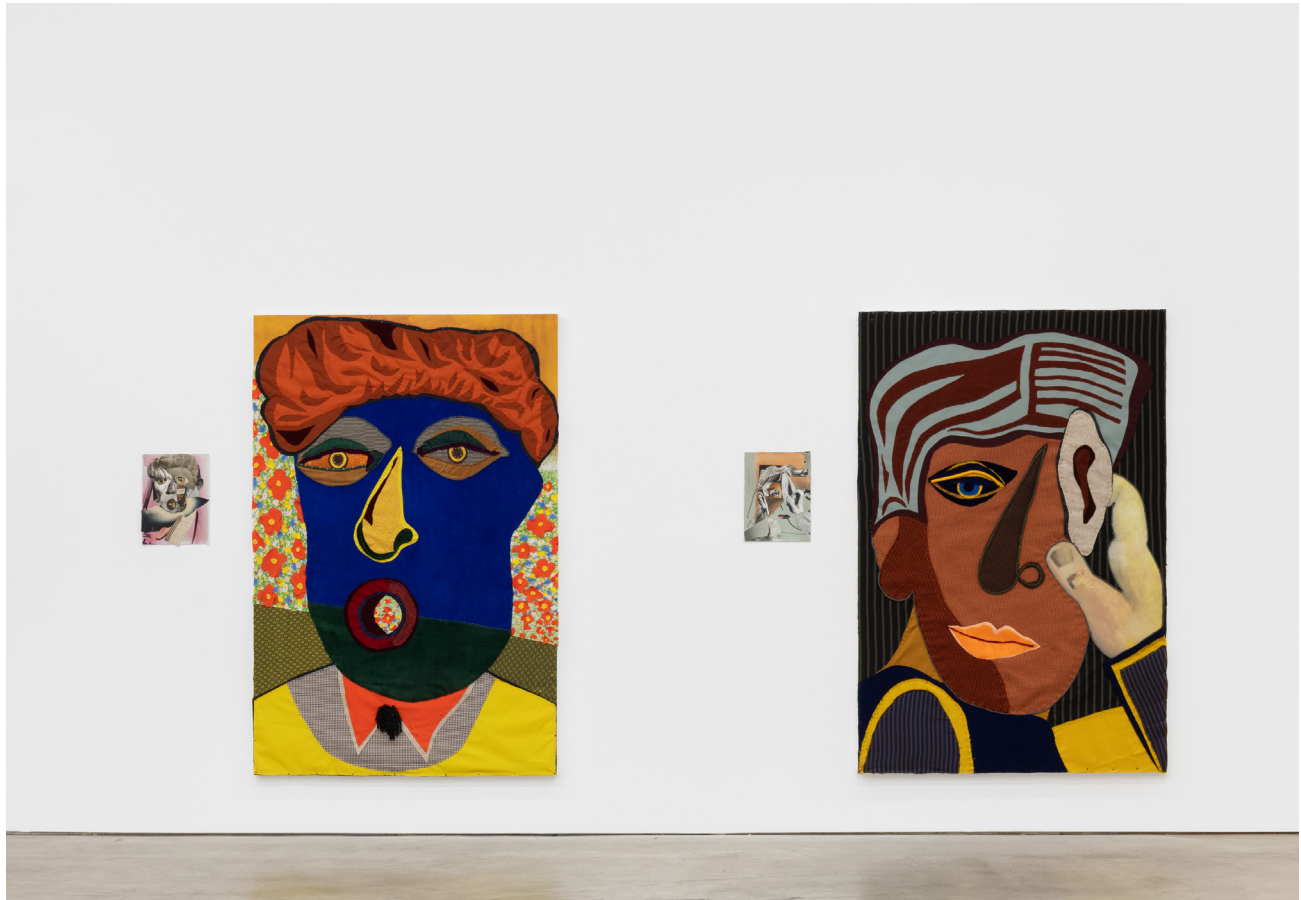
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Installation view of
BLAIR SAXON-HILL
As If Without Us We Could Be We
(December 1, 2018 - January 5, 2019)
Nino Mier Los Angeles, CA



Installation view of Blair Saxon-Hill
at *Gest*
(December 15 2020 - January 30 2021)
Nino Mier Los Angeles, CA



PRESS

INLANDER

January 2022

WSU art show explodes with color and sound from the Pacific Northwest

By Carrie Scozzaro



Credit the Pacific Northwest’s music scene with inspiring the name of Washington State University’s new exhibition, Indie Folk: New Art and Sounds from the Pacific Northwest.

“When I found out that the Northwest was a hub for indie folk, which is a genre that hybridizes traditional acoustic folk with contemporary instrumentation, I found a title for the show,” says Melissa Feldman, the East Coast-based independent art curator who developed Indie Folk.

The music may have inspired the title, but it was the Pacific Northwest art scene that caught her eye several years ago when she lived in Seattle.

“I noticed that there was a lot of involvement with hand making and craft-based methods in the Pacific Northwest, as opposed to hands-off conceptual work, and a preference for rough-hewn, graphic directness that you could describe as ‘folk,’” says Feldman, who worked with Portland-based Adams and Ollman Gallery in 2020 to stage Indie Folk online before approaching WSU with the exhibition.

Folk — as in folk music, folklore, folk hero — informally refers to people. It also implies a group of people’s commonly held traditions. That might make folk art one of the easiest-to-understand categories of artmaking because it is of the people.



Although an individual's experiences with folk art may differ due to culture and history, there are commonalities in the form. Folk art exemplifies resourcefulness, like scrap-metal sculptures fashioned from old farm implements. It is often personal, narrative and sometimes functional, such as the heirloom quilt that conveys both the history and heritage of its maker and users. And folk art is graphic versus scripted, emphasizing authenticity over artifice; it may be created by someone who doesn't know or care about structured techniques, and who may or may not call themselves an artist.

As democratic as folk art sounds, however, the term is also problematic, says Ryan Hardesty, executive director of Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art WSU. "Historically it was used as a bit of a catch-all term for really — sadly — any artist that was viewed outside the traditional art historical canon."

Similar labels like "outsider art" or "low art" used in academic or other institutional settings have historically segregated artists — and therefore the art they produce — according to education, gender and ethnicity. Indie Folk and exhibitions like it can help address those disparities.

"I think what's exciting about today and the world we're living in now is seeing an effort to kind of reclaim the term 'folk,' to work to dissolve some of those boundaries, giving greater value to wider forms of human artmaking and ingenuity," says Hardesty, who worked with Feldman since 2021 to bring Indie Folk to WSU.

Neither Hardesty nor Feldman would call the exhibition's participants folk artists in the traditional sense, and few, if any of them refer to themselves that way.

"Rather the point [of Indie Folk] is really to reflect on sensibilities, chosen aesthetics and influences of a select group of contemporary artists of the Northwest," Hardesty says.

Feldman concurs.

"None of the artists in the show are interested in reproducing early American wooden toys or a classic quilt pattern," says Feldman.

Although the artists in Indie Folk might not label themselves as "folk artists," they do reference folk traditions in various ways, Feldman says, including in terms of "aesthetics, formal and material inventiveness, connection to the past, closeness to human experience and ordinary life."

Aesthetically, Andrea Joyce Heimer's painting, "The Big Sky Rodeo Finals That Summer Were Marked By A Flash Lightning Storm, A Horse Fight, And My First Handjob In A Haystack," illustrates a complex outdoor event from both straight on and overhead so that viewers "read" the action almost like a graphic novel.

Vince Skelly's carved wooden benches and sculptures are a hybrid of two ways of working, featuring both rustic and highly refined surfaces and forms. His sculptures also bridge to the past, reminding of ancient monoliths, as well as the modern art those historical pieces inspired.

Denzil Hurley similarly steps in two worlds, says Feldman, who describes Hurley's mixed media pieces like "Glyph Frame #6" as sophisticated and modern from a distance, with its monochromatic coloration and minimalist composition. Yet Hurley also employs handmade objects in his work and — upon closer inspection — you can see his scribbles and brushstrokes, which are more related to folk traditions.

"The reason why he loved the language of art is it's more open and allows more ambiguity than the language of words," Feldman says of the late Barbados-born, Yale-educated artist who died in 2021.



Many of the Indie Folk artists incorporate common materials in uncommon ways, especially D. E. May, but also Marita Dingus, whose work symbolizes overcoming historical oppression.

“The discarded materials represent how people of African descent were used during the institution of slavery and colonialism then discarded, but who found ways to repurpose themselves and thrive in a hostile world,” writes Dingus, in her artist statement.

Visually, Dingus’ work seems fragile or fragmented, yet conceptually it is nuanced and cohesive, reminding viewers that the materials in contemporary folk art might be common, but the thought process is not.

Sky Hopinka’s video, “Jáaji Approx.,” shifts the focus away from inventive material usage in contemporary folk art and toward thematic commonalities.

Hopinka, a member of the Ho-Chunk Nation and descendant of the Pechanga Band of Luiseño people, juxtaposes a range of rural to urban landscapes with voice recordings of his father over a 10-year period. Superimposed over the imagery are transcriptions of the elder Hopinka’s words in one of three languages: English using the disorienting yet familiar phonetic alphabet; English using the (conventional) Roman alphabet; and Hoak, the traditional language of the Ho-Chunk people.

On one level, Hopinka’s work reflects similar themes throughout Indie Folk: family, community, oral and documentary traditions, rural sense of place, cultural traditions. On another level, it signals the continual evolution of the contemporary folk genre.

Indie Folk is not an endpoint; it’s more of an exploration of the concept of folk, says Feldman, whose lifelong interest in art and curating has been fueled by travel and innate curiosity.

“I think my familiarity with art scenes in different places I have lived — which include London, Glasgow, [Washington] DC, Philadelphia, San Francisco and New York, where I’m from and return to regularly — gives me a basis of comparison and has sensitized me to difference,” Feldman says. “With Indie Folk I’m trying to figure out where this trend came from to give some historical context for that.”

Interest in contemporary folk isn’t limited to the Northwest, she says.

Indeed, the American Folk Art Museum in New York City is celebrating its 60th anniversary with four different folk art exhibitions that will travel the nation through 2024. And when Indie Folk ends its Pullman run in May, it will travel onward to Schneider Museum of Art in Ashland, Oregon, and the Bellevue Arts Museum in Bellevue, Washington.

“I’m not the only curator these days looking at nonurban, nonmainstream, nonacademic sources and histories that affect art-making now,” Feldman says. “I think there’s a lot of interest in that.”

ARTFORUM

January 2022

UNDER THE SKIN OF NEWNESS

By Domenick Ammirati



View of the 2021 Triennial: "Soft Water Hard Stone," 2021–22, New Museum, New York. From left: Ann Greene Kelly, *Untitled (Polka Dot Sofa)*, 2021; Ann Greene Kelly, *Untitled (Column)*, 2021; Alex Ayed, *untitled*, 2021; Blair Saxon-Hill, *Emergency Contact*, 2021; Kahlil Robert Irving, *Routes&Roots[(SaintLouis<NewYork(returnflight))MEMORY MASSEST*, 2021. Photo: Dario Lasagni.

IN A WORLD WHERE CONTINGENCY has never loomed larger, why not begin with a book found lying on the street? At the beginning of autumn, which seemed like nothing but an extension of a hot, dread-filled summer, I came across a copy of Theodor Adorno's *Minima Moralia* on the sidewalk. When I began flipping through it that evening, I found something completely different from what I had expected. Far from page after numbing page elaborating theoretical constructs, *Minima Moralia* is a collection of hot takes: short, numbered prose pieces, rarely more than a few pages, that are sharp, grouchy, riddling, indulgent, seemingly self-reversing, veering from dire world-historical pronouncement to Larry David-esque one-liner, and devoid of any context that would make the various complaints comprehensible to anyone not already in the know. All in all, it was a mode thoroughly familiar from Twitter.

Adorno makes plenty of great points in the book, of course. His classics: The Enlightenment's regime of reason contained the seeds of its own destruction; the logic of commodification poisons all social relationships; we're all fucked. The book bristles with bons mots, from the refined to the ridiculous. On the one hand, we have the kind of critique that has made the "Franklin School" (to quote right-wing propagandist Mark Levin's malapropism for the Frankfurt School) a target of the GOP thought police: "The practical orders of life, while purporting to benefit man, serve in a profit economy to stunt human qualities." On the other, we have pseudo-Wildean aphorisms: "The talk about early and late maturers, seldom free of the death-wish for the former, is specious." In between, we have the unintentionally comedic fruit of *Kulturkritik*: According to section 21, titled "Articles may not be

exchanged,” the custom of gift giving has declined, and per section 75 (“Chilly hospitality”), hotels these days just aren’t what they used to be.

Adorno might be forgiven for having been a little sick of hotels. “The major part of this book was written during the war,” he explains in the dedication—that war being World War II. Hitler assumed power in 1933; Adorno, a German Jew, left in 1934 for England and eventually the United States. He wrote *Minima Moralia* largely from 1944 to 1948 while residing in Southern California, where many of his compatriots (e.g., Bertolt Brecht, Thomas Mann) had gathered. He was stressed out, to put it mildly, trying to make sense of an insensible moment. In *Minima Moralia*, this situation resolves into anguish and a seemingly terminal dyspepsia, a bending of perspective of which Adorno himself is not unaware. In a section titled “Baby with the bath-water,” he points out the flaw in lensing the world through the one concept I associate with him above all else, that culture is ideology. “Comforting and lulling,” he writes, culture “serves to keep alive the bad economic determination of existence. . . . But to act radically in accordance with this principle would be to extirpate, with the false, all that was true also.”

For Adorno, rationalism led inevitably to the irrational. More than knowing it, we all feel this now. We share his horror. Under the circumstances, “high culture” can appear a trifling business. It’s purely anecdotal—who would poll such a thing?—but people seem not terribly excited by much they come across in galleries these days. It appears that, per the logic of commodities, art consumers, like those in other realms, want relief and distraction in the form of something new.

A harsh yet lovely line from *Becoming Alluvium*, a 2019 video by Thao Nguyen Phan in the New Museum Triennial, goes as follows: “It is not so much by the things that each day are manufactured, sold, bought but rather by the things that each day are thrown out to make room for the new. So you begin to wonder if the city’s true passion is really the enjoyment of new and different things, and not, instead, the joy of expelling, discarding.” The text is adapted from Italo Calvino’s *Invisible Cities* (1972); Phan’s video ranges broadly around the Mekong River, collapsing present, past, and dream time, from Khmer myths to the deadly 2018 buckling of a Laotian dam. The Calvino line leads into depictions of trash-strewn shores.

On the face of it, the title of the exhibition, “Soft Water Hard Stone,” would seem to have an optimistic slant: small gestures adding up to something great, persistence being rewarded, the invincible being defeated by a weaker force. You know, like in *Star Wars*. But the exhibition itself is hardly uplifting. Its dominant formal trope is the ruin. The first thing one encounters on exiting the elevator is a set of ten works by Kahlil Robert Irving, ceramic objects that look a bit like core samples from archaeological sites, rough-hewn agglomerations of items such as coffee mugs, pieces of girder or siding, takeout containers. Set on plinths, they call to mind the desuetude of excavated classical sculpture; they bear signifiers of the present or the recent past, like photographic decals of such subjects as Sarah Huckabee Sanders. Nearby, curators Margot Norton and Jamillah James (who worked with curatorial fellows Jeanette Bisschops and Bernardo Mosqueira) have placed *Untitled (Column)*, 2021, a sculpture by Ann Greene Kelly. While it’s no Temple of Olympian Zeus and is more a duct than a column, it alludes to classical antecedents despite its stained white metal mesh, its lumpy gray and randomly punctured rectilinear surfaces. Half the bottom has been cut open to reveal female legs and feet. Behind all these works stands a wall of flattish mask- and figurelike forms by Blair Saxon-Hill assembled from detritus—a plastic lemon juicer as an eye, a squeegee as a cheekbone, and so on. Thus the show announces a desire to transport us somewhere, possibly into a future anterior, possibly sideways, to a place a little dreamy, a little beaten down.

At times, “Soft Water Hard Stone” evokes the makeshift architecture that served as an armature for the art in Molly Nesbit, Hans Ulrich Obrist, and Rirkrit Tiravanija’s “Utopia Station” at the 2003 Venice Biennale. Norton and James cleverly use a couple of works to form ad hoc walls that help them deal with the New Museum’s notoriously awkward gallery spaces—it’s almost a form of institutional critique. In one large gallery, Nadia Belerique’s *HOLDINGS*, 2020–, comprises dozens of white plastic shipping containers converted into sculptural vessels stacked on their sides. In another, a work by Laurie Kang features large sheets of sticky brown photo film over metal framing to split the space in two. The construction, *Great Shuttle*, 2020–21, looks neither in progress nor abandoned but stalled.

The Triennial announces a desire to transport us somewhere, possibly into a future anterior, possibly sideways, to a place a little dreamy, a little beaten down.

Tucked around the corner from Great Shuttle is one of the strongest pairings in the exhibition. A tableau by Harry Gould Harvey IV centers on two charred-looking doors taken from an abandoned church, accompanied by an altarlike two-part display, one half of it thick with melted red candle wax. The metaphysical overtones might have made Adorno nervous (the longest section of MM is titled “Theses against occultism”), but Harvey implies we shouldn’t take the mysticism too seriously. Two flanking, diagrammatic, easel-size drawings burlesque the high-modernist notion of art museum as secular church: Each depicts a space with a cathedral on top and, below, a sparse white cube housing spindly assemblages and kitsch putti museumgoers. The rendering is funny, and there’s a satirical bite thanks to Harvey’s wry allusions to class struggle. One of the drawings is titled *An Appeal to the Young After Kropotkin Maquette for a Thought Form, 2021*. (The other, with a reference to the Book of Revelation, is called *St. Michael of the Apocalypse Slaying the Instinctual Serpent*.) The drawings’ frames are made of wood scavenged from abandoned mansions in Newport, Rhode Island, the fabled resort of an earlier era’s robber barons, and the altars feature scrap metal from Whole Foods. The candle wax was melted by one of the job-site heaters that form the altars’ supports. The materialism doesn’t preclude an occult significance, of course. Perhaps some leftist occultism is necessary to combat meme magick.

The wall adjacent to Harvey’s work is occupied solely by Iris Touliatou’s *Untitled (Still Not Over You), 2021*. Two large squares, roughly ten feet a side, are marked off by fluorescent tubes taken from disused offices and storefronts in the artist’s native Athens. There’s nothing there but the blank, dim field of the wall and the dingy, scorched bulbs in their sockets, glowing a miserable shade of peach at their butt ends. Athens has never really recovered from the economic crisis of 2007–2008, and the recovery, such as it is, has been dominated by the same toxic real-estate dealings and skyrocketing rents that afflict New York and every other major metropolis (and every minor one too, really). At the end of *Minima Moralia*—shades of his friend Walter Benjamin—Adorno adopts a quasi-religious tone: “Perspectives must be fashioned that displace and estrange the world, reveal it to be, with its rifts and crevices, as indigent and distorted as it will appear one day in the messianic light.” Rather than with a messianic light, Touliatou’s work flickers barely and erratically with the ghosts of jobs. The unexpectedly intimate title seems addressed not to a person but to a city.

In section 150 of *Minima Moralia*, near the book’s conclusion, Adorno discusses the idea of the new; the term he fixes on is sensation. He moves from the cult of novelty and the commodity through addiction, sadism, and masochism, then heads into a discussion of a subject never far from his mind in the book—fascism. Adorno sees it as the ultimate expression of capitalism’s mentality of absolute competition. Elsewhere in MM, he writes, “The fixed, inspecting, hypnotic and hypnotized stare that is common to all the leaders of horror has its model in the appraising look of the manager asking an interview candidate to sit down, and illuminating his face in such a way as to divide it pitilessly into bright, utilizable parts. . . . The last stage is the medical examination to decide between capacity for work and liquidation.” He likens the new, the sensational, to a drug blotting out the horror of alienation and social conditions: “Newness in collective form . . . is in fact a stimulating and paralyzing narcotic extract hailed out of external life.” And, crucial to the idea of novelty, any drug will do: “Compared to its stimulus-value, the content of the shock becomes really irrelevant.” In this environment, politics of a particularly virulent sort becomes a kind of stimulant: “Fascism was the absolute sensation: in a statement at the time of the first pogroms, Goebbels boasted that at least the National Socialists were not boring.”

Novelty, of course, is about the unchanging logic of the commodity. Decrying “the cult of the new,” Adorno writes, “The never-changing quality of machine-produced goods, the lattice of socialization that enmeshes and assimilates equally objects and the view of them, converts everything encountered into what always was.” No wonder you’re bored; under the skin of newness lies the same old hardware.

Greater New York has always seemed to labor under the imperative of novelty more than its cohorts the Triennial or the Whitney Biennial. Unlike those shows, it seems to be construed as a venue that gives artists their first big breaks—not a drip-drip-drip on stone but a hammer to the wall separating them from commercial success. Vanity Fair dispatched its art reporter to MOMA PS1 and devoted an entire column to the exhibition, but only for the purposes of discussing its market-goosing properties. When the Triennial’s turn came for the Condé Nast treatment, it rated only a couple of paragraphs of scene reportage tacked on at the end of a long column mostly about a few artists smoking a joint at the opening reception.

The current edition of Greater New York has old things on its mind; it is more or less a love letter to the city whose name it bears, to New York's status as a physical place that inflects the art made there and as the incubator of a number of avant-gardes. There's an inherent tension here with the emphasis on the "emerging" that is typical for Greater New York and other periodic showcases. As Touliatou's work at the New Museum suggests, to love a city (at least in an era whose metropolises are beginning to make the urban dystopias of twentieth-century sci-fi look positively charming) is to love the past. To its credit, Greater New York 2021 (curated by a team led by Ruba Katrib, with Serubiri Moses, in collaboration with Kate Fowle and Inés Katzenstein) thematizes and makes good use of this tension. The exhibition's overarching concern is the importance of the past and its existence in the present and, in a subtextual way, the preciousness of what has been. Do you like New York—whatever that ambiguously means that isn't simply about money—or do you like throwing things away, like the residents of the unnamed city in Phan's *Becoming Alluvium*?

The show's tone is set in the lobby with a display of bootleg and nonbrand T-shirts collected by the duo Shanzhai Lyric, who in January 2020 set up the Canal Street Research Association in a storefront that served as both their office-studio and a venue for small exhibitions, screenings, and other activities. The text on these shirts is frequently garbled, often inexplicable, and occasionally quasi-poetic; idiot world hangs high on the metal support structure; a black tee sporting a sequined Garfield bears an ode that begins, AND THE / SCREEN / THAT CIRCLE / YOU LIKE / NUTERFLIES. With this tableau, Shanzhai Lyric acknowledge New York's role as a node of globalization even as they bring the city into the museum. Upstairs, Steffani Jemison's droll, pointed video shows a mime wandering the streets and mirroring various individuals' gestures—a man exercising in a park, for instance. A couple of rooms later, Jemison appears again with a trio of rock tumblers turning street detritus into smooth little objects. Laid out on a small riser, they convey a sense of the hustle, the spinning of garbage into gold. That work foreshadows the presence one floor up of the show's *pièce de résistance*, a wall-long display of Yuji Agematsu's miniature sculptures made of bits of trash nested inside the cellophane casings that surround packs of cigarettes. A crumpled straw's wrapper, an autumnal leaf, thread, wire mesh: Sometimes the works look like abstracted landscapes, sometimes like figures; all reflect an extraordinary delicacy and a seemingly inexhaustible ability to create while staring at the pavement.

One of the numerous older and underrecognized artists in the show performs a similar indexing of city life on a slightly larger scale. Curtis Cuffie, who made streetside assemblages (and for a long time lived on the street), died in 2002 at age forty-seven. Cuffie is represented by six sculptures, not quite figurative, made out of cloth scraps (blankets, garments) and cast-off items like a toy house, a fake rose, and a painting of what might be Venice. The curators here adopt a tactic that becomes familiar as one travels through the exhibition: mounting a selection of documentary photos. They do likewise with Luis Frangella, who created bold en plein air paintings on the West Side Piers in their heyday while palling around with Peter Hujar and David Wojnarowicz. Bodies of street photography from the '60s, '70s, and '80s elsewhere punctuate the show. Bettina Grossman, Hiram Maristany, Marilyn Nance, Robin Graubard: Each of these artists contributes a display of images that insist on a sense of what things used to be like, implicitly demanding comparison with the present.

The counterpoint to all this gritty history is a retreat into fantastic individual worlds. (Adorno might even call it a dialectic.) We see interior landscapes from Julio Galán, E'Wao Kagoshima, Ahmed Morsi, Nicolas Moufarrege, and others. In hands down the weirdest work in the show, Bill Hayden presents a dark swampscape featuring an impaired-looking marijuana leaf with a face, enclosed by a brassy department-store frame and titled *WEED, 2021*. It would be some kind of dumb meme art, a joke, except for the fineness of its inking and the eerily relatable quality of this vegetable, all alone in the dark, consuming itself, coping as best it can. Stationed nearby is another of the show's notable oddballs, Paulina Peavy, a kind of second-generation Agnes Pelton who moved from California to New York City to paint her dreamscapes. Peavy viewed her work as a channeling of her communication with an extraterrestrial named Lacamo, hardly something that would seem to require residency in the tristate area. Her desire to be in New York—or need, given that she seems to have been encouraged to move by her commercial reception here—was counterpoised by her impulse to escape.

With the show so focused on the city, one work that links the museum and its urban context takes on particular power. Diane Severin Nguyen has contributed a suite of mysterious, tissue, decidedly inorganic abstract studio photos in a long passage on the third floor. Across from them are what I first thought were a series of seven iridescent blue filaments. Their width seemed to shift on approach. In

fact, Nguyen cut seven slits in the wall to afford a slender view out the window that the temporary wall occludes. It's an optical effect that would please James Turrell, whose permanently installed sky-viewing room *Meeting*, 1980–86/2010, is down the hall. The effect is glorious but melancholic, drawing in the history of the institution, because of what Long Island City has become in the past decade. With myriad condo towers hemming in the once-radical and still-vital ps1, it's a materialization of everything that has gone wrong. The wide-open has shrunk to the size of a jigsaw blade. But at the right hour, the light can still create magic.

The Triennial and Greater New York don't have all that much in common—not enough to confidently triangulate a zeitgeist, anyway. One interest they do share, however, is in the lattice of socialization, as Adorno calls it: social architecture.

One of the Triennial's best works takes the form of tens of thousands of tiny colorful beads. They appear throughout the New Museum in crevices, in gaps between concrete floor and wall, and, in an homage to Felix Gonzalez-Torres, piled in a corner. The total weight of the beads equals that of artist Jeneen Frei Njootli. A Vuntut Gwitchin First Nations artist, Njootli literalizes the experience of marginalization—falling through cracks, or being stuffed into them—in a way that belies the work's bright colors and festive strewn quality. It seems almost too visually attractive to be as pointed as it feels. Punning on the architecture, the critique broaches not only large issues of structural injustice but also institutional treatment of artists from Native communities and other underrepresented groups—when not invisible, used as a kind of decor. The work's title is *Fighting for the title not to be pending*, 2020, which suggests a desire for self-definition that is constantly opposed.

The Triennial takes one firm stab at institutional critique in an almost neoclassical vein, in a work by Clara Ianni titled *Labor Drawing* (New Museum), 2021. Ianni surveyed New Museum staff about how they got to work and created sparse, gridded mappings of their commutes, labeling them by position and department. The director of exhibition management arrives in ten to fifteen minutes by running (!) or biking. The artistic director arrives in five minutes by foot. The wall label tartly notes that Ianni had intended to include the employees' incomes, but “only a few” provided the info. Of course, we know how much the museum's director, Lisa Phillips, was making prior to the pandemic—\$768,000 per annum, far exceeding the salaries of directors at comparably sized institutions, a rate maintained in the face of the staff's eventually successful attempt to unionize in 2019. (As a result of the pandemic, Phillips's salary did drop by 30 percent in 2020, when the museum's budget was slashed from \$14 million to \$11 million.) UAW Local 2110, which represents workers at the New Museum, filed a complaint with the National Labor Relations Board over the museum's allegedly retaliatory layoffs during the pandemic; in July 2021 the parties reached a settlement in which the union agreed to withdraw the charge. The director's commute is, for whatever reason, not among those Ianni depicts.

At Greater New York, questions of structural discrimination are raised by the presence of artists like Cuffie, G. Peter Jemison, and Diane Burns, a poet whose brief 1989 spoken-word spot for public television is delivered with such vigor that it dominates the largest gallery in the exhibition. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the street photography carries a great deal of similar freight. Maristany, for example, was the official documentarian of the *Young Lords*, a Puerto Rican parallel to the Black Panthers. Nance's photos include protesters confronting police but also address the strangeness of urban life, its unpredictability, with images like those of circus elephants plodding down night streets.

Greater New York's overarching concern is the importance of the past and its existence in the present. Do you like New York—whatever that ambiguously means that isn't simply about money?

One of the most singular works in Greater New York takes on social architecture in a different but no less real sense; it also seems widely misunderstood. Marie Karlberg's *The Good Terrorist*, 2021, is a narrative video that over the course of an hour dramatizes the lives of some inept leftist radicals whose plan to bomb something or other goes awry. One can detect the doom from the moment Karlberg's Alice and her repellent boyfriend, Jasper (flatly but effectively played by Tavish Miller), come across a numbskull drumming on a construction bucket in an empty room. The work's plot is drawn from the eponymous 1985 novel by Doris Lessing, but as moving image it plays as a reprise of Godard's 1967 *La Chinoise*, in which a similarly youthful, attractive, and abstruse bunch of Maoists plot an assassination that kills the wrong guy. Karlberg acknowledges the debt in a manner befitting her ultra-low budget, with some sloganeering silk screens paying homage to Godard's palette of red, yellow, and blue.

The medium of *The Good Terrorist* is, however, neither cinema nor video. Rather, its medium is its cast. The players have been selected not for their abilities to act but rather for their social status as figures in the art and literary worlds, in the “downtown” sense. The film is not a film; it is actually a piece of process art rooted in the notion of the social as a medium. *The Good Terrorist* is the successor to Karlberg’s project, several years in the running, of making short videos enlisting every art-affiliated person at hand, mostly in uneventful plots about the art world itself. (Your author is among those previously featured; I played a critic, poorly.) A number of them screened to impressive and comic effect in a multiroom installation at Tramps gallery in New York in 2019–20, their clashing against one another in the strange flea-market-like space creating an artificially social buzz. Inviting someone to be in a one-shot, DIY movie is flattering, even more so when the invitee knows they have no talent for it, or when they secretly believe they do. It’s a good way to make friends—they show up, do very little in a contrived ambience of gamelike tension, then get drunk. With each friendship, you build your network; the larger the network, the more supporters you have; the more supporters you have, the more likely you are to be taken seriously; and the next thing you know, MacArthur geniuses will be willing to wail over their fictive dead loved ones in front of your camera.

After all this, among these ruins, in a present too blithe or disoriented for its pasts, we find the New York artist of the moment. Her name is Rosemary Mayer, and she died in 2014.

Mayer’s work echoes themes found in Greater New York and the Triennial: the slight, the ephemeral, the ruined; the passing of time, history and how we mark it. Working primarily in the 1970s, she made sculptural installations of rods and draped fabrics that spread colorfully diameter-wise or rise more abruptly like a wall hanging, all in a delicate balance. The Swiss Institute has turned its main gallery over to *Galla Placidia*, 1973, a ceiling-hung ovoid form outlined in sheer lavender rayon with pink and yellow satin crumples nested inside it, on either side of a thicker lavender curtain. This piece is nine feet long, ten feet tall, and five across and despite the flimsy materials feels durable; the way it marks out space gives it a sense of something like monumentality, and it reflects the true sculptor’s ability to work in 360 degrees. I often feel that sculpture, like opera or literary fiction, is a dying art, and indeed, in a gallery you are infinitely more likely to run into an unconventionally attired mannequin than a work like *Galla Placidia*, which not only accounts for a rotational experience but does so in a way that doesn’t track along the smooth lines of something pre-rendered. It takes up space by being almost nothing. It can conjure a narrative—is it I for whom the curtain has dropped? Which side of it am I on, that of the performer or the audience?—but it also remains obstinately nonrepresentational. *Galla Placidia* is kind of spectacular once you engage with it; if you just stare at it and expect it to tell you something, you will be disappointed. As Adorno would say, “Cultivated philistines are in the habit of requiring that a work of art ‘give’ them something.”

Galla Placidia accounts for a rotational experience but does so in a way that doesn’t track along the smooth lines of something pre-rendered. It takes up space by being almost nothing.

Mayer’s Swiss Institute retrospective, curated by Laura McLean-Ferris with Alison Coplan, contains only a few such works: Mayer stopped making them around 1974, and they were unappealing to institutions—unsurprisingly, given her gender, the gender coding of her chosen materials, and her works’ fragility. Her art changed over the years and never quite settled. She had begun by making text-based and Conceptualist works, some of which appeared in *O to 9*, the avant-garde journal edited by her then-husband, Vito Acconci, and her sister Bernadette. (Bernadette wrote of the pairing, “Rosemary eventually married Vito Acconci . . . I don’t know why.”) Later in the 1970s, Mayer moved more decidedly into outdoor events, often choreographing tributes to friends. *Some Days in April*, 1978, for example, used inscribed weather balloons to create an homage to her late friend Ree Morton (with whose work hers shares affinities), as well as to the artist’s own parents. In photos, the balloons just hang in the sky near a gorge, orange, yellow, and white orbs whose discordant appearance reflects Mayer’s subtle sense of humor. The show is replete with sketches—the drawings of knots are especially beautiful—as well as photos and printed matter. There are “calendars” that combine abstractions with prose, family photos, names of friends, and flowers. At PS1, similarly errant calendars take the form of grids with colored-in boxes charting sounds outside Mayer’s apartment in summer: CRUNCH, CLANG, SIREN, HUM.

The values of the institutions that ignored Mayer’s work were the very ones she fought to overturn—



monumentality, permanence, a kind of traditional masculine imperative. Seeing the Swiss Institute show now and contemplating its too-modest scale, you can't help but muse on the irony: Her embrace of the transient created an obstacle to the passing-on of her ideas and her work. Of course, today, in a hyperdocumented era, no one faces precisely the same problem. Forgetting comes less from the lack of an institution that might preserve such work than from the overproduction of "memories," which results in those very memories' being erased.

One of the more productively wrongheaded criticisms I heard voiced about Greater New York is that it looks too much to the past. The work it presents isn't new or current enough. It has seemed strangely difficult for some to comprehend that the past-as-present is the point.

In section 94 of *MM*, Adorno writes, "The coming extinction of art is prefigured in the increasing impossibility of representing historical events." His outlook on his moment was endlessly dire. This mood is what makes him feel like a kindred spirit today; it also distances him from us, in that it seems a bit absurd to be upset rather than blasé. Today's downcast quality is different. At times, it has a seltzery ironical aspect, vigorous and briefly refreshing but bubbling into dissipation; else it seems horse-tranquilized into dissociation.

Adorno was looking at his present in a way that was heavily informed by the experience of having recently lived through monumental historical events. For him, the present was the past. For us, the present is the future, one that we simultaneously obsess over and deny. Any mapping of the *zeitgeist* is in fact an implicit prediction. Within art, we can still be excited that something new may appear; we retain the ability to hope. In a world-historical sense, the trends are pretty easy to forecast. And so the memory fog we all seem to suffer may be not the product of technology, as it's so often framed, but rather the expression of a mass desire to get on with things. The crises of today have such radical and awful ends that, subconsciously or otherwise, we can only see what's happening today as plot-point byways. We want to know what happens, how it all turns out. Or we at least want to get to the end of the story, to get it over with, so we can set aside the book, turn off the movie, stop the scroll, turn out the lights.

In Pictures: See Highlights of the New Museum's Very Subtle New Triennial, Filled With Raw, Barely-Finished-Looking Art

By Ben Davis



Blair Saxon-Hill, *Emergency Contact* (2021). Photo by Ben Davis.

The title of this year's New Museum triennial is "Soft Water Hard Stone." It's a moniker that alludes to the natural world, to folk wisdom, and to the kind of quiet, insistent force that makes change over time—the idea being that even something as pliant as a soft current of water, over time, has an effect.

Curated by Margot Norton and Jamillah James, with the assistance of Jeanette Bisschops, the resulting show does indeed land gently. It's a show of a lot of things that either lay on the ground or look like they were just picked up off the ground, and things that vaguely evoke a ruin. It is all washed-out colors and neutrals and graphite grays. It has a cool emotional tone (though not a cold one).

There are almost no big, central images—it's a lot of things you have to look at like puzzles, for details. Even the big things and the figurative work feel faceless and diffuse somehow. The mental afterimage the show leaves is of a lot of people standing with their backs to you, talking in low tones.

It offers plenty to think about. As I put together my own thoughts on it, here are some photos of the show, so you can get a taste for yourself.



ARTnews

April 2021

2021 New Museum Triennial Reveals Artist List, Putting Focus on Perseverance

By Alex Greenberger

The New Museum Triennial, one of the few biennials set to take place this year, has revealed an artist list for its next edition, which is due to open in October. Organized by New Museum curator Margot Norton and Institute of Contemporary Art Los Angeles senior curator Jamillah James, the exhibition will focus loosely on forms of perseverance and the ways that the past informs the present.

First launched in 2009 and now in its fifth iteration, the New Museum Triennial has accrued a reputation for launching emerging artists to fame. It has historically spotlighted younger artists, often with an international scope, and alongside the Whitney Biennial, it is considered one of the most important biennial-style shows in New York.

James and Norton's triennial will be titled "Soft Water Hard Stone," in reference to a Brazilian proverb—"Água mole em pedra dura, tanto bate até que fura" ("Soft water on hard stone hits until it bores a hole")—about the value of resistance over time. All of the 40 artists included are younger than 50.

"In this moment of profound change, where structures that were once thought to be stable are revealed to be precarious, broken, or on the verge of collapse, the 2021 Triennial recognizes artists reimagining traditional models, materials, and techniques beyond established institutional paradigms," an exhibition statement reads. "Their works exalt states of transformation, calling attention to the malleability of structures, porous and unstable surfaces, and the fluid and adaptable potential of both technological and organic media."

ARTFORUM

April 2021

NEW MUSEUM TRIENNIAL ANNOUNCES ARTISTS FOR 2021 EDITION

By Artforum Staff



The New Museum. Photo: Dean Kaufman.
April 02, 2021 at 9:00am

The New Museum in New York has announced the artists for its fifth triennial, titled “Soft Water Hard Stone” and running from October 27, 2021, to January 23, 2022. Cocurated by Margot Norton and Jamillah James of the New Museum and Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, respectively, the exhibition will devote four floors to showcasing new output by forty artists working across twenty-three countries.

“In this moment of profound change, where structures that were once thought to be stable are revealed to be precarious, broken, or on the verge of collapse, the 2021 Triennial recognizes artists reimagining traditional models, materials, and techniques beyond established institutional paradigms,” states the press release for the show, which is titled after the Brazilian proverb *Água mole em pedra dura, tanto bate até que fura* (Soft water on hard stone hits until it bores a hole). “The works included in the exhibition look back toward overlooked artistic traditions and technological building blocks, while at the same time look forward toward the immaterial, the transitory, and the creative potential that might give dysfunctional or discarded remains new life.”

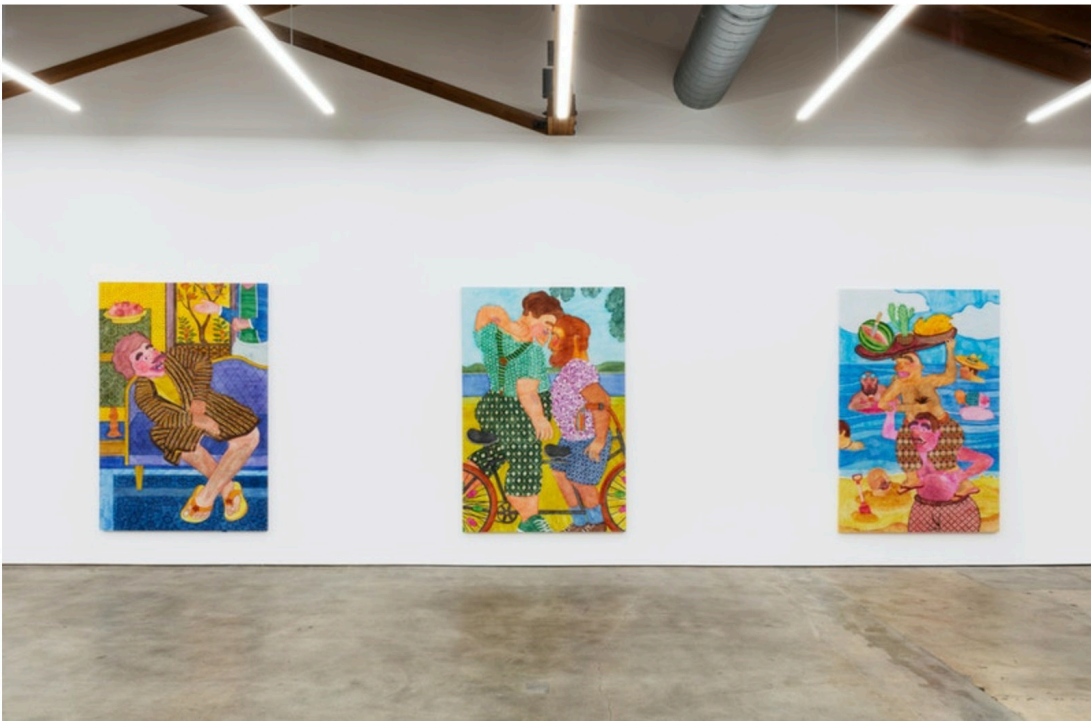
The exhibition’s catalogue, copublished by the New Museum and Phaidon Press Limited, will feature contributions from Jamillah James, Margot Norton, Karen Archey, Eunsong Kim, and Bernardo Mosqueira.

THE BROOKLYN RAIL

February 2021

ARTSEEN: GEST

Yxta Maya Murray



Installation view: *GEST*, Nino Mier Gallery, Los Angeles, California, 2020-21. Courtesy Nino Mier Gallery.

Nino Mier, the Austrian-born, Los Angeles-based painter and owner of his eponymous gallery, found himself adrift last March, at the beginning of the pandemic.¹ “While constantly browsing the web in a meditative and almost obsessive way on my phone,” he writes in the essay that accompanies the space’s new show, *GEST*, “certain works popped up through a little searching, or through group shows here and there, and stuck with me.” In the midst of LA’s first lockdown, when many people were still picking up their mail while swathed in rubber gloves and we did not yet know whether to protect ourselves with expression-erasing face masks, Mier’s melancholy internet cruise resulted in a compendium of artworks that illustrated Spring 2020’s opening chapter of fear.² Mier’s retreat to the consolations of scrolling, a kind of peripateticism or journeying, led him to devise an exhibition dedicated to the “gest,” that is, a “tale of adventure” or a knightly exploit—from the Anglo-French *geste*, which means, among other things, “romance.” The resulting show, which highlights 37 works from 10 different artists, builds upon Mier’s wish for freedom and sensation. *GEST*’s watercolors, drawings, stoneware sculptures, acrylic paintings, and collages express less an impulse towards a traditional Arthurian quest or quixotic caper than

a yearning for a voyage wherein the wanderer may rediscover the joys of seeing and being seen, and the pleasures of touching and being touched. Stephanie Temma Hier's mellifluous *Under the Volcano* (2020) begins with a foundation of dry, porous stones, which frames a gorgeous painting of four hands grasping each other. The desiccated look of the rocks nods to drought, while the shining, almost oily hands grappling in promiscuous abandon speak to the touch-famine that a great number of people currently endure. As Dr. Colter Ray, an assistant professor of interpersonal and health communication at San Diego State University said about this particular side effect of the lockdowns last May: "Imagining touch when we don't have it is like imagining water when we're thirsty."

Blair Saxon-Hill's *Untitled (Oyster, Pussy, Eye)* (2020), similarly evokes a longing to enter a privileged world where we can look closely into the eyes of another person and be caressed without fear of death. This collage/watercolor reveals a fragmented head, face, mouth, hand, and vagina composed largely from cutouts of photographs of marble sculptures. An eye gazes directly at the viewer from what looks to be a little bronze kiln or helmet, and a pale swoop of hair cascades down to a perfectly formed ear and a dangling, painted mouth. In the middle of the visage, a stone hand caresses the pudendum. *Oyster, Pussy, Eye* recalls not only the sensual collages of Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore but also references the feeling that our eyes have been caged and our hands have turned hard and cold from so much disconnection. Soyeon Shin's rhapsodic series of acrylic vignettes offer dreamlike cityscapes that make new sense during the COVID-19 pandemic. Largely focusing on scenes outside of street-facing apartment buildings that could be in New York City, downtown Los Angeles, Pittsburgh, or Chicago, Shin depicts a dogwalker strolling in front of a brick building while being erased by a tree's shadow and a sidewalk's glare, as in *Emerson Place* (2019), and a construction worker disappearing into a space-time wrinkle while standing in front of a build site, in *Bushwick Avenue* (2019). When created, these scenarios certainly intimated the topsy-turvy world of 2019, when President Trump was declaring an emergency to pay for the Wall, fomenting racial violence, and meeting with Kim Jong-un, but today Shin's accounts of physical deletion also seem diagnostic of our contemporary loneliness and medical hazard.

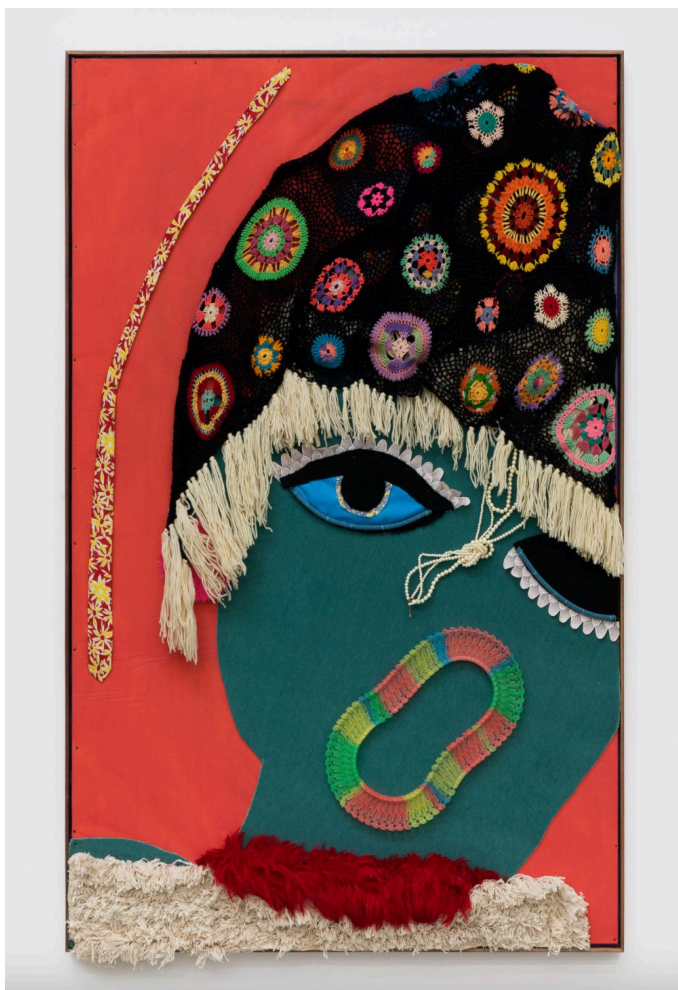
In March of 2020, an article in *Psychology Today* advised those suffering already from touch deprivation to self-soothe with "stretching, yoga, self-massage, [or] even just gently stroking your own face or arms, or rubbing your feet."⁷ But Orkideh Torabi's brightly dyed textile, *Your Fly's Open!* (2020), reminds us of the special sensation that arrives when we encounter another person's flesh. Two men face each other while seated on a tandem bicycle, touching their foreheads together while making intense eye contact. They seem to giggle, maybe at a wardrobe malfunction, but also at the joy of being in a body that is romancing another body, a body that will soon be engaged in the ancient and deeply necessary human adventure that we call the embrace.

FRIEZE

May 2021

Cecilia Alemani's Top Choices for Frieze New York 2021

By Cecilia Alemani



*Blair Saxon-Hill, Kiki de Montparnasse
Presented by Nino Mier Gallery*

The first time I saw these works I was reminded of Italian artist Enrico Baj, who like Blair, loved to combine scraps of fabrics, trimmings and found objects to compose seemingly grotesque portraits. In this presentation at Frieze, Saxon-Hill brings a cohort of formidable portraits, alternating large canvases with modest collages. Take a close look to appreciate all the details of the surface!

Blair Saxon-Hill

By Timmy Straw



In the roadhouses and bars and dancehalls of the American 20th century, the story goes, people used to spread sugar on the dance-floor—like liquor, it made the dancing easier. Sugar on the dancefloor: this flags once more a tale we love, about the ingenuity of poverty, about delight on the cheap, a provisional solution to the limitations of the body. But the tale contains its opposite, too: the labor in the cane fields of Florida, of Jamaica.

Like all things, sugar carries in it the record of its production, and its use. So too do the materials of Blair Saxon-Hill's work: found objects, often mass-produced, often discarded, that are recast, like the dance-floor sugar, into defiant, ingenious afterlives, into the lyric data of reality. This is the reality that Saxon-Hill's work—her embodied perception—makes visible to us. In this sense her work does not invent something to 'add' to the world: it is not mimesis, not commentary, not symbolic, not documentary, and never ideological. Saxon-Hill is a material-driven artist, and in this she is first a poet: her work discloses the world as it is, and it does so through her deep trust in material and her concomitant trust in reality. This is a political and ethical position as much as an aesthetic one, for, as Paul Celan notes—and which our recent history has shown us, in stark terms—"reality is not simply there; it must be searched for and won."¹



Saxon-Hill's work refuses cynicism, which, like sentimentality, is a rejection of the real, and it gives us no victims and no villains. It refuses to laugh at another's expense (though there is plenty of laughter-among—a form of laughter that is the genius of empathy). Instead, Saxon-Hill's work is an initiation: into our common precarity as finite selves, singular on a singular planet, and into a common splendor, provisional, changeable, and utterly ours. The pronoun blazing at the center of even her most solitary work is not "I," but the endlessly shifting "we."

Saxon-Hill's material is sometimes hydrocol, gouache, or ink, but more often it is the detritus of our epoch: objects that are produced, marketed, sold and 'used up.' Against this catastrophic repetition of value into disregard, she figures a whole metaphysics of correspondence, of reciprocity, fate-in-common. A wig, Walkman headphones, a tote bag, a badminton birdie, awning fabric, pantyhose, a punching bag, a resort towel; all these are transfigured, in Saxon-Hill's hands, into a new fullness of being and relation, undone both from their own perishability and from the trivia of their original purpose. Industrial mop-heads become the hair of a mother (in *Mother*, itself a transfiguring of *Untitled* (Ladle, Beak, Horn Solo)). A fireplace broom, a sport shirt, a tin can together broadcast the specter of history (*History Out of Breath*), slipshod and panting. In an inverse motion, the cast-off everyday is remade in translation and gains new dignity, as in the traffic cone made of an orange silk shawl, or the painted and treated resort towel in *LAID ME OUT*. Here the banal violence of the resort industry is, like the sugarcane, liberated into delight—a delight that signals urgency, necessity, dissent.

Her work, Saxon-Hill writes, wishes to undo "the hierarchy of things."² It would like to disclose, instead, the flickering net of correspondences that is the world, and our life together in it. Her work says: we have to complicate our idea of each other to see each other! The essence of human dignity is precisely this—permitting every person the complexity of self we allow ourselves. Consider *Daisy Stayed Hopeful*, *Still Watching* and its translation, *Huff* (Legs, Peace, Skirt). These aren't portraits, or symbolic figures, as in a frieze, but they aren't invented faces, either. The subject of Saxon-Hill's work is not the hero, but the chorus; and this chorus is not an anonymous mass, but a plurality of irreplaceable selfhoods. Saxon-Hill's work is humanist in its search— or better put, is work in search of a new humanism: one that does not forward an ideal but instead seeks itself anew in the face of each singular human being.

ARTFORUM

January 2017

JOAN: Blair Saxon-Hill

By Meg Whiteford



To be common is to be many things: popular or plentiful, lowbrow or uncivilized, a thing which two or more people can share, an icebreaker. In Blair Saxon-Hill's exhibition, visitors are welcomed by a theatrical gathering of characters just slightly larger than the average human and constructed from proletariat materials, such as cardboard, clay, sticks, and borrowed wares including umbrellas and handbags. They float on the walls in dialogue or as if they were a choir. They are at once harlequins, puppets with no strings, and DIY constructions of fragmented bodies. By flattening her figures and placing them on the walls--rather than, say, on the Soap Box (all works 2014-16) installed in the center of the gallery--the artist conflates the scenery with the characters. These pieces haunt the space, serving as a backdrop to the suggestion of discourse that happens at the center, on the floor, with no divide.

The theater has long been a space for the masses to convene and see bodies perform circumstances without the gravity of the real. To be a spectator among other spectators observing the same reflection of abstract concepts is a powerful and unifying feeling. And, in times of trouble, that is the most craved feeling: being together. By envisioning a space for her characters to both exist for and watch over visitors, Saxon-Hill's show provides a reverence for the commons.

artillery

January 2017

JOAN: Blair Saxon-Hill

By Jody Zellen



Blair Saxon-Hill, *to no ending except ourselves* (2016), installation view, courtesy of the artist and JOAN.

In Blair Saxon-Hill's installation *to no ending except ourselves* (2016), wall and floor based sculptures fashioned from discarded and broken materials come to life. Making art from found objects is nothing new and while Saxon-Hill's works pay homage both to outsider art and the Arte Povera movement, her figures are uniquely of the moment. Each figure has its own personality and *raison d'être*. Created in response to the anxiety felt around the election, they have risen from nothing—cobbed together from junk and detritus. Simultaneously broken and strong, they exert a presence as if holding court upon the gallery walls.

The careful arrangement of objects comes together as coherent figures in the viewer's eye. The most intact figure in the grouping is *Lives of Others* (2016), composed from a basket lid, tarp eyelet, ceramic rib, industrial glass shard, stick, leather mule blinders, inner tube, wood spindle, plastic bag, gouache, paper, stir stick, ceramic, wood, rubber glove, cement, paper clay, stage paint, masonry and dry pigment, driftwood, club, shellac and a quilt.



Its facial features are clearly defined and it has two arms, legs, hands and feet whereas many of Saxon-Hill's other characters are comprised of just a few disparate fragments. These child-like figures appear to have banded together, many taking arms—if a stick or coat hanger can be used as a weapon—as an act of defiance and solidarity. Although the floor based works are a bit more obtuse, they anchor Saxon-Hill's exploration of struggle and compassion. *American Asylee* (2016) projects the idea of surrender. A flag made from a pillowcase is attached to a piece of wood and extends from a wire chair whose back forms the shape of a heart.

Collectively, Saxon-Hill's personification of junk alludes to the diversity of our culture and asks viewers to think about the qualities that make each individual unique. Her figures entitled *Veteran*, *Spectator*, *Informant* and *Pitcher* take on the characteristics and qualities of those labels, yet the work also questions what those labels mean. Though to no ending except ourselves at first glance appears to be a quaint and charming collection of assemblages, upon close examination Saxon-Hill's message is a call to action..

ARTFORUM

April 2015

Critic's Pick: Blair Saxon-Hill

By Stephanie Snyder

At a glance, Blair SaxonHill's newest assemblages appear to be the relics of an indeterminate past. Their distressed surfaces and moody hues evoke postwar movements such as Arte Povera and Nouveau Réalisme, and the artist's iconography feels similarly dystopian in its overt humility bordering on impoverishment. The works here incorporate old wooden utensils, napkins, black-and-white photogravures of statuary fragments, and fishnet, just to name a few, and these objects often hang from the frames by old wires or are attached to their surfaces by modern office clips.

A perfect example of this is *Form, Content and Human Interpersonal Relationships (Preparations)*, 2015. Here, an old embroidered handkerchief forms the collar around an image of a scribal hand taken from a historic photogravure. Behind the fabric, a dark, misshapen painting forms a kind of shadow relief, and both the cloth and the painting are attached to the frame by clips and thumbtacks. These precarious connectors complete the impression of impermanence, as though the artist might come in and undo or reposition them at a moment's notice. Other works in the exhibition explore similar materials without the anchor of a frame. Take *Brooch*, 2015, for instance, in which a strange assortment of castoff twine, wood, wire, and paper towel are wadded into clump that is held together with a hardware clamp. The materials list for the piece is long and detailed, which affirms SaxonHill's process as a kind of postconsumer archeology or taxonomy of the sheer diversity of materials at hand these days.

Portland: Blair Saxon-Hill

By Hye-Mi Kim



PORTLAND
The Creative & Artistic Life

잡지 <진포크>와 미드 <포틀랜드>를 통해 짐작할 수 있는 포틀랜드의 이미지와 실재는, 놀랄게도 크게 다르지 않다. 타인의 시선에 얽여야(보다) 자신이 진정으로 원하는 삶을 추구하여, 주변 환경과 사람들을 잇는 그어로 사랑하고 존중할 줄 아는 삶, 건강한 라이프 스타일을 즐기며 크리에이티브한 에너지를 발휘하며 사는 포틀랜드 라이프, 불려야 할 만하다.

WHO IS SHE?

Blair Saxon-Hill
34세, 아티스트, 아트북 갤러리 운영
"Very Portland"라는 수어어 어렵지 않을 만큼 포틀랜드식 라이프스타일을 고수하는 열매여 예술 및 그녀의 건강하고 크리에이티브한 일상을 따라가보자.

당신이 생각하는 포틀랜드는 어떤 도시인가요?
건강한 삶, 건강한 식습관, 건강한 환경에 집중할 수 있는 곳이고, 포틀랜드 사람들은 친절하고 이웃 간에 자-치게 격식을 차리지 않기 때문에 포렌스도 자연스럽게 이뤄지는 것 같아요.

미드 <포틀랜드>를 보면 포틀랜드 사람들이 굉장히 독특한 캐릭터로 그려지잖아요. 실제로도 그런가요?
하하, 어느 정도는 공감해요. 이곳 사람들은 어떤 물건이 출제나 현상의 현안에 대해 아주 관심이 많고 질문할 때도 꽤 구체적이고 침오하게 하는 경향이 있고, 정치적인 성향이 강한 사람도 많고, 기후변화나 에코 라이프에 관심이 많은 것도 드라마에서 그려진 것과 꽤 유사한 부분이 있어요.

당신의 일상이 궁금해요.
망원엔 아트북 갤러리에 출근하고, 개인 아트 작업을 해요. 토요일 오전에는 '에스테잇 세일' 행사에 가고요. 누군가 사랑하면 그 사람이 살던 집 안의 물건을 판매하는 흥미로운 행사죠. 저는 특히 예술가의 에스테잇 세일에 관심이 많아요. 그들이 생전에 자-본인 집을 둘러보고 종종 그들의 멋진 소장품을 특별해 오기도 하고, 그런 오래된 물건들을 곁에 두는 게 좋아요. 저는 집 안에 클래식 물건을 좋아하는 걸 싫어하거든요.

어떤 사람에게 포틀랜드 여행을 권하고 싶나요?
 전혀 계획하지 않은 일이 벌어지도 즐길 준비가 되어 있는 사람이요. 가령 발가벗은 채로 자전거를 타는 사람을 만나게 된다면지 하는, 전혀 예상치 못한 사건이 벌어지는 것을 볼 준비가 되어 있으면 포틀랜드 여행이 즐거울 거예요.



MORNING COFFEE

우드론 Woodlawn
 플레이의 하루는 향긋한 모닝커피와 함께 시작된다. 포틀랜드의 수많은 카페 중 그녀가 유독 사랑하는 카페가 바로 우드론. 가장심치럼 스바하고 단정함 느낌의 이곳에서는 아침에 갖 구운 도넛, 카플레, 워딩 쿠키 등의 패이스트리를 저렴한 가격에 즐길 수 있다.
 메뉴 라테 \$3.75, 워딩 쿠키 \$1
 주소 808 NE Dekum St, Portland, OR 97211
 문의 503-954-2412,
www.woodlawncoffee.com



Weekday



EXERCISE

**이스트뱅크 수변 공원
Eastbank Esplanade**
 플레이는 출근 전 작업실 근처에 있는 이스트뱅크 수변 공원에 즐겨 가고 함께 산책을 한다. 공원은 이른 아침부터 이어폰을 귀에 끼고 러닝북 차임으로 열심히 달리는 사람들로 가득하다. 그녀도 캐주얼한 복장으로 계절마다 장관을 연출하는 수변 공원의 아름다운 부를 감상하며 30분가량 산책한 후 출근한다.

"매일 아침 아름다운 포틀랜드의 자연을 느끼는 시간을 가져요."



BRUNCH

**미트, 치즈, 브레드
Meat, Cheese, Bread**
 '고기, 치즈, 빵'이라는 뜻을 지닌 귀여운 이름의 샌드위치 가게. 신선한 재료로 정성스레 만든 다양한 샌드위치와 샐러드, 토스트 등 브런치 메뉴가 준비되어 있다.
 메뉴 마이클 샌드위치 \$7.5
 주소 1406 SE Stark St, Portland, OR 97214
 문의 503-234-1700,
www.meatcheesebread.com



WORK

**모노그래프 아트북 습
Monograph Bookwerks**
 플레이가 운영하는 아트북 습. 그녀가 직접 선택한 다양한 아트 서적이 비치되어 있다. 포틀랜드 아티스트들의 예술 작품부터 세계 각국의 감각적인 아티스트들의 작품집을 두루 만날 수 있는 공간. 호두로 만든 잉크, 핸드메이드 일러스트 도장 등 디자인 아이템도 판매한다.
 주소 5005 NE 27th Ave, Portland, OR 97211
 문의 503-284-5005,
www.monographbookwerks.com

플레이어 인터뷰: 2018년 10월 10일 촬영 (www.monographbookwerks.com)



농스 카오만
가이의 시그니처 메뉴,
치킨 앤 라이스.

LUNCH

농스 카오만 가이 Nong's Khao Man Gai

포틀랜드 거리 곳곳에는 저렴한 가격에 세계 각국의 음식을 제공하는 푸드 카트가 있어 가볍게 식사를 해결하기 안성맞춤이다. 그중 블레어가 즐겨 찾는 곳은 농스 카오만 가이. 감칠맛 나는 치킨 앤 라이스를 맛볼 수 있다.

메뉴 치킨 앤 라이스 \$8 주소 1003 SW Alder St., Portland, OR 97205

문의 971-255-3480, www.khaomangai.com



DINNER

루체 Luce

퇴근 후 특별한 저녁 식사를 하고 싶은 댄 루체로 향한다. 정통 이탈리아 가정식을 선보이는 이곳은 동네에서 꽤 소문난 맛집. 고소한 닭고기 수프부터 바삭한 송어구이까지 한 상 푸짐하게 맛보고 나면 건강한 집밥을 먹은 듯 포만감이 젖는다.

메뉴 송어구이 \$14 주소 2140 E Burnside St., Portland, OR 97214

문의 503-236-7195, www.luceportland.com

DESSERT

랜덤 오더 Random Order

점심 식사를 가볍게 했다면 마무리는 달달한 디저트로 블레어가 즐겨 찾는 디저트 숍은 포틀랜드의 소문난 파이집, 랜덤 오더. 피치, 애플, 블랙베리 등 과일 타르트부터 코코넛 크림, 바나나 크림, 초콜릿 크림 등 부드러운 크림이 듬뿍 얹어진 크림 타르트를 맛볼 수 있는 곳이다. 커피와 함께 즐겨도 좋지만 큐컴버 진토닉, 진저 럼, 레몬 진저 위스키 등 칵테일과 함께 먹으면 파이의 살아 있는 식감이 배가된다.

메뉴 코코넛 크림 타르트 \$25~30(라운드), 진저 럼 스위트 티 \$7

주소 1800 NE Alberta St., Portland, OR 97211

문의 971-340-6995, www.randomordercoffee.com



DATE

피플스 파머스 마켓 Farmers Market at Peoples Co-op

포틀랜드에선 20여 개의 파머스 마켓이 열리는데, 블레어는 그중 피플스 파머스 마켓을 추천한다. "피플스 파머스의 주최측에서 판매처를 결정할 때 직접 농장까지 방문할 정도로 엄격하게 검수를 하기 때문에 품질이 보장돼 있죠." 남자 친구와 함께 이곳에서 구입한 양질의 식재료를 건강한 요리를 만들어 먹는 것이 그녀의 큰 즐거움 중 하나다.

주소 3029 SE 21st Ave., Portland, OR 97202

문의 503-674-2642, www.peoples.coop



Weekend



"신상 아이템보다는 빈티지 아이템을 쇼핑하는 것이 더 흥미로워요."

SHOPPING

지그재그 원더러

Zigzag Wanderer

에코 라이프를 추구하는 포틀랜드에서는 쇼핑 역시 '신상'보다 '빈티지'가 대세다. 블레어 또한 빈티지 스타일을 애용하는데, 특히 지그재그 원더러는 그녀의 페이버릿 플레이스. 머플러, 가방 등 패션 아이템부터 리빙 아이템까지 고급스러운 빈티지 아이템을 저렴한 가격에 구입할 수 있다.

주소 1458 NE Alberta St.,

Portland, OR 97211

문의 503-737-5014, www.

zigzagwandererpx.tumblr.com



COFFEE TIME

카페 비타 Caffe Vita

주말 오전, 블레어는 노트북이나 소소한 일거리를 들고 카페 비타로 향한다. 카페에 비치된 기계의 원두 볶는 소리와 커피 향을 벗 삼아, 마치 갤러리 라이브러리처럼 꾸민 공간에 자리 잡고 앉아 아메리카노를 마시며 여유로이 일을 하노라면 온몸에 행복감이 감돈다.

메뉴 아메리카노 \$2.75, 마키아토 \$3.20

주소 2909 NE Alberta St., Portland, OR 97211

문의 503-954-2171, www.cafevita.com



JUICE

십 Sip

포틀랜드 사람들이 가장 사랑하는 음식 중 하나 꼽으라면 단연 '케일'. 채식주의자들뿐 아니라 많은 이들이 채소, 특히 케일을 즐겨 먹는다. 그러나 케일 스무디, 케일 주스, 케일 칵테일 등 다양한 케일 음료를 맛볼 수 있는 푸드 카트인 십이 인기 있는 것은 당연한 일. 쓰디쓴 케일 주스에 대한 편견은 버리자. 케일뿐 아니라 파인애플, 오렌지, 코코넛 오일, 레몬 등 다양한 과일과 믹스해 새콤달콤한 케일 주스를 취향대로 골라 마실 수 있다.

메뉴 트로피컬 그린 스무디 \$4.5

주소 3029 SE 21st Ave., Portland, OR 97202

문의 503-964-0820,

www.sipjuicecart.com



MEETING FRIEND

로웰 Lowell
블레어는 아티스트인 친구가 많은데, 그중 패션 디자이너인 한 친구는 자신의 남친과 함께 디자인 스텝 로웰을 운영하고 있다. 그녀가 디자인한 옷을 비롯해 뉴멕시코에서 공수해온 독특한 패턴의 빈티지 러그, 와인따개 등을 판매하는 매장. 블레어는 주말마다 이곳에서 친구의 일을 도우며 예쁜 빈티지 아이템을 득템하기도 한다.
주소 819 N Russell St., Portland, OR 97227
문의 503-753-3608,
www.lowellportland.com



바이 앤 바이의 비건 푸드.

DRINK

바이 앤 바이 Bye and Bye
블레어가 친구들과 함께 즐겨 찾는 바는 베지테리언 펍, 바이 앤 바이. 이곳의 비건 푸드는 맛있는 것은 물론 먹고 나면 속이 개운해 안주로도, 해장 음식으로도 그만이다. 두부, 검은콩, 케일을 BBQ 소스로 버무린 BBQ 플레이트가 가장 인기 메뉴. 포틀랜드 로컬 비어가 구비되어 있다.
주소 1011 NE Alberta St., Portland, OR 97211
문의 503-281-0537, www.thebyeandbye.com



PICNIC

울프 앤 비어스 Wolf & Bears
비가 오지 않는 맑은 날에는 그리스식 푸드 카트인 울프 앤 비어스에서 토르티야를 하나 사들고 로월허스트 공원으로 런치 피크닉을 떠난다. 다양한 메뉴가 있지만 그중에서도 베지테리언들을 위한 메뉴 '팔라펠'이 가장 인기. 야채튀김과 각종 채소, 크림치즈가 담긴 토르티야는 간편한 점심 식사 메뉴로 딱이다.
메뉴 팔라펠 \$7 주소 3925 N Mississippi Ave., Portland, OR 97227 문의 503-453-5044,
www.eatwolfandbears.com



울프 앤 비어스의 팔라펠.



GARDENING

피스틸스 너서리 Pistils Nursery
집 내부와 외부 정원에 다양한 식물을 기르는 블레어는 가드닝에 관심이 많은데, 피스틸스 너서리에는 각종 가드닝 툴과 화기, 화병, 비료 등 다양한 가드닝 아이템을 만날 수 있다.
주소 3811 N Mississippi Ave., Portland, OR 97227
문의 503-288-4889, www.pistilsnursery.com

RELAX HERE



에이스 호텔 Ace Hotel
 포틀랜드를 방문하는 젊은 여행객들에게 가장 인기 있는 숙소를 꼽으라면 단연 에이스 호텔이다. 호텔이라기보다는 게스트하우스 느낌이 강한 이곳은 객실 등급이 베이식, 스탠다드, 슈퍼리어, 디럭스 등으로 구분되는데, 모든 방이 전부 다른 인테리어와 소품, 디자인으로 꾸며져 있다. 특히 이곳에서 많은 이들의 사랑을 받는 공간은 바로 로비. 투숙객뿐 아니라 지나가는 행인들조차 이곳 로비에 앉아 신문을 읽거나 커피를 마실 정도로 '느낌 있는' 공간이다.
 주소 1022 SW Stark St., Portland, OR 97205 문의 503-228-2277, www.acehotel.com/portland



도브 비비 Dove Vivi
 포틀랜드에는 '글루텐 프리' 피자나 베지테리언 피자집이 대부분이지만 적어도 피자 먹을 때만큼은 글루텐과 고기를 포기할 수 없다면 도브 비비로 향하자. 각종 재료가 듬뿍 들어간 맛있는 피자를 맛볼 수 있다.
 메뉴 한 조각 \$4.5
 주소 2727 NE Glisan St., Portland, OR 97232
 문의 503-239-4444, www.dovevivipizza.com



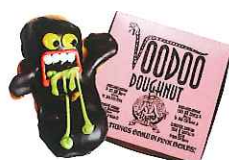
salt 앤 스트로 Salt & Straw
 포틀랜드 특유의 건강한 아이스크림을 맛볼 수 있는 곳. 올리브 오일 맛, 바다소금 맛, 허니 라벤다 맛 등 생소한 메뉴가 준비돼 있는데, 달콤하면서도 담백하고 깔끔한 맛에 감탄사를 연발하며 먹게 된다.
 메뉴 싱글컵 \$3.95
 주소 2035 NE Alberta St., Portland, OR 97211
 문의 503-208-3867, www.sallandstraw.com



다루마 스시 + 사케 Daruma Sushi + Sake
 일본인 셰프가 운영하는 사케 바. 주문 즉시 셰프의 섬세한 손길로 완성되는 신선한 스시를 맛보는 것도 좋고, 아보카도가 풍성하게 얹어진 아재&두부 돈부리를 맛보는 것도 추천한다.
 메뉴 모듬 초밥 \$18
 주소 3520 NE 42nd Ave., Portland, OR 97218
 문의 971-279-2759, www.darumapdx.com



모리스 Maurice
 프렌치&노르웨이 스타일의 음식을 선보이는 모리스. "우리 가게의 콘셉트는 신선함이에요!"라고 자부하는 셰프는 자극적인 소스 대신 신선함이 살아 있는 아채만으로 새콤달콤 맛깔스러운 향을 낸다.
 메뉴 당근 샐러드 \$8
 주소 921 SW Oak St., Portland, OR 97205
 문의 503-224-9921, www.mauricepdx.com



부두 도넛 Voodoo Doughnut
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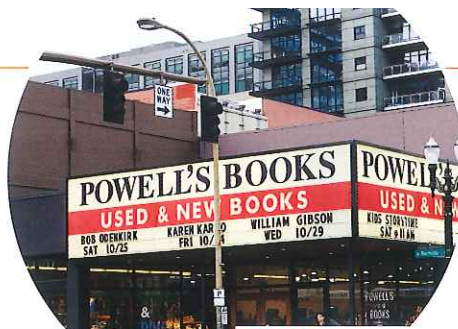
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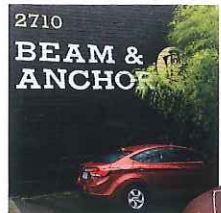




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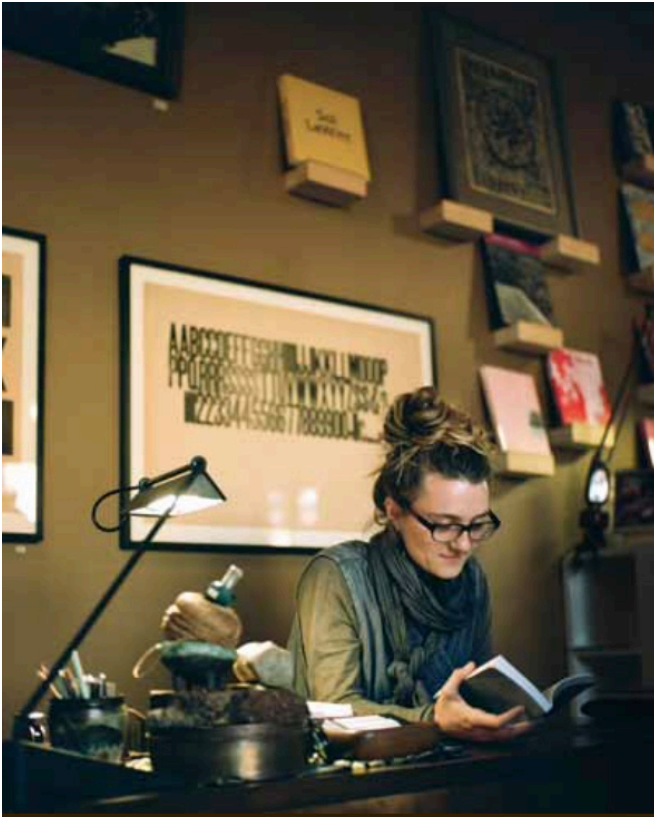


knock

September 2014

Portland: Blair Saxon-Hill

By Isao Nishiyama



With a "Portlanders You Must Meet" list from Midori in-hand,
we visit an art bookstore on Alberta Street.

Artists Blair Saxon-Hill and John Brodie opened 'Monograph Bookwerks' in 2010.
Their store is full of rare art publications and carefully selected pieces of art from all over the world.

As we walk up to Blair as she reads a book in the half-basement of the store,
she notices and greets us with a smile that could welcome a friend from 10 years ago.

僕らはミドリからもらった"ポートランドで会うべき人物リスト"を手に
アルバータ・ストリートにあるアートブックストアを訪ねた。

アーティストのブレア・サクソン・ヒルとジョン・プロディが2010年にオープンさせた
モノグラフ・ブックワークスには、ふたりが世界中から集めた

レアな芸術関連書籍や厳しい目でセレクトされたアートピースが並んでいる。

半地下になった店内で静かに本を読むブレアは、僕らの到着に気づくと
まるで十年ぶりの再会を思わせる人懐っこい笑顔で迎えてくれた。

BLAIR SAXON-HILL

ARTIST

A few days after our meeting at Monograph Bookwerks, we visit Blair Saxon-Hill's studio in Southeast Portland. The scenery looks familiar... Then we notice we were here recently. Stephanie's studio is just a few blocks away. I began to link the size of this town and ease of transportation to my hometown in Japan. As we stand there blankly staring off into the road, Blair comes down the stairs and invites us in. The large sliding door opens, revealing the studio with morning light bouncing off the white walls, illuminating the large space. "I really love this morning light," says Blair. With work-clothes covered in paint, Blair gets to work.

『モノグラフ・ブックワークス』での出会いから数日後、僕らはサウスイーストにあるブレア・サクソン・ヒルのスタジオを訪ねた。地図から目を離しあたりを見回すとどこかで見た風景。なるほど先日訪ねたステファニーのスタジオが数ブロック先にある。自転車さえあれば事足りる街のサイズ感到故郷の街並を重ねていると、階段を降りてきたブレアがぼんやりしている僕らをスタジオに招き入れてくれた。大きなスライド式の扉を開けると真っ白に塗られた壁に朝日がどかんと差し込む広いスタジオが現れた。「この朝の光が本当に好きなんだよね」絵の具だらけの作業着を羽織ったブレアは、さっそく仕事の支度にとりかかった。

I particularly like objects that have been repaired by hand.
A kind of tradition of “know-how”
that I believe is currently being lost in America
and being replaced by disposable commodities.

「私は手作業で繰り返し修理されてきた物が好き。
受け継がれるべきノウハウのようなものが、
近年のアメリカで失われつつある気がする。
使い捨て商品によって取って代わられてるの」



アイデアが身を結んでスタジオいっぱいの花を咲かせるとき アーティストとしての幸せを感じる。

I feel satisfied when the studio is blooming with all the derivations of an idea.

Please tell me your background.

I was raised in Eugene, Oregon - a small counterculture college town about two hours south of Portland, Oregon. I moved to Portland in 1997 to study studio art at a Reed College. After college, like most artists, I held a variety of jobs in order to support my work. For many years, I worked as an Immigration Paralegal at a law firm. In 2010, I opened Monograph Bookwerks with John Brodie, my studio mate and dearest friend. In some ways, the bookstore has become an extension of my art practice. Through a direct and everyday engagement with art history, education and various aspects of the multifaceted professional art and publishing worlds.

What made you to open the bookstore?

John and I have always loved and used art books in our art practices. Hunting for great and odd books is a part of what we do together for fun and inspiration. When we opened the shop the primary guiding principle was to make an art bookstore

簡単な自己紹介をしてくれる？

生まれ育ったのはポートランドから南へ2時間、カウンターカルチャーの影響を残す学園都市オレゴン・ユージーン。ポートランドへは1997年にリード・カレッジでスタジオアートを学ぶため引っ越してきたの。卒業後は他のアーティストたちと同じようにアート活動の傍ら様々な仕事をやったわ。特に弁護士事務所では外国人向けの労働許可申請に長く関わってた。2010年、親友でありスタジオ仲間のジョン・ブロディとモノグラフ・ブックワークスをオープンしたの。毎日のように美術史や教育、美術・出版業界と関わってるし、様々な角度からアートと向き合う書店運営は、今では私の創作活動の一環とも言えるほど重要なものになったわ。

書店を始めたきっかけを教えてください

私たちはアートブックが大好きで、作品の素材としても使用してきたの。これぞ!という逸品を求めて書店巡りすることが共通の趣味だったし、私たちのインスピレーションをかき立てるの。だから書店をオープンする時、まず第一に私たちが行

that was the sort of place that we'd want to go to. I have always been an arranger of things so having ceramics, sculpture, paintings and found objects was a natural way of texturing the bookstore with a physical creative world that people could touch and take home.

How do you describe living in Portland?

Portland could be considered a lifestyle, one that is rich with good fresh food, thoughtful people, and possibility. It is a city of possibility. The air is sweet and wet here. When you need to clear your head, you can be in the woods in less than 20 minutes, the ocean in two hours, and off in the mountains in one hour or less. The downside of Portland is we don't currently have strong arts patronage or critical writing on the contemporary arts culture - two critical components to making an art community successful. Therefore, although Portland has a huge art and design community it takes hard work to get the work itself out of Portland. I'd love to show in Tokyo!

きたくなるような場所にしようと話合ったわ。陶芸品、彫像作品、絵画そしてあちこちで見つけた逸品。そうしたものを厳選する目を養ってた私たちにとって『モノグラフ』をそうしたアートピースに直に触れ、購入することができる場所として特微づけていくことは自然なことだったの。

アーティストとしてポートランドでの生活はどう？

ポートランドは新鮮な食べ物、思いやりのある人々、可能性に満ちた生活を送れる場所。チャンス溢れる都市。スウィートでしっとりとした空気が気持ち良いわ。頭をすっきりさせたいときは20分で木々の中に身を置ける。2時間あれば海を見れるし、1時間やそこらで山にも行ける。良くない面では、近年熱心なアート支援者が少ないこと。また現代美術をフィールドとする批評家が少ないこと。このふたつの要素がうまくかみ合ってこそアートコミュニティは成長していくの。だから現状として、ポートランドは大きなアート・デザインコミュニティを持ちながらも、なかなか外に出ていけない。あ〜東京で個展をしてみたい!



frieze

July 2014

Portland: 2014

By Jonathan Griffin

In the April issue of *frieze*, Dan Fox prefaced his review of the 2013 Carnegie International with some observations about the perplexing lack of consensus around what, today, a biennial is actually for. 'Portland2014' is the third in this current formulation (the Oregon Biennial ran from 1949 until 2006) but its agenda and format are still, evidently, very much up for grabs.

The biennial is hosted by the non-profit institution Disjecta and this was the first edition that had been programmed by a curator from outside Portland: Amanda Hunt, Curator-at-Large of Los Angeles non-profit LAXART. Hunt's task cannot have been an easy one, but she delivered a clutch of thoughtfully arranged exhibitions. Whether she made a convincing case for those exhibitions adding up to a single biennial is debatable, although, since nobody knows quite how to define a biennial, it's a hard point to resolve. The remit of 'Portland2014' is to showcase the work of artists based in Oregon. This raises a number of questions: Is the biennial a summary of current art-making in the region? Does it address the concerns of the community at large? Is it simply a thematic exhibition populated by Oregon artists? None of these approaches would be any less valid than any other, and all of them have been adopted - in roughly equal measure - by other biennials around the world.

On paper, there were 18 artists in 'Portland2014', although six of those work as duos meaning that, in terms of the art on view, the presentation felt rather slight. Hunt chose not to title her biennial, nor to provide a text - not a press release, nor a wall text, nor a catalogue essay - that might have given us a clue as to what her ambitions for the project were. I would like to say that this curatorial light-handedness was intelligent, brave and compelling. In general, I admire the impulse to let art works speak for themselves. But I can't, quite. A biennial, I feel, needs to make a case and 'Portland2014' did not.

The polestar was the exhibition at Disjecta: a group show of seven artists who might justifiably have been surprised to find their work in the same room. A large, hectic painting by the duo Modou Dieng & Devon A. VanHouten-Maldonado, *Tranquillo* (2014), seemed to have little to say to eight pencil and acrylic wash drawings by D.E. May, which resemble architectural plans as dreamed by Agnes Martin. Evan La Londe's chic black and white photograms looked somewhat disdainful of the grungy aesthetic of the sagging, entropic assemblages of Blair Saxon-Hill and Jessica Jackson Hutchins.



Certain links did emerge – Saxon-Hill and Hutchins, for instance, are studio-mates and their use of found photographs in their sculptures, and of fabric to conjure unseen bodies, seemed almost too close for comfort. Their muted palette – particularly an apricot tone that recurs in ‘Portland 2014’s print design – was echoed in May’s drawings. Kelly Rauer’s video projection, *Locate* (2014), extended the associations between fabric (jazzily patterned, in this case), the body and traditional painting. In the centre of town, a solo exhibition by Ellen Lesperence was held at Upfor, a commercial gallery run by the chair of Disjecta’s board, Theo Downes-Le Guin. Grumblings about conflicts of interest aside, the show was a highlight – an ambitious total environment that included Lesperence’s drawings (knitting patterns based on garments worn by female political protesters and by Amazonian women on Ancient Greek pottery), ceramic figurines and, most strikingly, a wall-covering made by wrapping bouquets of flowers in lengths of silk and burying them in the ground.

A second (also untitled) group show, at the White Box gallery at the University of Oregon, brought together the three artists who ran the city’s Appendix Project Space until it closed in 2013. Zachary Davis, Alex Mackin Dolan and Travis Fitzgerald have now upped sticks and moved to New York. Their work – particularly Dolan’s digital collages combining photographs of chemical spills with flowery insignia – is ambitious and sharp. However, three artists who used to run a space together does not necessarily a group show make, and this exhibition, though elegant, did not provide the meat on the biennial’s bone I was hoping for. Neither did a display of letterpress print and books reconstructing Robert Smithson’s library, by Personal Libraries Library (run by Abra Ancliffe), at the hubristically named Best Art Gallery in Portland. Or *Kiosk Kiosk Kiosk* (2014), a public project by Christopher Michlig and John Zerzan that turned the latter’s anarchist treatises into tokenistic public sculptures and printed handouts.

Though there was plenty of good art in ‘Portland2014’, on my visit there was good art elsewhere in the city, too, and it was never clear to me why some of it was part of the biennial and some of it was not. I want more from my biennials.

“Interior Margins”

By TJ Norris

Around the dinner table one evening in Spring 2010 something creative was on the burner. Eleven female artists sat for supper conversation with Reed College’s Cooley Gallery curator Stephanie Snyder and Lumber Room founder Sarah Miller Meigs. These inter-generational women found an intersection through the power of the belly, opening up in discussion of painting, studio practice and family. Emerging in its wake is a powerful exhibition that suggests with paper (and other assorted surfaces) that Northwest women are operating in full force as well as defying any implied gender-specificity. “Interior Margins” only hints at traditional gestures associated with women’s work. Instead these ladies have otherwise replaced puffy quilting, floral patterns and politico-feminisms with raw imagination and materials.

There are really two shows here. Perhaps this split has been partly influenced by the physicality of the venue. An elegant private loft cum contemporary exhibition space, The Lumber Room features two levels, several rooms and high ceilings of warm honey-colored beams. The dual perspectives offer deep-rooted organics and the morphing primordial body (Kristan Kennedy, Blair Saxon-Hill, Nell Warren) versus ordered systems dispensing complex sacred mathematics (Linda Hutchins, Victoria Haven), symbology (Léonie Guyer) and fractured neo-geometries (Judy Cooke).

Two artists maneuver the in-between of these parenthetical aesthetics: Heather Watkins and Michelle Ross. Watkin’s “Surfacing” (2008-11) groups black on black ink drawings, like fetal pods, emerging right at the very edges of the paper’s border. The installation zig-zags over three adjacent walls in a grid that references the room, punctuated by the asymmetry of one absent corner, the white of the wall itself - perhaps an offering of hope or a nod to the tension of work-in-progress. Two of Ross’ assemblages appear in the main room and one in the lower lobby, and they add the most immediate color to the space with the simple swatch of peek-a-boo pink organza combined with the pop of roughly brushed clementine over a black and white digital print. “A Shallow Metronome” is a nuanced drama that keeps the eye moving to and from a crudely deconstructed fabric remnant. In the entry the artist doesn’t shy from curious stains, frays and other imperfections in “The Mannerist,” a totemic work that puts us face-to-face with a femme fatale the morning after her raucous night of passion.



Sculptural forms add volume throughout the main space. New work by Saxon-Hill is a daring departure and shows off a promising young artist. From a painter who formerly made lovely small-scale landscapes comes a chunky, clunky pair of works that revel in the bold, sooty, lumpy visceralities of industrialized life. “What that Entails and What Comes After” seems on one end to be an homage to Joseph Beuys, sans a blatant riddle. The engaging work in powdery gray, like a cloak hiding something adrift in the cosmos, is assuredly the show’s most poker-faced. In bare contrast are the racy lines of colorful sand embedded through acrylic cubes and tubes by Midori Hirose. Making reference to but unlike Sol Lewitt’s “Incomplete Cubes: from the mid 1970’s, “SQFT” acts as an open cage, an armature of camouflage dipping back into the day-glo fluorescence of the 1980’s, when artists like Stephen Sprouse and Keith Haring reigned. But here by bracketing space the artist doesn’t abandon the fine line for the sake of pomp.

Finally, Kennedy’s “E.G.S.O.E.Y.S.” hangs amid the near visible, elegant shapes of Lynne Woods Turner, writhing from a deep internal space. The thickly layered blackened gesso atop raw canvas recalls early Julian Schnabel. The twist in this five foot six inch tall work is a retrofitting akin to what appears to be a shroud-like breastplate taken from the outside in. In ghostly absentia the work is a comment on painting itself, lost layers of ideas, forever faded from the interior margins.



September 2010

Voices from TBA: Blair Saxon-Hill & John Brodie

By DK Row

The Portland Institute of Contemporary Art has often said that its annual Time-Based Art Festival is an event for and by artists. Of course, others beyond the art world attend and are curious about the festival's shows and performances, but the point is well made: The community of artists -- many from Portland, many visiting -- is one of the festival's essential characteristics.

We caught up with two such artists, Blair Saxon-Hill and John Brodie, on Saturday at "The Works," before a performance by Ten Tiny Dances. Saxon-Hill and Brodie -- a couple and co-owners of Monograph Bookwerks, an art bookstore in the Alberta District -- talked about their TBA experience, past and present.

Q. What's the best thing about this festival, year in and year out?

Brodie: The energy, the excitement, and the concentration of art in a short period of time.

Saxon-Hill: TBA brings out the recluses of the art community who finally come out and gather together.

Q. What have you seen so far?

Brodie: We just arrived. We just walked up the stairs. So, the lobby, basically (laughs).

Q. TBA's been around for a spell...

Brodie: Like all good things, it's taken awhile to establish itself. But it's done a lot and there's a lot more it will do.

Saxon-Hill: I'd love to see PICA re-establish a permanent visual arts home one day, maybe here at Washington High School, even.



Q. So, what are you going to see in the days to come?

Brodie: I'm just starting out and thinking things through.

Saxon-Hill: I've reassigned my priorities, but definitely (artist) Storm Tharp's lectures.

Q. TBA's appeal is about really pushing the artistic boundaries. Does that appeal to you?

Saxon-Hill: For me, it's less about shock and outrage. But I'll definitely go see something outrageous. I'm just more pulled by quiet work.

Brodie: It's not necessary but if used wisely, it can be quite effective.

CV



BLAIR SAXON-HILL

Born 1979 in Eugene, Oregon
Lives and works in Portland, Oregon

EDUCATION

2002 Reed College, Studio Art, Portland, Oregon, US

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2022 *Shrimp Head Momma*, Nino Mier Gallery Glassell Park, Los Angeles, CA, US
Pace Prints, New York, NY, US (*forthcoming*)

2018 *As If Without Us We Could Be We*, Nino Mier Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US

2017 *LAID ME OUT*, Tahoe Gallery, Sierra Nevada College, Incline Village, NV, US
Diagnostic, Artist Curated Projects, Los Angeles, CA, US

2016 *to no ending except ourselves*, JOAN, Los Angeles, CA, US

2015 *No Edge to Nature*, Fourteen30 Contemporary, Portland, OR, US

2014 *From the Beginning (Yet Further On)*, Littman Gallery, Portland, OR, US
Confounding Medium, North View Gallery, Portland, OR, US

2011 *Tonal Sequence*, Fourteen30 Contemporary, Portland, OR, US

2008 *Beyond the Way Station*, Lunar Boy Gallery, Astoria, OR, US

2002 *Evocation of the Empathetic Response Through a Material Linguistic*,
Feldenheimer Gallery, Reed College, Portland, OR, US

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2022 *New Editions*, Pace Prints, New York, NY, US
Indie Folk, WSU Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, Pullman, WA, US

2021 *Soft Water, Hard Stone*, New Museum International Triennial of Contemporary
Art, New York, NY, US
The Inaugural Exhibition, Nino Mier Gallery, Brussels, BE



- 2020 *Gest*, Nino Mier Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US
Five Year Anniversary Exhibition, Nino Mier Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US
Indie Folk, Adams & Ollman, Portland, OR, US
PAPER (and one on wood), Nino Mier, Los Angeles, CA, US
What Needs To Be Said, Disjecta, Portland, OR, US
- 2019 *What Needs To Be Said*, Hallie Ford Museum of Art, Salem, OR, US
What Needs To Be Said, Umpqua Community College, Roseburg, OR, US
- 2018 *Pussy, King of the Pirates*, Maccarone, Los Angeles, CA, US
- 2017 *Concrete Island*, VENUS Over Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA, US
- 2016 *Sister City Project*: Portland, 500m Museum, Sapporo, JP
Outside the Museum, PICA's TBA Festival, Pioneer Courthouse Square, Portland, OR, US
Out of Sight, King Street Station, Seattle, WA, US
Good Neighbor, Seattle University's Hedreen Gallery, Seattle, WA, US
Plus One, Traywick Gallery, Berkeley, CA, US
- 2015 *Stilleven: Contemporary Still Life*, Hallie Ford Museum of Art, Salem, OR, US
The World Is Not The Earth, Adams & Ollman Gallery, Portland, OR, US
Crow's Shadow Institute of the Arts, Jacobs Gallery, Eugene, OR, US
Dirty Peach, LA Art Book Fair, Museum of Contemporary Art
Los Angeles, CA, US
- 2014 *Portland2014: A Biennial of Contemporary Art*, Disjecta Contemporary Art Center, Portland, OR, US
New Art 2.0, Eiteljorg Museum, Indianapolis, IN, US
- 2013 *Subject, Answer, Countersubject*, Disjecta Center for Contemporary Art, Portland, OR, US
- 2012 *Interior Margins*, The Lumber Room, Portland, OR, US
Group Exhibition, Regional Arts and Culture Council, Portland, OR, US
- 2011 *Blair Saxon-Hill and Emily Bixler*, Union Pine, Portland, OR, US
- 2010 *Morph/Shift: perspectives on non-objective, abstract, experimental painting*, Pacific Northwest College of Art (curated by Mack McFarland), Portland, OR, US
SUMMER SHOW 2010, Fourteen30 Contemporary, Portland, OR, US



GRANTS AND AWARDS

- 2020 Oregon Arts Commission and Ford Family Foundation Career Opportunity Grant
- 2018 Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters and Sculptors Fellowship
- 2017 Oregon Arts Commission Career Opportunity Grant
- 2016 Hallie Ford Family Foundation Fellowship
Oregon Arts Commission Fellowship
- 2013 Oregon Arts Commission Career Opportunity Grant
Ford Family Foundation Career Opportunity Grant
Ford Family Foundation Golden Spot Award
- 2010 Regional Arts and Culture Council Professional Development Grant

ARTIST PUBLICATIONS

- 2015 *Dirty Peach*, Artist Book, Colpa Press, San Francisco, CA, US
- 2014 *Folder Level*, Artist Book, Blair Saxon-Hill with assistance of Publication Studio, Portland, OR, US
The Riso Book, Artist Book, Colpa Press, San Francisco, CA, US
Publication Studio Portland Biennial, Publication Studio, Portland, OR, US
- 2012 *Summer Sigs '12 Anthology*, Artist Book, Container Corp., Portland, OR, US

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 2022 Ammirati, Domenick, "*Under the Skin of Newness: Domenick Ammirati on the New Museum's 2021 Triennial, Greater New York 2021 at MoMA PS1, and Rosemary Mayer at Swiss Institute*", ArtForum Magazine, January 2022.
- 2021 Norton, Margot and James, Jamillah, ed. *Soft Water Hard Stone: 2021 New Museum Triennial*, Phaidon, 2021.
Straw, Timmy, Essay, Ford Family Foundation, 2021.
Alemani, Cecilia, "'Refreshing and Mighty': Cecilia Alemani's Top Choices for Frieze New York 2021", Frieze Magazine, May 3, 2021.
Murray, Yxta Maya, "*GEST*", The Brooklyn Rail, February 2021.



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