

THIS IS NOT AN ARCHIVE / EVERYONE IS AN ARCHIVIST

A thesis presented to the faculty of the Graduate School of
Western Carolina University in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Masters of Fine Arts in Studio Art.

By

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Land Acknowledgement

I wish to recognize and honor the ᏌᏍᏏᏉᏍᏏ Tsalaguwetiyi (Cherokee, East) and S'atsoyaha (Yuchi) on whose stolen lands I write these words. It is my hope that you choose to support and uplift the legacies of peoples upon whose ancestral lands you currently occupy by seeking out ways to be in solidarity and community with Indigenous artists, cultural leaders, and community members. To find further information about the peoples who have stewarded the land you presently call home, consult <https://native-land.ca/> or text your zip code to (855) 917-5263.

Adrienne Wong's Digital Land Acknowledgement

“Since our activities are shared digitally to the internet, let's take a moment to consider the legacy of colonization embedded within the technology, structures, and ways of thinking we use every day. We are using equipment and high-speed internet, not available in many Indigenous communities. Even the technologies that are central to much of the art we make, leaves significant carbon footprints, contributing to changing climates that disproportionately affect Indigenous people worldwide. I invite you to join us in acknowledging all this, as well as our shared responsibility to make good of this time and for each of us to consider our roles in reconciliation, decolonization, and ally-ship.”

My research is deeply influenced by Critical Race Theory, intersectional feminism, and trauma-informed care, which means I am indebted to many Black, Indigenous, and People of Color for making your work accessible. Thank you.

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ABSTRACT

THIS IS NOT AN ARCHIVE / EVERYONE IS AN ARCHIVIST

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Western Carolina University (April 2021)

Director: Tom Ashcraft

An examination of sites of archival practice within the human lived experience—artists as archivists, erasure and archival silences, materials which keep time, and the topography of intersections between art making and archival processes, this document looks to artists, artworks and critical theory concerned with representation and community engagement across the fields of public art, craft, photography, textiles, library science, museum studies, and material culture.

CONTENT WARNING

Content discussed in this document includes topics which might be triggering to some readers, such as white supremacy, trauma and generational trauma, the holocaust, and enslavement.

INTRODUCTION

“History is not the past, it is the present. We carry our history with us. We are our history.”

James Baldwin

“Transform yourself to transform the world”

Grace Lee Boggs

I started writing this document with the intention of bringing everyone who influences my work and research with me. As a proponent of “Shine Theory¹” and someone who is committed to relational attribution, meaning, it’s not just the works cited or research which has influenced my practice, but conversations and interactions I have had along the way, I was trying to find a way to map the intersecting threads which have woven into my three years of thesis work and my practice as it emerges from this time. Several weeks into the process I realized I wasn’t writing for my thesis; I was writing for a future document that wasn’t necessarily ready to emerge yet.

Instead, I’ve elected to present a checklist or finding aid² of the works which were presented as part of my constellation of thesis exhibitions, with annotations directly pointing to moments of clarity, questioning, or shifts in my process, to defray the notion that artistic labor occurs within an individualized vacuum. I am someone who makes things: objects, photographs, artworks, but I am also someone who makes connections: with people, community, and ideas, and these connections are in continual dialog with my practice. To

¹ Aminatou Sow & Ann Friendman. (<https://www.shinetheory.com/>)

² “a description that typically consists of contextual and structural information about an archival resource” (<https://dictionary.archivists.org/entry/finding-aid.html>)

limit a presentation of my physical artwork to a document which only describes the “what” leaves out the multiplicity of how, when, why, and with whom, the “what” occurred. So, this document is meant as an archive of my physical, critical, relational, and co-creative process.

This document is not an archive(s)³, and I am not an archivist. And yet, with fundamental antipathy to structures which uphold white supremacy⁴ (and an acknowledgement of the historical silences, omissions, and extractions within art collections and archival practice which effectively mediate collections with white/cis/neurotypical/heteronormative/maleness⁵ as default), this is the tip of the iceberg of a proposition to turn towards a liberation of ‘the Archive’—from exclusion to embodiment. I attempt to present sources/resources as accessibly as possible (given the format of a master’s thesis⁶) and by forgoing established citation and footnote frameworks in favor of my own format which, to my neurodivergent brain, makes accessing these references more direct.⁷ While not an archive by the traditional metric, this document is a collection of

³ Archives are collections of records of continuing value, however, the term is fraught, and carries no fewer than twelve definitions, three most actively used by archivists include: the records themselves, the facility where they are stored, and the organization responsible for both. (paraphrased from <https://www2.archivists.org/about-archives>, which was excerpted from Millar, Laura. *The Story behind the Book: Preserving Authors' and Publishers' Archives*. Vancouver: CCSP Press, 2009.)

⁴ White Supremacy Culture by Tema Okun (https://www.showingupforracialjustice.org/uploads/8/9/8/0/89802181/characteristics_of_white_supremacy_culture_copy.pdf)

⁵ Cis refers to cisgender, or one who identifies as the gender assigned to them at birth. Neurotypical describes those of “typical” developmental, intellectual, and cognitive abilities, as distinguished from neurodiverse, or divergent intellectual/developmental/cognitive abilities, such as autism. Heteronormativity is the belief that heterosexuality is the default or “normal” sexual orientation, and reinforces the construct of the gender binary.

⁶ In this spirit, alternate versions of this work will be published on my website and as an artist’s book, with a less scholarly framework, more content authored by and linked to those referenced, and expanded resources.

⁷ A combination of extensive footnotes, and indexical references which rely on contemporary gestures of navigating the internet, in-text links, and social media, rather than scholarly citations, etc. influenced by Maggie Nelson’s use of margin citations in *the Argonauts*, matt lambert and Ben Lignel’s “the footnote” expansion in *Mapping Craft*, and my own preferences for navigating references within texts.

records of enduring value which has informed my work. Wherever possible I link primary source materials⁸ by impacted voices⁹.

As an arts worker, and to be an effective agent for change, I must both understand the mechanics of how the institution works (as best I can), and also how the institution fails. My practice orbits the hierarchies therein, and the intersections with art, the art industrial complex¹⁰, higher education, library science, representation, history, public space, and material culture is where much of my work lives. As such, I think it's important to be explicit that, while I am not a certified archivist, meaning, I do not have any sort of LIS credentials, I identify as an "artist-archivist" or a "curator of archives." This is meant to show deference to the field by valuing the labor necessary in achieving LIS standards of professional practice while acknowledging that one may perform gestures of archiving without being a certified archivist¹¹. The idea that everyone is an archivist is not meant to devalue the field, but rather expand the possibilities of who has agency within the context of archives beyond the framework of formal or institutional archives.

⁸ primary source - material that contains firsthand accounts of events and that was created contemporaneous to those events or later recalled by an eyewitness
(<https://dictionary.archivists.org/entry/primary-source.html>)

⁹ "impacted voices" references a principle of leadership described in adrienne maree brown, "Transforming Ruckus: Actions Speak Louder"- "impacted leadership (the leadership of communities directly impacted by economic and environmental injustice)
(http://sfoonline.barnard.edu/polyphonic/brown_04.htm)

¹⁰ the overlapping interests related to the commodification of cultural labor within the art market— collectors, galleries, museums, auction houses, and the inherent power dynamics therein, "Those who are responsible for and profit from a country's undoing also sponsor, applaud and exhibit works produced from the wretched conditions they themselves have helped sow." (Excerpted from Rijin Sahakian "On the Closing of Sada for Iraqi Art" <http://www.warscapes.com/blog/closing-sada-iraqi-art>)

¹¹ SAA Core Values Statement and Code of Ethics
(<https://www2.archivists.org/statements/saa-core-values-statement-and-code-of-ethics>)

Critical Race Theory¹², intersectional feminism¹³, and trauma-informed care¹⁴ are at the core of this work and research. As whiteness has been the default within which Euro-centric and Western historical context has been based, it is crucial to name that all scholarship on decolonizing, re-contextualizing, and interpreting culture, history, and within collections, conducted by white researchers, artists, archivists, curators, and others, will be inherently racially biased and hierarchically coded. Even the premise of “scholarship” itself upholds a standard of legitimacy for research rooted within formal systems of power which excludes based on race, class, gender, ability, and so on.

To situate “scholarship” by white people on the aforementioned subjects as more “legitimate” than lived experience, accounts outside of critical analysis, or a format which meets university, peer-reviewed, or professional standards, is a deeply problematic framework. Scholarship conducted by white (particularly white/cis/neurotypical/heteronormative/male) people, upholds a standard within which “othering” is inherent, and the oppression of “others” is purely conceptual. This abstraction of injustice through theoretical analysis disregards the emotional labor of experience and pushes tangible action in dismantling oppression to the margins in favor of detached conjecture. Ergo, transparent positionality¹⁵ is important to this critique: I benefit from white privilege, use she/they/y’all pronouns, was assigned female at birth, and primarily identify as female or “femme” (but am often reluctant to fully identify under the gender binary as I

¹² an intellectual and embodied movement and legal framework that centers the premise that race is a socially constructed / culturally invented category

¹³ coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 and recently re-defined as “a prism for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other.”

¹⁴ Trauma-informed care shifts the focus from “*What’s wrong with you?*” to “*What happened to you?*” - <https://www.traumainformedcare.chcs.org/what-is-trauma-informed-care/>

¹⁵ “Positionality refers to the how differences in social position and power shape identities and access in society.”

(<https://indigenousinitiatives.ctlt.ubc.ca/classroom-climate/positionality-and-intersectionality>)

believe gender is a construct). I am an (ethnic) Ashkenazi Jew, am Northern by birth and Appalachian by choice, and I work and live on land stolen from the ᏍᏏᏉᏍᏏ Tsalaguwetiwi (Cherokee, East) and S'atsoyaha (Yuchi), what is now known as Western North Carolina. Disclosing my positionality does not absolve me from the responsibility of due diligence in conducting this process with deference to those most impacted by the subjects I am tackling. I hold deep care and a commitment to long-term relational engagement with this living archive and those involved as it evolves over time.

I was 25 before I learned what an archive(s) was. In the last ten years—alongside my burgeoning interest in the field—wider recognition of archival practice, and interrogation of the ethical framework within which archivists operate, has become more accessible outside of the discipline. In short, archives are having a moment. As wider access to—and awareness of—archives expands the field itself, LIS becomes (slowly) more “diverse.” The commonalities between LIS and the art world are staggering, particularly with regard to diversity, representation, and an overwhelming lack of impacted leadership¹⁶ (it’s almost as if these two things are connected). Another harmful parallel between the two is the culture of “vocational awe,” a phenomenon traced and defined by Fobazi M. Ettarh as “the set of ideas, values, and assumptions librarians have about themselves and the profession that result in notions that libraries as institutions are inherently good, sacred notions, and therefore beyond critique,”¹⁷ which plays out in professional art and culture positions as a similar assumption about the ethical and public value of arts workers.

¹⁶ adrienne maree brown, "Transforming Ruckus: Actions Speak Louder"—“impacted leadership (the leadership of communities directly impacted by economic and environmental injustice) (http://sfoonline.barnard.edu/polyphonic/brown_04.htm)

¹⁷ Ettarh, Fobazi. 2018. “Vocational Awe and Librarianship: The Lies We Tell Ourselves.” In *In the Library with the Lead Pipe*, January 10, 2018. <http://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2018/vocational-awe/>.

My introduction to archives and special collections was stewarded by Emily Atkins, MLIS, a friend who has worked in various roles in archives and collections management. Atkins' generosity in discussing both technically specific and deeply abstract library science concepts helped me to negotiate the spaces between my artistic interest in library studies—in materials with provenance¹⁸, in excavating known unknowns, in salvaging discards, in the process of deaccession, and how this work was ultimately deeply rooted in my social practice—in unpacking whiteness, in examining representation, in leveraging art and cultural capital towards community engagement and through the lens of co-creation.

My hope is, here and in the future, to present this research in a format which may bridge the gap between, and be legible to, those both inside and outside the institution, engaged in critical theory and practice. I believe that everyone is an archivist, and in this spirit, agency and representation are essential to this dialog. This document, my practice as an artist in studio and public, and my work as director of Engaging Collections, an organization committed to demystifying archives through public art interventions into libraries, archives, and special collections, is in service of this premise.

¹⁸ Provenance is defined as “information regarding the origins, custody, and ownership of an item or collection” by SAA (<https://dictionary.archivists.org/entry/provenance.html>)

CHECKLIST

*Open Floor Plan*¹⁹ is a constellation of exhibitions which include sculpture, installation, photography, public art, and time-based media shown in multiple locations across several months. The works orbit the multifaceted interpretations of home, and how identity and representation are intrinsically linked to place. The works in *Open Floor Plan* are intended to spark conversation and consideration, with an invitation to examine one's relationship to community, housing, and access to resources, and how this affects their understanding of the environmental implications and socioeconomic concerns of displacement, gentrification, and diaspora. Each installation urges visitors to consider the notions, trappings, and complexities of "home."

I have moved homes over 25 times in my 35 years of life, and these moves were often marked by financial difficulty or trauma. In all of these moves, despite not having consistent access to affordable housing at some points, I always had a safe place to stay. However, while my houselessness was always temporary, over half a million people in America experience houselessness each night, over 10.2% of the population, 27% of whom experience chronic homelessness (those who have experienced homelessness for at least a year – or repeatedly)²⁰. Furthermore, the minimum wage does not provide a living wage for most American families. Access to affordable housing and a living wage should be a human right, yet I have watched the minimum wage sit stagnant in my lifetime, as

¹⁹ The title of the exhibition series comes from real estate marketing terminology, used often as a selling point for homes, and is intended as a nod as the necessity of spreading these works across multiple locations and times due to the lack of appropriate space within which to show, as well as the idea that some of these works were intended to be engaged with by publics in different environments, such as public space without the trappings of and associations with museum or gallery spaces.

²⁰ <https://endhomelessness.org/>

rent, utilities, and other necessities have continued to increase—astronomically so in Western North Carolina where I live.

Part of the process of building this body of work required my examination of my own thoughts about housing in general, historical exclusion regarding access to housing, and housing as a human right. Also brought up in the making of these works was my internalized generational trauma (or postmemory²¹) from lived experience as an ethnic Ashkenazi Jew benefitting from white privilege and several generations of American citizenship. Making this work caused me to look at my feelings about diaspora, in the context of my Judaism and within the framework of moving so much throughout my life, and also of cultural depictions of what a house/home looks like, particularly in the western world.

In addition to the works on view at each location, in-person and digital visitors, if able and moved to do so, are encouraged to make donations of supplies, funds, time, or resources to @avlsurvival²² or their local mutual aid solidarity network benefiting individuals experiencing houselessness and those disproportionately affected by COVID-19.

²¹ In *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust*, Marianne Hirsch looks to writers, artists, and through a critical feminist lens to examine the potential of integrating the past into contemporary visual culture without the trappings of extraction or appropriation. Hirsch coins the concept “postmemory” to “describe the relationship that the “generation after” bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before — to experiences they “remember” only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up.”
(<https://cup.columbia.edu/author-interviews/hirsch-generation-postmemory>)

²² <https://linktr.ee/avlsurvival>

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Upon entering the space, a simple job-site table holds a housing survey, which asks visitors for basic demographic information related to their housing situation, resources, information about mutual aid and wealth reclamation, and sanitizing wipes and gloves. In the lower portion of the gallery, Festival of Shelters and the Special Field Order No. 15, a sculptural frame of a house form, made from steel, sits in its yard of 500 sq ft of sod. Visitors are invited to walk around, sit a while, and occupy space and time within the installation.

Nearby, Planned Communities and Public Housing on Sample Whites is made up of 70+ paint sample cards in a variety of 'whites,' resting on two 2"x4"x8' select studs. Over the course of the exhibition, I held open hours in the gallery, drawing topographic interpretations of planned communities, such as Levittown, PA and Shaker Heights, OH, and Public Housing, such as Jordan Downs, Watts, CA, and C. J. Peete Public Housing Development (Magnolia Projects), New Orleans, LA.

Works I read, listened to, took in while making *Affordable Housing*, info about the history of de jure segregation, mutual aid, dual power, wealth reclamation, and other non-hierarchical methods of community care:

- Antiracist Praxis, American University - Segregation and De Facto Segregation by Olivia Ivey
- The Color of Law, A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America
- Black Autonomy Podcast: Dual Power: A Simple Explanation

1. *Festival of Shelters and the Special Field Order No. 15*
2020-2021

- + steel, teaching myself to weld with input from Kylie Price, Eli Blasko, and Bruce Bailin, machinist and best friend of my father
- + 500 sq ft of sod, retrieved from Turf Mountain Sod by Lex Turnbull, and myself, during a harrowing journey in the pouring rain with a trailer with flat tires in a car borrowed from Tom Ashcraft, deinstalled by Kate Chassner and her children, Liz Williams, and Leslie Rosenberg
- + gold washi tape

This work went through many transformations. Of the most impactful conversations which influenced the work, a fellow-MFA candidate, Seth Echlin, asked me about the connections I saw within the work to my ethnicity as an Ashkenazi Jew, and the sculpture's potential parallel to the Sukkah, or the ceremony of Sukkhot. I cried.

This question prompted me to think about my feelings of disconnect with my Judaism, and to interrogate my own internalized anti-Semitism. Being Jewish was one of the first things I learned to hate about myself during childhood. Peers made it explicitly clear through bullying and threatening that Judaism was something to be ashamed of, and one classmate even went so far as to tell me "I wish Hitler had killed all the Jews." That experience, which could have radicalized me, made me fearful of owning my ethnicity, of being "too Jewish," of embodying Jewish stereotypes. While in adulthood, I've always claimed the "Jewish Mother" trope as someone who tends to those I love with care and a little tough love, but I kept my associations with Judaism ironic and light-hearted.

While the piece evolved, I was thinking a lot about the Special Field Order No. 15, or the "forty acres and a mule" order²³, which has been brought up more recently in discussions about reparations – 500 sq ft. of sod equals roughly 1/100th of an acre. I wanted to make something which might hold space for both diasporas, the African diaspora through the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade, and my own latent postmemory and generational history of being part of the Jewish diaspora. However, while white American Jews have benefitted from white privilege and therefore have not been prevented from owning property to the same extent as people of color, Black Americans have been consistently, and with government support, been blocked from owning property in the form of de jure segregation.

²³ <https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/shermans-field-order-no-15>

1. *Planned Communities and Public Housing on Sample Whites*
2020-2021

+ paint sample cards from a home improvement chain in the shape of houses in various “whites,” with graphite drawings added durationally

From art writer and host of Modern Art Notes podcast, Tyler Green²⁴:

“Among the rarest things is a white artist making a work about whiteness. Enter @lydiasee.studio, whose 2021 "Affordable Housing" was recently on view @revolveavl.

It featured "Festival of Shelters and the Special Field Order No. 15," the outline of a house in steel, a form abstract and empty enough to prompt the viewer to muse on how to fill it in. See's sculpture sat on sod and asked, 'What makes a place a home?'

About 10 feet away, two racks of paint samples turned the softballs posed on the field into a more pointed question: who gets to have a home? Each of the paint chips was a different shade of white. Suddenly See's idyll became a call for redress.

Oh btw, Union Gen. William T. Sherman issued the “Special Field Orders No. 15” of See's title in 1865. Sherman's order confiscated land from treasonous white Southerners and provided for its dispensation to formerly enslaved Black men and women. Later, white supremacist President Andrew Johnson returned these lands to their previous owners, a denial of both economic opportunity and a certain justice to men and women had joined the Union Army and fought for both their freedom and the Union.

Later, again: across the 20thC and especially after WWII, the US denied soldiers and their families who were not culturally constructed as white access to both housing and economic opportunity. Federal programs, such the extension of federal loans to whites on the explicit condition that they not sell their houses to Black buyers, and the 1949 Housing Act, which enforced segregation on the nation's most popular housing sector were explicitly constructed around the imposition and expansion of white supremacy. States and home-owners groups followed with policies such as the imposition of racially restrictive covenants on houses and neighborhoods. Today the average white family has 41 times the wealth of a Black family.

See has offered literature on some of this. But it was the paint chips -- installed serially on racks in a manner that recalls the seriality of post-war developments such as CA's Lakewood and NY's Levittown – that used repression's vocabulary and form to say it all.”

²⁴ <https://manpodcast.com/>

2. Housing Survey

During the course of the exhibitions, I offered an in-person and digital housing survey that asked a few simple questions about positionality and the percentage of one's income spent on rent (or mortgage).

link to survey: <https://bit.ly/2QzoNPZ>

Here are some responses:

- a. He/him. 27. White. Trans. I am paid above living wage. BFA in visual arts. I have no generational resources. I have lived in buncombe county for 5 years.
Percentage of monthly income on rent: 37.2%
Buncombe County
I can walk to access resources (food, transportation) from my home
- b. She/her, white, lived in avl for 7 years, married and 2 kids, one with cerebral palsy which means for us that we need to live close to a lot of medical resources, keeping us closer to the hospital and paying higher rent. Stuck paying high rent and can't get a mortgage.
Percentage of monthly income on rent: 38%
Buncombe County
I can walk to access resources (food, transportation) from my home
- c. [no positionality given]
Percentage of monthly income on rent: 50%
Buncombe County
I can walk to access resources (food, transportation) from my home
- d. she/her – Black, 46. Bachelor's Degree, Asheville Native, never exp homelessness, no supplemental income, Business Owner, yes, I am paid a living wage, I am a parent of 2 adult children.
Percentage of monthly income on mortgage payment: 23%
home value - \$262,000
Buncombe County
drive only – no walking access to resources (food, transportation) from my home
- e. I am paid \$14 in Buncombe County which is more than \$9 an hour I was paid in Durham County. I received unemployment for 10 weeks last year which was more than I earned working. It was easier to find somewhere to live here for less than \$800 than it was in Orange County. Affordable Housing for single people is necessary everywhere. Not everyone has partners or a family.
Percentage of monthly income on rent: 53%
Buncombe County
I can walk to access resources (food, transportation) from my home

NEW REAL ESTATE NOW AVAILABLE

New Real Estate Now Available is a site-specific installation which includes a child's playhouse, photographs, and construction and real estate materials. The child's playhouse, given to the artist by a friend whose children had outgrown it, acts as gallery to a selection of images—playhouses, birdhouses, and other “houses”— which are a way of looking at the material culture which surrounds notions of “home. The installation is surrounded by chain-link fencing and real estate marketing materials, barn quilt patterns stitched from fence tarp, and other real-estate related ephemera. The title of the installation arose during a conversation between the artist and a friend who had been displaced from their home and studio during the pandemic, and began painting custom birdhouses to sell while space constraints prevented them from making larger work. A photograph of one of their birdhouses may be seen inside the home/gallery.

This installation urges visitors to consider their own visual associations with home, with construction sites and their situational relationships to the architecture in proximity, their experience with development and “affordable housing,” their exposure to real estate signs and advertisements, and their lived experience of “playing house” as a child, and then being housed or unhoused as they age.

Visitors are invited to enter the playhouse/gallery and occupy the space as they feel comfortable.

1. The playhouse/gallery
+ children's playhouse, given to me by Kate Chassner, whose children had outgrown it. Eleanor and Theo called the playhouse “the spider house” due to

its many spider webs which had accumulated inside over time and contributed to their willingness to give it to me.

+ I was inspired to use the playhouse as a place to view photographs of house/objects by the work of Sofia Valiente, whose *Foreverglades*, a book, public art installation, and photography exhibit, presented photographs of the Belle Glade, Florida region in a 1920's inspired steamboat docked in the Stub Canal Turning Basin.²⁵

2. Photographs printed on Sintra, locations/sources:

- + child's playhouse outside Avl Survival free store
- + hand-painted birdhouse by artist Maxx Feist, who inspired the name of the installation
- + Little Tykes brand plastic dollhouse from Lex Turnbull
- + lamps and house figurines from Goodwill
- + several yard sales
- + birdhouses from John's Creek and Beaver Lake
- + Build and Grow kids birdhouse kit from Lowes
- + decorative garden houses from Webster
- + outdoor train set buildings from the NC Arboretum
- + House/barn mailbox from Newfound Road in Leicester
- + paper wasp nest outside an abandoned motel in Cullowhee

3. Quilts:

N35.533376W-82.838591 (fivespot for Ami)

2019-2020

- + construction tarp
- + thread

35.4275927-83.4446604 Appalachian Dream

2019-2020

- + Construction tarp
- + thread
- + wool recovered from the dumpster of a now closed weaving mill I Hendersonville, NC

Constructed with salvaged fence netting material, these barn quilt squares are exercises in the liminal space Appalachian semiotics and the white noise which advertising and sponsorship construction netting occupies.

Each quilt is based off of an existing barn quilt which may be seen on the WNC Barn Quilt trail, a self-guided tourism attraction. Much of the gentrification which has plagued Western NC is due to tourism, and comes at the cost of affordable local housing. This image is a detail of the quilt hung on a chain-link fence which has since become condos which average monthly rent that would fall in the 50% range of rent/income ratio for average workers in the Asheville area. The quilts bear the GPS coordinate location of each actual barn quilt in their titles.

²⁵ <http://www.sofiavaliente.com/home>

4. Wheatpaste on real estate advertising tarp:
 - + tarp taken from defunct condo project on Haywood Rd. in downtown Asheville
 - + various copies from city planning and architecture drawings from Raleigh City Capital development planning documents deaccessioned from Buncombe County Special Collections
 - + “You stand on stolen Cherokee land” written in Cherokee Syllabary
 - + photographs of the playhouse/gallery

5. Signage:
 - + various store-bought and custom “For Rent” and other signage describing the playhouse/gallery as a “cozy, 15 sq ft apartment, close to nature”

CUSTOM, LIGHT-FILLED, HISTORIC

1. *Barrier* 2021

- + household family linens, from Jean, my aunt who was a library director in Schnectady, NY, and for/about whom I have made a lot of work. She passed Feb. 16, 2019.
- + microfilm from the Spartanburg County Public Library, of Better Homes and Gardens, Architectural Digest, and Southern Living painted with High Visibility Husqvarna Orange
- + thread
- + Tyvek house wrap from Kylie Price and the Cabbage School
- + American Flag which hung outside my step-dad's house for 20+ years
- + orange safety barrier fence given to me by construction workers on the WCU campus
- + Husqvarna brand orange spray-paint
- + electrical tape

By selecting magazines depicting homeownership and upkeep of homes, and juxtaposing the content of these periodicals with "barrier" often used during the construction process, I intend to draw connections between access and barriers to information, homeownership, and safety. This "safety barrier" is often also used in controlling crowds, particularly recently during the racial uprisings and responses to the persistence of white supremacy. The uses of barriers to both "keep safe" and "control" are not mutually exclusive. I combined the microfilm with thread, painted it, and cut it by hand, as well as hand-cutting the Tyvek and family linens.

2. *for those who consider houselessness...* 2020-2021

- + concrete and steel from Chloe Kaylor
- + carpet foam from Lex Turnbull
- + raku-fired stoneware, formed with Kim Springs with guidance from Juliana Brown and Seth Echlin, glazing with Cristina Colom Muñoz, firing with Kevin McNiff and Cristina Colom Muñoz
- + wood scraps from Eli Blasko
- + floor sweepings from my home and studio
- + resin casting process advised by Emily Budd
- + produce bags from grocery consumption
- + microfilm scraps
- + small scrap fabric offcuts from family linens used in other pieces
- + fire

These hopeful houses and their environments, made from my own and others' trash, remind us that beyond a hierarchy of location, facade, and finishing, that many homes are constructed with the same materials. The difference between public housing and "urban loft condos" is negligible, and materials are commonly

chosen intentionally to emphasize a politicized value proposition.

Imperfect little landscapes, references to comfort constructed from industrial materials designating hierarchies of class and access surround these homes - asking us to consider what then, other than generational wealth, separates those with homes and those without? To what degree have those adhering to shelter-in-place and stay-at-home orders considered how the pandemic, systemic racism, and the culture of white supremacy affects those who have no home within which to shelter?

Have oppressive practices slowed - of gentrification, of environmentally destructive land-use, of displacement, of enacting and enforcing laws which punish the conduct of necessary, life-sustaining activities in public, even when many people have no other option? Certainly not, in fact, these practices have become increasingly insidious.

3. *Impact*

2020-2021

+ birds killed by impact with windows photographed on various building supplies, cedar, dimensions variable

Each of these birds died from impact with large reflective windows on my university campus, a result of architectural design not sensitive to environmental issues which affects migratory birds every year. Cedar was chosen for its resistance to pests and decay, and the form of the boxes is referential of raised garden beds and plain wood coffins to draw attention to what we put into (and on) the earth as well as how we impact the environment. Each bird is photographed laid to rest on various forms of building materials like tarps, moving blankets, carpet pads, and blue foam insulation.

These photographs were a slow burn. I had been noticing the dead birds around Bardo Arts Center and had spoken to Dr. Tapley about them who had been in conversation with Dr. Barbara Ballentine: "I will take a look at your window treatment and let you know what I think. We find a lot of dead birds at that window. And, yes, please do let me know if you find birds in reasonably good shape. We have a collection on campus and we can put them to good use. And, the more data I have on how many birds are killed on campus, the better my argument can be to the administration to invest in bird-friendly treatments to windows."

I began a correspondence with Dr. Ballantine about the birds, and started collecting them when I saw them. I started out photographing them in the style of "vanitas" paintings to try to memorialize the birds, but this was insufficient, and eventually pivoted to a taxonomic photograph of each depicted laying on material often used in housing and construction, such as tarps and moving blankets.

4. *whitewashing the news*
2019-2020

- + Newspaper cast from 2019 cover story detailing the Eastern Band of Cherokee's historic agreement with Smoky Mountain National Park that "returns the right" to the Cherokee to pick sochan on their ancestral land as they had done for thousands of years prior to colonization
- + newspaper clippings
- + used scrap paper from my home and studio
- + microfilm and microfilm boxes
- + salvaged linter from closed paper mill

The mold for, and much of the pulp used in, casting was made from copies of a newspaper which featured a front page story about the Eastern Band of Cherokee's historic agreement with Smoky Mountain National Park that "returns the right" to the Cherokee to pick sochan on their ancestral land as they had done for thousands of years prior to colonization.

The bulk of the rest of the pulp includes newspapers which feature front page stories about the Eastern Band as well as protests and county commissioners voting around removing "Sylva Sam," a confederate statue located on the steps of the public library, what was once a courthouse, in my small town. Some sheets of raw paper pulp used were salvaged from a decommissioned newspaper printing facility and microfilm, microfilm boxes, studio and home used paper, and other personal paper ephemera were added.

This work marks the first time my process centered on an automatic, industrial process of working. My body became a production line, I was able to make these casts over a year using a process which did not require my analytical or over-thinking brain, my body becoming an archive of the gestures of purely making, physical labor, and the rhythms of casting.

5. *Custom*
2020-2021

construction barrier tarp, salvaged housepaint and spray-paint, wool from a now-closed weaving mill in Hendersonville, NC

6. *light-filled*
2020-2021

construction barrier tarp, salvaged housepaint and spray-paint, wool from a now-closed weaving mill in Hendersonville, NC

7. *Historic*
2020-2021

construction barrier tarp, salvaged housepaint and spray-paint, wool from a now-closed weaving mill in Hendersonville, NC

In *Custom*, *light-filled*, *Historic*, real-estate jargon is meticulously embroidered onto construction tarps which have been painted with salvaged house paint from behind, pushing the paint through an unpredictable perforated grid of plastic cloth.

These three fencing tarps, and the tarps used to make 35.4275927-83.4446604 *Appalachian Dream* and N35.533376W-82.838591 *Fivespot* (for Ami) were displayed outside the Asheville Art Museum during its several year, \$24 million expansion and renovation, for which the Museum accepted \$2 million from the City of Asheville (amidst claims that the friendly relationship between the Museum's Executive Director and individual Council members led to favorable treatment for the institution), nearly \$2 million from Buncombe County, and \$1.5 million from Asheville's Tourism Development Authority (TDA). This sum does not include the Museum's rent. In 2014, the museum entered into a 30-year agreement to lease the site which the museum occupies for \$10 per year, with an option to renew for an additional 20 years.²⁶

The TDA, which wielded an estimated \$20 million in hotel tax dollars in 2019, is controlled by a board of eight voting members, all with a stake in tourism (five own hotel/hospitality groups, one owns a brewery, one owns a retail shop, one is the VP of Communications at the Biltmore, which is essentially its own hospitality group). The TDA has come under scrutiny for ignoring the community's calls for hotel tax dollars to support affordable housing and infrastructure. Instead, the extractive process of demolishing amenities used primarily by locals who are experiencing increasing cost of living and fewer affordable housing options in caters to tourist needs. Writing on this subject has been published in recent years by Matilda Bliss²⁷, Katherine Calhoun Cutshall²⁸, and Ami Worthen²⁹, detailing the long history of extraction of indigenous people, African Americans, and rural whites in support of "The Tourism Machine," as Bliss has named it. "It is difficult to digest the cumulative damage caused by encouraging rich white people to visit for over a century and a half... we should have no illusions about the roots of tourism, on whose backs it was built, what type of tourists we have courted, and who benefits," posits Worthen³⁰, whose coverage of this topic has been instrumental in my process of building this body of work, and for whom a work on view as part of *New Real Estate Now Available* is named.

Is it the responsibility of an art museum or cultural institution to address concerns of displacement and extraction in its community? This is certainly a larger question regarding the role of cultural institutions in our contemporary cultural landscape. However, by accepting funds from the TDA, the Museum implies complicity by championing tourism.

By using material which hung outside the Museum during its construction, material which acts as a signifier of development, these works are an investigation into the aestheticization of construction which has historically and consistently led to displacement in the name of progress. Asheville's legacy of displacement through urban renewal, such as the severing of the historic East End neighborhood from downtown Asheville by way of road redirection and re-naming, has insidious roots

²⁶ *Asheville Art Museum builds for the past, present and future*, Able Allen (<https://mountainx.com/news/asheville-art-museum-builds-for-the-past-present-and-future/>)

²⁷ *The tourism machine*, Matilda Bliss (<https://ashevilleblade.com/?p=3607>)

²⁸ *Pack(ed) Place: Cultural Heritage Tourism in Buncombe County, NC Past, Present, and Future*, Katherine Calhoun Cutshall (<http://libres.uncg.edu/ir/unca/listing.aspx?id=29188>)

²⁹ *Abolish the TDA*, Ami Worthen (<https://ashevilleblade.com/?p=3742>)

³⁰ *Abolish the TDA*, Ami Worthen (<https://ashevilleblade.com/?p=3742>)

and long-term impact on the African American community. Valley Street, “the historic root of the neighborhood, was gone, redirected and renamed South Charlotte Street after Charlotte Patton, a member of the prominent Asheville slaveholding family. Pathways that interconnected lives and destinations were paved over to make municipal garages and administration buildings. People who had lived in the dense housing of the neighborhood found themselves in public housing communities or in far-flung neighborhoods, away from those important networks of support,” remarked Dr. Sarah Judson, Professor of History at UNCA, in an interview with the Mountain Xpress in 2020³¹.

By continuing to encourage tourism, hotel and real estate development without consideration of income and the living wage, housing, access to resources, the rising cost of living, and the displacement of communities, the city has made a statement of values, to which I respond with these works.

³¹ Urban Renewal in Asheville, Thomas Calder (<https://mountainx.com/news/uprooted-urban-renewal-in-asheville/>)

SELECTS

I don't know what to do with my hands

2020-2021

+ family photographs from extended family who responded to my call for unwanted family photographs and ephemera which had been digitized or were the “other” pictures that didn’t make it into the family album.

+ gouache

These are pictures of people posing—sitting, standing in front of things, in a line or arrangement, or frozen mid-action to awkwardly catch a moment. Most of these people are strangers to me, as I’m not close with the aunt and uncle who gave me this collection. I saw patterns in their boxes of photographs, like these, which led me to intervening with them in a variety of ways.

I painted the bodies out in these images to draw attention to the awkward positions people tend to hold their hands in while being photographed and asked to pose—there is a persistent discomfort present in the hand gestures, and the title of the works “*I don't know what to do with my hands*” references this state of discomfort.

I don't know what to do with my hands was included in *Selects* at Tracey Morgan Gallery in Asheville, NC, April 2021.

FICTION OF THE REAL

Double prints

2020-2021

Woven double prints from a photograph collection from extended family who responded to my call for unwanted family photographs and ephemera which had been digitized or were the “other” pictures that didn’t make it into the family album.

These images, from the same collection as I don’t know what to do with my hands, are the extra double prints which never made it into albums—because they were poorly taken, uninteresting, duplicates of other images on the roll, and some are insurance images made for my uncle’s now deceased mother, whose possessions have all been dispersed.

“Double prints” are an iconic object which have no current contemporary analogue, a habit of the past which no longer applies. Not only does the use of double prints date these images, but it situates the weaving of them together in a conversation about imaging as a duplicate of the “real.” Photographs are often misconstrued with “fact” as they have become one of the more reliable “eyewitnesses” to history as it happens. But photographs can be edited, falsified, or even that the act of making images carries with it a certain amount of privilege (owning a camera, buying film, printing. Photographs can hold multiple truths, and the weaving together of these duplicate prints is a nod to the “truths” which may be manipulated in the viewing, handling, and keeping of photographs.

Double prints was included in *Fiction of the Real* at Revolve Gallery in Asheville, NC, April 2021.

IMAGES

Affordable Housing

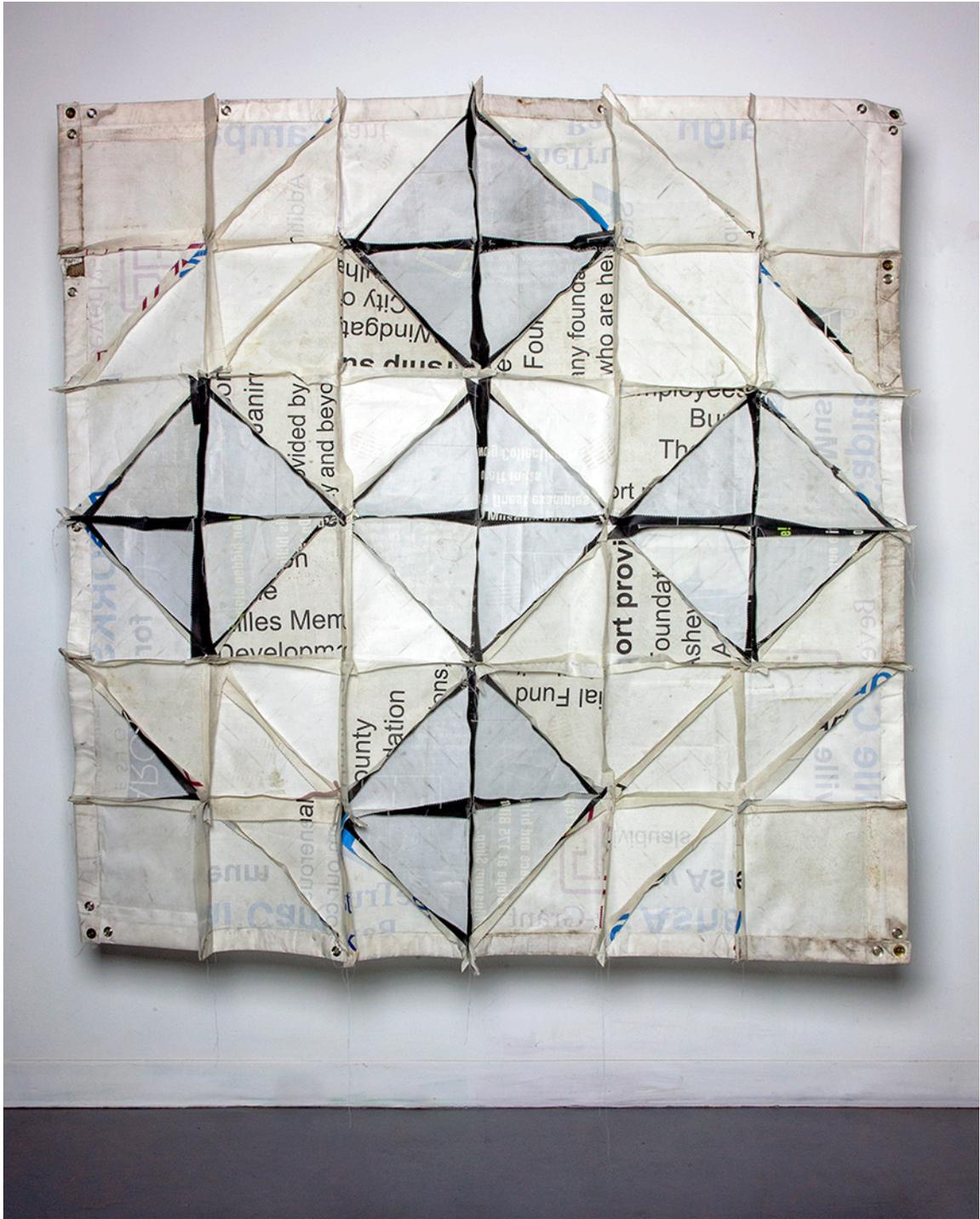




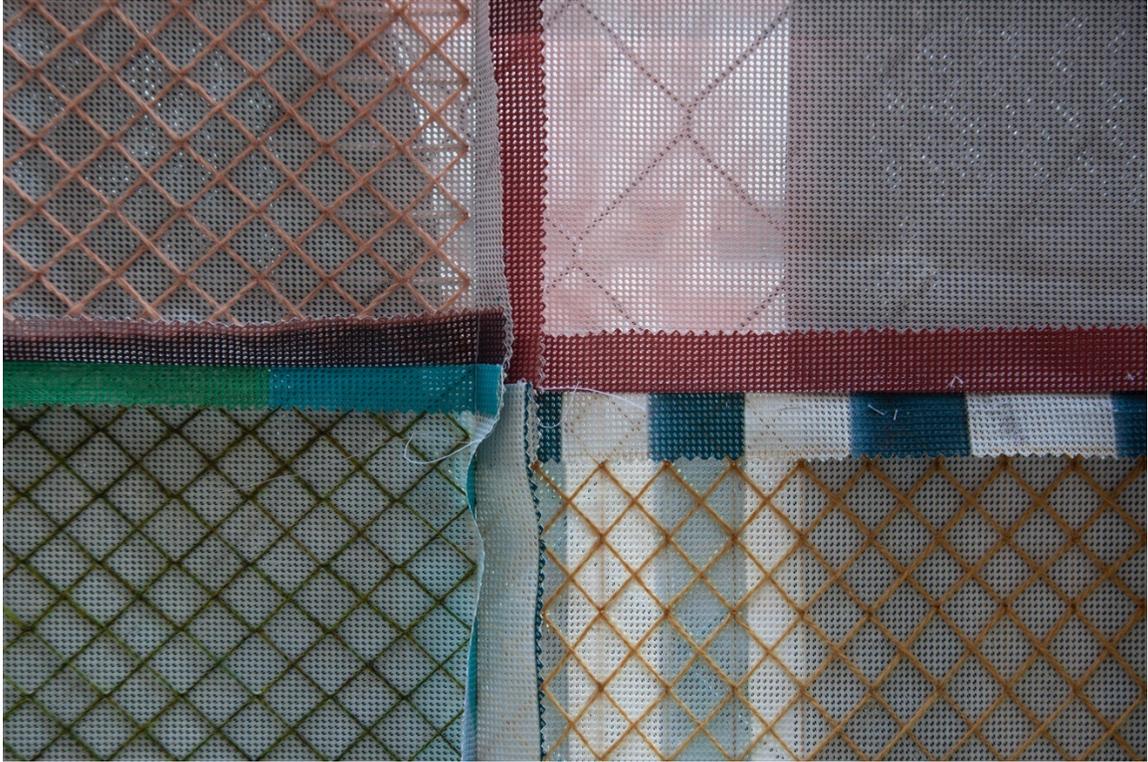
New Real Estate Now Available



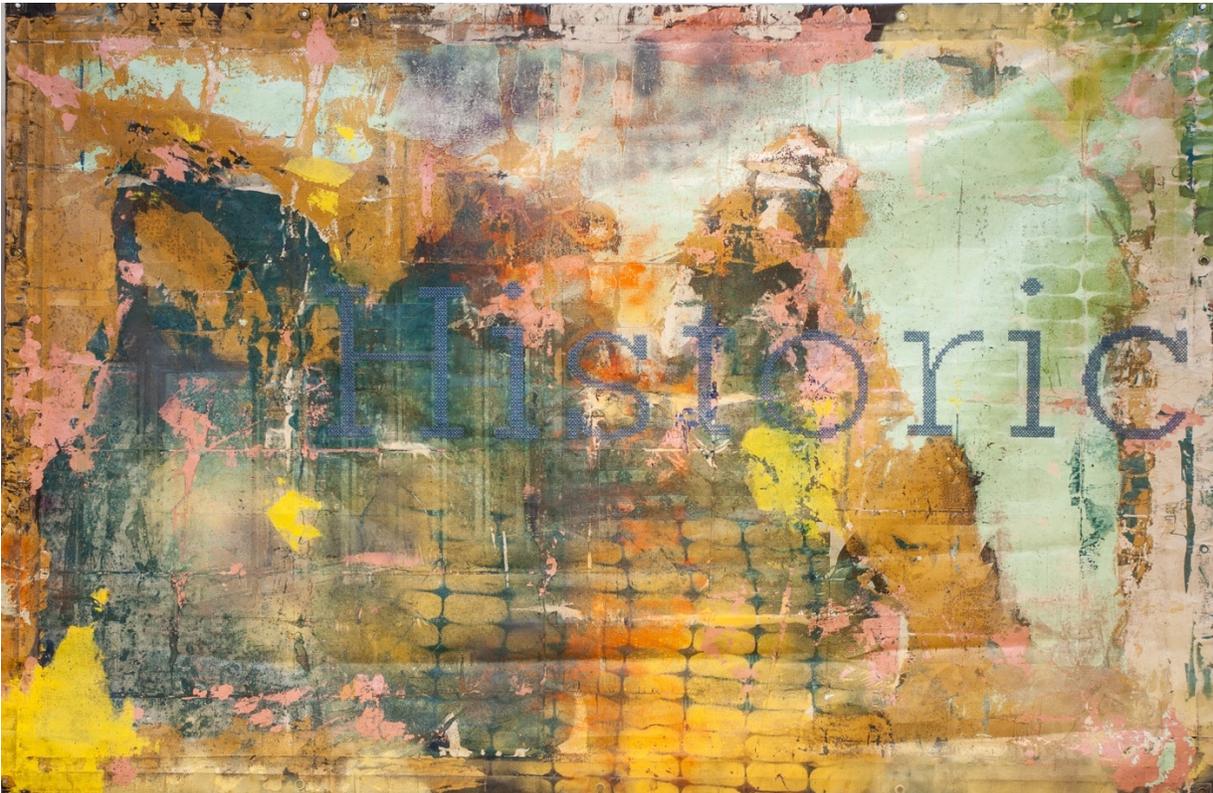








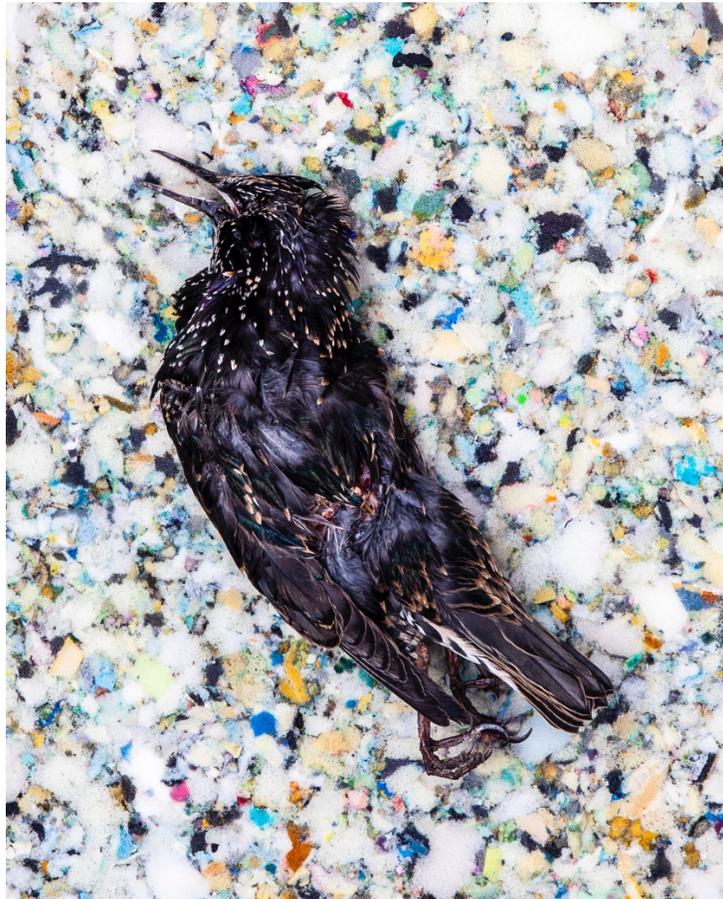
Custom, light-filled, Historic





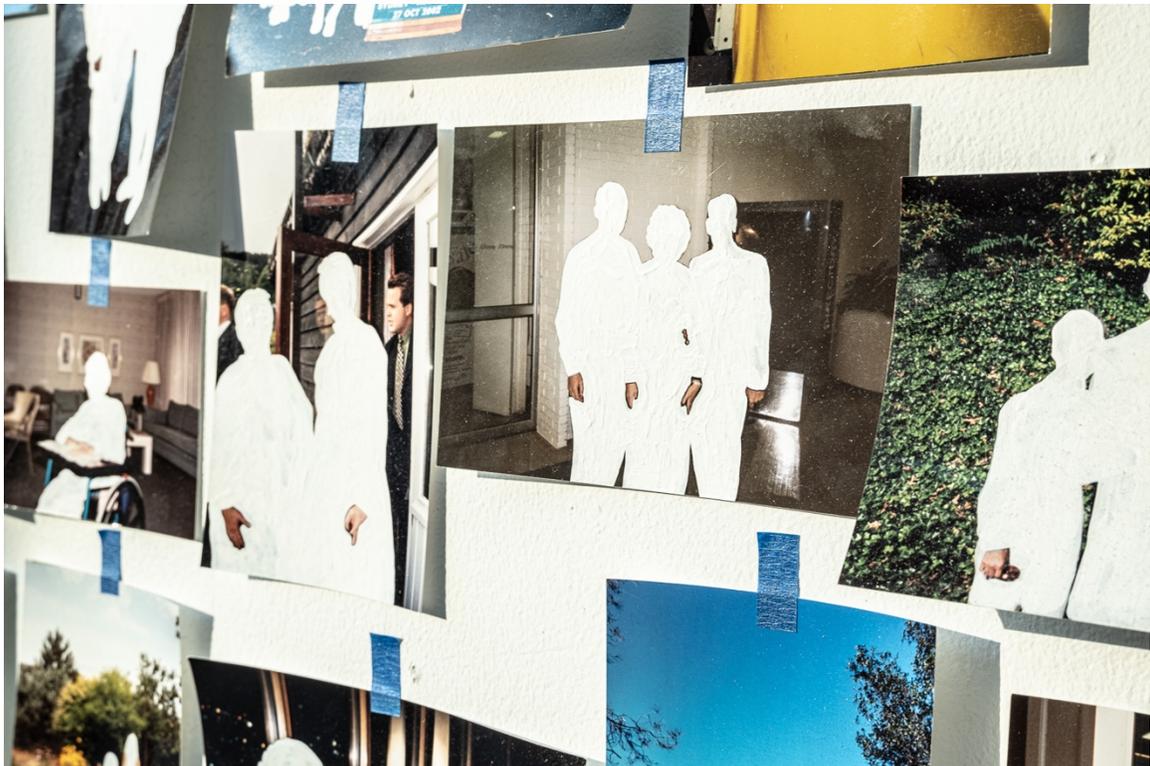








I don't know what to do with my hands



Fiction of the Real



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