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I have written this thesis to explore and support the artistic practice and work I have formed while at the University of North Carolina Greensboro. The work of my thesis show was made in reaction and reference to both the real world and the world as I see and experience it. With my work I want to make my thoughts and concerns known, but I also wish to share work that is not overly didactic. I intend to make it apparent that the world is bleak and treats the overwhelming opportunity and liberty of life with apathy and doubt. Highlighting the dystopian nature of the world makes mechanisms of oppression - nationalism, economics, xenophobia - known again, it is a revolt against the madness of sight without vision. By making these sculptures and investing care, love and patience, I am giving these mechanisms my time and attention despite my contempt for them. I place value in acknowledgment and naming as a first step in positive change. During the making of this thesis, the novel Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) caused a global health and economic crisis. In addition to the COVID-19 pandemic, the suffocation death of an unarmed black man named George Floyd by a white policeman on May 25 in Minneapolis sparked worldwide protest and for policing reform and defunding. The work and thoughts of this thesis seemed to materialize and mirror themselves in the physical present world.

SEASONS IN THE ABYSS

by

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APPROVAL PAGE

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I view Seasons in the Abyss's social and political component as its most crucial element. The objects that make up Seasons in the Abyss are made mostly of wood and depict various miniaturized American landscapes, some vague and others distinctly American. The craft of these objects - the cleanliness of their construction and the balance of efficiency and play in their design is important to me, but the display of craft and skill in the work is in service to the message, I do not want to use technique to show off my virtuosity. The orderly appearance and processes undertaken is used to make the work seamless and believable. I view this "seamlessness" as a gesture of goodwill, I invest deep amounts of time into the making so that the work can speak on its own - its construction is unquestionable, so failures of craft do not obstruct the path. The work aims to expose ills of society by scaling down, copying, and reproducing architecture, objects, and landscapes in wood. By scaling down and reproducing, our perspective is altered and allows us to examine these objects and the things that they represent in a new way. No longer do these objects and places dominate us, we can stand over them and examine them completely with only a few steps. The power these places and things have over us is removed; these sculptures empower us, enhancing our ability to see, examine, and question.

An example of one of these objects is a very detailed copy of a crude oil pump jack made from wood. It is a small, model sized sculpture. In the world these pumps are often massive and fenced off, but in this reduced state we are no longer small and kept at a distance, instead we are invited to look and question it. The pump creates pressure to most efficiently extract oil, it is an anchor and a root. It attaches humanity to the earth in the most exploitive way and with it we can effortlessly extract from the earth as we please. And when the well runs dry, the pump is pulled onto a trailer and the site is abandoned leaving behind a toxic legacy.

The content and scale of this work is a departure from the work I made when I started at UNCG, yet still interconnected in a number of ways. The work of the thesis followed a steady theme of dystopian isolation, neglect, and apathy. To better understand the work of this thesis, it is important to introduce my practice and work I have made during my time at UNCG and how that work has created a larger context for my thesis work.

CHAPTER II

CONTEXT

My artistic practice centers around crafted sculptural objects that question power, hierarchy, personal privilege, care and empathy. Many of these objects are accompanied by my presence as a facilitator. My questioning of power - of the larger political and social world - feels like a natural inclination. However, I acknowledge my inclination to question the power structure is one that was taught and learned. My upbringing was heavily influenced by mother's involvement in the social movements of the 1960's in northern California and her lifelong pursuit to empower herself. It is important to understand that she is white and was treated differently than non white activists at the same time, but she paid a significant price. She was injured after being shot with a rubber bullet by the police, disowned by her racist father, and evicted by and later forced to pay rent to her mother. Despite the repercussions, she endorsed a philosophy that championed not only fairness, equality, and non violence; but consciously decided to stop the abuse that had plagued her family for generations. She realized the mean-spirited nature of her father was representative of a corrupt larger system that simultaneously mistreated him as a young man and empowered him as an adult.

My pursuit towards fairness and questioning is complicated by being white and being a man. I am not ashamed of being white or a man, but there is a long cruel history

white men need to acknowledge and not feign ignorance to or deny responsibility. I have privilege in almost all things I do. I am seldom questioned, doubted, or receive suspicious glances; something I am not always aware of, but is something I actively consider. Using art to probe the social and political world has been a way for me to examine this privilege and make constructive use of it. By undertaking social projects, like the organizing of an artist-run pop up gallery, I want to use my privilege and resources to empower other artists and amplify their voices. There is the ever present pitfall of white saviorism and it is dangerous to simply dismiss those concerns, but I think it is careless (corrupt even) to simply sit idle in the comfort of my personal power. My knowledge of my power, and more broadly my personal philosophy, is heavily influenced by the French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu and the American visual culture theorist, Nicholas Mirzoeff.

Pierre Bourdieu presented an idea that each person has varying degrees of capital in separate categories; cultural, social, economic, and symbolic. In brief, Bourdieu saw this blend of capital as determinant of one's habitus, the way in which they see and navigate the world, and their habitus was determined by their class and their position in the field of power. A person of high cultural capital defines themselves through sophisticated taste which is often predicated by some economic or symbolic capital which enables them to have the power of choice (Bourdieu 11-85). Nicholas Mirzoeff speaks in depth about the power of slavery in *An Introduction to Visual Culture* and how it became the most dynamic force of the last 500 years. The presence of natural resources and millions of enslaved african laborers in the colonies provided white European countries

the perfect opportunity to accrue massive amounts of capital and establish western European nations as the preeminent world powers (Mirzeoff).

Europeans and their descendants have been building capital and equity for centuries. The descendants of white persons in America have possessed some form of capital for centuries; be it inherited economic capital, a culture, or a race. Now consider the descendants of enslaved African persons in America, they accrued absolutely zero capital for centuries and live in a field of power that views blackness as negative symbolic capital. The blackness of their bodies positions them in direct opposition to the system they were forced to assimilate into. For centuries, they possessed nothing, let alone their labor, culture, history, family, names, or bodies. White bodies, no matter how impoverished their families, have inherited some form of capital for centuries, they are empowered by the symbolic and cultural capital attached to the color of their skin.

I am a white man from an upper middle class family. I have two parents who are both white, able bodied, both of them had traditional families that cared for them, neither of them have been incarcerated, both were given the opportunity of a college education, and both were able to work their entire adult lives. My upbringing from a social activist grants me certain cultural and symbolic capital, I have economic capital through being able to work and the support of my family, and I have cultural capital from a formal arts education. If I run out of money, I will not be destitute or homeless, I can live with my parents and they have and can support me if I ever fall ill or am hurt. Not everyone has this support system and family history, I am empowered and have great privilege. Being

able to see my power and privilege is an important step in change, but it is also unfortunately reflective of a corrupt system. I had to pay and seek out educational capital to gain perspective granted by education which granted a slight enough ability of self awareness. The systems of power in play see whiteness and integrity of a dominant white capital culture as unquestionable and go to great lengths to protect its stability.

My first major undertaking at UNCG was a social practice/ performance based project that critically looked at time through whittling and community building. I would whittle under a specific oak tree every Wednesday from noon to three and brought extra tools and materials to include anyone who wanted to join. I rode a purpose built delivery bicycle equipped with a custom built wood basket to the tree across from the university library. At first it was a chance operation, maybe one person over the course of three hours would stop just to ask a question, it was completely random. There was no formal signage or distributed media. I “advertised” the project only by word of mouth. These first few sittings were lonely, long, and boring. My spirit and enthusiasm for the project was dampened. Attendance turned around after six weeks and a regular group began to form that consistently came to sit under the tree, whittle, and talk. The bicycle mentioned above functioned as a sort of billboard, it broke down defenses erected to filter out the minutiae of everyday life on campus. The bicycle's basket of woven orange paracord and polka dots “breaks through” because it is distinctly cared for. It is in great contrast to bicycles on campus that are perpetually chained and forgotten. Whittling was the perfect “vehicle” for this project; it was not about excellence, skill, or making great art; it was

about being open to take the time to sit and whittle. To take a traditional folk art practice and thrust into a classist and hierarchical art world.

The critical focus of the project: time; was analyzed by the conflicting relationship between whittling, an activity defined by its ability to pass time, on a university campus and the role of time in a capitalist society. The university's structuring of time encourages deadlines, productivity, "all-nighters", information cramming, and the adoption of a "whatever it takes attitude". These attributes of time are hallmarks of the capitalist business world. This public interruption of time through whittling proposed a peaceful method to reclaim time. In a sense, to free time from the clock and reclaim power over your life. Beyond a critical examination of capitalistic time, the project also taught physical handcrafts and provided intimate interaction in a way that is particularly relevant at this moment of social distancing and self quarantining brought about by the outbreak of COVID-19. While the whittling project is arcadian and utopian compared to pieces in *Seasons in the Abyss*, it ultimately asks the same questions about power and corruption. The whittling project speaks to and questions the same conditions of a dystopian capitalist world depicted in the thesis work through whittling's uncanny power to question the warping of time and how it is valued in contemporary capitalist society. The whittling project has informed work I have explored at the university since. It birthed a number of works that explored the dissolution of barriers between the studio (a place of private contemplation), the institutions of art (museums, schools, and galleries), and emerging artists. One of these projects was a mobile satellite gallery that aimed to

dissolve hierarchies of access present in art's institutions - museums, galleries, universities, residences. This “gallery” is actually a hand-built work cart I made from poplar to ferry tools and materials between my studio and the school’s workshops. I initially pressed the cart into service as a coffee cart where I would brew and serve coffee to students and faculty in the art building. I decided to use the cart as an exhibition space where emerging and established artists could stage a “solo show” with a “catered opening”, the coveted gem of the art world.

The gallery was then turned over to a variety of artists including undergraduate and graduate students, a faculty member, and artists who have graduated from the institution and are now outside of it. Projects include it being suspended from the ceiling far out of reach with a fresh pot of coffee (Dane Winkler, in reference to my first project with the cart), filling the cart with sand to consume and heal the written traumas and harmful memories of its participants (Mary Martinez), and even using the cart as a public and free adhoc workstation to mend and even add flair to clothing (Claire Stromberg). The artists who showed work through the gallery were given carte blanche as to content and form, but they often echoed my intent of the cart. The gallery's utopian promise of fairness and access was often embodied by the work that took form from it. The project was a critique of galleries and museums, but it was also a celebration of them. I used this gallery to remove the burden of profit and find the utopian potential of the art gallery. Another significant project is a leaderless space that takes the form of an austere hand-built structure. The space was made in response to thoughts that emerged from whittling

on the university campus. The campus is a place of relative safety and intellectual freedom, but it is not “free”. Access is given to those who live, study, and work there. It is constantly patrolled and its order maintained by its own police force. I decided to build a shelter, a building that could be free and clear of the rules of institutions. It could be used for whittling, but it could also be for pedagogy, meditation, or conversation. It is a space for care and consideration, it is constantly in transition and lacking specificity. The space did not carry out one specific function; it wasn't only a whittling shelter or class room, sometimes it was a whittling shelter and other times it was a space for contemplation for people to relax and think. It was a space of freedom, each person when they used it, used it for their unique needs and purposes.

The structure is 8'x 8'x 8' of wood and fabric, with a transparent plastic roof. The walls are made of a stretched white polyester fabric used for “skinning” homemade airplanes. I am attracted to the fabrics clean and orderly appearance. Its treatment of light is dreamlike, diffusing light making for a comfortable and calming space. Handing the structure over to the public stoked my own paranoias. Its construction was expensive hard work and in public I feared it would be vandalized and misused. This issue never materialized, but another one took its place.

I saw the space in a dream, a glowing warm object - a symbol of utopian safety and order deep in a dark forest. It has never materialized that way. Property, as I learned from this project, is owned either by someone or something (organization, government, the public trust) and they hold the power. The space is not built to code or by an engineer

and is an insurance liability which makes its presence in the public impossible. The presence of the space on private property, something I don't possess, requires consent not only for the use of the land, but also constrains the access and freedom of the structure. And to be completely honest, if the site were on my property, I would probably put constraints on its use too. Site conflicts with the conceptual goal of a leaderless space. The leaderless space was also a response to insecurity. I felt the nature of the whittling project and the satellite gallery presented a "lack of form" because of their experiential nature - something I was unfamiliar with as a sculptor and maker. The space was full sized and permanent compared to the nomadic and packable nature of the whittling and gallery projects. The structure was a learning opportunity, I learned about conventional building techniques and the challenges of moving large sculptures, but it also provided conceptual insights into the effects of space and the nature of property.

Feedback on these three projects were positive and they were incredible learning opportunities. I learned what it meant to have an art practice that didn't focus entirely on objects and their making. I do not want to suggest that I "mastered" a new skill, these works were challenging and could be improved and refined, but they are forms I felt I needed to explore in graduate school. Moving forward, I decided to shift scale downwards to the scale that much of this show embodies. The reasons are both practical and conceptual. Practically, I can build smaller objects more efficiently, I am granted a freedom to work in aggregate. I was able to abstract these real world phenomena by way of scale, material and site.

CHAPTER III

CRAFT

As a sculptor I use philosophies and processes of a maker, builder, and woodworker with an adherence to craft and technique. In the introduction I refer to craft as a “cleanliness of construction and the balance of efficiency and play in design”. While I say this definition of craft is important to me, I also say the craft of objects is in service to the conceptual message of the work. In this case, the social and political expression takes priority over the display of virtuosity. While this statement has merit, I also find conflict in my love and care for craft and making. I falsely held the belief that if the craft was low, there was fault in the work. It is less believable and what will ultimately be seen is the fault in the work and that the message is lost. I have a false impression from art seen at the Venice Biennale and in major New York museums that art must be of high production value, it needs to be slick and sexy - expensive to make. These artworks are often so sleek and perfect, they are shimmering pools that one falls into, lulled by their perfect surfaces and moving concepts. But that is not all that art is, that is art for a specific market, place, and time. I lose sight that I can whittle on a stool under a tree and it is art. I can also make things that are “beautiful and perfect” and they are also art as well.

My greatest fear is that I may only be seen as a technician - a person whose work

shows skill, but lacks conceptual and critical substance. The technician's work has a slick and appealing appearance, but lacks conceptual and emotional depth. Earlier in my career, questioning this adherence to craft was out of the question - a betrayal of a vague moral code - I saw high craft and technique as the path of approval from instructors and other artists. I would feel tempted to *not* make the clever and unseen joint or even use a different material and process, but there fear of "straying from the path". If I don't follow my own code of proven techniques, the work will be poor and I could risk the loss of precious time. I also assume straying from my self established norm will bring resistance from the academic establishment. I fear I am too far along in my current work to shift my trajectory and lack the conceptual footing to validate these decisions.

I am caught between ideologies - a cool detachment that views the process is irrelevant and the product is the ultimate art - in opposition to - a meditative practice that views both process and product as equally important and artistic. I don't want to feel trapped by process, yet I find great comfort in it. James Krenov, a famed woodworker and founder of the Krenov school, embodied a deeper connection to making. A connection that materialized itself in the planes he made by touch and feel when he could no longer see. But there is also the work of Doris Salcedo, who makes work that is seamless and unseen, it is precisely perfect, but the work sometimes never touches her hand. My experience of her work and process is that it is not about the craft, it is about violence, memory, loss, constant questioning; but the craft is perfect, it feels as if the work has to be seamless and unseen so the questions the work poses are most visible.

Fortunately and unfortunately, I also love to make things. It is a felt experience. I use precision wood machine processes in tandem with traditional hand tools. The blend of these processes asks for a balance of efficiency, patience, feel, and touch - a harmony. I quickly, accurately, and safely trim a piece of wood on the table saw to then turn it over in my fingers and smooth its hard corners with a sharpened chisel. When these things are made, finished, and exist; they are loved. I can hold them. I feel and see my hand in their making. Wood is warm and comforting. Its surface records its history; a small pencil mark, a scuff from sandpaper, even some grease from the touch of my finger. If I am frustrated and upset (feelings that I unwisely prefer to disown), the marks on the work reflect this. These objects become embodiments of goodwill. They are spiritual objects, but they are not holy and reverent, but they have my essence in them and I treat them with care. I often turn my work and myself over for public interaction, risking the structure and consideration I have placed into the work.

For my work, craft is emblematic of care, it is my form of investment into issues that I cannot physically be involved in. I am empowered by my culture's current power structure, but I am a white man and I accept that, this fact is not going to change. However, there are things happening in the world that I can't accept, things we need to talk and care about. By caring about the way the wood looks and feels, by spending so much time and consideration on the craft of objects that stand in for these events, places, and things that are so painful and I hate so much, I am caring about something far removed from myself by bringing it close. Craft is personal. The craft of my work isn't

about precision, technique, and perfection - showing off; but it is about love, attention, respect, and care.

CHAPTER IV

CONTENT

My experience with *Seasons in the Abyss* is about many things, but I want to place emphasis on seeing and by extension, the care of seeing. As stated in the thesis, my intention is “to make apparent a world that is bleak and treats the overwhelming opportunity and liberty of life with apathy and doubt. Highlighting the dystopian nature of the world makes the mechanisms of oppression known again, it is a revolt against the madness of sight without vision. By giving these mechanisms time and attention it is an act of care; acknowledgment and naming as a first step in change.” The “madness of sight without vision” is my condensed experience with the collective sight of culture and society. The “seeing” of the everyday, as the sensation of sight - the taking in of seen data - light and shadow entering into eyes, often lacks a deeper “vision”. Vision being the processing of sight into perception and experience - the assignment of meaning, judgement, and questioning to these “sights”. I want to emphasize seeing beyond what things actually are and thinking more abstractly as to what these things are in service to and to whom and maybe to what they perpetuate. The pure amount of received data the world presents is too vast to perceive and investigate, but to resist sight at the surface level is ultimately a caring act. It is about taking the time to perceive and question as an extension of care. It is care that grants us the ability to truly see beyond appearances. It is

the use of care as a radical political gesture - by caring we can question time, the places we live and frequent, and the powers that control us.

The thesis's title, *Seasons in the Abyss*, takes its name from Slayer's album of the same name. I was attracted both to the poetry of the title (the beauty of the seasons and the sublime terror of the abyss) and the lyrical similarities of the album (corruption, war, and violence) with the work of the show. The title has taken on new meaning with the emergence of the COVID-19 outbreak. COVID-19 has caused over 160,000 deaths at this moment, has seen global markets tumble, art institutions close, and formal calls to self-quarantine and practice "social-distancing". As a result of the calls to quarantine, universities across the country have decided to close their campuses indefinitely. All BFA and MFA shows have been cancelled across the country, including the one that accompanies this thesis. The timetable for COVID-19 is unknown, but is suggested to last months and a vaccine, optimistically, is years away. Times Square, the embodiment of a 24/7 capitalist spectacle, is subject to an eerily stillness and has transformed into an expansive abyss as time has slowed indefinitely. I want to focus on three pieces, *My Country*, 32.748554, -114.871424, and *Hell Hole Rat Race*.

My Country is a collection of wooden objects and miniaturized structures on a ground plane. It represents a departure from the larger scale, social practice artworks that saw my constant presence as a facilitator with the artwork. It is designed to stand alone. *My Country* is a nightmarish and incomplete space, it teeters between the unseen and the deeply cared for. It is seemingly populated by the discarded, the unseen,

unacknowledged, and the isolated. However, what populates the site has received great care. The dumpster was lovingly crafted and happily made. It pushed my knowledge of making and encouraged me to use new tools. The whittled sticks were originally joined with machines and then sat with and whittled. The ground plane is a piece of maple that was milled using a CNC router from a digital 3D model.

During the machining process, the CNC lost calibration and gouged into the material, tearing and destroying the original topographic model. I was struck by the machine's violent treatment of the symbolic land. On the land is a pair of derrick structures, one sitting in a raised planter of grass with a blank billboard and the other is incomplete, sitting idle. In between the derricks is a miniaturized wood dumpster. Underneath the uncompleted derrick structure is a replica of a parquet brick sidewalk made from poplar blocks. The sidewalk has been torn up and bricks from the sidewalk are scattered across the landscape. Some bricks precariously prop up the landscape ground plane from its square wood feet. One of the whittled sticks is a copy of a fallen stick found in the street and the other is a composite of what I imagine a stick to look like and images of sticks found on Google image search through a computer screen. These whittled sticks span the physical distances between objects on the landscape; but as branches, they are representative of sprouting, growth, and death; they span not only physical space, but also time. They are also representative of a divide between the physical and digital worlds; one is a copy of an actually fallen branch, the other a composite of an idea and digital representation. My Country is a space of alienation and

destabilization, it is meant to teeter between the great care placed in its construction and the neglect and distance of its content.

The sculpture, 32.748, -114.871, continues this theme of alienation with its representation of my experience of the United States - Mexico border, specifically a stretch of desert past Yuma, AZ moving into California. Looking south a thin brown strip emerges in the distance, sitting on top of the landscape. It almost appears as if it were a giant, miles long Richard Serra sculpture. However, this is the fence that separates the United States and Mexico. It is an unnerving experience, altogether insignificant and obscure while saddening and stifling. It is representative of intense racism and xenophobia, but the common experience for White Americans of this space from the inside of a car is subtle and pacified. The sculpture is a CNC carved topography precariously perched on three custom made folding wood ladders.

The topography is a 3D model rendered from data obtained by Google Maps, it's dimensions and proportions are true to life. It is an exact data produced representation of this place which contrasts with the vagueness and unclarity of my remembered experience. I initially tried to replicate this experience with a viewfinder to simulate the perspective of an automobile. The sculpture would have been table height and the viewer would sit with the piece looking in. Experiments with the viewfinder and simulating sky and perspective proved unsuccessful. The form and material was not the way to recreate this experience. As a result this piece's form has changed dramatically. The viewfinder and the tabletop was scrapped and I decided to eschew the presence of an actual border

fence altogether. The sculpture's new position on the ladders is at 54 inches, below my eye level.

This view of the land creates a new perspective. It sees the land as an object. The viewer has the ability to see underneath the land, from above it, and all around it. The land is sliced and removed from the earth. I have realized this disruption, this removal of the land from the earth, is representative of contemporary border politics. A proposed border wall would replace the fence in this area and likely transform the region. This border wall has long been Donald Trump's great campaign promise, its necessity fueled by lies and hatred mostly in the form of racist remarks about Mexican immigrants. The border wall has become Donald Trump's defacto fall back to manufacture dissent. He has alienated this place from earth transforming it from place to object - into a wedge. I have asked myself if I am doing a disservice extracting this site and displaying it the way I am - obviously omitting certain details, however I feel its merit lies in how this depiction is representative of a cultural alienation with this place. This section of topography is removed from the earth, from context, from reality. The topography lacks a fence, a highway, and powerlines - many features of the real world; but in many ways Trump's border wall is equally divorced from reality and the real world. It is a fantasy, seen only in the mind of its supporters. The land and its position on these ladders is precarious and mirrors our relationship with the land, the people, and the politics we force upon it. Borders are seldom of the land or earth, they are spoken of and exist as imaginary lines,

lines that only exist in rhetoric and are made real when power manipulates and corrupts fear.

The piece, Hell Hole Rat Race, echoes 32.748, -114.871 in its mining of places I have seen and experienced in my life. Hell Hole Rat Race is a copy of an abandoned gas station at a run-down strip mall on west Market Street in Greensboro. The pumps and convenience store are gone, but the structure that would cover the pumps and customers remains. This structure is an eerie object seemingly at odds in the world, almost a sculpture on its own. I have always been drawn to this structure's symbolism and strangeness and decided to make a copy of it. My copy is made to scale from photographs and has the smooth round corners of the original, but departs from the original with its bright red paint and a sign on top that reads "CASH LOANS". Hell Hole Rat Race, like the border sculpture, copies from life and then departs from it. I realized this copy plucked from west Market Street, again like the border, lacked its broader context. The atmosphere and site of the original that granted it such silence and stillness could not be rebirthed in the studio.

I wrestled with how to create context for the piece, I thought maybe it needed a more detailed ground plane, but I wanted to shy away from more formal model making techniques fearing the piece would become too diorama or "toy". I wanted to preserve some sort of abstraction, some room for questioning and introspection. I started by using the gas station itself for context, placing some of my handmade objects on top of the structure - wooden boxes, whittled sticks, and painted wood cigarette boxes. Some

associations were too literal and others just didn't make enough sense. I began to see the structure as a carcass in its strip mall graveyard, a casualty of a market that builds, abandons and builds somewhere else. This station was gutted of its implements of sustaining itself and left to eventually collapse. I am attracted to signage and in particular billboards and the way they give mass to language in the world. I saw the predatory practice of payday loans as a particularly gruesome and despicable aspect of the capitalist system, one that preys on the underpaid, underserved, and more desperate lower working classes. The signage activates the top of the structure and also gives scale to the entire structure. This context of scale transforms the sculpture, it can no longer be a coffee table, but is actually a representation of something larger. The signage also gives it a site, placing it in the world in an imagined urban or lower income area where payday loans appear necessary to cover costs.

The gas station is, to me, the embodiment of American capitalism. It is the holding space for the fossil fuels that empower and ground the wars for which our economy relies. It is where we feed the cars that take us to our work, but also where our bodies are fed cheap addictive nutrient deficient foods, cigarettes, and alcohol. It is the place that fuels our lives and "saves" us the time we long to have and our jobs salivate for.

In all these sculptures the human form is noticeably absent, but these are the places where our bodies are most at play. My Country is the ground on which bodies are battered and lost in time and fade back into the earth. The topographical border crossing,

32.748, -114.871, is where bodies are hunted. It is the place where human lives seeking a reprieve from a violent home are stripped of their humanity and dignity, pressed and molded into the proof for an isolated xenophobic American fantasy (or nightmare). Hell Hole Rat Race is the site of the great American gaslighting. It shelters us from the rain and placates our addictions and keeps our gas tanks full of resources pilfered from the earth, but at the same time it sustains and props up the system that rushes us from place to place and makes our livers fatty and our stomachs ache. And when we can no longer compete in the great American race, we are stripped of our tools and abandoned, replaced by the newest shining plastic and light emitting diodes.

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CATALOG OF IMAGES

Figure 1. *My Country*, wood, found object, 55 x 31 x 60 in, 2020.

Figure 2. *My Country*. (detail).

Figure 3. *32.748, -114.871*, wood, dimensions variable, 2020.

Figure 4. *32.748, -114.871*. (detail).

Figure 5. *Hell Hole Rat Race*, wood, mdf, paint, dimensions variable, 2020.

Figure 6. *Hell Hole Rat Race*. (detail).



Figure 1. *My Country*, wood, found object, 55 x 31 x 60 in, 2020.



Figure 2. *My Country*. (detail).



Figure 3. 32.748, -114.871, wood, dimensions variable, 2020.



Figure 4. 32.748, -114.871. (detail).



Figure 5. *Hell Hole Rat Race*, wood, mdf, paint, dimensions variable, 2020.



Figure 6. *Hell Hole Rat Race*. (detail).