

Continuous Home Repair

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A thesis

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School of Art + Art History + Design

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Abstract

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In my practice, I explore the interconnection between the body, the home, and nature, treating them as interchangeable, symbolic stand-ins for one another. This throughline allows me to reflect on the continuous hostility impressed upon all three elements. As Western power clings to dominance over the Global South, as marginalized communities are stripped of autonomy, and as the climate crisis rages on, my work persists as a poetic, emotional, and bodily response.

I create assemblage sculptures and kinetic installations that incorporate video, sound, performance, and found materials. Much of the material I use comes from construction sites, emergency contexts, or are remnants of various exploitative industries. I assemble and orchestrate these materials by playing with their intended function and focus on their

relationship to labor: pallets don't carry a heavy load, windows are removed from walls, and Styrofoam breathes on in perpetuity. My work often includes video projections of performance documentation, portraying Sisyphean scenes of futile, repetitive acts. These performances are staged with care, using deliberately chosen materials and locations, but the actions themselves are discovered through experimentation and multiple takes. By allowing space for spontaneity in both my assemblages and performances, I invite viewers into an immersive encounter that stirs curiosity, evokes surprise, and leads to meaningful discovery.

Working across the interconnected layers of our existence, the body, the home, and earth, I aim to provoke reflection on the state of our collective well-being and the colonial and industrial systems that have led us into crisis and collapse.

The format of this thesis weaves through literal explanation and poetic fragments of personal narrative related to origins of aspects of my practice. Starting with the various steps of my creative process to listing off impactful influences and lastly to numbered sections of significant themes or approaches implemented in my work.

Process

My art making process occurs in four steps. First, is the research step. During this period I am reading, writing, and consuming information. My research material spans from various news outlets, historical texts, and social media. The second step is when I collect the found material and readymades. I find my materials in thrift stores, on Craigslist and Facebook marketplace, outside in the streets. Often, I also have friends, other artists, sending me photos and locations of material they think I would like. Or they collect the material themselves and gift it to me. The second step is also when I document staged performances and edit the videos. These performances often include the found material. The third step is when I assemble and physically create the work. This step is about risks, flow, and play. I enter into a flow state and combine all the various materials without plans. I test the physicality of materials, I become acutely aware of all the intricacies of the available materials and play with their functional features. I am moving and creating without words in my head. For the final step, I am titling the work and adding words back into the work. This step circles back to step one.

Even though my four step process seems clinical and inflexible, throughout that entire cycle I am open to every step being intersected by ideas, thoughts, imaginings presented to me through dreams. This dreamscape is accessed in that time period right when your eyes begin to open from sleep but you haven't put your feet on the floor yet. I haven't sipped my water on my nightstand, I haven't looked at my phone or the clock, I haven't uttered a word out loud. There I am thinking about materials and objects and things happening in life.

Influences

In my practice, I explore the interconnection between the body, the home, and nature, treating them as interchangeable, symbolic stand-ins for one another.

Thinking of these elements, the body, the home, and nature, these specific works have impacted my perception of them in artistic terms.

The body:

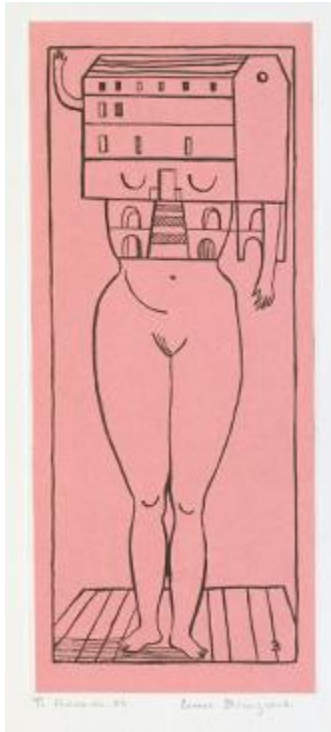


Charlemagne Palestine, *Island Song*

1976, 16:29 min, sound

This video piece was created by Palestine strapping a video camera to his body and driving a motorcycle around an island while repeatedly singing “I gotta get out of here” and harmonizing with the engine sound. This work deeply impacted my perception of how a body can be represented in a work of art. Here it is represented by sound and by indication of a skewed view.

The home:



Louise Bourgeois and her Femme Maison imagery.

Louise Bourgeois had a long and prolific practice spanning mediums and content. Her Femme Maison works specifically impact my practice. Translating from French to house wife, her works of this content were often drawings, sometimes sculptures, which depicted houses that were both on top of and a part of a woman or person's body. These works refer to the pressure and demand of a woman's role in a household.

Nature:



Ana Mendieta, Siluetas series

The Siluetas or Silhouettes series spanned from 1973-1980. For this series Mendieta created silhouettes of a human form in nature with rocks, sand, gunpowder, and more. The works exist as photographs and films. As Mendieta states, “its human scale... It’s like in connection with the paleolithic spirit. As opposed to the industrial spirit.” Mendieta was concerned with reconnecting with nature from the perspective of the human body and in consideration to the history of human relationships with the earth. She referenced indigenous spiritual practices that involved earth, blood, and animals.

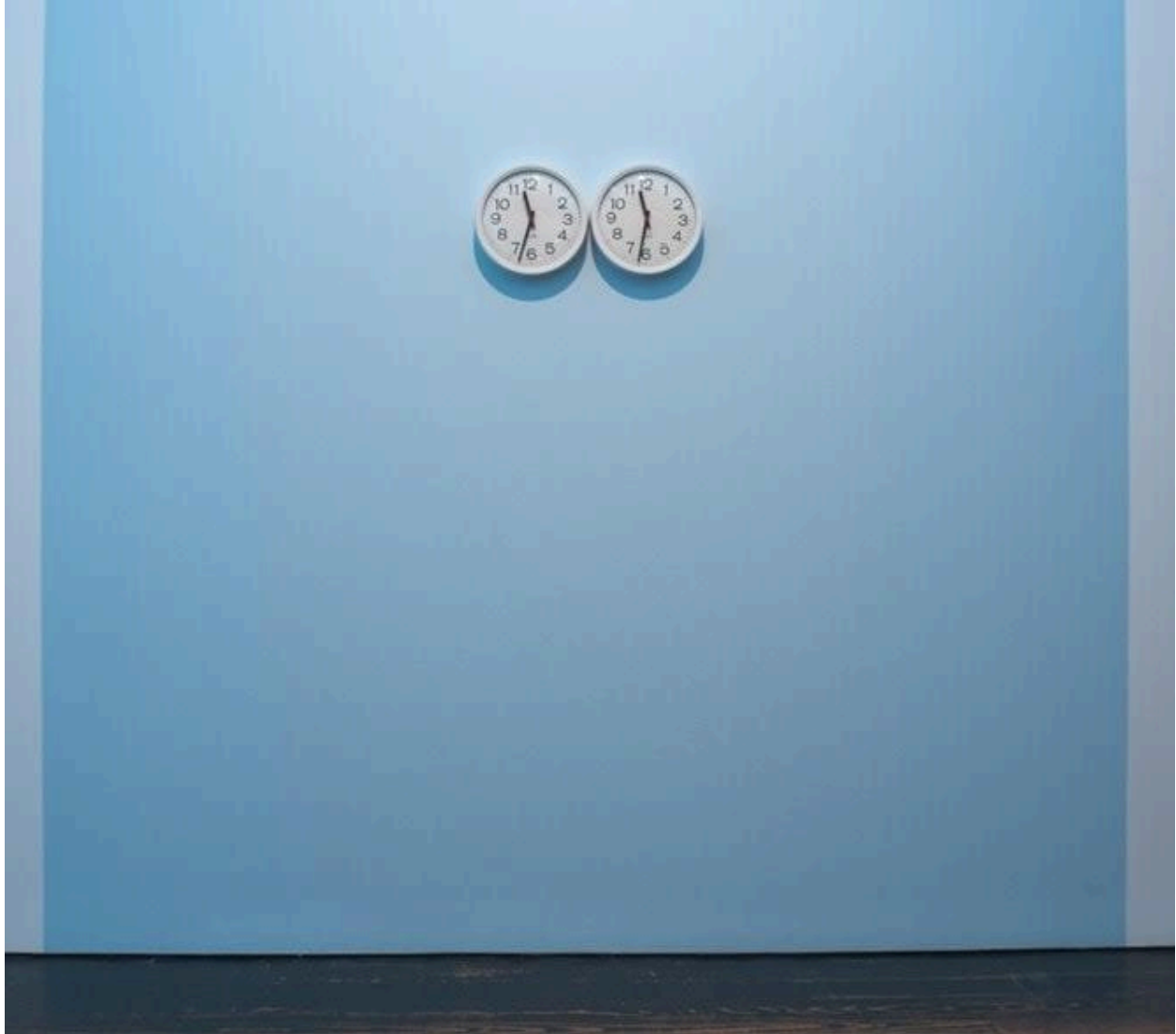
As Western power clings to dominance over the Global South, as marginalized communities are stripped of autonomy, and as the climate crisis rages on, my work persists as a poetic, emotional, and bodily response.

With this in mind, three artists have impacted and shaped my approach to art making as personal care to combat political strife.



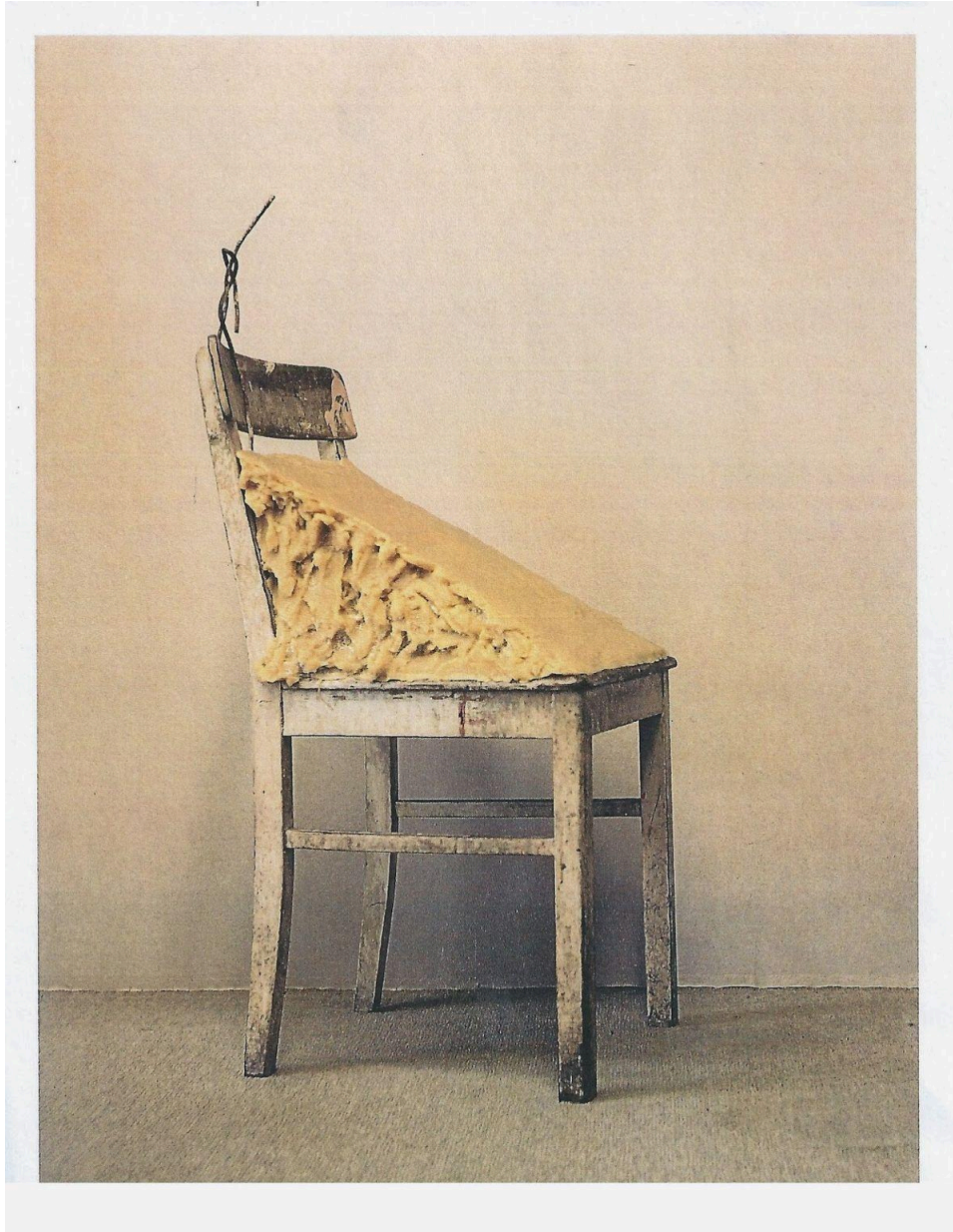
David Wojnarowicz, Untitled (Face in Dirt) 1992-1993.

As the AIDS crisis continued on without political support or acknowledgement towards the end of Wojnarowicz life, many lives were needlessly lost. Wojnarowicz's practice taught me how to apply my rage into poetics.



Félix González-Torres, "Untitled" (Perfect Lovers), 1991, Wall clocks and paint on wall, Two parts; ideally installed above head height, Overall dimensions vary with installation, Original clocks: 14 inches diameter each

Félix González-Torres created highly poignant pieces which walked the line between the deeply personal to the highly political. González-Torres aesthetically worked in a minimal manner but their work is emotionally profound. His practice showed me there can be emotional depth while working minimally.



Joseph Beuys, Fat Chair, 1964, objet trouve, wax, fat, wire, wooden chair, 94.5 x 41.6 cm

Joseph Beuys' work spanning from social practice to sculpture, taught me about mythic storytelling and how to be decisive and exact in choice of material in consideration of its history.

Working with icons and expectations

Narratives and associations are a driving force in how and why I select the materials I work with. The following section opens up personal narratives associated with the major themes prevalent in my practice.

1. Labor

A story:

At an early age my father started taking me to his job sites. On random mornings on the drive to school, he would pause and turn to me and ask, “do you have any tests today?” If I didn’t, he would let out a mischievous giggle and say, “ok let’s play hooky.” My father has been a general contractor for over thirty years and has been working in construction since he was a teenager. His work ranges from foundation work, hillside repair, to home renovation. Before we would speed off to Redondo Beach, we would make a couple stops at his various job sites. There I would see houses gutted, concrete piles in progress, stacks of raw materials everywhere. Seeing common and familiar places like a home in structural upheaval deeply impacted me. I began to wonder and question the inner workings of everything around me.

A relationship:

Now I approach the tools and materials found at construction sites as instruments and signifiers of labor.



continuous home repair, 2024, worklight, cement mixer, sand, extension cables, water, Capiz, dimensions variable

2. Performance

A story:

I was approached by a friend of a friend to play the lead role in their independent mumblecore film, *About Colonia*. I was hesitant to take the role as I was the only actor without professional training and I didn't want to disappoint the cast and crew who devoted their personal and professional lives to cinema. I ended up finding myself engrossed in a community that was there to match my hard effort and carry each other when we needed it. I worked tirelessly to memorize my lines and cues and my fellow cast members would guide me and answer my

constant questions. I feel fortunate that I made lifelong friends in the process and that we were nominated for and won numerous awards and were selected for festivals nationally and internationally. I believe in the making of that film, I intimately learned about the power of performance and I cherish that time deeply.

A relationship:

A major aspect of my practice is when all materials get assembled together. Like actors in a film, I function like a director. Selecting an actor for the skills and presence they already possess and utilizing such to build a complex multifaceted experience. As I enter a flow state and combine all the materials I am considering the materials as icons and playing with the associations and relationships formed between materials and objects.



Still from *demolishing walls* beach performance, 2025, site specific installation

RALPH
SALAZAR

ZAIDA
CORNIEL

FRANCIS
MATEO

ORIANA
LINEWEAVER

A FILM BY EDUARDO SHLOMO VELÁZQUEZ



ABOUT COLONIA

VERANDI FILMS IN ASSOCIATION WITH NARROWBOAT PRESENT ABOUT COLONIA STARRING RALPH SALAZAR ZAIDA CORNIEL FRANCIS MATEO ORIANA LINEWEAVER & MILDOR CHEVALIER DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY KIM XU FIRST AD LIANA WEEKS EDITOR DATIHA INC. COSTUME DESIGNER LAUREN KISCHEK SUPERVISING SOUND EDITOR MATT CHIARVALLE ORIGINAL MUSIC COMPOSED BY EDDIE VARGAS EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS JOSHUA DAVID BLUM & EDUARDO SHLOMO VELÁZQUEZ PRODUCED BY JOSHUA DAVID BLUM & EDUARDO SHLOMO VELÁZQUEZ WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY EDUARDO SHLOMO VELÁZQUEZ



3. readymades/found material

A story:

Like many artists, I began working with found material out of necessity. Prior, I had been working collaboratively with a friend of mine, Dalia Perez. We primarily created large paintings and collages working with oil, enamel, and gouache. I had acquired a certain taste for a class of materials that I was not able to afford on my own when she had to leave the country for an uncertain amount of time. During my routine walks around New York City at early dawn, my favorite walking hour, I felt drawn to the many and constant unmanned construction sites that are littered throughout. I began peering into them, longing for the abundance of material they housed. I noticed they aren't always fenced off. I began to pocket what I could carry. An oddly shaped brick here, a loose drill without a battery there. Soon enough I found myself working with the stolen material as I did with paint, creating gestural forms inquiring about precarity.

A relationship:

Readymades and found material exist in my work with a three tiered understanding. First, the objects provide an inherent functionality. Jackhammers are used for demolition, cement mixers are designed to mix, and windows are designed to provide both light and protection. Secondly, the objects bring association with symbolism and metaphor. In the history of art, windows have often been depicted as access points to discuss the relationship between an inner and outer world. Thirdly and most significantly, the objects selected have a history and relationship to labor. I am considering the past life of the found material, the context in which it was designed for, and potentially the labor involved in its creation or extraction.



Caspar David Friedrich, Right Window of the Artist's Studio, Sepia on Paper, 1805-1806



my island body, 2024, window, air mover, sandbags, emergency blanket, dimensions variable

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