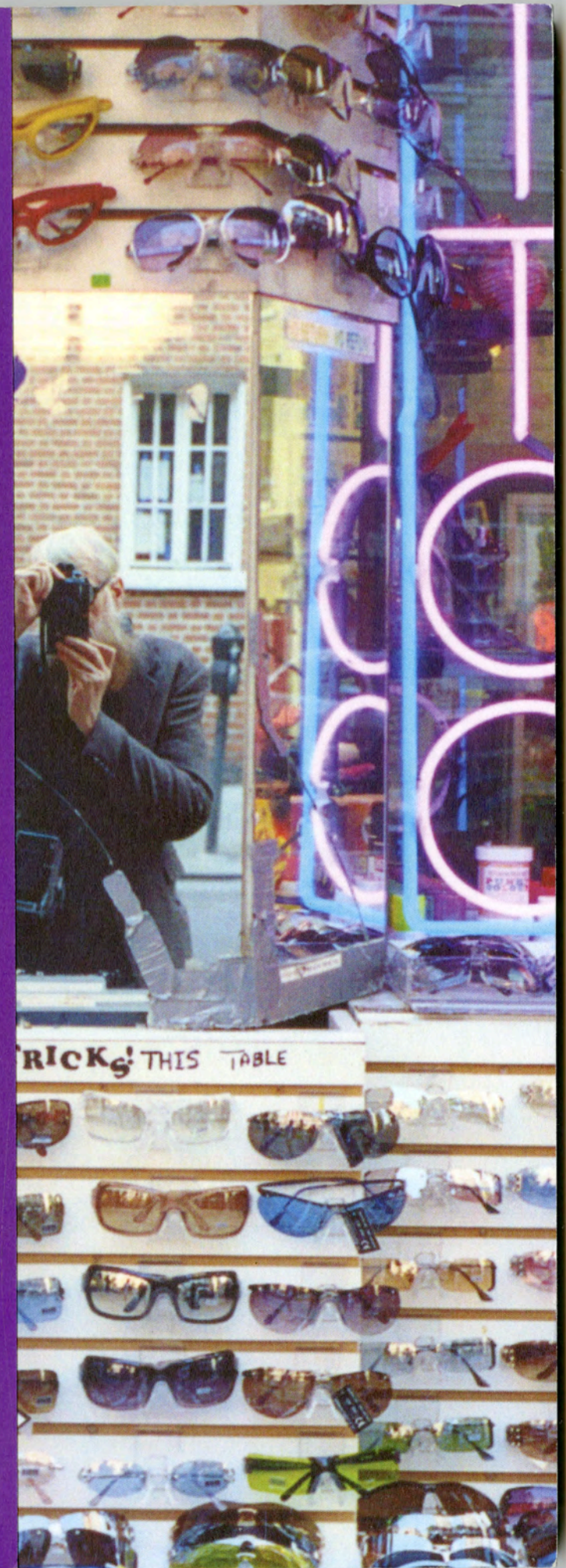


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ART

JOURNAL



Raw Powers

Lily Cox-Richard
Introduced by Karen Lemmey

June 27th 1827

Spots or blurs about an inch - shifting sometimes
all confused, then separating - sometimes undistinct
- but maps - then the fibres show all distinctly
They were of
numerous - and
discover the
probably there
in Robak's
nose

on May 1827
to my recollection
They were of
numerous - and
discover the
probably there
in Robak's
nose

see them after sun set
one blur predominates yet
color by its yellow rather whitish
all transparent - indeed these 3 months ago
bubble like 8 o'clock at night



seen a smaller one in
the left eye - very little of it
came before the right, but on the
vision it appears almost as extensive
as the other - June 11th 1828

Sometimes they are all
mass
able and undelineable
one clear spot
now about the same size
one disconnected
longest days disappear
I observed that I cannot
by considerable with the right
with the left. I can find no cause



FIRENZE - NAPOLI
G. BROGI

The first time I met Lily Cox-Richard she was meticulously measuring Hiram Powers's allegorical marble sculpture *California* (1850–55) at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. She was not after the idealized figure but rather the columnar support, carved to look like a cluster of quartz crystals. Back in her studio, she faithfully recreated this sculptural element in plaster (fig. 2), along with the vertical supports buttressing Powers's other figures, to create her series *The Stand* (Possessing Powers) (2010–14). Cox-Richard's reprise of these overlooked features investigates themes of ideal beauty, gender, and labor. Her exacting method of measuring is akin to tracing—one might say a form of haptic quoting—making her work less about appropriation than about shadowing, inhabiting, indeed *possessing* Powers.¹

For *Raw Powers*, Cox-Richard delved into the Archives of American Art, searching for instances when artists have similarly contemplated others' creative practices. The resulting work channels the voices of more than a dozen individuals, many of them women. Cox-Richard incorporates elements of their art, traces over their handwritten letters, and embellishes their archived objects, all while listening to their oral histories. Ideas of creation and destruction, body and spirit, run through *Raw Powers*. We see this in the artist's use of Powers's narrative accounts of spirit encounters, a photograph documenting the melting down of Bruce Nauman's original wax models, Mierle Laderman Ukeles's condolence letter to Nancy Holt on the passing of Holt's husband Robert Smithson, and the snapshot of "a body possessed" that Harmony Hammond sent to Lucy Lippard.

Cox-Richard is primarily a sculptor and even this flat collage is rich with textures. Rather than simply pasting pages together, she used caulk, which erupts at the seams like flowing wax or bronze, oozing out to suggest fluidity across distinct archival collections. Each page was built on a surface that is equal parts studio workbench and séance table. Felix Gonzalez-Torres's "Untitled" (*Republican Years*) (1992), comprised of a stack of sheets of white paper framed with the black border of mourning stationery, serves as common ground, while a cast of Cox-Richard's left hand suggests a table around which a polyphonic chorus of artists (some still living) speak of premonitions, apparitions, and making, remaking, and sometimes even destroying art. *Raw Powers* is indeed raw, for Cox-Richard chose words and images that take us back to the studios and foundries where things are made, places of both fragility and empowerment. Viewers will discover, for instance, snapshots from the Art Foundry in Santa Fe, New Mexico, a magical crucible for experiment.² Kiki Smith once confessed to Chuck Close, "You can go there

fig. 1 (previous)
Giacomo Brogi, cabinet card depicting Hiram Powers death mask, ca. 1888 (original death mask in the collection of the Smithsonian American Art Museum); and Hiram Powers, illustrated notes concerning the artist's visions, June 11, 1825, June 27, 1827, and August 13, 1927. Hiram Powers Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

fig. 2 (opposite)
Lily Cox-Richard, *The Stand: California* (2013, plaster, 70 x 28 x 21 in.) in process in the artist's Washington, DC, studio in 2012. © Lily Cox-Richard. Photograph by the artist.



and make secret art and nobody knows what you're doing," to which Close added, "Like going to an arts and crafts camp."³ Cox-Richard's selections afford us glimpses into private moments and conversations, often between artists. These are far from the outward-facing communications that dominate the art world, the polished statements and glossy photos carefully prepared for vernissage.

Cox-Richard collapses and "reclaims" time (as she says on the final page of her contribution) by finding common cause among artists across centuries. Perhaps best described by the artist herself, *Raw Powers* is "a mash-up of histories and legacies, and a potentially haunted site of (re)creation. As a printed document—a journal laid open on a table—it becomes a portal to another workspace."⁴

KAREN LEMMEY is curator of sculpture at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, where she organized the exhibition *Measured Perfection: Hiram Powers' Greek Slave* (2015–2017).

Notes

1 Cox-Richard describes the project as "a kind of reenactment" in "Alex Potts in Conversation with Lily Cox-Richard: *The Stand* (Possessing Powers)," *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 15, no. 2 (Summer 2016), <http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/summer16/potts-in-conversation-with-lily-cox-richard-the-stand-possessing-powers>. See also Nicholas Hartigan and Joan Kee, "Lily Cox-Richard: On the Powers of Taking a Stand," *Art Journal* 72, no. 4 (Winter 2013): 78–83.

2 See Jason Stieber, "Art Foundry and Art Foundry Editions Records," *Archives of American Art Journal* 54, no. 2 (Fall 2015): 86–89.

3 Chuck Close, "Interview with Kiki Smith," *Bomb* 49 (Fall 1994): 38–45, <https://bombmagazine.org/articles/kiki-smith-1/>.

4 Artist statement sent to the author, March 7, 2017.





Reclaiming my time

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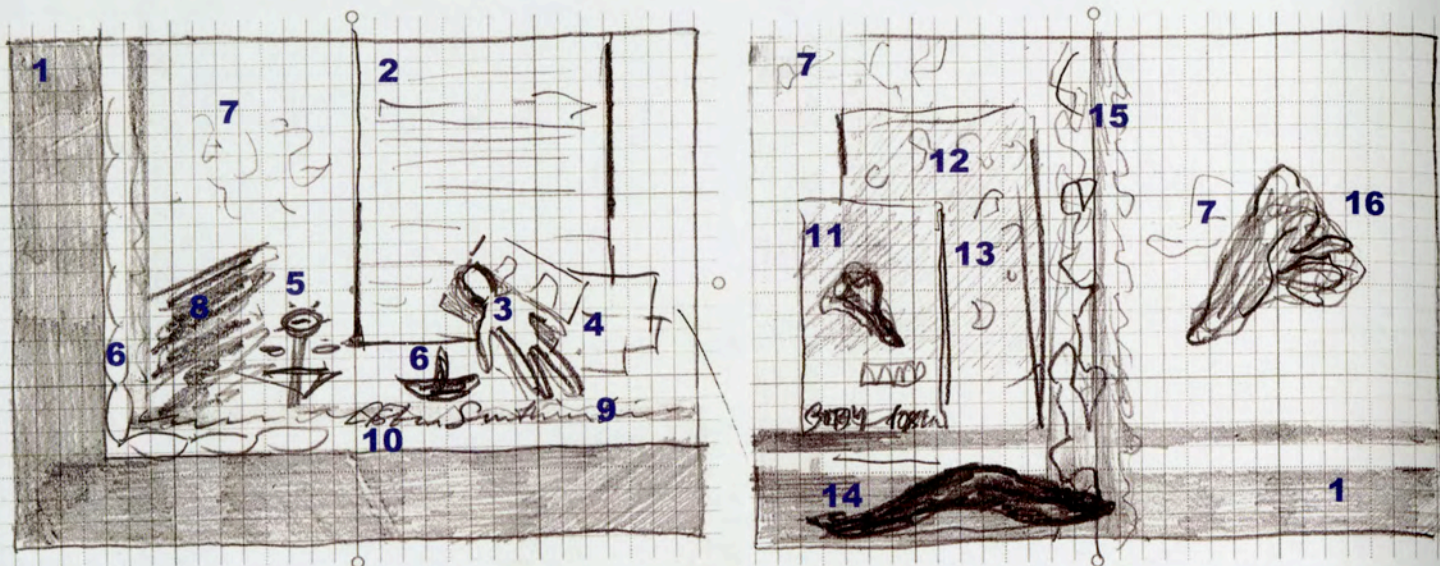
Reclaiming my time

Reclaiming my time

Reclaiming my time

Reclaiming my time

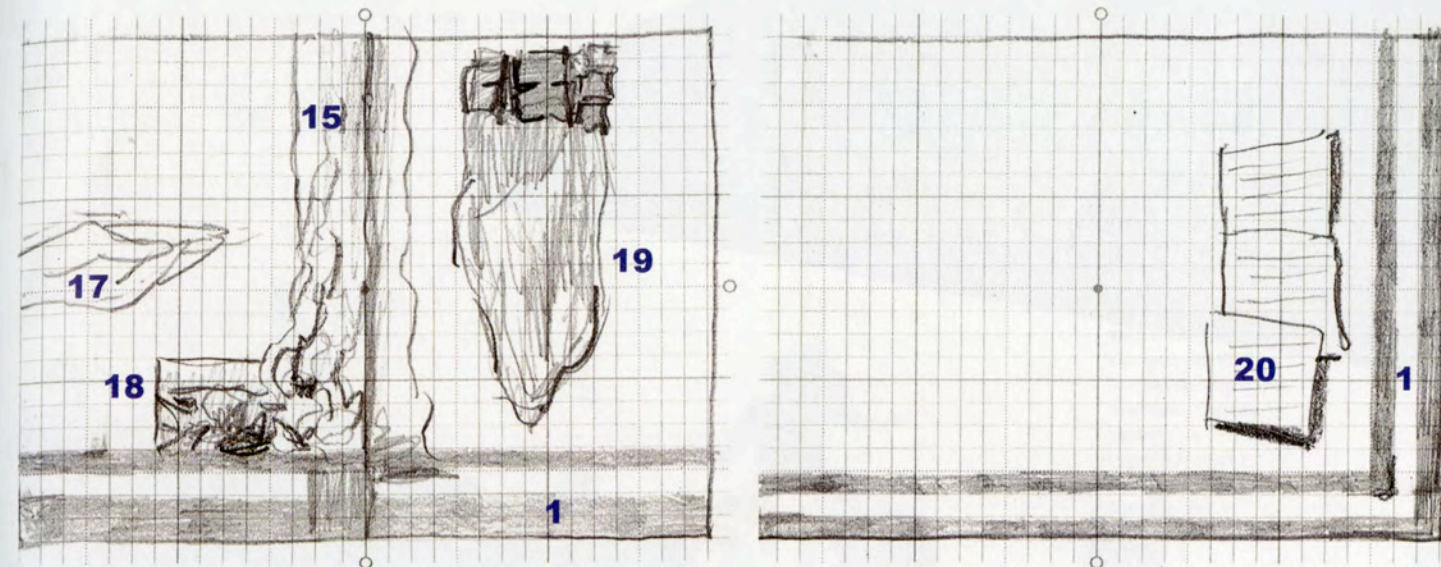
Reclaiming my time



Key

Unless noted otherwise, the artists' papers, gallery records, and oral histories cited below are held by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

- 1 Work surface: printed papers from Felix Gonzalez-Torres's "Untitled" (*Republican Years*) (1992), taken from the exhibition *Felix Gonzalez-Torres*, David Zwirner, New York, April 27–July 14, 2017. Understood as a cenotaph for victims of the AIDS epidemic and a foreshadowing of the artist's own death in 1996, this work continues to echo as memorial and witness.
- 2 Traced handwriting: letter from Hiram Powers to his cousin John P. Richardson concerning premonitions and spirit encounters, December 14, 1853, Hiram Powers Papers.
- 3 Maquettes of Elaine Sturtevant's *Gober Partially Buried Sinks* (1997) and *Hate Kill Falsity* (2006) from the exhibition *Raw Power*, Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, Paris, March 3–April 7, 2007.
- 4 Notes made while listening to oral history interviews with Amy Bess Miller, July 10, 1985; Nancy Holt, July 6, 1992; and Elaine Sturtevant, July 25–26, 2007.
- 5 Drawings of "Sayings of the Prophetesses Anna, Miriam, and Deborah" (Shaker spirit messages), 1843, The New York Public Library Digital Collections.
- 6 Drawings of a "witch ring." David's friends told him not to wear it because it didn't suit him. He thinks it's magic so he doesn't want it to fall into the wrong hands. He gave it to me in Richmond, Virginia, on July 28, 2017. I haven't seen him since.
- 7 Drawings of Hiram Powers's sketches of visions (possibly eye floaters), June 27, 1827, June 29, 1827, and June 11, 1828, Hiram Powers Papers.
- 8 Maquette of Una Hanbury's *Flight* (work in progress) at the Art Foundry, Santa Fe, New Mexico, December 1980, Art Foundry and Art Foundry Editions Records.
- 9 Traced handwriting: condolence letter from Mierle Laderman Ukeles to Nancy Holt, July 24, 1973, Robert Smithson and Nancy Holt Papers.
- 10 Clay tool from my studio.



- 11 Photograph of "A body possessed," included with a letter from Harmony Hammond to Lucy Lippard, Lucy R. Lippard Papers. Caption on verso: H. Hammond, *Studio in Progress*, 1991, Galisteo, New Mexico.
- 12 Maquettes made while listening to an oral history interview with Amy Bess Miller, July 10, 1985.
- 13 Photograph of Kiki Smith's *Untitled (Roses)* (work in progress) at the Art Foundry, Santa Fe, New Mexico, January 1995, Art Foundry and Art Foundry Editions Records.
- 14 Reclaimed copper: electrical wire offcuts bundled by workers, found in a Philadelphia scrapyard, August 2016.
- 15 Impressions of caulk used by roofers to repair an 1898 Odd Fellows Lodge in Corsicana, Texas, where I was an artist in residence March–April 2017.
- 16 Inked rubber mold, cast from a natural growth I found in markets during my residency at Yvonne in Guatemala City, and used to make monoprints for my site-specific installation *If Not An Hongo/Si no es un mushroom* (2017). The woody tumor grows in response to parasitic mistletoe: a biological act of resistance.
- 17 My left hand cast in plaster.
- 18 Photograph of original Bruce Nauman waxes being destroyed by melting them down at the Art Foundry, Santa Fe, New Mexico, October 11, 1994, Art Foundry and Art Foundry Editions Records.
- 19 Maquette of a Beverly Buchanan sculpture pictured on an undated holiday card from Buchanan to Lucy Lippard, Lucy R. Lippard Papers, reimagined by me as an iceberg.
- 20 "Reclaiming my time." This phrase was spoken fifteen times by Rep. Maxine Waters (D-CA) as she pressed Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin to answer her questions regarding President Donald J. Trump's finances during a House Financial Services Committee hearing, July 27, 2017.

LILY COX-RICHARD is an assistant professor at Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts. Her work engages the cultural and material histories of vernacular forms and systems. Cox-Richards' series of carved plaster sculptures, *The Stand (Possessing Powers)* (2010–14), deals with sculptural traditions, American history, gender, and form by focusing on the work of Hiram Powers (1805–1873).