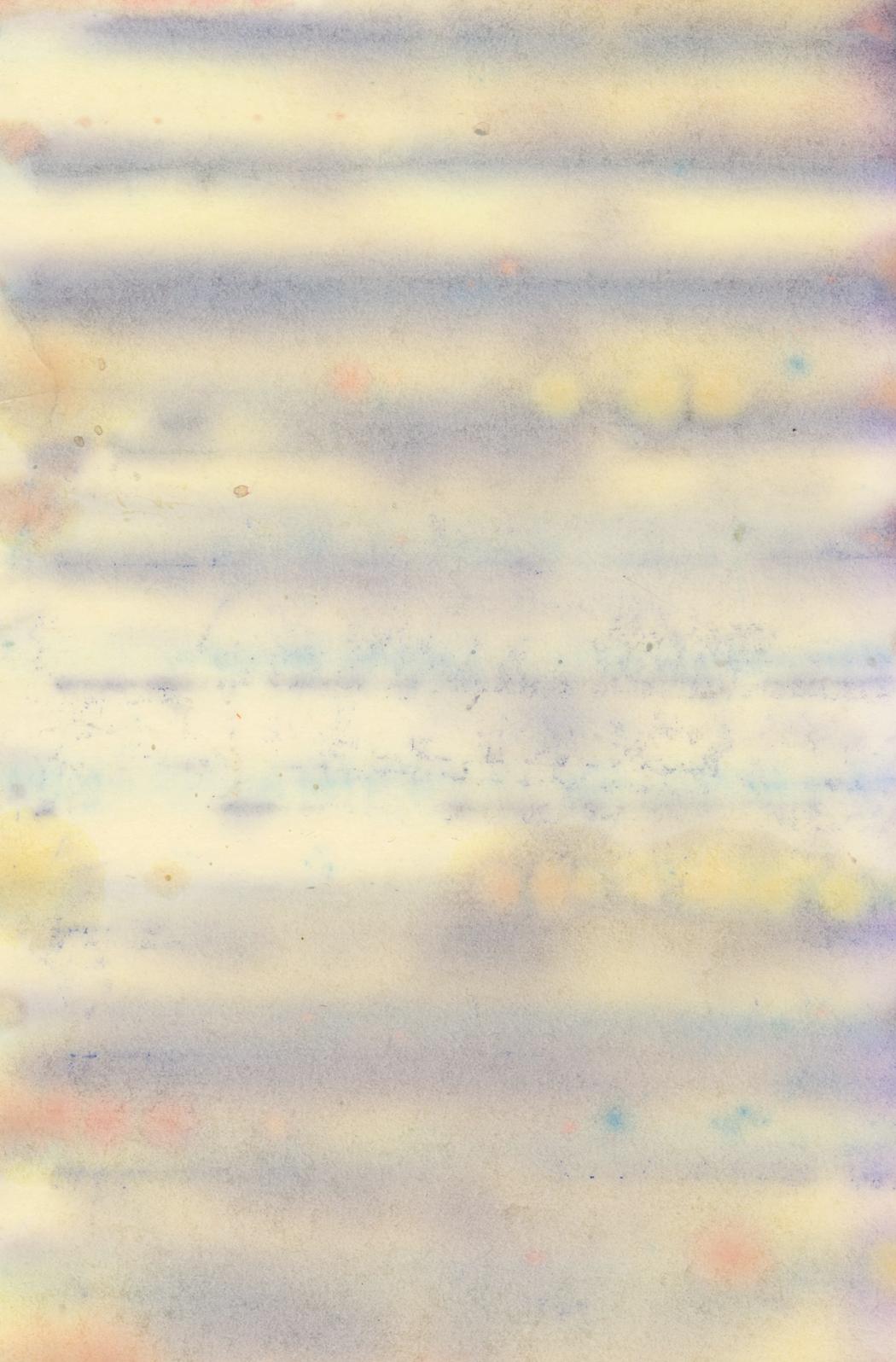




LilyCox-
Richard
Weep
Holes



**Lily Cox-
Richard
Weep
Holes**

MASS MoCA



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Fingerprints

Working with wire and concrete made holes in my gloves, and the cement worked its way into small cuts in my fingers that grew into craters overnight. In the morning, I soaked my hands in vinegar to neutralize the reaction. Daily fingerprints document my skin as it healed.

Spore Prints

Pleurotus ostreatus (oyster mushroom) spore prints, affected by the air currents and a roof leak in my studio, insect and larvae trails, paw prints on paper.

Video Prints

Five-minute buddy movie, made in collaboration with Sharad Kant Patel: On a quiet day at the Revolution Recovery Center, a bale of tinsel longing to fly is befriended by a drone chandelier in need of rest.

Candle Prints

Divine Magic & Novelties in Richmond, VA displays candles in the boxes they are shipped in. Scrap papers are packed in between each layer, and become stained with candle sweat. Mr. Woo doesn't throw them away, so they accumulate in a tidy stack at the end of the shelf. Thank you, Woo.

— Lily Cox-Richard

Weaving and Unweaving the World: Lily Cox-Richard's Weep Holes

DENISE MARKONISH

"Magic is an art of changing trajectories, of weaving fate into a form that works for us—a form that works with us."

— Aidan Wachter¹

What does it mean to weave our own fate, to manifest how we want to see the world? Does this literally involve mending materials together to assemble a new whole? These acts of reconstruction, tenderness, and care lie at the heart of Lily Cox-Richard's work. Since 2015 she has been contending with threat and care in her projects, most often in the form of sculptures as aggregates, projects that build upon each other like stones gathering moss. Aggregates are crafted by compacting various materials into a whole, like asphalt. The result is that stones and a binder merge, yet, when viewing a cross section, it is clear that all the parts still retain their individuality. In many ways, aggregate is a way of looking at how society can function when working at its best. This concept is particularly poignant to Cox-Richard at a time when the world seems to be increasingly polarized, and, for her, it becomes a way of trying to mend a future.



In 2015, Cox-Richard participated in the Recycled Artist in Residence (RAIR) program, located on a three-acre site in Philadelphia where 400 tons of material that have been diverted from landfills are processed on a daily basis. There, the artist closely watched materials move through the system—getting sorted, shredded, and compacted—emerging as new aggregates of their own. There she began thinking about scrap copper—as both discard and source of value. Following that, in 2016, she produced the exhibition *Salv.* at Artpace in San Antonio, Texas. This project merged multiple narratives, including the theft of Cox-Richard’s catalytic converter for scrap, the theft of copper for resale, and the story of Bobby Wayne Caughorn, who in 1985 lost control of his asphalt truck in Texas’ Big Bend Ranch State Park. Following the death of Caughorn and his passenger, Michael S. Mayfield, insurance settlements were calculated on the lives of the men.² Together, these stories ask us to reckon with the value of things.

Salv. contained three sculptural bales of #2 scrap copper, from Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Texas. Each sat on a custom-designed platform, referencing both industrial pallets and the minimalist sculpture of the 1960s. At the same time, Cox-Richard questioned the predominantly male art canon, in particular artists such as Robert Smithson³ or Carl Andre. Instead, she created minimalist forms that are aggregates, whose binding materials are stewardship, feminism, and care. In 2016, Cox-Richard described this process, stating: “I’ve been wondering about how the contours of landscape—their density or use—affect our relationship to natural resources, labor, and time. The possibility for certain goods to be indexed to a commodities market makes determining the value of things like life, labor, and love feel all the more impossible. During this fall’s hot mix of queasy politics, I felt solidarity in crafting meaning with remnants—dirt, rubble, bodily fluids—and claiming space for the details and scraps.”⁴



Lily Cox-Richard, *Old Copper Futures: 951 lbs. of #2 scrap copper from Revolution Recovery, New Castle, DE*, 2016. From the exhibition *Lily Cox-Richard: Salv.* Copper, concrete, blanket. 42 × 26 × 39 inches. Photo by Adam Schreiber

Cox-Richard continued thinking about the fate of objects during the 2016 presidential election and subsequent administration. *Salv.*, which opened just days after the election, addressed how notions of care, stewardship, and feminism were all dangerously in peril. Cox-Richard persistently pondered the notion of stewardship and how we can mend the damage done, while responsibly getting to a future in which care can take center stage. Now, in 2022, her new work has been completed against a whole new backdrop of conditions that are ever changing, from the tension around the 2020 election to the divided politics of America, the continual violence against BIPOC communities, a global pandemic, and the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The 2016 invitation for Cox-Richard to exhibit at MASS MoCA was a beacon for the artist, who, upon hearing the show would be mounted in 2021⁵, stated that “we’ll have a new



president by then,” but also added that while it felt good to be planning for that future, “first we have to get there, to the mess on the other side.”⁶ Despite the election results—or perhaps because of the events around the election—we know more than ever how badly we are still in need of care. To that end, Cox-Richard weaves together the possibility of willing a new future into being, one where tenderness can be a form of political action and resistance.

The result of this trajectory is the exhibition *Weep Holes*, which weaves together new forms that hold the potential to change ideas through matter transmuted. The phrase “weep hole” is visceral, conjuring a repository for collective sorrow, and the vulnerability of our bodies. In reality, the phrase is a construction term for the holes placed in buildings, in particular in masonry, which allow the façade to breathe and water to escape safely. This alleviation of pressure, both materially and metaphorically, is the starting point for Cox-Richard’s new works, as is the mess on the other side (of life, of politics, of destruction), and what it may look like or grow into. Cox-Richard began conceptualizing her exhibition by posing a series of questions to herself: “How do we get to the future and do so while taking care of one another; how do we mend the damage that is already done; and what are the tools needed for this dismantling?”

This questioning began when Cox-Richard was at RAIR and saw a 1,200-pound bale of tinsel in the backyard, an object that has not escaped her imagination since. She was taken by its continual transformation—it would be rendered nearly invisible when covered in dirt and then, after a cleansing rain, would sparkle once again. It is reminiscent of the Charles Dickens character, Miss Havisham, from *Great Expectations*, who spends her whole life wearing the wedding dress she was once jilted in, until it becomes the tattered remains of hope, yet with hints of beauty lying beneath the ruins. Of the first glimpse of her, Dickens writes: “But, I saw that everything within my view which ought to be white, had been white long ago, and had lost

its luster, and was faded and yellow”⁷ The bale, much like the form of the copper bales in *Salv.*, becomes a beacon of how to find hope amidst the pile of hopelessness—the sparkle under the grime—and it makes appearances throughout the exhibition like Virgil to our Dante, transcending the ruins of its Dickensian forbearer.

Throughout the exhibition, the works on view shift in scale and play off the existing architecture, while making the presence/absence of the viewer’s body palpable in relationship to the objects present. This expanding and contracting of scale begins in the smaller front galleries. In this space, we see materials pushing against the architecture of MASS MoCA’s old mill buildings. A series of sandbags, usually utilized to help abate floodwater, becomes a wall bursting forth with sandcastles made by dribbling wet sand rather than molding it into shape; and a series of columns becomes the site for weavings of decommissioned fire hoses, drawing together the forms to create new architecture. Half of the columns are additive, and some



Tinsel bale, RAIR Philadelphia, PA, 2018. Photo by Sharad Kant Patel



are held up with capitals sculpted to look like five-gallon buckets with mushrooms growing from their sides, like Corinthian columns. Behind these permeable barriers is a series of prints made from scans of papers once used to separate candles packed in boxes for shipping. The wax and dyes of the candles stained the paper, resulting in soft seepages that vibrate and dissolve before our eyes.

All of these works mend and tie together disparate materials to create new forms and connections, while elevating the residue of daily life. The notion of mending is key to these pieces; you can see the patches in sculptures, the marks from temporary walls removed but still ghosting on the floor, or the remains of ash from rituals. In Cox-Richard's hands these subtle clues and purposeful materials become like spells, conjuring the benevolent witchy magic of collective repair. The sculpture's aggregate nature and inability to be



Lily Cox-Richard, *Sculptures the Size of Hailstones*, 2018. From the exhibition *Lily Cox-Richard: Sculptures the Size of Hailstones*. Gypsum cement, concrete, found materials, mixed media. Photo by Sharad Kant Patel

easily categorized reference the notion of willfulness as discussed by writer Sara Ahmed in her blog *Feminist Killjoys*. She states: “Willful stones do not stay in the right place . . . they move around. That their movement begins with dissatisfaction tells us something . . . when the stones do not stay in place, they bring our walls down. Willful stones would be those that bring the walls down.”⁸ This willfulness and the scattering of objects and ideas as stones is central to Cox-Richard's exploration of sculpture as aggregate—casts of objects mixed with plaster and other materials to create a new kind of building material, one now woven together.

Willfulness was also evident in Cox-Richard's *Sculptures the Size of Hailstones* (2018) at the Old Jail Art Center in Albany, Texas. For this exhibition, she began with the “hail scale,” or how we determine the size of hail in relationship to known objects like golf balls, softballs, walnuts, or teacups. Cox-Richard notes that what may be large for hail is relatively small for sculpture, so she built an oversize pedestal into the architecture of the gallery and placed divots in it that would hold small sculptures—again with the aggregate whole becoming larger than the sum of its parts. Alongside the “hailstones” Cox-Richard embellished a series of antique lightning rods—impotent indoors, but still retaining the energy of the outside world. One is reminded yet again of Ahmed, who writes: “Perhaps stones are willing inasmuch as what they do not let us do; in how they resist our intentions. They can be checking powers; reminders that the world is not waiting to receive our shape.”⁹

Just like the hailstones, *Weep Holes* functions like a breadcrumb trail, with the works in the front galleries leading us—as if through a path in the woods—to the final gallery, which is divided into two parts. A series of starburst-shaped sculptures, made from tomato plant cages woven with the invasive vine kudzu, exist in both the front and back spaces, like constellations or thrown toy jacks connecting the rooms. Next, we encounter a two-story high hand-tied



broom so huge it becomes architecture, or grows out of the existing building materials—something sprung forth from the weep holes. The broom serves as a metaphor for all we need to sweep up. Additionally, for Cox-Richard these materials aren't discarded; they are reconfigured, rewoven into new forms. Even the broom itself is a recasting of materials, made from backer rod, a material consisting of small strips of foam used to back joints and help control the amount of sealant used in construction, functioning similarly to weep holes. The material is the same foam also used in floating "pool noodles." Cox-Richard worked with a zero-waste company, Nomaco,¹⁰ which both fabricates the product and melts down and recycles the waste. The material for the broom will be recycled yet again after the exhibition.

The inspiration for the broom also comes from the history of broom-making itself. In his article "How the Broom Became Flat," J. Bryan Lowder states that "before the 19th century, broom-making was an idiosyncratic art; most were fashioned at home from whatever materials were at hand. The basic design involved binding the sweeping bundle to a wooden stick with rope or linen twine."¹¹ In Western culture, it was the Shakers who later transformed the broom into a bundled handle radiating into a flat-shaped whisk, creating a more efficient cleaning tool. The Shakers, a radical spiritual community, were formed in England in 1747, coming to the United States and settling in Albany, New York, in 1776, before establishing the community in New Lebanon, New York (about an hour from MASS MoCA) in 1782. They are a unique utopian society that practices celibacy, but also encourages equality between the sexes; they believe in frugality, hard work, feminism, and pacifism, and abide by the adage, "Put your hands to work and give your hearts to God." Cox-Richard's broom uses the frugality of recycling as it sits in the gallery—we can even see the trace of its efforts to sweep up in gestures across the floor, before observing that a doorway has opened up, as if the broom has broken through the walls.



Lily Cox-Richard's studio, Richmond, VA, 2020. Photo by Sharad Kant Patel

Just as *Salv.* made reference to the history of minimalist sculpture, so too does *Weep Holes*. For, along with the kudzu sculptures, the broom is also accompanied by a series of handcrafted firepits. The summer prior to her exhibition opening, Cox-Richard made the firepits from concrete (most using casts of basket interiors that exist both throughout her body of work and in *Weep Holes*, serving as punctuation points in the exhibition). These sixty-plus objects were distributed to friends and collaborators to use for warmth, for ritual, and, for this author, as a watering hole for birds and squirrels. Cox-Richard then reconvened the firepits; having generously given the gifts, she asked to borrow them back before returning them to their forever yards at the end of the exhibition. After making and distributing these pieces, Cox-Richard remembered seeing an untitled Donald Judd work from 1977 installed in Münster, Germany, for which he created two concrete concentric rings.¹² The form in Judd's installation references the sloping park around a lake as each ring sits slightly askew to the other, and it has become a gathering space, much like huddling





Detail of the firepit after use. Photo by Lily Cox-Richard

around a firepit. Once again, Cox-Richard humanizes the austerity of minimalism by placing the firepits in two piles, as if swept to the corner by the broom. But the firepits here literally hum with a soundtrack of cat purrs, created by collaborator Michael Jevon Demps, resulting in a rumbling comfort permeating the room.

Uniting the elements in the large gallery is a drone that swings across the ceiling. The first appearance of this curious object is in the form of a video of it interacting with the tinsel bale, made collaboratively by Cox-Richard and Sharad Kant Patel—the drone holding the desire to sparkle and rest, and the bale harboring the urge to fly. Just as the tinsel no longer adorns a Christmas tree, this is not your ordinary drone; instead, it has a new vocation, which is to produce rainbows. The drone is embellished with crystals, turning it into a drone carrying a chandelier—shifting what was once a stealth object

into a producer of prisms, as evidenced by its kaleidoscopic projections around a window in the gallery. In the video, both the drone and the bale glint as they catch the sun, two new friends forging a path forward from their intended fate. And finally, at the back of the gallery, through the doorway cutout that resembles the shape of the broom sculpture while also functioning like a drawn-back curtain, the tinsel bale itself sits on a platform that seemingly hovers above the floor, resolute in its objecthood and gleaming like a sentinel of the future, a future we can all weave together.

Feminist theorist Audre Lorde states that “the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.”¹³ This signaling for change is Cox-Richard’s call to arms: arms that embrace, take care of each other, and can take down the houses they did not build. These stones become the tools; they are not for throwing, but instead aggregate to build a new future from their fallen past. In the artist’s hands, these stones betray their lithic nature, instead becoming pliable, weaving together a new fate as if by magic. In the end, Cox-Richard acknowledges the collective effort toward resistance, channeling Katie West, who writes: “I see you, I know you’re tired. I know the world is a hard place to navigate. And you are right to have hoped it would’ve been, if not easier, at least better by now. Instead you’re left waiting (for equal rights, for gender to be recognized as a spectrum, for reconciliation, for self-acceptance, for the right to choose, for the patriarchy to burn, for universal health care, for access, for it not to be audacious to demand decency and kindness). I see you. And I’m glad you’re still here. Still struggling, resisting, fighting, yearning for all the above and more. And I want you to know, like so many witches already know, that you’re powerful. Find your rituals, find your power, find your reason. Become dangerous.”¹⁴





Recording cat purrs with foster kitten Shea, Lily Cox-Richard's studio, Richmond, VA 2021
Photo by Lily Cox-Richard

ENDNOTES

1. Aidan Wachter, *Weaving Fate: Hypersigils, Changing the Past & Telling True Lies* (Red Temple Press, 2020), p. 19.
2. Caughorn's truck had suffered a broken axle. A jury found American Petrofina negligent in the death of the passenger, Mayfield, and awarded \$879,700 to his mother. No information was provided by Cox-Richard on compensation for Caughorn. The artist saw the crumpled trailer still lodged in the steep side of a rocky ravine in 2016. See www.lilycoxrichard.com/texts/#Markonish.
3. Smithson's *Asphalt Rundown* (1969) serves as a footnote to Cox-Richard's work in reference to Caughorn's asphalt truck.
4. <https://artpace.org/exhibitions/salv/>.
5. The exhibition was originally set to open in March 2021, but the Covid-19 pandemic postponed it for a year.
6. From Cox-Richard's email to the author April 3, 2018.
7. Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations* (London, 1861; New York: Race Point Publishing, 2016), p. 56.
8. <https://feministkilljoys.com/2016/01/29/willful-stones/>.
9. Ibid.
10. www.nomaco.com/.
11. <https://slate.com/human-interest/2012/06/broom-history-how-it-became-flat.html>.
12. Cox-Richard was reminded of the Judd work in a conversation with Mike Bianco, who is a friend of the artist and currently lives in Australia. Due to this distance he couldn't receive a firepit, but contributed to important conversations about the project over its development.
13. Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House" (1983), in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, ed. Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (New York: Kitchen Table Press, 1981), pp. 94-101.
14. Katie West, "Introduction," in *Becoming Dangerous: Witchy Femmes, Queer Conjurers, and Magical Rebels*, ed. Katie West and Jasmine Elliott (Newburyport: Weiser Books, 2018), p. xvii.













Continuation

PATRICIA KAISHIAN

When thinking of the first shudder of biomolecular fusion and subsequent transcription into lineage, we consider vibration and continuity to be definitionally life. Life being a vibration, a tremble, directed only toward continuity itself. Later, these vitalities mingle, and somehow abounding randomness is both refracted and absorbed. No longer a pure entropic state, but the stage for the first relation. A passing vibration, the first perception. What co-relational information is translated and transcribed becomes enclosed in a membrane, offering discretion and a semblance of order amidst otherwise infinite randomness. Information streams cytoplasmically, endlessly, multiplying; a family emerges.

In the relational space—the relief of the membranes—forms a parallel body. Here, vital exchanges congeal on the palms of perception. In these exchanges, each membranous tremble is reciprocal, gaseous, a carbon atom shared here, a nitrogen atom shared there. Complexity builds for greater perception. Bonds between membranes become more stable, less glancing, and a cellular language pours into the slipstream. The parallel body is an elixir of new language, swollen with vital gasps and whispers. Differentiation exists here, too. Water, fire, earth, wind: amoeboid vesicles of vitality.



Each shuddering with the babble of membranes; a respite from the expansive stretch of a disordered cosmos.

Increasing complexity makes continuation more concerted. Death becomes more dramatic. Networks, whole families, stutter and blink shut. Palaces of molecules and memory collapse. Pain is born. A panic is scribbled into code and shared widely; pain becomes enmeshed in complexity. Inseparable. But still no desperation takes hold. Death is not the opposite of continuity, rather a component structure. A concession to a bounded universe that has been dynamically generous. Pain gives thanks, ensures continuity, temporary avoidance of death, allowing membranes enough time to repackage their dance into a new generation.

Eventually, complexity builds consciousness, or the phenomenon of choice. Sputtering assessments traveling like lightning through cells; calculating the sum of relational vibrations.

In this newfound pluralism, schisms can form in a singular body, creating multiple simultaneous realities in one. A fungus may choose to offer more phosphorus to one partner tree than the other; a kingfisher selects her mate. It is here, in the wake of awareness, that the fuzzy dimensions of value take shape. Agreements are etched into bodies.

Transmissions from the mysterious before can slither through genomes, and burst forth when called upon by a parallel body, like a salamander emerging from soil in the first warm spring rain, called forth to the same vernal pool visited by her grandmother. Histories are sung breathily into membranes and passed tenderly like embers in a tinder conk. These stories can be read as assurances; manuals for when to persevere, and when to decompose, and when to send a soft probe for nourishment into the mucosal pockets of the night.

Choice may have emerged as a response to pain; an attempt to decouple complexity from suffering. It is clear to say that this did not succeed, and the outcome was euphoria. But maybe it could be argued that euphoria is the most ancestral state, and pain is derived. By default, all organisms are suspended in euphoric vitality—the broth of the primordial soup was resonant cellular pleasure. Only in an absence of euphoria is pain, and pain is only legible through the context of choice, which in turn emerged as a way to heighten the perception of pleasure.

In any case, we are here. What comes from this babbling continuity is never alone. Pain is your planetary location, triangulated with vitality and euphoria. Only in constructing a familial denial will decomposition be seen as antagonism, will pulsing primordia look flat, muted, numb. Only in constructing this aching schism will you see yourself alone, with all that hums beside you mere units to be mined. A fabricated position atop a hierarchy of delusion.

Instead, you should know that our consciousness moves like a stone skipped across the wimpled belly of a lake. Each ripple a neighborhood, a body of gifts. Our thoughts are boulders plunked in soft earth by glacial retreat, each forming a new-millipede-center-of-the-universe. We are a family of cells making sense of laughter, a watery collection of tireless vitality. We are a long-tongued bee lost in legume and clover and a blanketing dayscape of small biotic collisions. We are a newt-filled dawn and a mud flat packed with clams. We are a split gill with twenty thousand sexes; a termite queen basking in adulation.

Knowing this will always protect you.











Interview with Lily Cox-Richard, Billy Dufala, and Christophe Theunissen

SARAH MARGOLIS-PINEO

*“To use the world well, to be able to stop wasting it
and our time in it, we need to relearn our being in it.”*

— Ursula K. Le Guin¹

When did the idea of “the end of the world” stop referring to the future? For millennia, humanity has been propelled by the possibility of what might happen next. We are a hopeful and resilient species, surviving plagues, natural disasters, and the decimations of war, even when it seemed that civilization could endure no more. Somehow, babies were born, communities were rebuilt, art was created, and tinsel continued to festoon our celebrations.

Today, amid catastrophic climate change, many find it more hopeful to look toward the past; unable to confront the reality of what climate scientists tell us, we are trans-apocalyptic. Global warming represents such an extreme, utter collapse of the world as we know it that our awareness of the present is getting away from us—it’s too terrifying to let in. Lily Cox-Richard might say that we are



lost in time. Her installation, *Weep Holes*, collapses future and past, reimagining an alternative present that, perhaps, is playing out alongside us now—imperceptible, yet coexistent.

Comprised of overlooked materials that were foraged, found, and upcycled from industrial waste streams, Cox-Richard's dystopian landscape finds beauty and absurdity in what could oppress, demoralize, and render us hopeless. Instead, she sounds a thunderous call to action (queue the purring cats!). Something is deeply wrong in our here, but in Cox-Richard's here networks of care and responsible stewardship are tools for a more compassionate reality to emerge. Her monumental hand-tied broom, inspired by the Shakers, is a nod to the capacity to build worlds, not just destroy them. The sculpture is a collaboration between Cox-Richard, Billy Dufala, and Christophe Theunissen, who reunited on Tuesday, February 1, 2022, for this conversation on the climate crisis and the capacity for art to challenge our perceptions of waste.

SARAH MARGOLIS-PINEO

How did the three of you become collaborators?

BILLY DUFALA

I first worked with Lily in 2016 at Recycled Artist in Residency (RAIR), a creative platform intersecting art and industry based out of Revolution Recovery, a construction and demolition waste recycling facility in Philadelphia. We became friends, stayed in touch, and have worked on other things since. Oh, and of course Lily fell in love with the tinsel bale, but that's a whole other thing.

LILY COX-RICHARD

I was working on a project about scrap copper and the way that copper moves in different economies. At the time, I was living in

Michigan—there was a major scrapping economy in Detroit. My catalytic converter got stolen one night when I was in a movie theater, and I started thinking about the catalytic converter and its value in different economies. This launched a whole line of thinking that led to the idea of making copper bales.

Through my adventures with scrap metals—exploring and doing research into baling—I eventually met Billy. If you show up at a scrapyard asking about copper, they assume that you're either planning a heist or you're an investigative reporter. No one was interested in my creative project. But eventually, through RAIR and Billy's connections, we were able to find places willing to engage in conversations.

Ironically, right before I left to come install *Weep Holes*, my catalytic converter was stolen again, which was majorly inconvenient but also closed a big loop—I'm still thinking about questions related to value, repair, and recycling.

BD

When Lily began sourcing materials for MASS MoCA, we talked about various options. Our parameters were to identify something that's linear, flexible, and lightweight. I did some research and found out the material for pool noodles has an industrial application: "backer rod." Then, I just scoured the internet for the companies that were manufacturing it, looking at their social responsibility acts to try to understand the company's environmental awareness and their accountability for manufacturing plastic products. When I came across Nomaco, I thought that the company seemed to know what they were talking about—they're talking the talk and walking the walk. I was very quickly put in touch with Christophe, and we just struck up a conversation.

SMP

What interested you about Billy's inquiry, Christophe?



CHRISTOPHE THEUNISSEN

I'm a sales guy to start with, so, for me, you never know what the next opportunity will be—an opportunity not just to sell something but to learn something too. Billy sent me a link to an exhibition that Lily had done, and I remember thinking: holy smoke! Her work is beautiful, and it represents what's very important to me. At Nomaco, we don't scrap a single piece of plastic into the landfill—we re-grind it, sell it, or use it. Also, we were the first company in the U.S. to switch away from chlorofluorocarbons—the stuff that depletes the ozone layer—and we have several products that are green, like our sugarcane-based material, and a material that has an added food for microbes so the plastic is digested within a year. This technology has its challenges—it's more expensive—but our long-term goal is to be the friendly plastics company.

SMP

Lily, there's a lengthy history of upcycling and reuse of material in fine art, as well as engaging waste streams as a political act. What is the relationship between material and meaning for you?

LCR

I'm interested in materials and whatever kind of baggage they come with—histories, associations, or information. The form of the turkey-wing broom was something I was really drawn to, and, through finding the backer rod, I learned that the material itself has a relationship to other ideas in the show—ideas about filling holes and plugging gaps in architecture. Christophe, can you explain what backer rod is?

CT

Backer rod is a joint filler used for construction. Concrete expands, so when you build with concrete, you need to incorporate an expansion joint; otherwise it will crack. Usually the expansion joint is filled with backer rod and then covered with a sealant. The backer rod does

two things: it controls the amount of sealant used (too much sealant will crack); and it gives the sealant the necessary hourglass shape so the sealant can act like an elastic, contracting and expanding with fluctuations in temperature. It's very simple, but very important, as we've seen with the recent collapse of the condo in Miami, which was due to water permeation. Waterproofing is critical to the health of a building.

LCR

I didn't have a title for the show when we landed on backer rod as a material. All of it just kind of came together.

SMP

Going back to the turkey-wing broom, why were you drawn to that form?

LCR

I was at RAIR when the Democratic National Convention was in Philadelphia and, afterwards, all the trash came in—the red, white, and blue garbage—it felt hopeful in that moment. And then, by the time I was invited to do the exhibition at MASS MoCA, Donald Trump was president. In my early conversations with the curator, Denise Markonish, all I could think was, what will it be like in 2021? I was trying to imagine and make sense of the future in coming years, which seemed pretty dark at the time, and I had a vision of this giant broom. MASS MoCA creates the possibility of working on a scale that I've never worked on before, and I wanted to make work about stewardship and care that felt responsible. I didn't want to create waste—reuse just felt really important.

SMP

Is sustainability part of the connection to the Shakers? What about that utopian endeavor appeals to you?







LCR

I've always been interested in spiritual practices that have a direct relationship with a higher power without having to go through an ordained minister or other authority. And, of course, I'm interested in their early feminist separatism and craft. There's something spiritual in the moments when we get lost in work or find our flow in something. Not to overly romanticize labor, but I think there's a very deep connection with another source that, at different times, has brought me to the Shakers. There's a pace to craft that is different from our digital lives. Ways of making can only happen at the speed of one's own body and hands. It demands a different kind of patience.

SMP

Industrial systems are vital to the way we live, but streams of production and waste are so often hidden, overlooked, or misunderstood. Why bring visibility to these systems?

CT

For me, it's because I'd like my kids to grow up in a clean world. It's as simple as that. Climate change is real, it's happening now, and if we don't act now, it will be too late. And the response needs to be global. We need to think collectively and understand that politics should be taken out of it. Yes, it will cost a bit more, but from a long-term economic standpoint, it will cost a lot more if we don't do anything—there will be suffering like we've never seen. One person at a time changing their habits is pretty much like a drop of water in the ocean; but, you know what, if everybody does a little drop, that will make a difference.

BD

When you go to Revolution Recovery, you realize there's an abundant source of materials operating within their own alternative economy, and no one is paying attention. Making people aware of the built environment beyond the city center—what's happening in the places

you never go to—is a way to open our eyes to the catastrophic way we live. I don't have an answer to the huge systemic problems that we're facing, but I do know that, going back to what Christophe said, there are ways for small steps to lead to cultural change. It might be a drop in the bucket, but cumulatively, over time, we need to understand that, as consumers, we have power.

LCR

Our culture values profit above everything—above people, above health, above the climate. If we put no value on our very lives, then what are we doing? If the choice is to pay 10 percent more and not destroy everything, the choice seems really clear to me—especially at a time when people are making different choices with their jobs and lives. The pandemic has demonstrated how so many things—from racial injustice to supply chain issues—have to make themselves visible before we're forced to confront them. Unfortunately, for many of us, it's not until we're personally affected by something, or we witness it firsthand, that we can begin to understand the world outside of our own experience.

CT

I agree; but the mentality of thinking short-term and price-oriented is something American consumers need to change.

LCR

We need to have a deeper understanding of value and what the true costs are beyond the economic.

SMP

Segueing to the firepits, is this a nod to burning it down, or is there hope in the dark?

LCR

I was thinking a lot about fire the summer that the West Coast and



Australian Bush were burning. There were fires all over Richmond [Virginia] during the uprising—fireworks every night, flash-bangs launched at protesters, cars were on fire. And it seemed like all our institutions—government, industry, higher ed—were raging dumpster fires.

But then, there were votive candles and outdoor gatherings that allowed us to commune in some way around recuperative fire. So, I started making the firepits and sending them to friends, and it became a way to connect from afar. They got used in different ways—as an occasional campfire or an end-of-the-day ritual. I thought of it as a network. They were like portals connecting us to each other—to people that we're close to as well as to people we don't know. I don't know what happened around the fires, but they seemed to have the potential for healing.

SMP

How do art and artists play a role in social movements?

BD

There are endless amounts of opportunity for creative disciplines to engage not only with material in really meaningful ways, but also with the systems in which the material operates. I've been using this term for years: "the skinny part of the wedge." I feel that it's appropriate when talking about this intervention that we're doing at RAIR. It can be a pejorative. It can be useful.

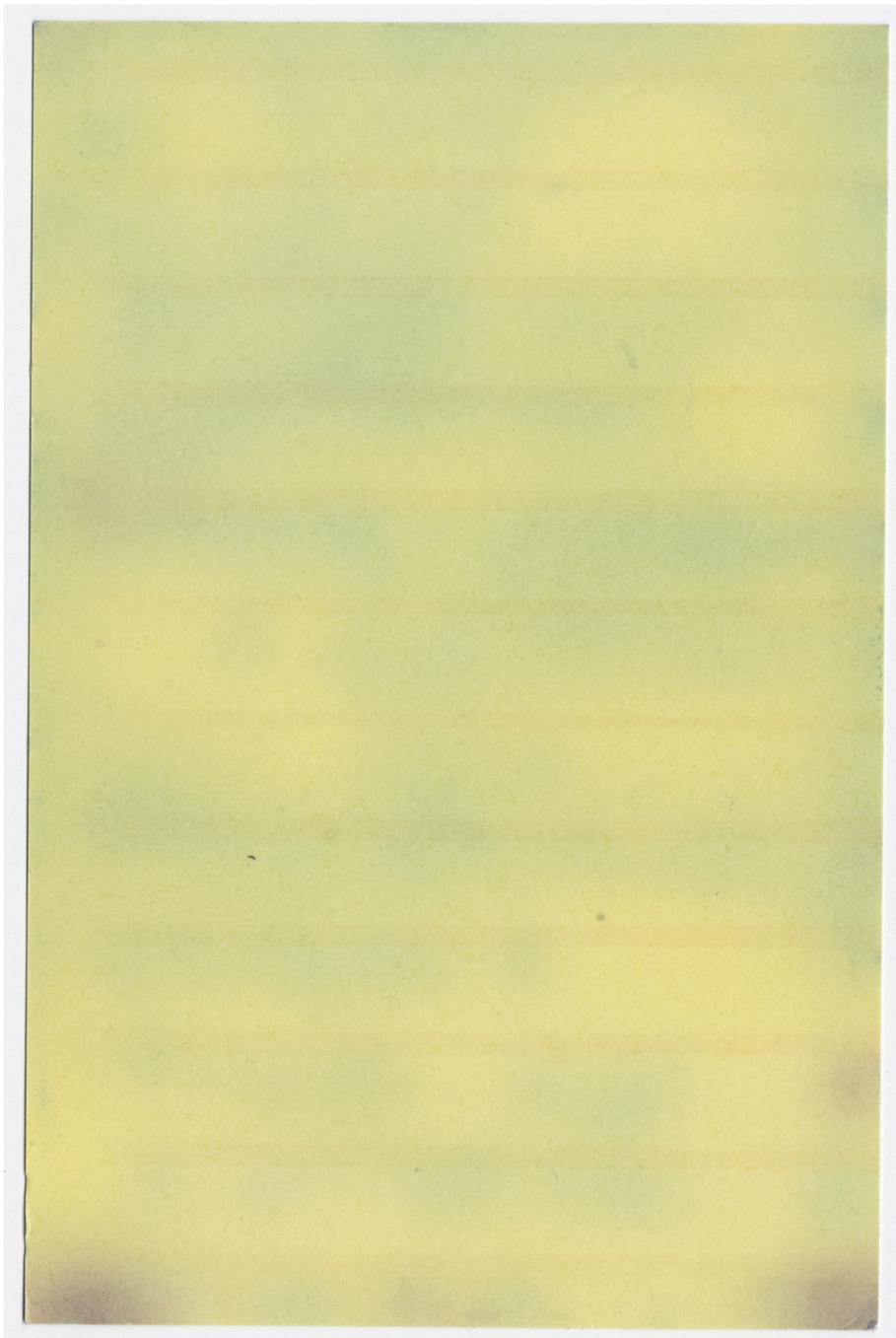
LCR

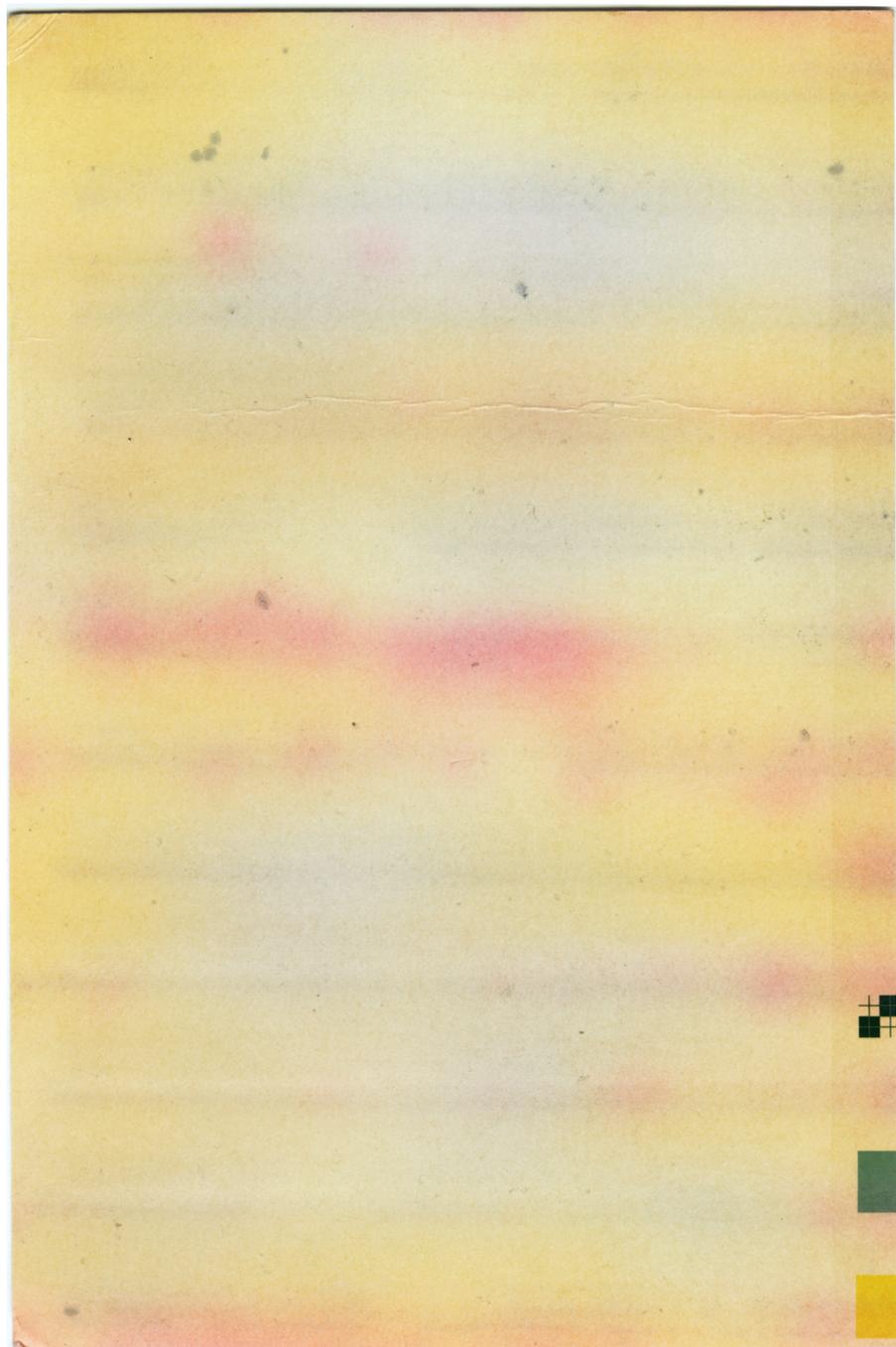
I was thinking about the wedge as this thing that can wiggle into something, either supporting it or intervening and creating a disruption. Also, it has a kind of fragility to it—it can break off, or get pushed out of the way, or disappear at any time.

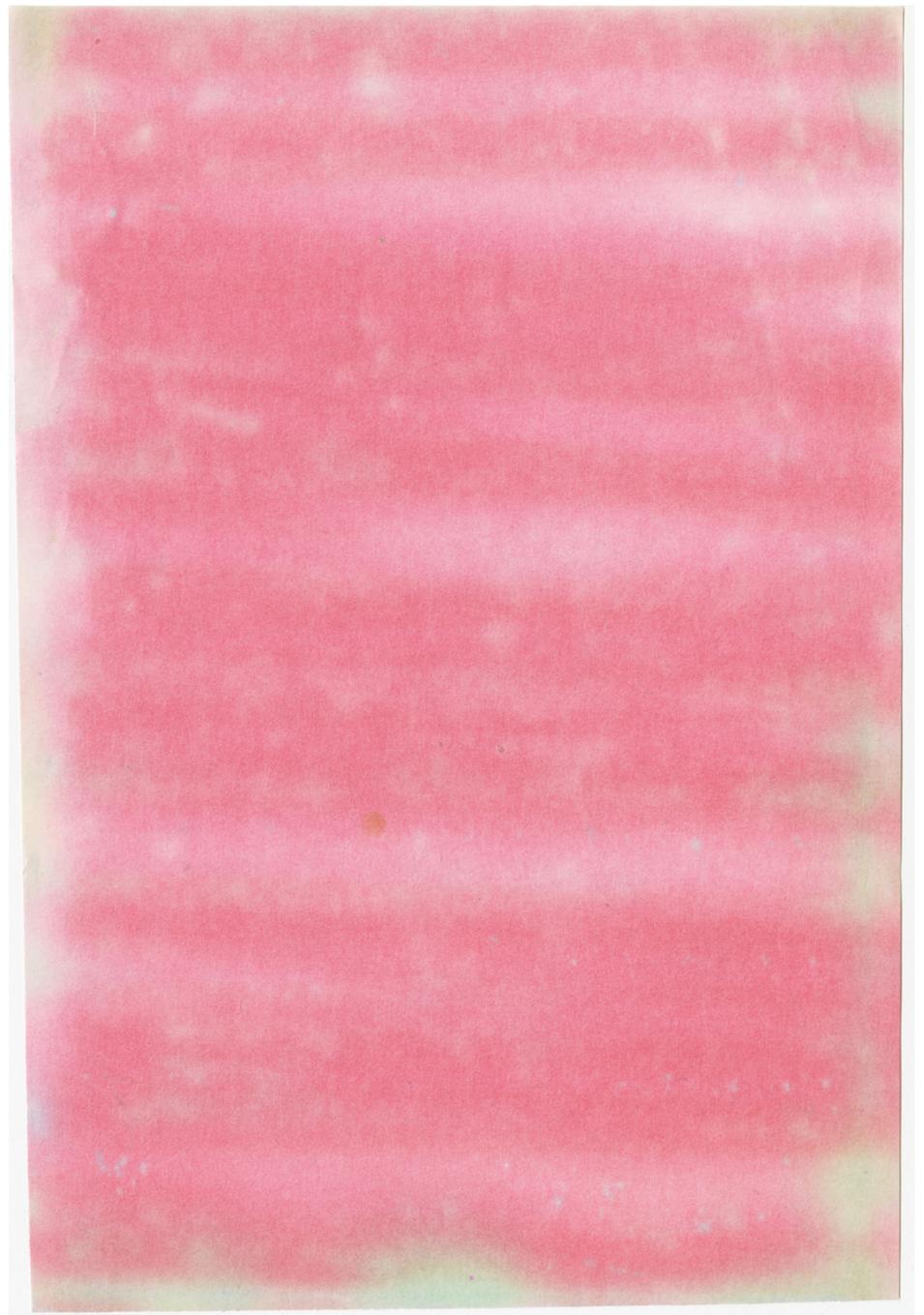
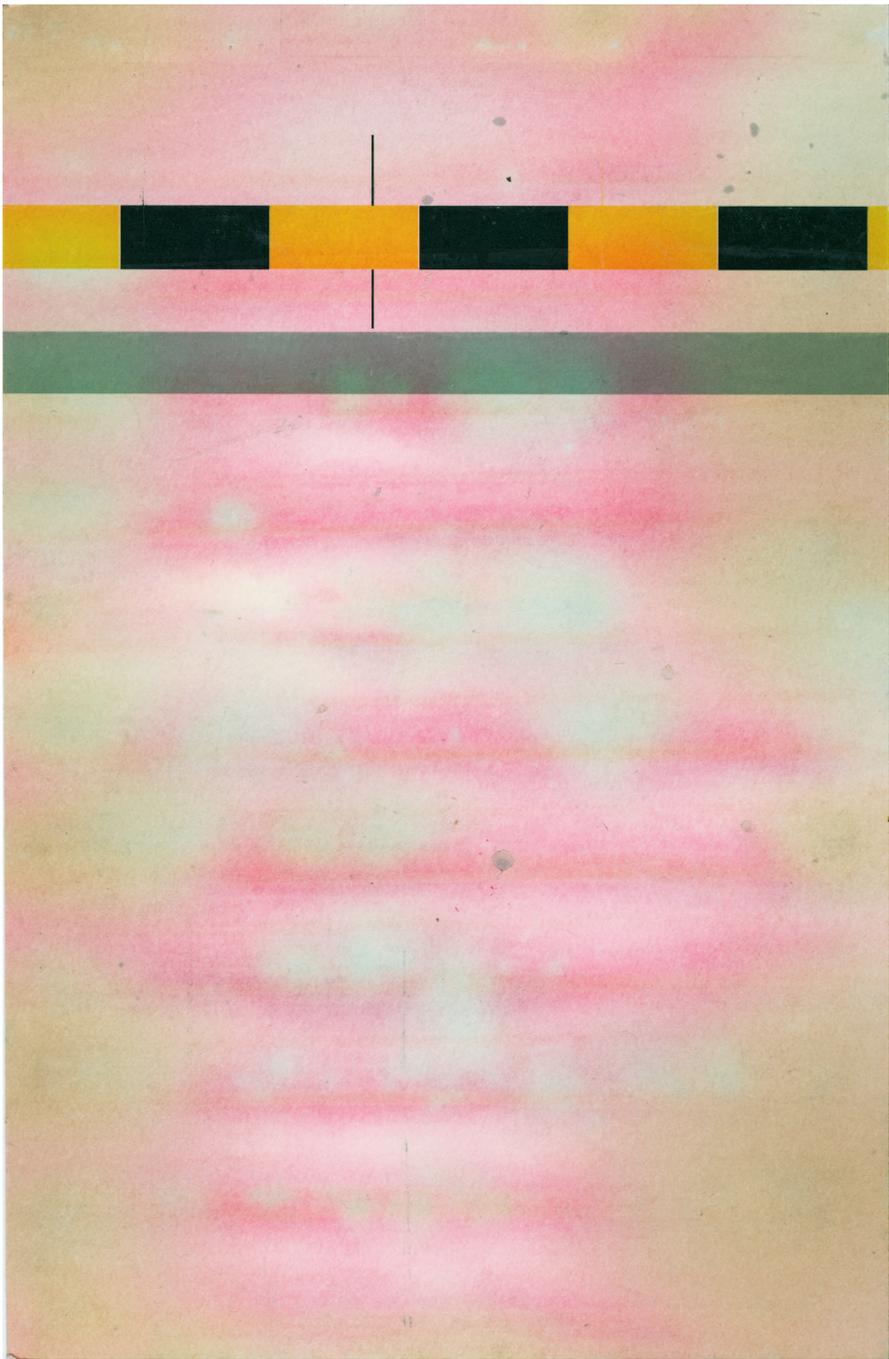
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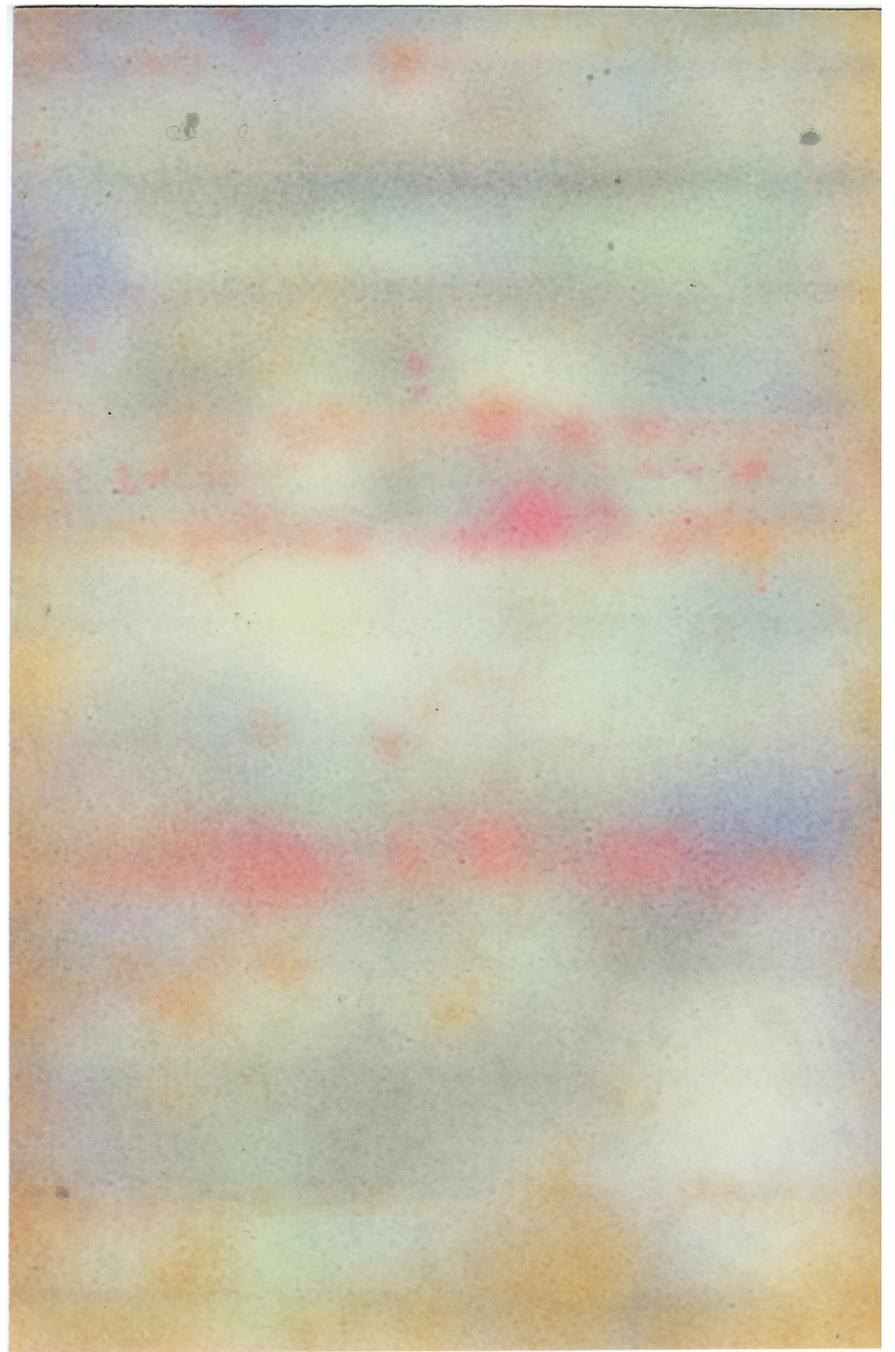
1. Ursula K. Le Guin, "Deep in Admiration," *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet*, edited by Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, Nils Bubandt, Elaine Gan, Heather Anne Swanson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), p. M15.

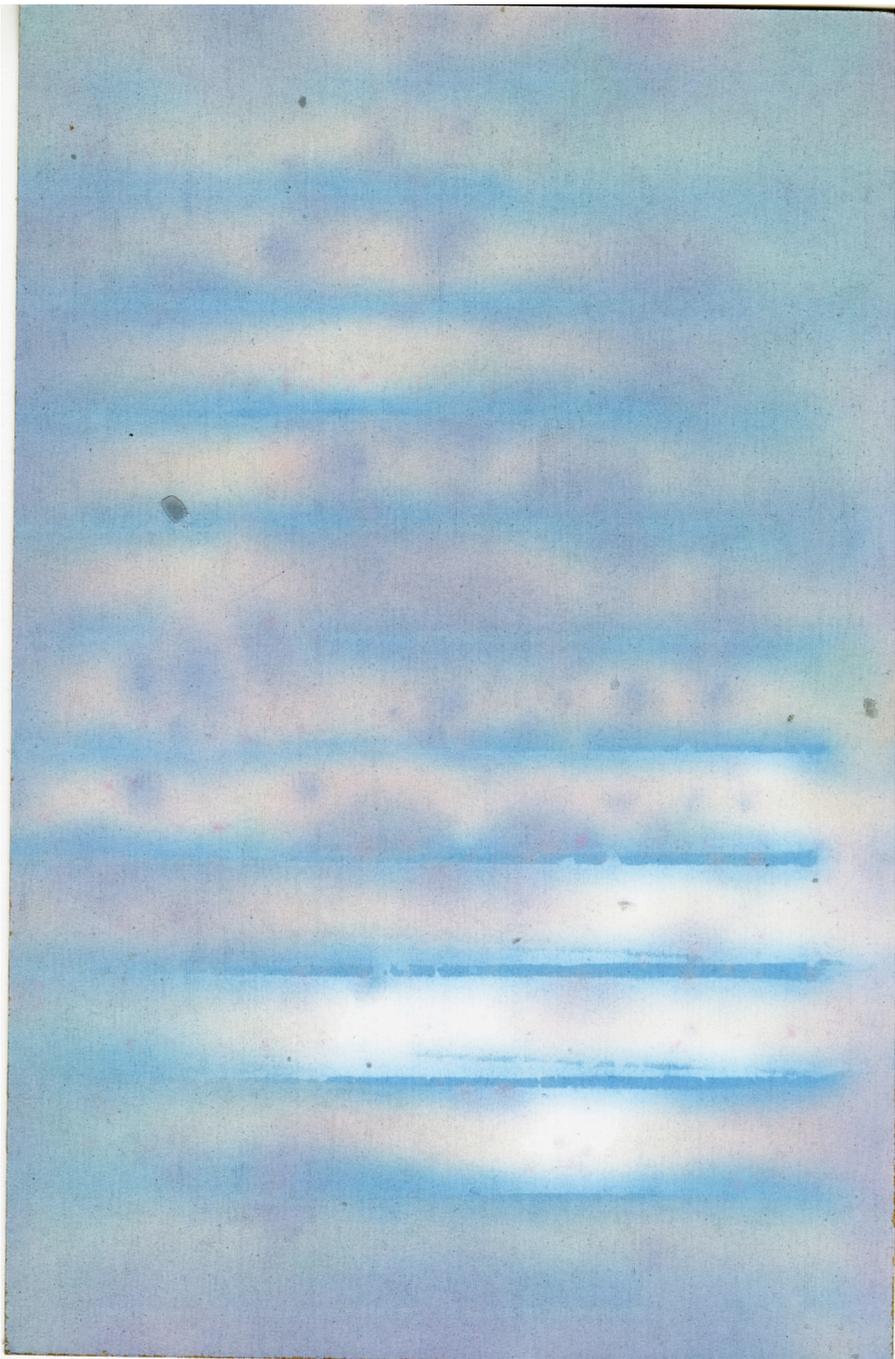


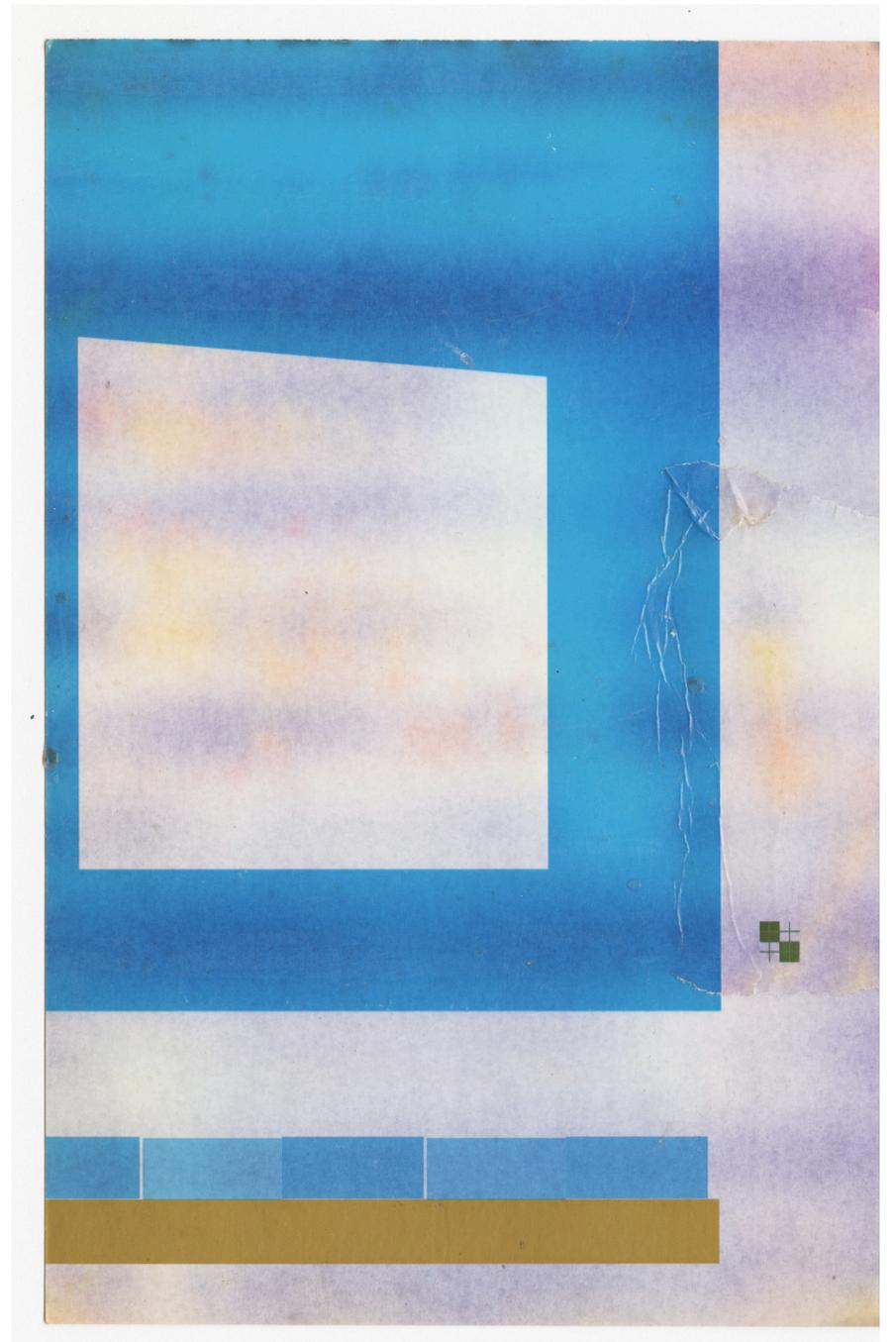
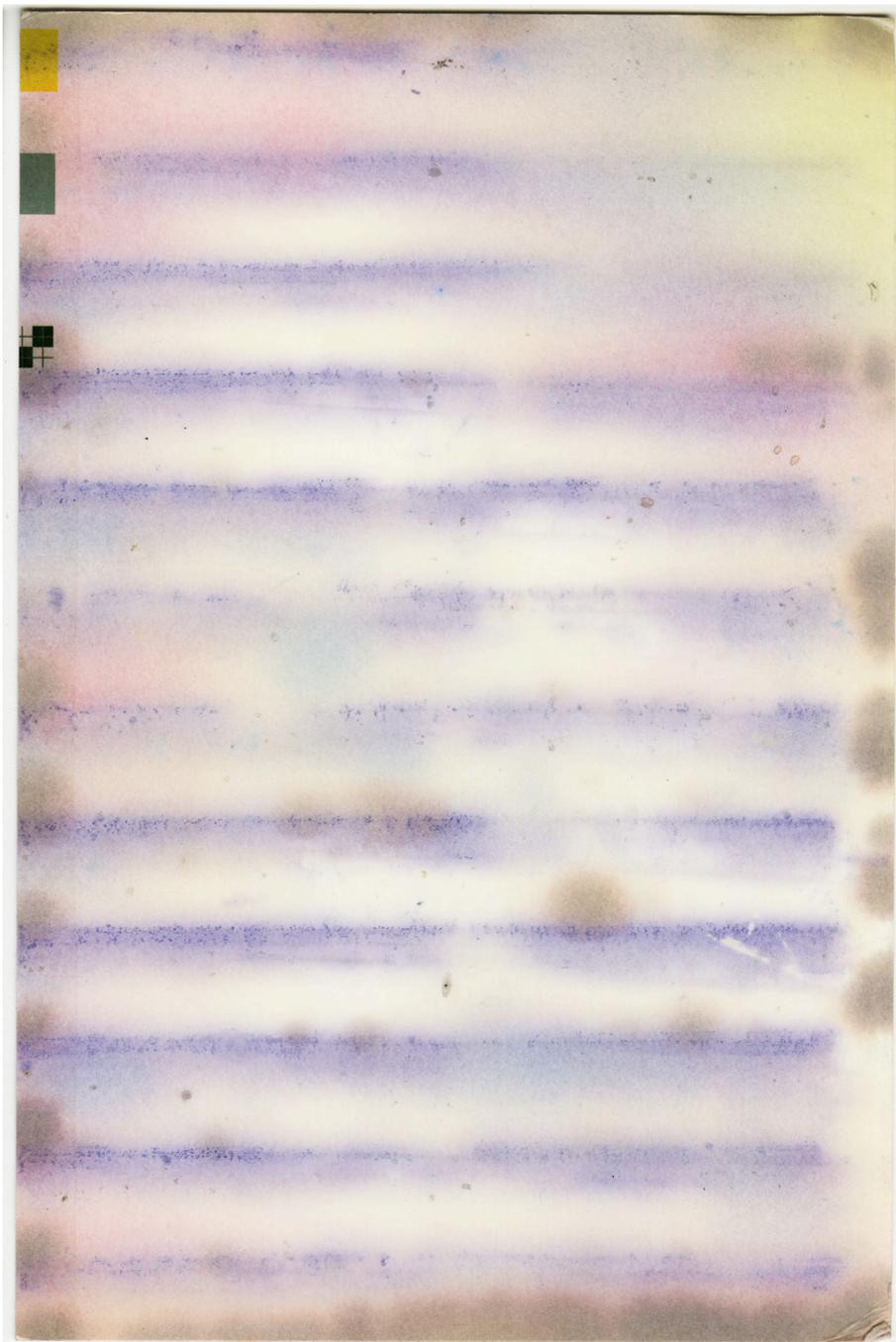














I Do Not Look at a Chaos, but at Things¹

JOHANNA HEDVA

“There’s war in Ukraine,” J— just told me. I was in the kitchen making coffee. It is February 24, 2022. Still morning. I, we all, knew it was coming, this one began in 2014, but as I write this now tears smear my eyes. I will think of nothing else. I will wonder, with each word I commit to the page, how I am supposed to write about anything else right now. And then I will commit words to the page. I will think of how I managed to commit words to pages during the wars in Palestine, Syria, Afghanistan, the uprisings in America and Beirut. I will think of how acknowledging the futility of this is not the same thing as surrendering to its fact, and perhaps this difference is worth everything. I will commit words to the page.

On January 31, 2022, in a Zoom meeting, I asked Lily Cox-Richard what she means when she talks about care, and she used

*A window cut out of
a wall*

*A basket goes into
the wall, flush*

*A bucket half plastered
into a window*



the phrase “the intersection of intention and attention,” and I cannot stop thinking about it. I wonder what is found at those crossroads, what is lost. I feel heavy with the meager calculus of life—persistence that is additive waged against the cost of living that is subtractive—but as any good mathematician—as any good poet—knows, the commutativity which is so slippery around value is where things start to sing. Against, into, because of, despite that, about it—I will commit words to the page.

At dawn, someone started playing the trumpet badly outside our bedroom window. The sky was garish pink and orange, a Maxfield Parrish sky that I’ve never seen in Berlin before. Even in my sleep I could hear that the trumpet player’s breath was unsteady, the notes wobbling. “What the fuck is that,” I mumbled. “Someone’s protesting that they’re cutting down the trees today,” J— said. We tried to sleep through it but couldn’t. When I eventually got up and looked out the window, it was true; they’d cut down the trees. They lay rigid, fallen, hacked, the site of a minor massacre. A new apartment building is supposed to be built on the small piece of grass between our building and the street. We hate this—one of the reasons we live where we do, which is far outside of the city, is because out of our windows, we see only trees. Across the street the forest starts, and it doesn’t stop until it meets the river way over there. Also, it’s

*Candle-sweat papers—
“the premonitions of all
the blessings that will
burn in them”*

*A mycelial rope
structure—“kind of
magic knots”*

*“A congregation of 50
firepits”*

“It’s kind of defective”

*“The holes that already
exist”*

one of the few neighborhoods in Berlin that we can afford to live in. About a year ago, it was announced that the company that owns our complex of buildings was going to build a shitload more in tight rows, cutting down 35 trees and forcing 170 new parking spaces into this already cramped plot of land that holds flats originally built as social housing for the servants of diplomats in the East. The flats are tiny—one bedroom, or a luxurious one-and-a-half—and plain and cheap, the floors covered in fake linoleum that’s supposed to resemble wood. The trees outside our windows are all we have.

The meager calculus of living—what is added, subtracted, commuted—the irreconcilability of its different scales: war, an illness that is changing the world, then some trees outside our window that have been ruined—the phenomenological flesh of the world quivers. I commit words, about the sky, trees that are now trash, to the page.

The neighborhood residents obviously revolted against the building plan. There were protests, petitions, meetings with politicians, painted signs with exclamation marks hung up everywhere, and although we got involved, added our names to the petitions, went to the rallies, I felt my Americanness, how cynical I was that this collective action would do anything. Convince a real estate developer not to build?

*“Let me know if you see
any constellations in
this brick wall”*

*“Scale and time are
slippery in this space”*

*“A lot of residue and
premonition”*

*“A horizon of stains of
candles that haven’t
burned yet; the
premonition of rituals
and spells that haven’t
happened yet”*



At one of the rallies, someone pleaded in a desperate voice that many species of birds would lose their homes, and I scoffed at how useless this argument was. They don't care about the fucking birds, I said to J— when we got home afterward. But I had to eat my words. The little neighborhood revolt succeeded in saving an entire parcel of land on the other side of our building. It's large and has a courtyard and many, many trees. There's a playground on it, so people entreated for the well-being of their children. They couldn't save the little patch of grass and the trees on it outside our window, though. We had to give the real estate developer something, so we conceded this part.

During these weeks, I am also thinking about, looking at, the work of Lily Cox-Richard, and, as I try to commit words to the page for her, about her, because of her, it makes me think of all the different meanings of the word "commit." *To give in charge or trust; to consign, send; to become guilty of, perpetrate; to involve (esp. oneself); to pledge, promise.* This strikes me as a list of the things that Lily's pieces are for, about, and because of, what they contain in themselves already, without her, how she notices that and names it, and then what she has asked them to contain further. When I look up "commit" in the used 11th edition of my Chambers dictionary, which is large and red and sits on my desk, and which I just bought because

"Police cars on fire"

"The healing properties of fire—contemplative, community-making, oracular"

"There's a giant broom"

Retired arborist rope

Weavings, columns

someone told me I couldn't hope to live without one, I learn a new word: "commensal," an adjective, which means "eating at the same table; living together in close association and with mutual benefit, esp. an association of less intimate kind than that called symbiosis." Commensal can also be a noun, meaning a "messmate; an organism living in partnership or association with another of a different species without affecting or benefiting it." Messmate is a navy term—"a person with whom one shares communal accommodation, with whom one regularly *takes mess*" [italics mine]. I want to use the navy meaning of messmate for how Lily's pieces make me feel—that they take mess, and that there is a communal accommodation that emerges from this that isn't necessarily a benefit or even an affect. It's just there. It's not nothing.

Once I heard about war in Ukraine this morning, I wondered if the trumpet player was playing for that and not the trees. It's now almost noon, and they are still playing somewhere nearby. Scraps of the wobbly melody arrive on the air. It has the sad, grandiose sound of a song meant to be patriotic. The sky has lost its color and gone back to the familiar, claustrophobic gray of Berlin; only at dawn, sometimes sunset, in this city does the sky become a color, and even then it's rare.

*A bale of tinsel—
"something's growing
there"*

Drone chandelier

*"The tinsel bale is
longing to fly and the
drone chandelier wants
to rest"*

*"Care and stewardship
are acts of resistance"*



I read the news, BBC, CNN, NBC, *The New Yorker*, and doom-scroll through the shaky videos taken with Ukrainian phones of Russian tanks rolling down the streets of their neighborhoods. J— and I talk about how we don't want to try to survive in a nuclear winter, would prefer to be annihilated in the blast. His mother calls crying, her friends are already stockpiling. What is the word for having these conversations and then talking about what to cook for dinner? What is the word for having tabs open on a screen, where I click from images of war, refugees pushing onto a train, people fleeing violence in lines that stretch to 15km long, then to my Google calendar with its deadlines and things to do and friends to meet on Friday?

For her show, Lily has made many things, she told me, “from the neglect of someone else.” There was a discarded bale of tinsel that she saw many years ago, and then it grew in her mind. There is defective backer rod that will make a giant broom and then be recycled after the show. Its materiality will persist. As there is for numerals, there is a commutative property to matter. The different elements can be rearranged, and this will not affect the sum. But what happens when they are rearranged? Things are not numbers, and they are not words. What happens when the form of a thing is migrated to somewhere else? When it

Weep holes—“water is going to find a way through the wall or it's gonna push it over; to relieve pressure, find a path and carve away at it. If you provide the pathways for it, it will function; if you don't, it will destroy”

“Acknowledging the life of material, to see the tinsel bale and not stop thinking about it”

“The continuum of things that will continue and the things that won't”

“The intersection of intention and attention”

deteriorates, grows, rots, sprouts? I had not yet committed to writing this text for Lily when we met, but as soon as she told me about the “drone chandelier,” I said yes. I loved those two words together. I had never heard them as a pair before. When she spoke to me, I wrote down as many of her phrases as I could. Lily speaks in the language of someone who understands how a sky can be on fire with color and then turn gray, and still the people underneath it persist.

I think of the literal meaning of the word “messmate”—mates with mess, mates because of mess, in it. These weeks that I am writing about Lily's work and the war crowding everything, I am also trying to write a love letter to someone with whom I'm always fighting. They are the person who told me to buy a Chambers dictionary. Lily's phrase, “the intersection of intention and attention,” strikes me as something that could define love—but it could also define fighting.

What I am trying to articulate is that sometimes things exist with each other in succor—they share space, a table, a mess—and although they communally accommodate each other, it is a partnership that does not necessarily produce something beyond this here and right now, this messy, succourable communion. It may or may not persist, its form may or may not change, and the

“Many of the pieces are the result of the neglect of someone else”

“The space created by lack of value, not valuing something”

“Allow a thing to reach a different kind of purpose”

“I never know what people will see in the work. I don't know what I saw. And if people can rest in that?”



purpose happens in that contingency. I am trying to say something about commutativity. I am trying to commit to something in a world whose scale of pain is crushing. I am trying to live inside the difference between acknowledging futility and surrendering to it.

"I'm in a committed relationship with mushrooms"

I have committed 1786 words to this page.

"You can literally see different mushrooms when you're walking up hill than when you're walking down hill"

Trees, love, war, dawn, a sad song for a country, a little neighborhood revolt, fighting.

Just refreshed Twitter.

War, genocide, selfies.

Lily asked me to tell her if I see any constellations in the brick wall of the museum where her show will be. This request is my favorite of the requests I've received this year.

"In my woods I know that when the wisteria smells a certain way, I'll find morels"

Today, February 24, 2022, is also Lily's birthday.

I light a candle for Lily, for Ukraine, for my ancestors, and the candle tunnels. I try to straighten out the wick. The commutativity of things that persist.

— Notes taken from conversations and correspondence with Lily Cox-Richard. All quotes attributed to her.

Now a car horn is going outside.

I wonder where the trumpet player went.

ENDNOTES

1. The title is a line from Maurice Merleau-Ponty's essay, "The Intertwining—The Chiasm," from *The Visible and the Invisible*, this translation taken from *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, ed. Ted Toadvine and Leonard Lawlor (Northwestern University Press, 2007).





The Ruth F. Devereux Gallery
Given by Penelope & Foster Devereux

Lily Cox- Richard Weep Holes

"It is in the knowledge of the ge...
our strength to live and our rea...
—Simone de Beauvoir

Lily Cox-Richard's *Weep Holes* ad...
collective action, and building di...
title references the alleviation ho...
without damage. It also conjures...
transforms these concepts of car...
center on materiality, reuse, and

The works in *Weep Holes* reveal m...
them together to create new form...
architecture of the space, sandba...
and rope is spliced together to vi...
roots of fungus). In another galle...
made of tomato-growing cages w





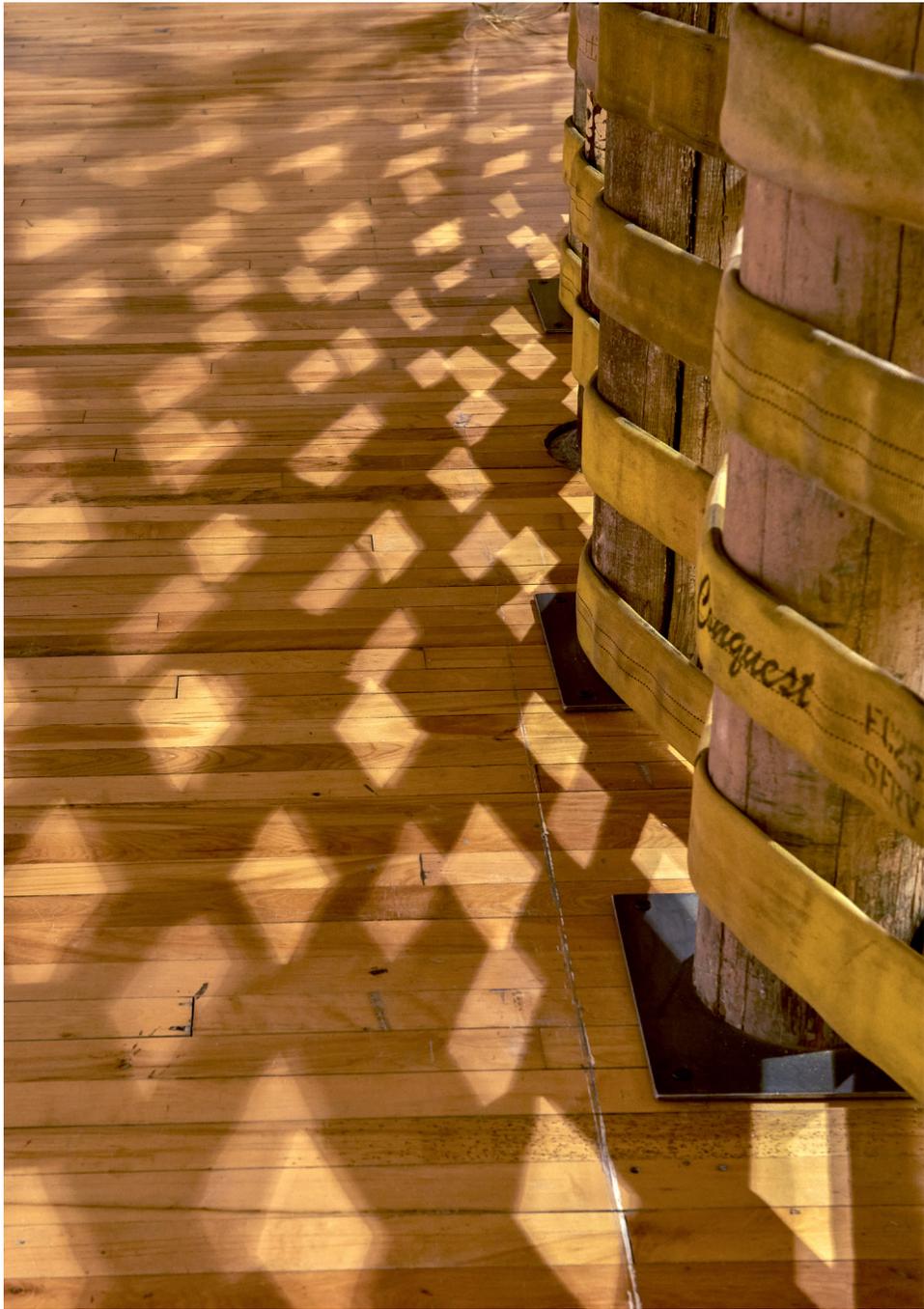
QUEST KIVU

QUEST KIVU is a collection of objects that tell the story of the Kivus, a group of people who lived in the Kivu region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The objects are made of wood, metal, and other natural materials, and they represent the traditional crafts and skills of the Kivus. The collection is displayed in a large, open-plan space, allowing visitors to see the objects in their original context.















sa Family Gallery
by John B. DeRosa

FIRE
FIRE

EXIT











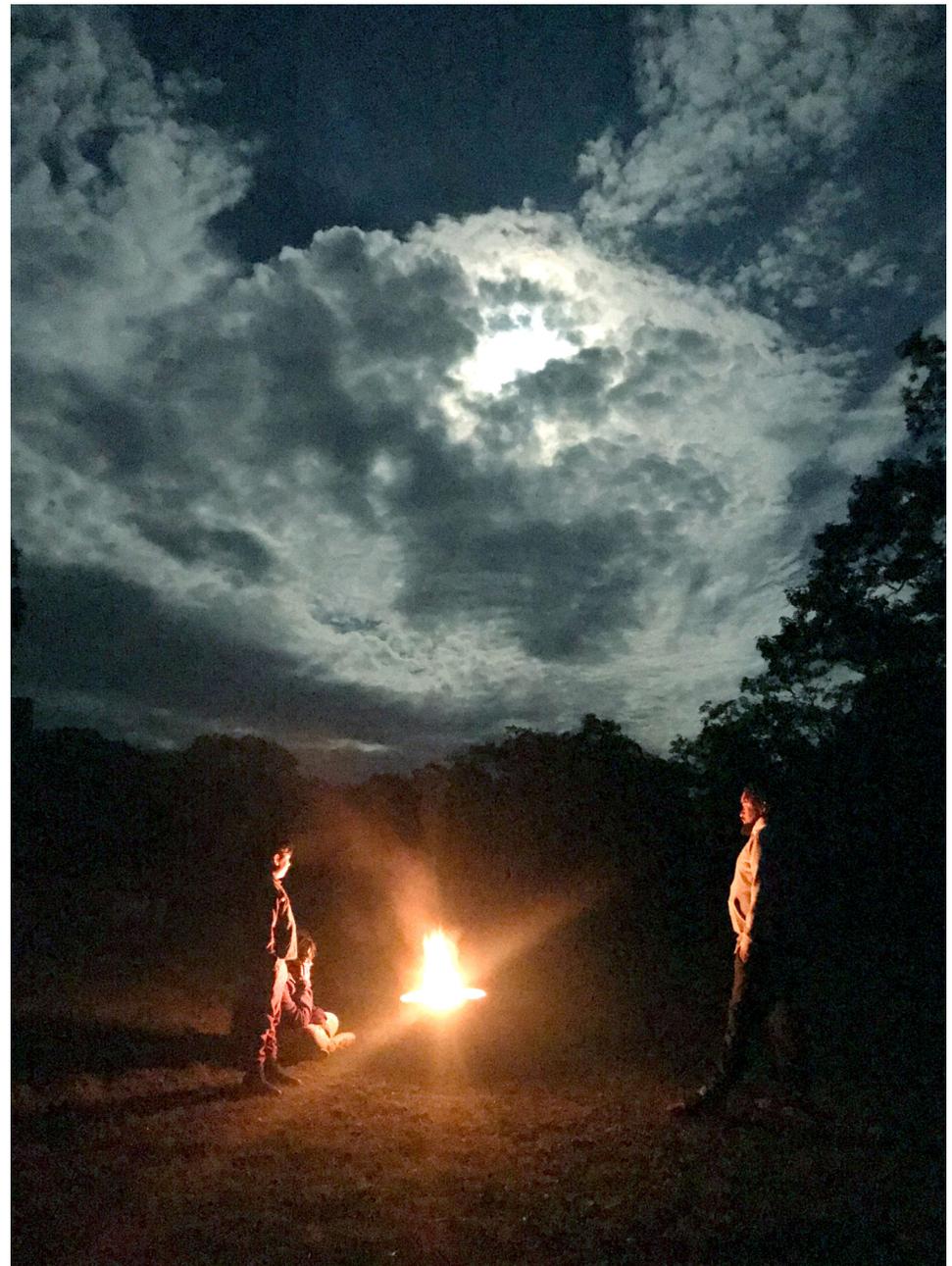












Left and next page: Photo by Lily Cox-Richard

Above: Full moon fire with Michael Jevon Demps, October 19, 2021. Photo by Fallon Aiello

Pages 122–123: First fire of 2022. Photo by Ryan Hawk



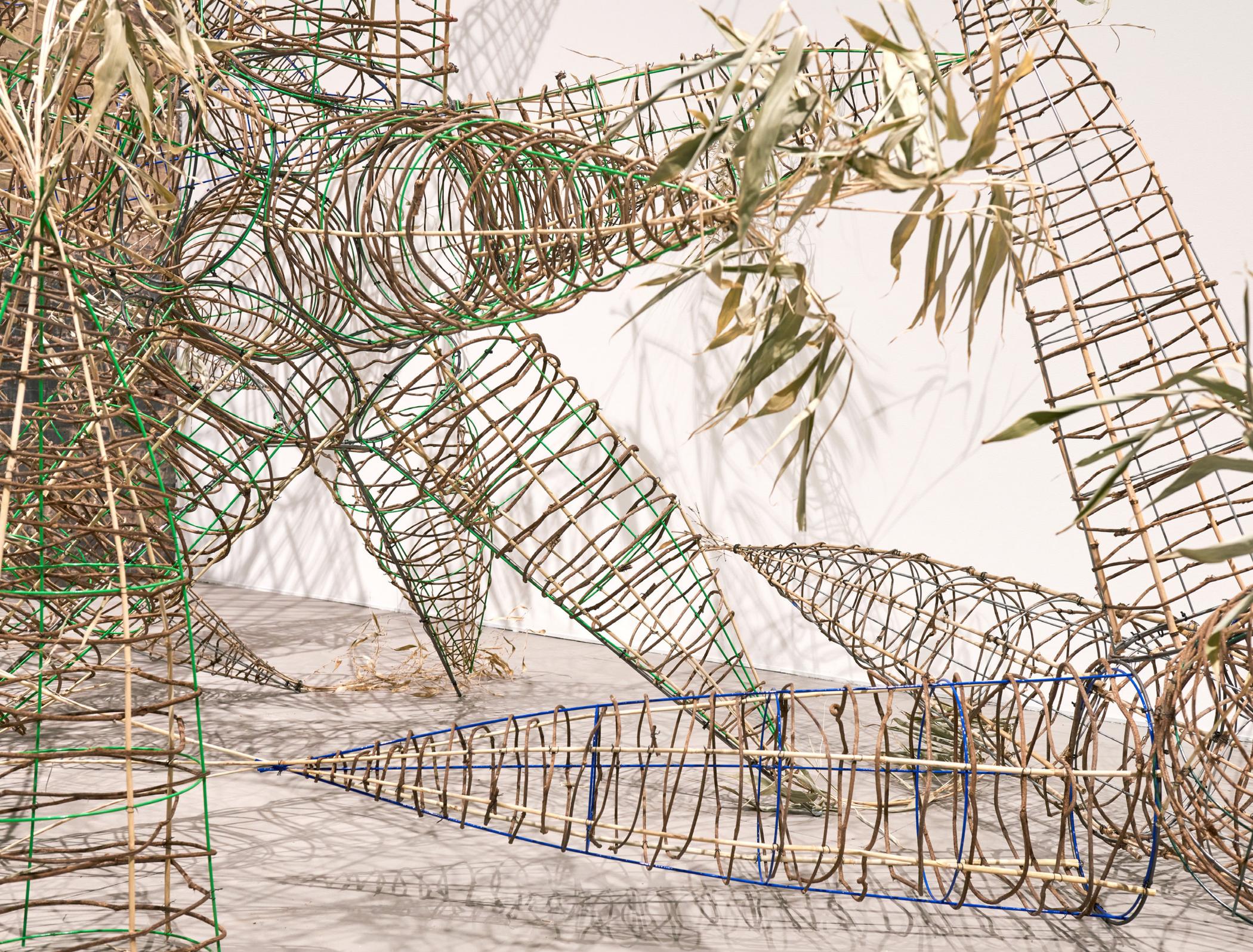




















EXIT









Contributor Biographies

LILY COX-RICHARD (SHE/HER/LCR) makes sculptures and installations that take up details of cultural and material histories to explore porousness, energy exchange, and paths of resistance. LCR has been awarded an Artadia grant, a Smithsonian Artist Research Fellowship, a postdoctoral fellowship in the University of Michigan's Society of Fellows, and residencies at the Core Program, Millay Colony, RAIR Philadelphia, and the MacDowell Colony. Recent solo exhibitions include Yvonne, Guatemala City; Artpace, San Antonio, TX; Diverseworks, Houston, TX; Hirschl & Adler Modern, New York; The Blanton Museum of Art, Austin, TX. LCR studies, forages, and practices in Tsenacomoco territory/Richmond, VA, on land that, for thousands of years, has been inhabited and cared for by Indigenous people, including the Pamunkey, Monacan, Chickahominy, and many other tribes forcibly disappeared and whose stories remain untold.

BILLY DUFALA is a Philadelphia-based artist/musician engaged in a wide variety of creative disciplines. He is a co-founder and director of residencies at RAIR, an artist residency located at Revolution Recovery, a construction and demolition waste recycling facility in northeast Philadelphia. RAIR's mission is to challenge the perception of waste culture by providing a unique platform for artists at the intersection of art and industry. He is also known for his ongoing collaborative work with his brother, Steven, as the Dufala Brothers. They create drawings, prints, sculpture, performance, music and design. Represented by Fleisher Ollman Gallery in Philadelphia, they co-teach in the sculpture department at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

JOHANNA HEDVA (THEY/THEM) is a Korean-American writer, artist, and musician who was raised in Los Angeles by a family of witches, and now lives in LA and Berlin. Hedva is the author of *Minerva the Miscarriage of the Brain*, a collection of poems, performances, and essays, and the novel *On Hell*. Their albums are *Black Moon Lilith in Pisces in the 4th House* and *The Sun and the Moon*. Their work has been shown at Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin; the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London; Performance Space New York; Gyeongnam Art Museum, South Korea; the LA Architecture and Design Museum; and the Museum of Contemporary Art on the Moon. Their essay "Sick Woman Theory," published in 2016 in *Mask*, has been translated into ten languages.

DR. PATRICIA KAISHIAN is a mycologist and visiting professor at Bard College. Her research focuses on fungal taxonomy, diversity, evolution, symbiosis, and ecology, particularly of the less studied fungal groups such as the insect-associated Laboulbeniales. Kaishian also studies philosophy of science and feminist bioscience, exploring how mycology and other scientific disciplines are situated in and informed by our sociopolitical landscape. She is a co-founder of the International Congress of Armenian Mycologists, which seeks to jointly protect Armenian sovereignty and biodiversity.

SARAH MARGOLIS-PINEO is an independent curator and writer specializing in American craft and design. Recently, she was curator of Hancock Shaker Village, Pittsfield, MA, where she managed the collection, exhibitions, scholarly programs, and artist residency. Previously, she held curatorial appointments at American Folk Art Museum, New York; Frye Art Museum, Seattle; Museum of Contemporary Craft, Portland; and Cranbrook Art Museum, Bloomfield Hills, MI. In 2017, she founded Lone Pine Farm & Studio, an agricultural artist residency on Bainbridge Island, WA. Margolis-Pineo earned her MA from the San Francisco Art Institute and her BA from Vassar College. sarahmargolispineo.com @smargolispineo



DENISE MARKONISH is the senior curator and director of exhibitions at MASS MoCA. Her exhibitions include *Glenn Kaino: In the Light of a Shadow*; *Suffering from Realness*; *Trenton Doyle Hancock, Mind of the Mound: Critical Mass*; *Nick Cave: Until, Explode Every Day: An Inquiry into the Phenomena of Wonder*; *Teresita Fernández: As Above So Below*; *Oh, Canada*; *Nari Ward: Sub Mirage Lignum*; *These Days: Elegies for Modern Times*; and *Badlands: New Horizons in Landscape*. She edited the books *Teresita Fernández: Wayfinding* (DelMonico/Prestel) and *Wonder: 50 Years of RISD Glass*, and co-edited *Sol LeWitt: 100 Views* (Yale University Press). Markonish has taught at Williams College and the Rhode Island School of Design, and was a visiting curator at Artpace, San Antonio, and Haystack School of Craft, Deer Isle, Maine.

CHRISTOPHE THEUNISSEN started his career as an intern for Nomaco in Zebulon, NC, a manufacturer of PE and PP foam products for a variety of markets, on a scholarship awarded by the Prince Albert Foundation of Belgium. At Nomaco, Theunissen developed a passion for solving challenges with foam. Nearly thirty years later, that passion, combined with his interest in meeting new people and building relationships, plus his desire to learn something new each and every day, makes him the perfect sales leader for Nomaco. The variety of Theunissen's market interactions keeps things interesting, as on any given day he may be learning something new about auto glass, fitness, recreation—or, really, anything.





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Rest easy, Chris Baggett. Thank you for sharing your solid craft, slow cooking, and blueberry wine.

Weep Holes is dedicated to the great awareness and burns with commitment and love for the ever-expanding network of fires.

— Lily Cox-Richard



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p. 30, 40, 68, 80–117, 124–136, 138–145 photography by Tony Luong

p. 8, 78–79, 106–108, 137 photography by Sofia Taylor

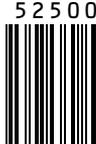




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