MICHEL REIN Paris|Brussels

# *ABIGAIL DEVILLE*

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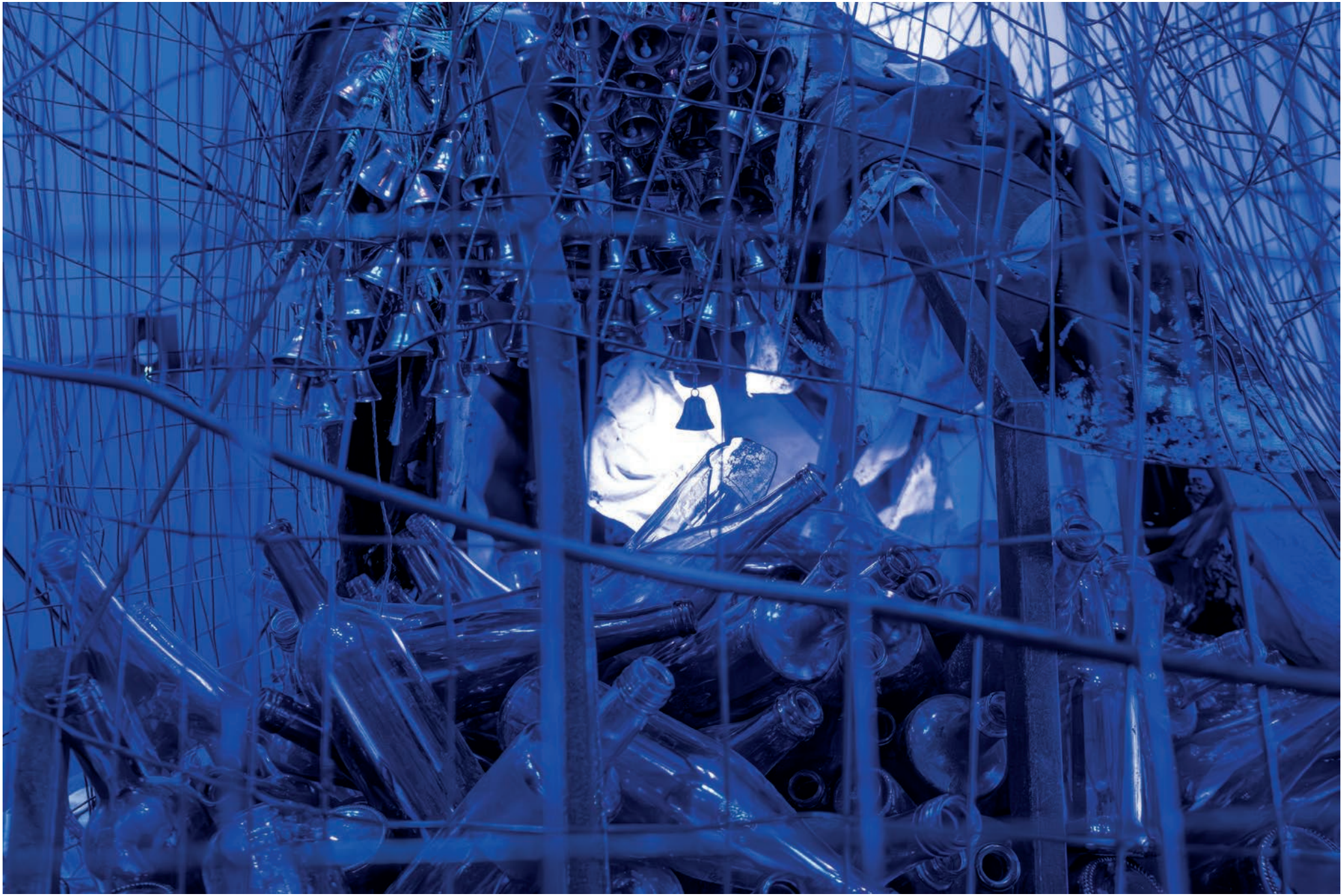
# SUMMARY | SOMMAIRE

# *EXHIBITIONS*
# *EXPOSITIONS*

*MONUMENTS,* The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, USA, 2025



*the heart knows its own bitterness (Manifest)*, Lewis Center for the Arts, Princeton, USA, 2025

*Against the Grain: The Stories We Tell Ourselves*, Longwood Art gallery, Bronx, USA, 2024

*Lux et Veritas*, NSU Art Museum, Fort Lauderdale, USA, 2022

*Lux et Veritas*, NSU Art Museum, Fort Lauderdale, USA, 2022

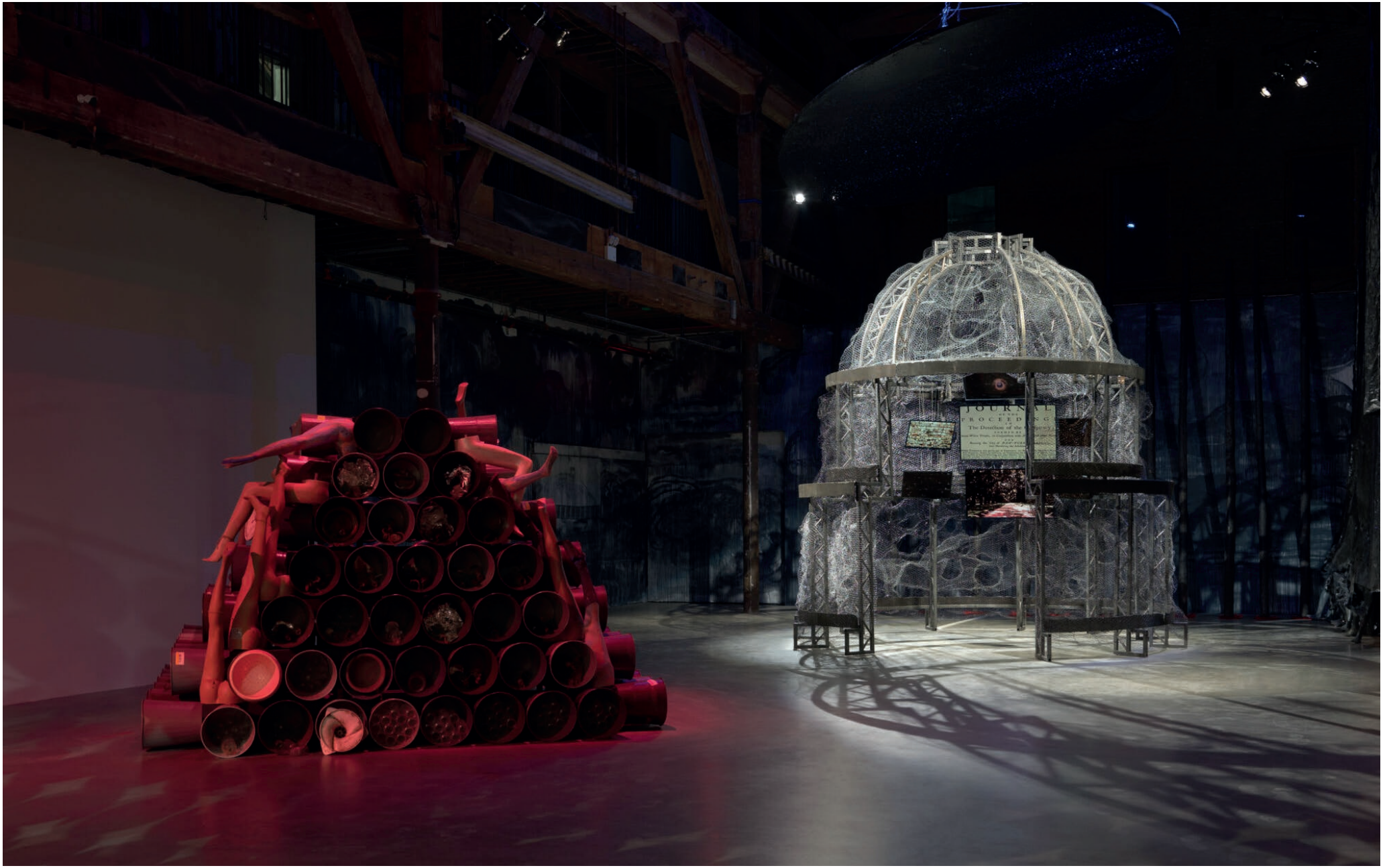
*The Dream Keeper,* FRONT International: Cleveland Triennale for Contemporary art, Cleveland, USA, 2022

*Beneath Tongues*, Swiss Institute, New York, USA, 2021

*Homebody*, Andrew Edlin Gallery, New York, USA, 2021

Michel Rein, *Seeds of Empire*, Paris, France, 2021

Michel Rein, *Seeds of Empire*, Paris, France, 2021



Pioneer Works Centre for Art and Innovation, *Brand New Heavies* (cur. Racquel Chevremont and Mickalene Thomas), New York, USA, 2021

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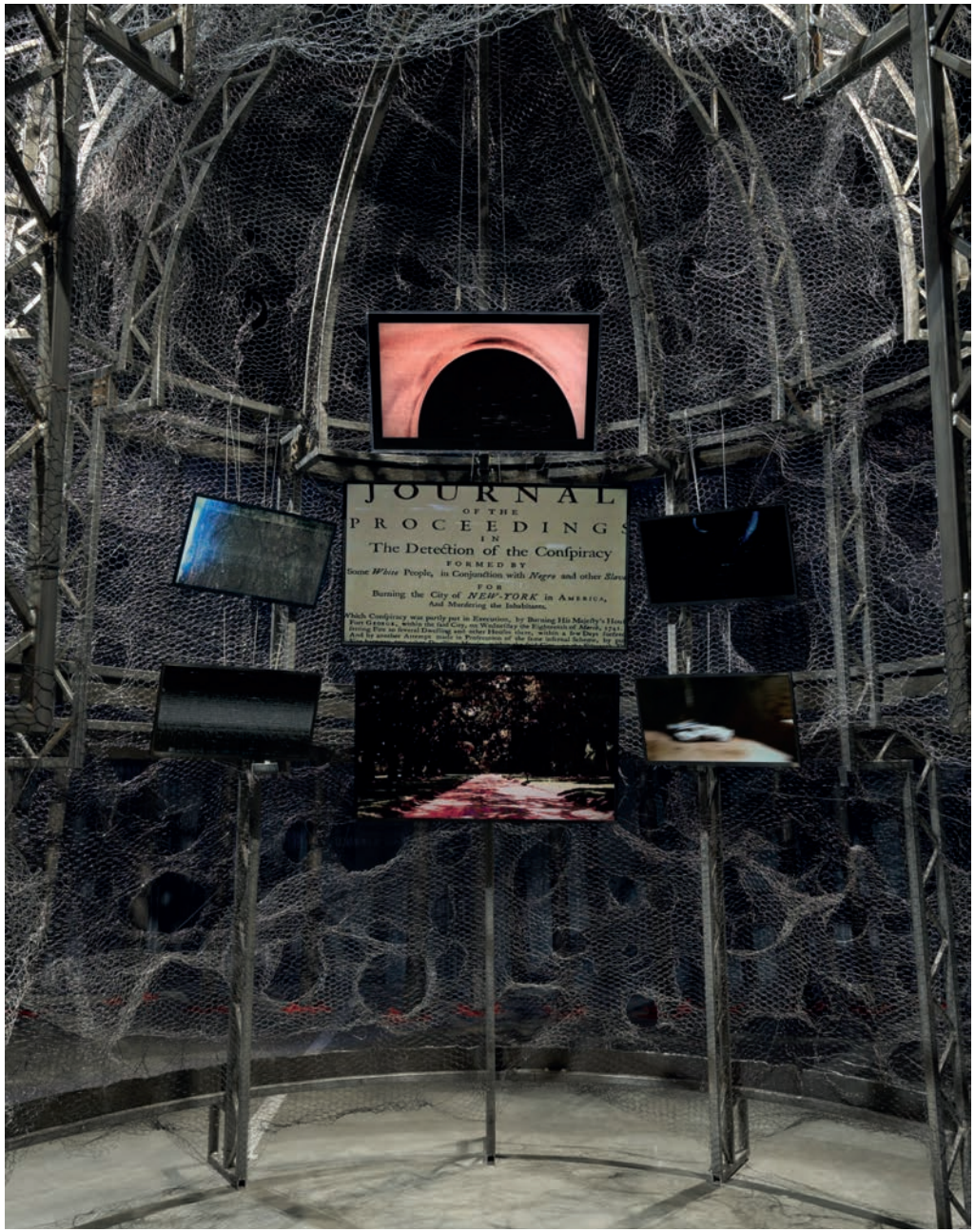



Pioneer Works Centre for Art and Innovation, *Brand New Heavies* (cur. Racquel Chevremont and Mickalene Thomas), New York, USA, 2021

Madison Square Park, *Light of Freedom* (organized by Brooke Kamin Rapaport, Martin Friedman, Tom Reidy), New York, USA, 2020

Palazzo Grassi – Punta della Dogana, *Untitled*, 2020, exhibition view of *Trois regards sur l'art d'aujourd'hui*, Venise, Italy, 2020
Pinault collection

Portland Institute for Contemporary Art (Pica), *The American Future*, Portland, USA, 2019

Portland Institute for Contemporary Art (Pica), *The American Future*, Portland, USA, 2019

Portland Institute for Contemporary Art (Pica), *The American Future*, Portland, USA, 2019

Portland Institute for Contemporary Art (Pica), *The American Future*, Portland, USA, 2019

PROJECT ROOM

# ABIGAIL DEVILLE:
## No Space Hidden (Shelter)

9.9.17 – 12.31.17

*No Space Hidden (Shelter)* is Bronx-based multidisciplinary artist Abigail DeVille's first solo museum exhibition in Los Angeles, and the inaugural exhibition in ICA LA's new project room. Noted for her dynamic, site-specific installations, DeVille's work touches upon displacement, migration, and historical instances of cultural erasure. At the center of her practice is an interest in how movement through space is complicated by social difference—particularly for women, people of color, and the economically disenfranchised—and how alternate narratives can be formed to address inequality. Further, as it borrows its title from a 2005 book about sculpture made and displayed in African American domestic spaces, the exhibition reveals the complexities of defining the concept of "home."

For this presentation in Los Angeles, DeVille considered the city's complex history of class and racial disparities, and the complicity of its citizens in its perpetuation. Within this city's confines are some of the country's wealthiest neighborhoods; Hollywood, a major engine of the American film industry; and Skid Row, an itinerant community with one of the largest homeless populations in the United States. Economic conditions are often intertwined with the distribution of people, and contribute to displacement, gentrification, housing shortages, and cultural segregation. To visualize this movement and the production of economic and social space, DeVille collects and repurposes found materials from throughout the city's landscape, forging a narrative through objects to give physical presence to histories and communities that may otherwise be silenced or sidelined.

DeVille has often discussed her work as the embodiment of a black hole, a collection of distinct ideas and materials that co-exist in a void. The past, present, and future collapse in a single site, and the unfolding of time is indistinguishable from the experience of space. The centerpiece of this installation is a sculpture built from an accumulation of detritus and scavenged materials, both industrial and domestic, grafted onto a steel structure in the shape of a cyclone, with towering mobile sculptures inhabiting the corners of the room. Enveloping the space is a dense and overwhelming blackness, both metaphoric and physical—a false ceiling made from punctured black trash bags mimics the night sky, while oil-painted cardboard boxes and asphalt roofing paper line the walls and floor. DeVille introduces some elements to maintain an air of tension in the space—mirrors glint from inside the blackened cardboard boxes, an invitation for viewers to reflect upon their position on the many challenges facing their fellow citizens. Police lights offer some release from the darkness, though the spinning red and blue lights may not signal comfort or safety to all who encounter them in public space. While this exhibition suggests an alternate reality with its references to the unknown dimensions of outer space, the installation is grounded in its conceptual engagement in current topics of debate, such as immigration, incarceration, deportation, and targeted acts of violence—all of which deeply impact the way that people move through and experience space and their sense of belonging and security.

Even though the installation is overflowing with objects embedded with their own histories, staged in a different context for the sake of enabling new dialogue on long-term societal issues, there is an undercurrent of hope and possibility throughout. In this work, these materials, long discarded or forgotten, have been given a new purpose, and by extension, DeVille, using her particular visual language, provides new points of entry to contemplate circumstances that have become too familiar and excused as part of everyday life in American cities. She also imagines a universe where, like time in a black hole, all citizens can exist side-by-side, regardless of social position, unified and moving through space together.

*Abigail DeVille: No Space Hidden (Shelter)* is organized by Jamillah James, ICA LA Curator.

*Project Rooms exhibitions are made possible, in part, by ICA LA's Curator's Council.*

Institute of Contemporary Art, *Abigail DeVille: No Space Hidden (Shelter)*, Los Angeles, USA, 2017

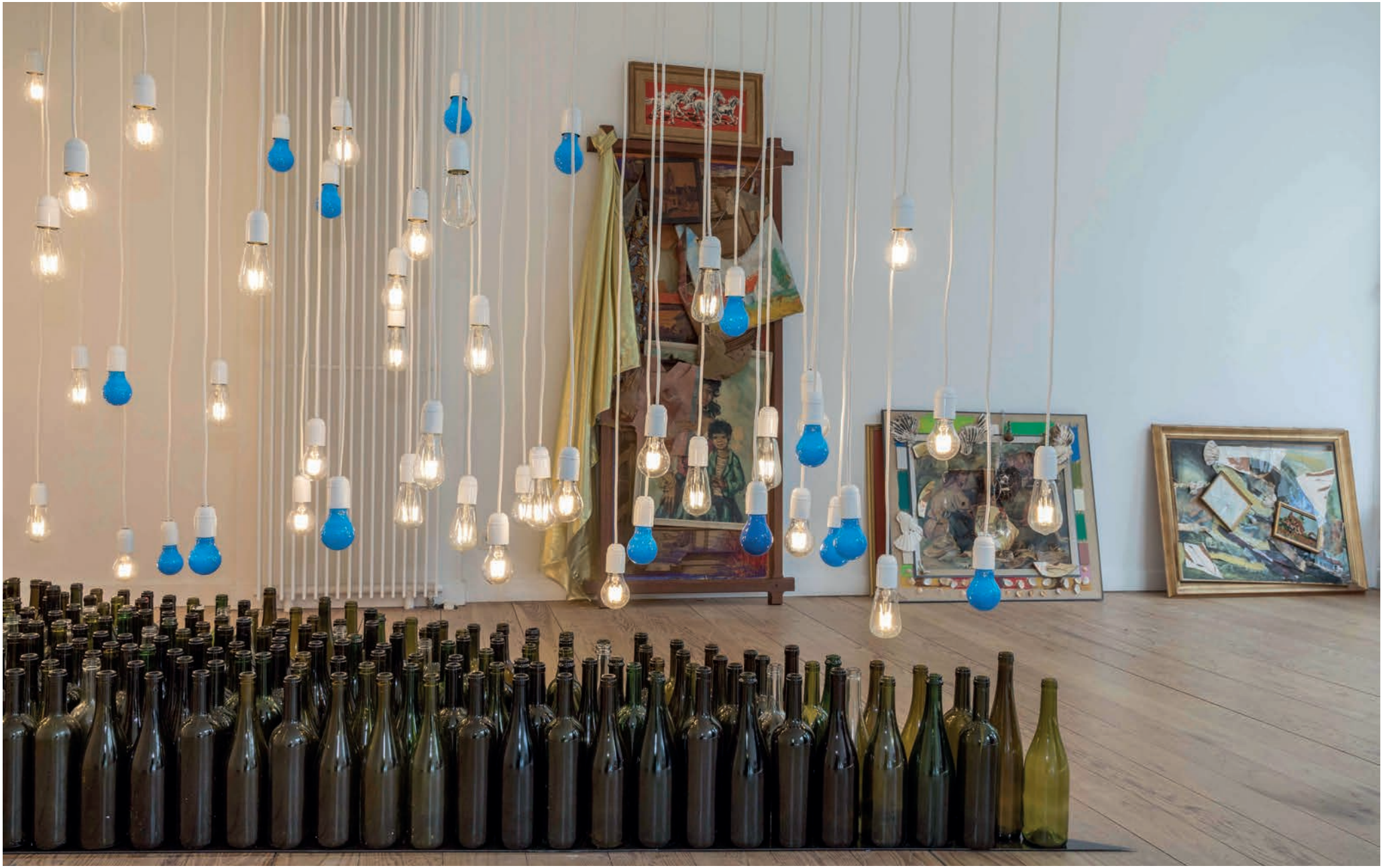
Institute of Contemporary Art, *Abigail DeVille: No Space Hidden (Shelter)*, Los Angeles, USA, 2017

Institute of Contemporary Art, *Abigail DeVille: No Space Hidden (Shelter)*, Los Angeles, USA, 2017

ICA Miami, *Lift Every Voice and Sing (amerikanskie gorki)*, USA, 2017

Momentum 9 - The Nordic Biennial of Contemporary Art, *A Picture of the Universe in Clock Time*, Moss, Norway, 2017

Michel Rein, *Chaos or Community?*, Brussels, Belgium, 2017



Michel Rein, *Chaos or Community?*, Brussels, Belgium, 2017

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Hauser & Wirth, *Revolution in the Making: Abstract Sculpture by Women, 1947 – 2016*, Los Angeles, USA, 2016

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Socrates Sculpture Park, *Landmark*, Queens, New York, USA, 2016

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Former Peale Museum, *Only When It's Dark Enough Can You See The Stars*, Baltimore, USA, 2016

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Former Peale Museum, *Only When It's Dark Enough Can You See The Stars*, Baltimore, USA, 2016

Michel Rein, *America*, Paris, France, 2015

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601 Artspace, *From the Ruins…* (cur. Jane Ursula Harris), New York, USA, 2015

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Theatrical installation, *A Mid Summer Nights Dream* by William Shakespeare (dir. by Peter Sellers), Stratford Festival, Ontario, Canada, 2014

Theatrical installation, *A Mid Summer Nights Dream* by William Shakespeare (dir. by Peter Sellers), Stratford Festival, Ontario, Canada, 2014


Studio Museum Harlem, *The Artist's Voice: Abigail DeVille's The New Migration: Living Dead*, NY, USA, 2014

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Studio Museum Harlem, *The Artist's Voice: Abigail DeVille's The New Migration: Living Dead*, NY, USA, 2014

Palazzo Contarini Polignac, *Future Generation Prize Exhibition*, The 55th Venice Biennial, Venice, 2013

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Rogers Park, *XXXXXXX, Iceberg Projects*, Chicago, IL, USA, 2013

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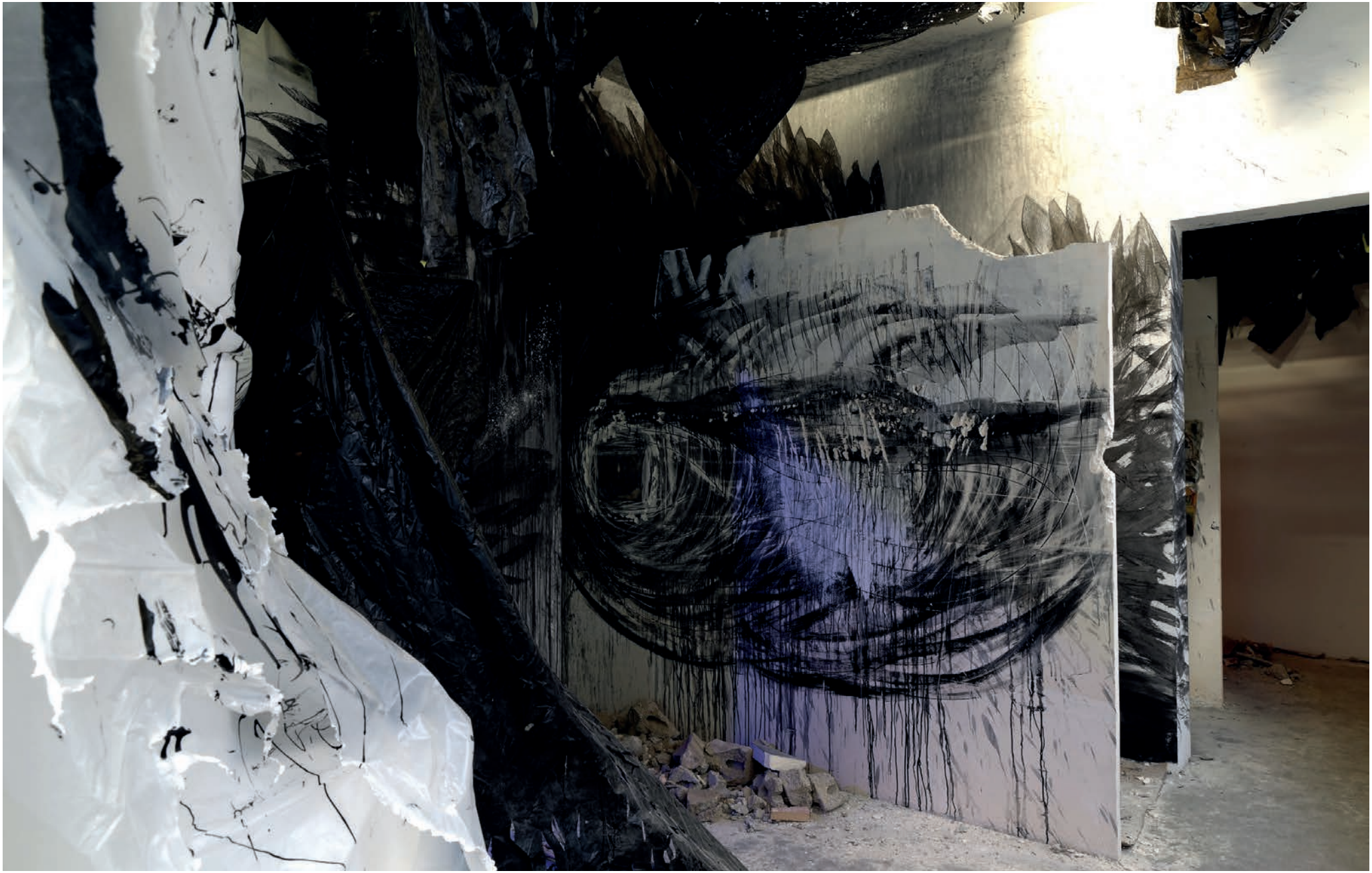

Michel Rein, *Invisible Men: Beyond the Veil*, Paris, France, 2013

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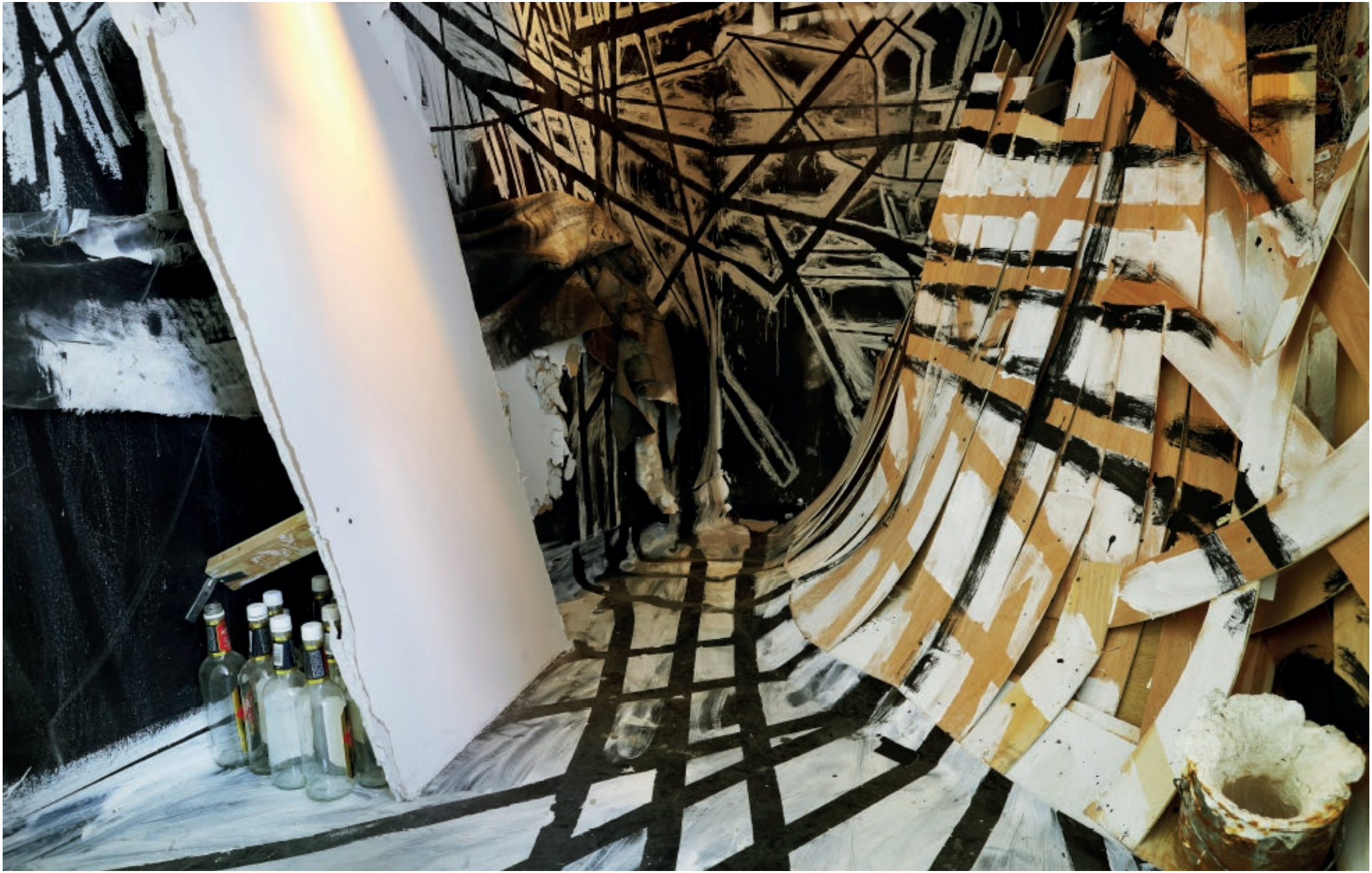
Michel Rein, *Invisible Men: Beyond the Veil*, Paris, France, 2013

Artspeak, *Gastown Follies*, Vancouver, BC, Canada, 2013

The New Museum Triennial, *The Ungovernables*, New York, USA, 2012



The New Museum Triennial, *The Ungovernables*, New York, USA, 2012


Pinchuk Art Centre, Future Generation Prize Exhibition, Kiev, Ukraine, 2012

Pinchuk Art Centre, Future Generation Prize Exhibition, Kiev, Ukraine, 2012

Recess Gallery, *Dark Star*, New York, USA, 2010

Recess Gallery, *Dark Star*, New York, USA, 2010

Gold Mountain, *Marginal Utility*, Philadelphia, PE, USA, 2010

The Bronx River Art Center, *Black Gold*, New York, 2009

The Bronx River Art Center, *Black Gold*, New York, 2009

# *ARTWORKS*
# *ŒUVRES*

***Jeffersonian Vacuum***, 2020
vacuum cleaner, mannequin, rope, wood, plastic, cardboard rolls, paper prints
aspirateur, mannequin, cordes, bois, plastique, rouleaux en carton, impressions papier
137 x 60 x 50 cm (53.94 x 23.62 x 19.69 in.)
unique artwork

DEVI21065

***As the World Turns***, 2020
figurines in porcelain, glass, plaster, wood, oil pastels
figurines en porcelaine, verre, plâtre, bois, pastels gras
120 x 60 x 60 cm (47.24 x 23.62 x 23.62 in.)
unique artwork

Coll. Antoine de Galbert

***We the People***, 2017-2018
mannequin, mirrors, cardboard, iron, scales, wooden statuettes
mannequin, miroirs, carton, fer, balance, statuettes en bois
159 x 63 x 63 cm (62.6 x 24.8 x 24.8 in.)
unique artwork

Coll. Antoine de Galbert

***Native Tongue***, 2020
mannequin, wooden masks, iron wire, spoons, sewing machine, cast iron clock/pans, glass bottles
mannequin, masques en bois, fil de fer, cuillères, machine à coudre, horloge/casserole en fonte, bouteilles en verre
180 x 90 x 38 cm (70.87 x 35.43 x 14.96 in.)
unique artwork

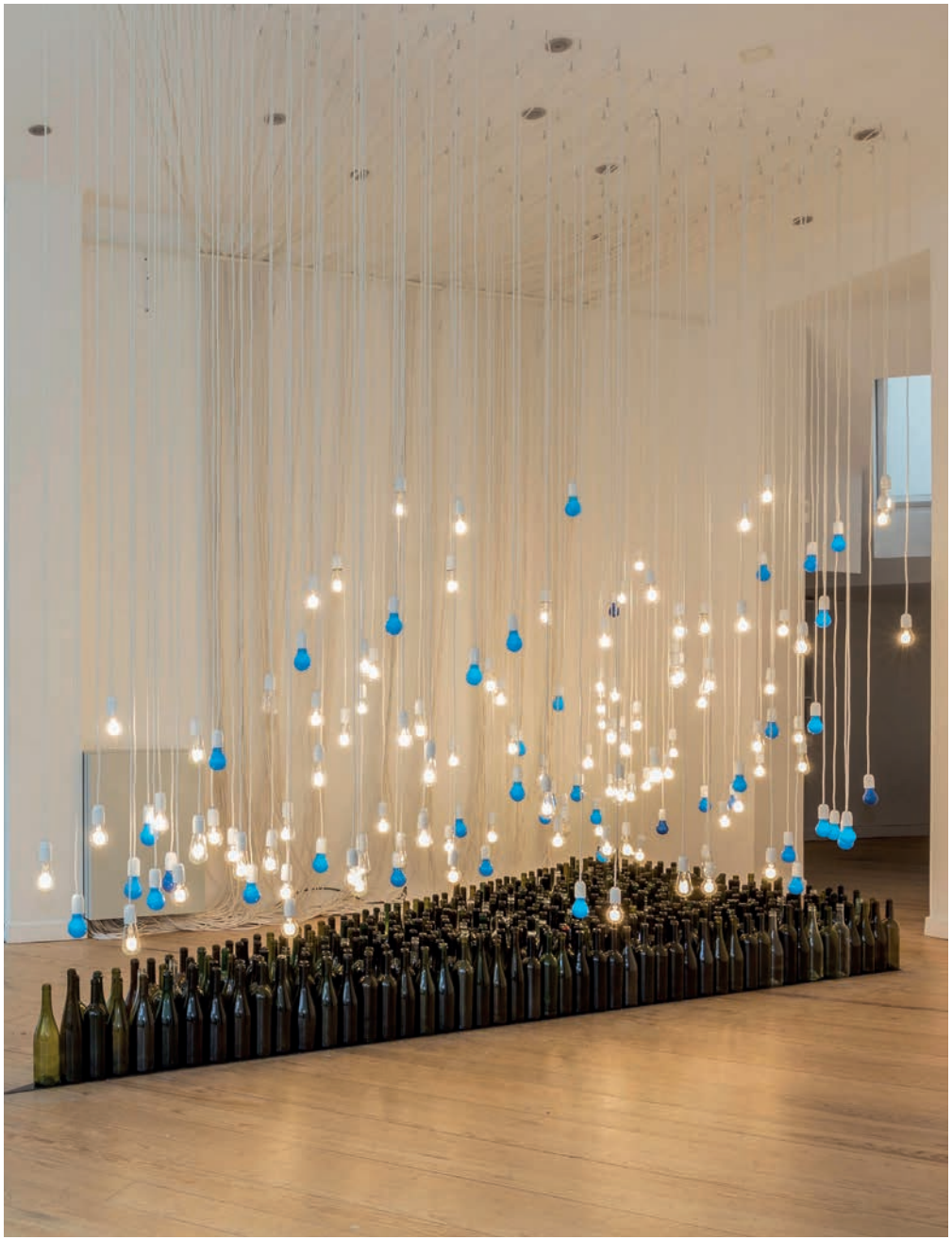
DEVI21069

***Sarcophagus blue***, 2017
boat, mannequin legs, tights, wood, rope, painting
bateau, jabes de mannequin, collants, bois, corde, peinture
variable dimension
unique artwork

DEVI17048

***Leopold II Regi Belgarum 1865-1909 Patria Memor***, 2017
mixed media
technique mixte
225 x 131 x 112 cm (88.6 x 51.6 x 44.1 in.)
unique artwork

DEVI17049



***.0001 Pour Cent***, 2017
glass bottles, hanging light bulbs
bouteilles en verre, ampoules suspendues
370 x 400 x 175 cm (145.7 x 157.5 x 68.9 in.)
unique artwork

DEVI17055

***Heaven***, 2017
mirrors, glass pieces, plexiglass
miroirs, morceaux de verre, plexiglas
125 x 325 x 35 cm (49.2 x 128 x 13.8 in.)
unique artwork

DEVI17054

***Day 2***, 2017
shells, pastel, light bulb, wire, porcelain, figurines, oil painting
coquillages, pastel, ampoule, fil de fer, porcelaine, figurines, peinture à l'huile
82 x 107 x 24 cm (32.3 x 42.1 x 9.4 in.)
unique artwork

DEVI17051

***Civil Court Cosmological Recompence (7 Judges)***, 2017
mixed media
technique mixte
325 x 45 x 60 cm (128 x 17.7 x 23.6 in.)
unique artwork

DEVI17053

***La Loge Harlem***, 2017
archival photographs, shoes, string, mirror shards, polyurethane, glass, wood
photographies d'archives, chaussures, corde, éclats de mirroir, polyuerthane, verre, bois
96,5 x 76,2 x 15 cm (38 x 30 x 5,9 in.)
unique artwork

Kadist Collection, San Francisco, USA

***Luther***, 2017
reclaimed wood panel, seashells, oil pastel, plants, archival photographs, rusted pot
panneau de bois récupéré, coquillage, pastel à l'huile, plantes, phographies d'archives, pot rouillé
137,2 x 99 cm (54 x 39 in.)
unique artwork

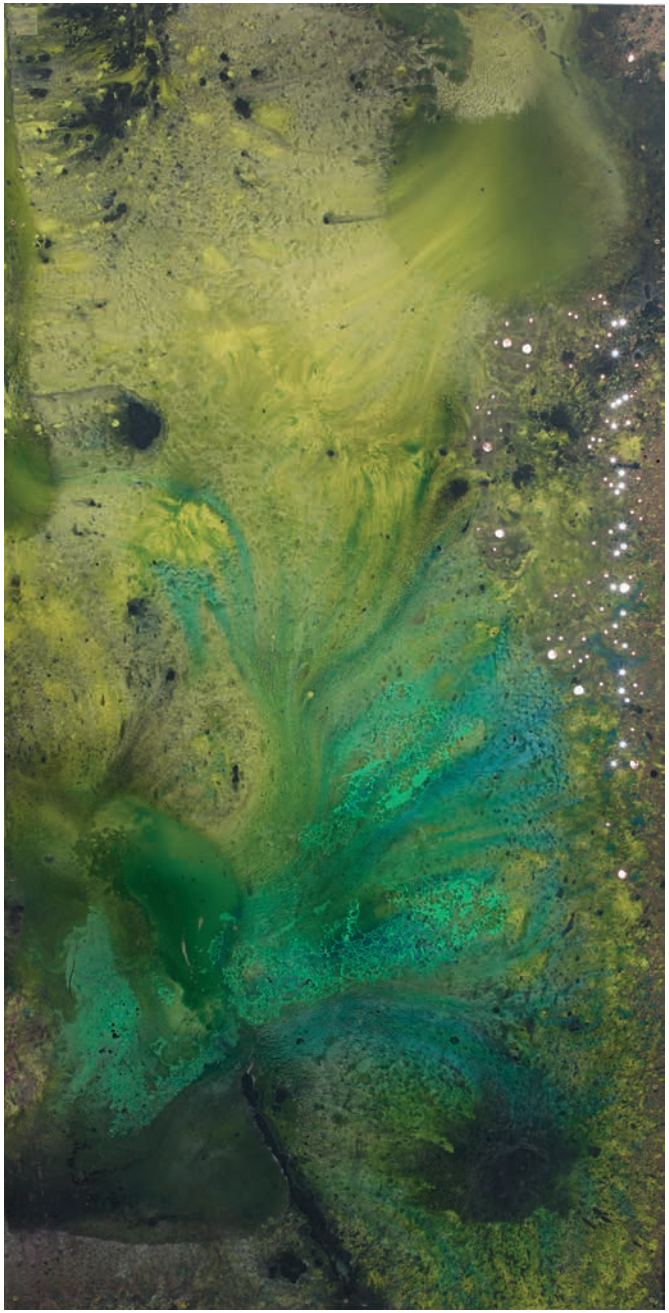
Private collection

***Two Dancers on a Stage Lady Liberty***, 2017
archival photographs, wooden sash window, broken glass, mirror shards, paper, mannequin hand, tape, artificial plants, fake money, polyurethane, charcoal
photographies d'archives, fenêtre à guillotine en bois, verre brisé, éclats de miroir, papier, main de mannequin, scotch, faux billets, polyurethane, fusain
96,5 x 76,2 x 8 cm (38 x 30 x 3.1 in.)
unique artwork

Private collection

***High Spirits (tenenment)***, 2017
plywood panel, vintage assortment glass bottles, wooden sash windows, charcoal, mirror shards, archival photographs, strobe lights
panneaux en contreplaqué, assortiment de bouteilles vintage en verre, fenêtres à guillotine, fusain, éclats de miroir, photographies d'archives, lumière stroboscopique
187,9 x 113 x 30 cm (73.6 x 44.5 x 11.8 in.)
unique artwork

Private collection

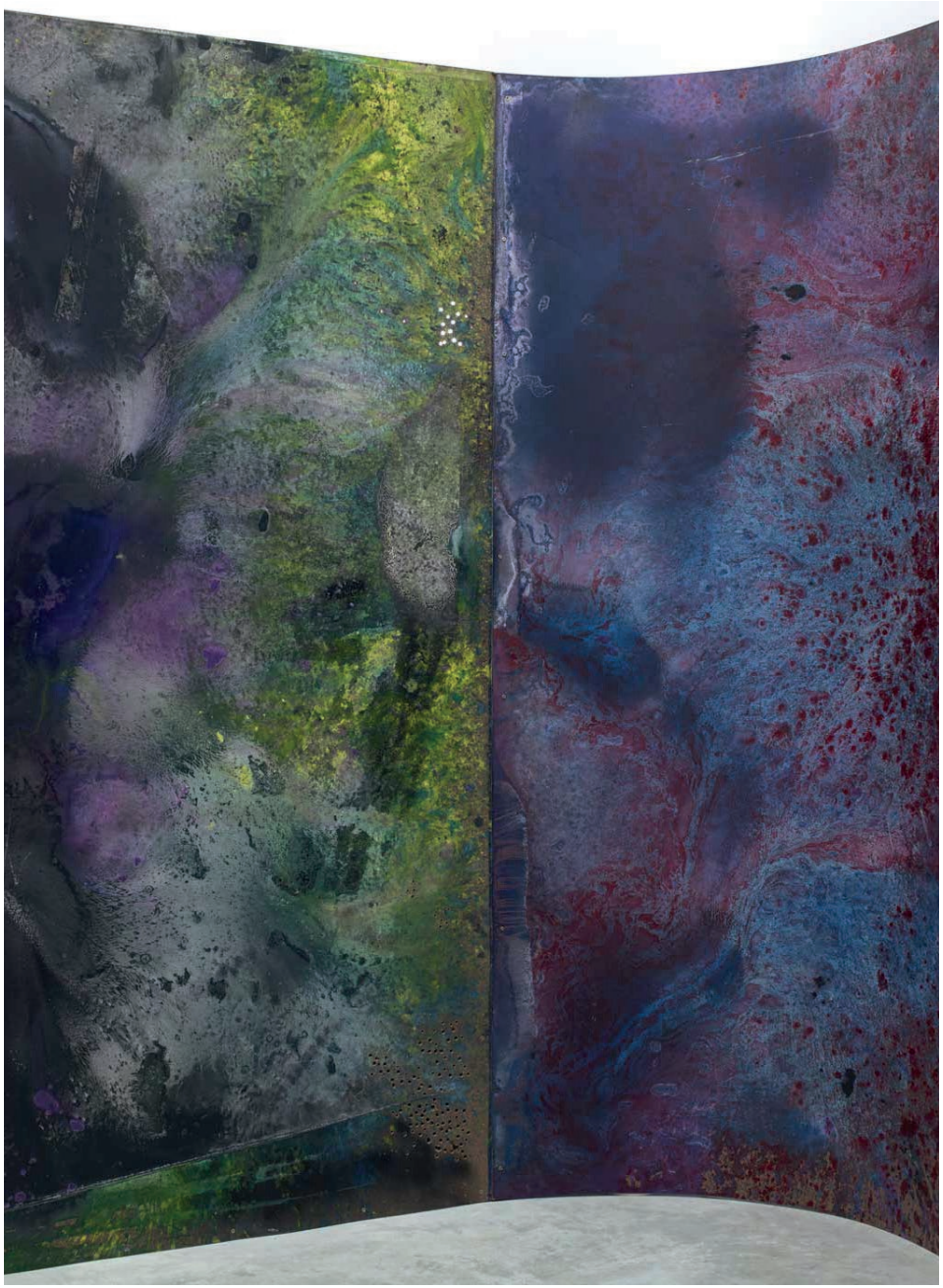


***America #03,*** 2015
acrylic paint on masonite, wood, flexible ribbon light
peinture acrylique sur isorel, bois, ruban de led
244 x 122 x 5 cm (96 x 48 x 1.9 in.)
unique artwork

DEVI15021

***America #10,*** 2015
acrylic paint on masonite, wood, flexible ribbon light
peinture acrylique sur isorel, bois, ruban de led
244 x 122 x 5 cm (96 x 48 x 1.9 in.)
unique artwork

DEVI15028



***America #06***, 2015
acrylic paint on masonite, wood, flexible ribbon light
peinture acrylique sur isorel, bois, ruban de led
244 x 244 x 5 cm (96 x 96 x 1.9 in.)
unique artwork

DEVI15024

***Untitled***, 2015
mixed media
technique mixte
70 x 240 x 180 cm (27.6 x 94.5 x 70.9 in.)
unique artwork

DEVI15015

***Black Flag (Children of the Corn)***, 2015
wood, plastic film, cardboard, paint
bois, film plastique, carton, détrempe
177 x 200 x 89,5 cm (69.7 x 78.7 x 35 in.)
unique artwork

CNAP Collection (FR)

***Talismán***, 2015
wooden door, 4 broomsticks
porte en bois, 4 balais
200 x 70 x 4 cm (78.7 x 27.5 x 1.6 in.)
unique artwork

Pinault Collection (FR)

***Nobody knows my name***, 2015
two wooden panels, fluorescent tubes, mirrors
deux panneaux de bois, tubes fluorescents, miroirs
200 x 90 cm (78 x 35 in.)
unique artwork

Private collection

***Negation : Dusk to Dust***, 2013
scattered debris, canvas, American flags, white oil paint, plaster, plaster dust, red light bulb
débris, toile, drapeaux américains, peinture blanche, plâtre, poussière de plâtre, ampoule rouge
around 250 x 90 cm (98 x 35 in.)
unique artwork

Private collection

***Sun Ra Orb***, 2013
broken mirror fragments, chicken wire, light bulbs, accumulated debris, wood, charcoal
fragments de miroirs brisés, colliers de serrage serflex, ampoules, débris accumulés, bois, charbon de bois
120 x 50 x 50 cm (47.2 x 19.7 x 19.7 in.)
unique artwork

Private collection

***Invisible Women***, 2012
mannequin parts, trash bags, accumulated heirlooms
mannequin, sacs poubelles, objets accumulés
105 x 73 x 90 cm (41 x 29 x 35 in.)
unique artwork

Private collection

***Harlem Tower of Babel***, 2012
reclaimed lumber, accumulated debris, family heirlooms
bois de construction récuperé, débris accumulés, objets de famille
490 x 180 x 180 cm (193 x 71 x 71 in.)
unique artwork

DEVI15018

***$Tree***, 2011
found wood panel, dirt, gold paint, gold pigment, xerox copied American currency, polyurethane, cinder block base
panneau de bois récupéré, terre, peinture dorée, pigment doré, photocopies de billets américains, polyuréthane, support en parpaing
140 x 130 x 40 cm (55.11 x 51.18 x 15.75 in.)
unique artwork

Private collection

***449***, 2007
canvas, lotto tickets, ink, acrylic medium, enamel paint, paper, Xerox copies, cardboard, crayon, marker
toile, billets de loto, encre, acrylique, émail, papier, photocopies, carton, crayon, marqueur
20 x 30,5 cm (7.87 x 11.81 in.)
unique artwork

Private collection

# *PRESS*
# *PRESSE*

LA Los Angeles Review of Books RB

ABIGAIL DEVILLE
LARB -
-Los Angeles Review of Books
23 avril 2026

# The Precarious Deaths of Monuments

*The afterlives of Confederate memorials and the ideological contradictions of American commemorative culture.*

By Jillian McManemin • April 23, 2026

ART & ARCHITECTURE POLITICS

IN THE HEAT of July 2020, at the height of the Black Lives Matter protests, a statue of Christopher Columbus in Baltimore was toppled to the sound of electric cheers. The statue was then dragged from the square and thrown into the Inner Harbor. This was one incident amid a wave of movements focused on the history and legacy of colonialism, the Confederacy, slavery, and racism. It was an incredible moment, so exciting and full of hope; it felt like toppling these symbols of past horrors might help redress inequalities in the present.



Just two days following its descent into the harbor, I watched footage of the statue rising out of the water. A scuba diving team had been hired by the Knights of Columbus to locate the fragments, which were fished out by crane, pieced back together, and 3D-scanned to produce a mold from which a replica was eventually made. The statue was "brought back to life," in the words of the local Fox News affiliate. On February 5, 2026, *The Hill* reported that "White House officials signed a loan agreement Wednesday with the Italian American Organizations United to secure a reconstructed statue of Columbus thrown into the Baltimore Harbor."

Many such monuments—particularly those to the Confederacy—were contested long before 2020, but that year brought mainstream awareness, debate, and a wave of removals. The years since have shown how difficult it is to kill them, just how precarious their deaths can be. Monuments cannot die unless the ideologies that built them also die, which doesn't seem possible in 2026 in the United States of America, where inequality, racism, and the fascist Right are ascendant. While neo-Confederate groups have seen their numbers go down, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center, pro-monument groups have been gaining momentum, in a sense taking the place of the former. The defense and reinstallation of Confederate and colonial monuments are symptoms of persistent white supremacy, alongside the more violent examples of the daily terror committed by ICE agents and endless imperialist wars.

In the United States, contested and toppled monuments have been moved around, absorbed into private collections, reinstalled in cemeteries and golf courses, placed into storage, and put on display. The Robert E. Lee monument in Dallas was relocated to the Lajitas Golf Resort near Terlingua, Texas, in 2021. The Reconciliation Monument, a Confederate memorial removed from Arlington National Cemetery in 2023, is slated for repair and reinstallation by 2027, at a cost of $10 million. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth stated on X:

> I'm proud to announce that Moses Ezekiel's beautiful and historic sculpture—often referred to as "The Reconciliation Monument"—will be rightfully be [*sic*] returned to Arlington National Cemetery near his burial site.
>
> It never should have been taken down by woke lemmings. Unlike the Left, we don't believe in erasing American history—we honor it.

Another, rather different staging of the afterlife of Confederate statues, the landmark exhibition titled *MONUMENTS.* at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles and the Brick, gathers 10 of these decommissioned monuments and displays them alongside works by 19 contemporary artists. There's a disjointed quality in encountering these monuments in an art space. Perhaps that's the point. More than the question of Confederate monuments themselves and the ideologies they represent, placing them inside the museum, alongside contemporary artworks, asks the question of the relationship between these two distinct types of objects—artworks and

monuments—and introduces a third, crucial category: ruins. Upon entering, the viewer first encounters fragments from the base of the Robert E. Lee monument, previously installed in Richmond, Virginia. One of the largest Confederate monuments in the American South, (though it pales in comparison to the gargantuan bas-relief Stone Mountain outside Atlanta) and the first to be installed on Richmond's Monument Avenue, in 1890, it became one of the most representative symbols of the 2020 uprisings. A gathering place for many actions, the monument was heavily graffitied, with activists renaming its plaza "Marcus-David Peters Circle" as a memorial to a Richmond resident killed by police in 2018. *The New York Times* named the altered monument one of the "most influential works of American protest art since World War II." Many argued for keeping the monument in its transformed state as a permanent public art project, for the object to take on another life, but the statue was removed by the city in September 2021, the pedestal in February 2022. It is currently owned by the Black History Museum and Cultural Center of Virginia.

It's strange to see these fragments, as if they're from a long-lost civilization rather than one being furiously debated. One of the reasons that we are drawn to ruins is the distance they conjure. We get to look at a death and stand askance, experiencing what frightens us at a comfortable remove. We take in destruction and persistence simultaneously. We uncover the desire for obliteration together with the desire to preserve. In *Irresistible Decay: Ruins Reclaimed* (1997), Michael S. Roth writes, "The word *ruin* has its origins in the idea of falling and has long been associated with fallen stones. When we frame an object as a ruin, we reclaim that object *from* its fall into decay and oblivion and often *for* some kind of cultural attention and care that, in a sense, elevates its value."

I imagine the amount of money spent to get the monuments to Los Angeles, the attention and care required. It is a strange fate: because of their political contentiousness, the Confederate monuments have been removed from public view, and yet vast resources go into preserving and housing them. Looking at a very different context, Arna Mačkić writes in *Mortal Cities and Forgotten Monuments* (2016):

> Due to their locations, use of material, construction methods and sheer size, [the Communist monuments in the Balkans] have proved to be almost impossible to destroy, which is why a large number of them could not be demolished during the Yugoslavian Civil War in the 1990s. [...] The majority of them are either damaged or left to the effects of nature. The monuments can now be considered tombstones that are reminiscent of the land that once used to be called Yugoslavia.

By contrast, in the United States, we all walk around in "Civil War purgatory," a state of irresolution captured in the simultaneous removal and preservation of these statues. At MOCA, a monument to Jefferson Davis is displayed at an angle, on its side, in a simulation of a toppled monument. The statue was brought down by protesters in June 2020 in Richmond, after being splashed with pink paint. Seeing it lying there in this condition, one can't help but imagine—an impossibility in the current political landscape—what if these Confederate statues had been left to molder on the ground where they were toppled?



With the upheaval among memorials in the United States, proposals began to emerge for the making of new monuments. Organizations like Monument Lab, which aspires to "move toward a monument landscape that better acknowledges a fuller history of our country," exemplify this agenda. There is an obvious appeal to this vision of repopulating that landscape to represent a more just view of history, to include women and people of color. But the current enthusiasm for rebooting American commemorative culture raises critical questions, particularly because it is very often from contemporary artists and art institutions that the new monuments are being sought. Why this anxiety to refill rather than leave it empty? What happens when we replace one monument with another instead of embracing the radical potential of absence? In turning to art for new monuments, do we risk sacrificing the oppositional power of making art?

In their recent book *Monumental: How a New Generation of Artists Is Shaping the Memorial Landscape* (2025), Cat Dawson argues that several artworks created in response to monumentality, and specifically within the context of the history of American slavery (including Kara Walker's *A Subtlety*, a massive sculpture of a sphinx made of sugar, installed in the Domino Sugar Factory in Brooklyn, New York, in 2014), deserve recognition as monuments themselves. Dawson writes:

> [T]here is both a formal case to be made for, and political imperative to, recognizing these forms not just as monumental but as monuments. To understand these objects as having the same claim to the term as more traditional instances do challenges the kinds of exclusionary thinking that has long underwritten the relationships between monuments and domination.

Yet art's power lies precisely in its capacity for dissent, to question and refuse official narratives and symbols. Monuments, whether we agree with them or not, seek to efficiently express the values of the state. Art is meant to stir critical thought; it offers the viewer independence through an encounter. Art, in other words, is always subject to and meant for interpretation. Meanwhile, one of the main functions of a monument is to be toppled: it is an expression of both state power and its limit. When art is destroyed, however, it symbolizes the death of thought, like a book burning. This doesn't mean all monuments are "bad"—there are those that would be (or were) tragic to lose: for example, the oft-mentioned Buddhas of Bamiyan, a UNESCO World Heritage Site destroyed by the Taliban in 2001; or the National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama, designed by the Equal Justice Initiative, the only monument specifically dedicated to the thousands of Black American victims of lynching.

But it does mean there is a vital distinction between art and monuments—their function and lack of function.

The art in *MONUMENTS* is most successful when it doesn't, to quote from the exhibition text,

"broaden the field of what a monument can be," but when it actively opposes the form. Leonardo Drew's *Number 363* (2023) is a 900-pound cube constructed with layers of cotton, drawing on the history of minimalist and process-based sculpture as well as the history of slavery. It evokes a whitewashed pedestal. Even with its dense set of allusions, it's a meditative work, an object that opens itself to the viewer.

Abigail Deville's 2025 installation *Deo Vindice (Orion's Cabinet)*—whose Latin title references the motto of the Confederacy, translating to "With God as Our Defender"—utilizes a vast assemblage of china cabinets, lit with colored lights, and covered in salt, pig blood, and charred material to evoke the burning of Richmond at the end of the Civil War. Deville creates a series of doors that the viewer cannot enter. The piece cannot be viewed all at once, and its fragmentation, its shadows and light, is crucial.

A suite of photographs by Nona Faustine, taken between 2012 and 2024, conveys the body as subject and object and pulls from the history of feminist performance art, as she deploys her body as material. Faustine implicates New York City in the slave trade, standing naked at various sites involved with that history, including Wall Street, the Dutch Reform Cemetery in Brooklyn, and the Tweed Courthouse. She embodies both a ghost of history, acting as a stand-in for the many who have died, and a present-tense reminder of how these histories are still alive.

Stan Douglas's *Birth of a Nation* takes the eponymous 1915 D. W. Griffith film, which follows two families from the North and South through the Civil War and Reconstruction, and adds new scenes, sequences, and characters played by Black actors (instead of the blackface originals), flipping black-and-white into full color. He inserts, distorts, and alters, cutting into the iconography to dismantle it, splicing it up into five channels. The original *Birth of a Nation* was famously screened at the White House by Woodrow Wilson, but instead of creating a new cinematic monument, the Douglas version punctures the old with remixing.

The most exciting moment in the exhibition came while I was walking toward the large-scale equestrian monument of Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson: out of the corner of my eye, I saw *A Suspension of Hostilities* (2019) by Hank Willis Thomas. The sculpture is a 1969 Dodge Charger painted bright neon orange with a Confederate flag on the roof, a replica of the General Lee car from the TV series *The Dukes of Hazzard* (1979–85), flipped onto its front bumper, standing upright. This is art. It's something that knocks you sideways. It interrupts a narrative and does something else with it. The effect is entirely different from *The Embrace*, Thomas's 2023 monument to Martin Luther King Jr. and Coretta Scott King for the city of Boston, which recreates the arms of the couple from an image of them hugging. Even with its surreal abstraction, *The Embrace* feels stagnant: it doesn't provide a new perspective on their history or facilitate a space for people to gather (just the opposite—its appearance garnered many jokes). All the criticality, supercharged aesthetics, and rebelliousness that typically characterize the artist's work were lost in the monumental form.



While *A Suspension of Hostilities* both recreates and reorients an iconic object from popular culture, Kara Walker's *Unmanned Drone* (2023), on view at the Brick, goes further: it remixes an actual Confederate monument. In 2021, Walker was deeded a decommissioned statue of Stonewall Jackson riding his horse, Little Sorrel, into battle; the monument was previously located in Charlottesville, Virginia, the site of the Unite the Right rally in 2017. Walker deconstructed the 13-foot-high, 16-foot-long statue and reassembled it into a mutated, twisted form, an inverted centaur. She describes making cuts to the horse as butchering meat. There's an uncanniness to the aliveness of this object, and a testament to what effort, what precision, it takes to change a monument, kill it, and make it art.

Through Walker's dissection and reconfiguring of Jackson into a contorted figure, twisting in agony, we're able to enter the brutal history of the Civil War from a different vantage point. When art is effective, it goes beyond itself, and the sculpture's title suggests how the Confederate monument-as-material can open onto other wars. Horses were used as technologies of war, vital to the colonization of the American continent, and the work suggests a through line to drones being used in Gaza and Ukraine today, and to the other modern technologies of surveillance and domination—tanks, robot dogs, facial recognition software.

*Unmanned Drone* works because it takes a monument and turns it into art, not unlike the collaborative transformation of the Robert E. Lee monument into Marcus-David Peters Circle. There is something charged about Walker's sculpture. It has a sex drive, a death drive, an aliveness that monuments do not and cannot possess. Where monuments are restricted, sculpture is porous, more affected by temporality and site specificity. Sculpture is easier to kill. It addresses the boundary between internal and external, the body and the melancholy that accompanies it. Sculpture provokes questions of mortality and immortality because sculpture exists in relation to the body, in the life and death of materials and of us: we need more autonomy, creativity, and freedom; we need more sculpture, not more monuments.

The ancient Roman method of disposing of an unwanted statue, a monument to a defeated enemy's king or god, involved decapitating it, denting it with a sword, and finally throwing it into a body of water as the final step in killing the symbolic power of the object. This was to prevent resurrections and hauntings. An ideological tug-of-war coalesces around our monuments, but it's important to remember that it cannot be fought with the objects themselves. The monuments to the Confederacy remain resuscitated, unable to be covered over with vines or blurred under layers of graffiti, unable yet to become softened into the remnants of a dead empire.

⌑

*Featured image: Edward V. Valentine, Jefferson Davis memorial, 1907, bronze, 98 × 54 × 48 in. The Valentine Museum, Richmond, Virginia. Photo by Fredrik Nilsen.*

ARTFORUM

Abigail DeVille
Artforum
April, 2023
By Darla Migan

**Abigail DeVille, *Lunar Capsule*, 2022**, steel, aluminum, fabric, gold leaf, found chair, recorder, acrylic paint, approximately 75 × 82 × 82". Photo: Argenis Apolinario.

## Abigail DeVille

BRONX MUSEUM OF THE ARTS

Abigail DeVille's exhibition, appropriately titled "Bronx Heavens," begins by offering visitors an invitation to board *Lunar Capsule* (all works cited, 2022). The quirky *Mork & Mindy*–style spacecraft, with its gilded interior and Rococoesque chair—an item of furniture that conjures an elder's sitting room, where family history is often passed down—has traveled to many cultural events and festivals, collecting stories from people of all ages that have now become treasured records of daily life on Earth.

A voice-activated microphone within *Lunar Capsule* captures our narratives, which are eventually broadcast through a media player connected to the headphones of a separate work, *Black Monolith*, a telephone booth–like object that glows with numinous blue and purple lights. A direct refutation of the idea of a singular experience of Blackness, *Monolith* operates like an inverse of Adrian Piper's *What It's Like, What It Is #3*, 1991, a rectangular white cube containing a series of videos in which a Black man plainly states, among other things, that he is "not shiftless," "not childish," and "not evil" in order to challenge any stereotypical ideas a white and presumably liberal museum-going audience might have about Black people.

An otherworldly blue radiance suffuses the exhibition, representing the universe. Outer space has been a prominent theme in DeVille's work since 2008. Take *Cosmos Gate*, a pyramid of repurposed television sets on which video loops of old home movies made by Bronx residents play. (The artist, who works in the borough, was also born and raised there—her deep affection for this section of New York, and for the city as a whole, is absolutely clear throughout this show.) DeVille even reorients Gotham's origin myths in her sculpture *Halve Maen*, a salty reconfiguration of the eponymous ship on which the English explorer Henry Hudson sailed. The vessel traveled on the river—the one he likely died in or around—that now bears his name. The object, which calls to mind a precariously tilted-looking hobbyhorse, is twisted up in damaged clothes and a tangled United States flag, all of which is topped off by a fiberglass effigy of a deer's head. The work is a funny yet bleak meditation on colonial rapaciousness and the brutal histories of antique regimes, but it is also a monument to better futures forged by someone who wants to build a brighter and more expansive tomorrow. *Ascension (meditation)*, a stratospheric installation comprising Masonite panels painted in blastoff shades of violet blue and punctuated by salvaged bits of home fixtures—windows, a screen door—seems as if it is somehow reflecting the light bouncing off the ancient seafloor (which can now be seen up close, thanks to recent advances in imaging technology). Or perhaps the work is a rendering of an older, moribund version of our galaxy.

In a lot of ways, "Bronx Heavens" functions as an open-source archive that honors and energizes the lives of those who occupy the titular borough—including family members, scholars, and other artists who have vitalized DeVille's own existence for decades. Her show takes the idea of going "uptown" as a way of entering a divine realm, but one grounded in and nurtured by the goings-on of everyday life.

While New York is giving us a lot of exhibitions by Black artists with work that seems as though it was inspired by the American South or the Caribbean, it is refreshing to experience art that channels the joy and curiosity of living in a place that could only be expressed by a lovingly devoted "city kid." Whether we consider the multiple generations of Southern Black families that moved to the Bronx in waves during the Great Migration or those immigrants from all over the world who are still arriving in the borough today, we might ask what those roots constitute, given the ways they have been dragged across the sea and continue slipping through the universe. For some viewers, DeVille's exhibition could be a metaphor for the Bronx itself—a place that belongs to myriad interconnected systems that may only now be coming into view, like the light of exploding stars from eons ago.

— *Darla Migan*

HYPERALLERGIC

Abigail DeVille
Hyperallergic
August 2nd, 2018
By Seph Rodney

# ABIGAIL DEVILLE

## An Exhibition that Frustrates Our Grasp of Abstraction

Installation view of Shinique Smith's "Forgiving Strands" (2014–present) at *Out of Easy Reach*, Stony Island Arts Bank (all installation images taken in Stony Island Arts Bankd are by David C. Sampson, and courtesy Stony Island Arts Bank.)

CHICAGO — Given a title that lends itself to semantic play, *Out of Easy Reach*, the multi-site exhibition of 24 artists at the DePaul Art Museum, Stony Island Arts Bank, and Gallery 400 offers an easy on-ramp for entering the critical flow of conversation. For one thing, there's the work really is practically not close at hand, but spread throughout Chicago. It took me the better part of a day to travel by public transportation to see all the venues in geographically separate areas of the city: the West Loop, Lincoln Park, and the South Side. (Plus there's some easter eggs for those who aren't worn out by traveling: more work by three of the featured artists, Sheree Hovsepian, Caroline Kent, and Abigail Deville, at Monique Meloche gallery.) The show, curated by Allison M. Glenn, conversely has a fairly easily graspable conceit: it calls out the nature and significance of contributions of women (per the wall text) "from the Black and Latina diaspora" to the (ongoing) conversation around abstraction. All indications are that by "abstraction" Glenn means visual art that does not visually illustrate or represent that which we see and experience in real life. So, the work is not within easy reach, but its ostensible importance is. I agree with this premise.

It is about time for the US arts community to have the opportunity to seriously consider the artistic endowments made to this genre of visual artwork by women of color, because they are unique, poised, and take the discussion around abstraction to useful places. Seeing this show I discovered that the conversation about materiality is widened by the work of Shinique Smith who who spreads out all over the gallery space in a way that mimics organic forms. And that discourse is made more complex by Abigail DeVille's use of historicized imagery that indicates the racialized, socio-political realities that underpin her works of jagged, splintery collages. Still, though this exhibition ostensibly has a unifying theme, the three main spaces present a variety of tastes and approaches in a way that feels like ungainly curation which ultimately does not clarify how these women artists now steer the conversation.

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Installation view of Shinique Smith's "Bale Variant No. 0022" (2012) at Sony Island Arts Bank

The place where I felt the presentation was most focused and convincing was easily Stony Island. Its building feels like it was once a space of opulence, perhaps a theater, with its high ceilings, nooks, and plaster facades. Thus, wandering around it on an early Saturday afternoon made me feel like I was investigating a space that held secrets and stories. (It was actually once a savings and loan bank.) Here I was able to turn a corner in my understanding of Shinique Smith's work. I have seen her work before but hadn't been able to form an opinion or conviction about it. But her installation in Stony Bank seems to be about taking over the space, reclaiming it through her room-size installations of stuffed fabric hanging from the ceiling. But the fabric pieces don't just pervade the space without some reciprocity — Smith uses seemingly personal items as anchoring elements in her pieces, such as luggage tags. This work feels like it is concerned with transforming the space around it, making it into a hive where these cocoons can live out their gestation. The better surprise is in a second room where Smith has a stack of used clothing arrange in a pillar, a structure composed of bodily castoffs raised to the rafters, raised to the roof, thereby becoming totemic. Smith's pieces rescue the detritus of modern life from meaninglessness.

Sheree Hovsepian "Sway" (2017) in *Out of Easy Reach* at Stony Island Arts Bank

In the same space, Hovsepian presents framed, concentrated contemplations of material associated with women, such as hosiery, in which the stretched fabric creates prisms through which to see other scrims. Each of these pieces feels like a shrunken theater: lovely, layered, and lyrical. The other works she has here also add primeval graphic elements that resemble rocks and sticks interrupted by geometric plane figures. (Similar work is on display at Monique Meloche gallery, though these pieces add African masks and yarn to make visual vignettes that might be stories, might be archaeological finds.) Finishing off the exhibition is one of Barbara Chase Riboud's steles, "Little Gold Flag" (1985) an elegant and compelling détente between the oppositional factions of braided silk and crumpled, polished bronze. This part of the overall exhibition feels like it has the clearest curatorial vision.

Installation view of Barbara Chase Riboud's "Little Gold Flag" (1985) at *Out of Easy Reach*, Stony Island Arts Bank

Gallery 400 was looser in its curation, putting together graphic prints, textiles, video, and sculpture that didn't share the same concerns. It was the most challenging space, mostly because I had to switch intellectual gears from piece to piece. I appreciated Yvette Mayorga's monuments, but didn't care for them. They look like tiered, frosted cakes consisting of a smorgasbord of materials made into a festive overflow: foam, plaster, toy soldiers, hair, balloons, wood, fabric, and acrylic paint. The have a slathered-on aesthetic that reads to me as spendthrift with materials that are not, in and of themselves, particularly meaningful. Yet, one gets from her work an overflow of decorative filigree that becomes abject in its abundance — the visual equivalent of feeling sick after imbibing too much sugar. These works are too much in a way that feels genuine. And I have a similar response to Lisa Alvarado's combination of acrylic paint and fabric based on Mexican textiles, which look like very intricate tapestries hung from wood poles. The work of geometric forms and jagged lines in bright, garish colors is so finely wrought, and seems both contemporary and ancient at the same time, that they visually surprise. They also break up the gallery space by creating hallways and portals, which feels freeing.

Installation view of *Out of Easy Reach* at Gallery 400 with works by Yvette Mayorga in the foreground (image courtesy of Gallery 400)

Installation view of *Out of Easy Reach* at Gallery 400 with works by Lisa Alvarado featured (image courtesy of Gallery 400)

On the other hand the work of Torkwase Dyson, also represented here, requires different perceptual tools. Dyson is widely respected and valued for her keen intellect. Yet, even after listening to her talk about her work in an intimate group studio visit a few months ago, I still remain baffled by it. Dyson speaks about her drawings and sculpture as if what she produces are abstraction of thought that are already abstractions. She's spoken of "hyperobjects," which, near as I can tell, has to do with philosophical concepts forwarded by Timothy Morton, but are reconfigured to encompass African-American life, ecological justice, a lexicon of "shape language" that Dyson is cultivating, and graphic drawings like the ones shown here. These disparate ideas never quite cohere for me in her work. To wit, the drawings she has presented here "Untitled (Hypershape)" (2017) tend to read as small-scale, post-war, minimalist abstraction which has little to do with what she says she's interested in. This work illustrates for me the very palpable gap between what it sometimes grandiose discourse about visual work and the lived experience of it.

Installation view of Torkwase Dyson's "Untitled (Hypershape)" (2017) at Gallery 400 (image courtesy of Gallery 400)

And speaking of work belied by its rhetorical scaffolding, the work by Juliana Huxtable is the most disappointing. Her work here consists of texts that gesture in the direction of poetry but never actually rise to the occasion of being poetic. Huxtable's self-positioning as a transgender transgressive artist is rooted in an origin story that she is far too enamored with — so much so that she neglects to make content that rewards the viewer's intellectual or visual engagement. What's more, Huxtable feels shoe-horned into this exhibition since a great deal of her work and the essence of her practice is self-portraiture that works the tropes of identity.

Jennie C. Jones, "Gray Measure with Clipped Tone (Inverses)" (2016) (photo by the author for Hyperallergic)

The DePaul University Museum was the display space with the most coldly modernist feel. Jennie C. Jones fits right in here with her sculptural work "Gray Measure with Clipped Tone (Inverses)" (2016) which consists of monochrome acoustic paneling and a painted canvas that meet in the corner of a wall. It has a rigorous quietude that doesn't aim to be visually seductive, but rather is concerned with what happens when chromatically related materials that have very different textures come together. Alternatively, Abigail DeVille with her "I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me from Nobody Knows My Name" (2015) is visually boisterous. The collage work is composed of broken glass and archival photos she discovered in Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection. And for all its sharp angles and dangerous surfaces, it reads as a fragile historical document that is both partially revealed and partially hidden by becoming this aesthetic object.

Abigail DeVille, "I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me from Nobody Knows My Name" (2015) (photo by the author)

And lastly, this theme of hiding and recognition further pursued in a color photograph by Xaviera Simmons, "On Sculpture #2" (2011). The photo depicts a pair of dark-skinned hands holding up a black and white photograph in which silhouetted figures are seen jumping overboard from a small boat. The smaller photograph is held in such a way, blocking the view of what seems like a seascape, that it becomes a kind of prism, through which an historical event is superimposed on what seems like a benign image. The work might be viewed as abstraction in terms of the way it suggests that events and histories become abstracted through documentary records. The records both hide and reveal what is most often only a partial comprehension.

Abigail DeVille
Sculpture
July/August, 2018
by Susan CAnning

sculpture

# Abigail DeVille

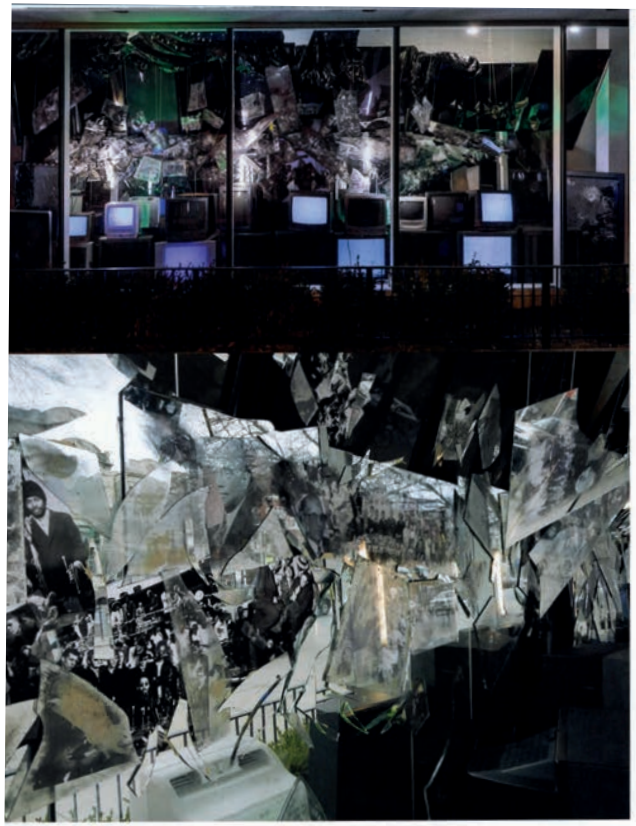
## Everyday Processions

BY SUSAN CANNING

This page and detail: *A Picture of the Universe in Clock Time*, 2017. Installation from "Momentum 9: Alienation," 9th Nordic Biennial of Contemporary Art, Moss, Norway.

Fashioned from rubbish and recycled materials, Abigail DeVille's sculptures refuse their role as art objects. Instead, her assemblages of repurposed items revel in excess and the casual circumstance of the everyday. Recognizing the potential of cast-off things to tell stories and enunciate other histories, DeVille proposes an alternative, social purpose for sculpture (often combined with performance and collaborative projects), one that entangles us in the complex relations of race, history, and class, where art and life cross paths. Directly and dramatically, she takes us to the street.

Born and raised in New York City, DeVille studied illustration and design at the Pratt Institute, attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine, and received her BFA from the Fashion Institute of Technology in 2007. At Yale, where she focused on painting (MFA, 2011), her work expanded in scale and into space, as the line between painting, sculpture, and installation became increasingly blurred. At the same time, ongoing stage and set design collaborations with Peter Sellars and Charlotte Brathwaite encouraged a theatrical bent that persists in the spectacle of her immersive environments.



**Left and detail: *Nobody Knows My Name*, 2015. Mixed media, installation at Monique Meloche Gallery, Chicago.**

Initially, DeVille's sculptures look like Modernist mash-ups referencing Cubist collage and Dada performance, Jean Tinguely's self-destructing machines and Mark di Suvero's large constructions, or even Robert Rauschenberg's and John Chamberlain's assemblages. But DeVille's nod to Modernist tradition and its (often male) protagonists remains irreverent and circumspect, even guarded. Indeed, her work archly challenges the legacy and legitimacy of Modernism by paying homage to an equally important but less heralded history drawn from African American culture and community. Her assemblages recall Simon Rodia's monumental steel, concrete, and found object constructions at Watts Towers, Noah Purifoy's sculptures recycled from the refuse of the 1965 Watts riots, John Outterbridge's assemblages of cast-off clothing and scavenged materials, and David Hammons's sculptures incorporating humble materials like hair, bottle caps, wine bottles, rags, and cigarette butts. Also in the mix are references to collages, sculptures, and installations by women artists like Betye and Alison Saar and Louise Nevelson, who likewise reclaim rejects to invest them with new meanings and narratives. In addition to sharing the approaches and working methods of these artists, DeVille is similarly engaged in presenting social and political critique.

Her process of recovering and refashioning discarded objects into large-scale assemblages and installations invites a reconsideration of the meaning assigned to the abject and the thrown-away. For DeVille, trash is not without value or significance. Indeed, these found cast-offs provide archaeological evidence of a lived past that informs present experience, embodying the invisible histories that her installations and performances expose and reclaim.

*Harlem Stories* (2014), a performance produced in conjunction with a Studio Museum residency and documented in Art21's "New York Close Up" series, follows DeVille through the streets of Harlem as she pushes a large cart filled with junk. Her activity elicits a range of reactions, while her voice-over ties her actions to street culture, the local economy of cart pushers, and urban labor. For DeVille, the streets of Harlem require intervention before their characteristic identity is completely lost to development and gentrification. Stopping at various sites along a route related to her family history, DeVille places small plaster heads—perhaps a self-portrait or the bust of a relative—as markers or offerings (one location was a former boarding house where her grandfather, a poet, had lived). Moving from personal reclamation to a more public act in the last Harlem Story, DeVille uses plastic bags and the collected junk in her cart to fashion a memorial near the East River and the Willis Avenue Bridge—the site of an undocumented African American burial ground. Here, her sculptural performance of remembering focuses on restoring dignity to the unidentified.

DeVille calls many of her pieces "processionals." These dramatic and provisional actions—like the push cart march through Harlem—are intended to make connections and engage communities with issues of concern, particularly displacement and marginalization. They advance a defiant response based in difference and dissent, problematizing the notion of "site-specific" art. While her assemblages might appear spontaneous, even haphazard, they are, in fact, the result of extensive research, coming together after much time and energy spent gathering materials.

*Half Moon* (2016), created for Socrates Sculpture Park, a former ferry slip, landfill, and illegal dump located along the East River in Queens, is a case in point. The title refers to Henry Hudson's ship, which sailed

down the river that now bears his name to claim Dutch sovereignty over the land called *Mahicanituck* by the Lenape. Using scraps of wood salvaged from houses, scavenged materials including fur, cloth, straw, bottles, flags, and even birch bark woven in a manner that recalled Lenape building methods, DeVille constructed a ghostly, hollowed-out ship frame. Exposed to the elements and tilting, this moldering and derelict wreck conjured the past while speaking to migration, marginalization, and neglect today. As *Half Moon* makes evident, DeVille is intrigued by how discarded things retain the residue of earlier lives, invoking history, identity, even origins and functions lost to time. Her process of recovery and display excavates these lost histories, investing the overlooked with new narratives.

Although DeVille has exhibited in galleries, she prefers specific sites or architectural spaces and often makes installations during residencies in which she can immerse herself in local history. In 2016, working with Baltimore's The Contemporary, an itinerant museum that presents exhibitions in non-traditional spaces, she created nine separate installations in the Peale Museum, America's first museum (founded by the artist Rembrandt Peale), which has been empty since 1997 and is now coming back to life. (These works are also documented on <https://art21.org>.) Collectively titled *Only When It's Dark Enough Can You See The Stars*—a quotation from Martin Luther King Jr.'s 1968 speech in Memphis, given the day before he was assassinated—the installations not only responded to the history of the building, which had served as Baltimore's first City Hall, a public school for African American children, and the Municipal Arts Museum, but also to present-day events in the city, including the civil unrest following the death of Freddie Gray in police custody.

In this vacated space, DeVille created a dense, intertwined accumulation of materials, everything from historical photographs of children at the school to arrangements of bottles, trashcans, discarded furniture, wooden lattices, blacked-out protest signs, music, videos, and even portraits of distinguished men, with each room providing a dramatic context and conceptual frame for

**Above: *Half Moon*, 2016. Reclaimed lumber, plastic tarps, and accumulated debris, view of work at Socrates Sculpture Park. Below: *Sarcophagus blue*, 2017. Boat, mannequin legs, tights, wood, rope, and painting, dimensions variable.**

her performative inquiry. One narrow room contained a dilapidated fragment of a large American flag—a reference to Francis Scott Key's anthem and the oversize flag displayed at the Peale after the War of 1812. Accompanied by a dilapidated chandelier with paper stars, sheets of antiqued paper, and broadsheets chronicling the Freddie Gray protests, DeVille's flag resisted patriotic display with a counter-narrative chronicling the racism and violence experienced by the "other" Baltimore. Another room juxtaposed a coat rack with objects hanging from hooks like so many body parts, while a wall of television monitors played looped videos of the protests and rioting that had happened nearby.

Despite this often visceral commentary on current events, DeVille also sought to transcend rage and anger. In addition to staging numerous paths through the museum that encouraged interaction and discovery, she also provided room for community and exchange. On the second floor, a small stage with several rows of pews offered a space for reflection and an open mike where anyone could speak, perform, or engage in song or protest.

**Installation views from *Only When It's Dark Enough Can You See The Stars*, 2016. Clockwise from bottom left: *The People's Theater*, *Colored Grammar School No. 1 1874–1888*, and *Charm City Roundhouse*. Multi-part work at The Contemporary, Baltimore.**

This notion of passage, implying both pathway and enactment, transit and migration, invites a radical re-thinking of the act of looking at and experiencing art. Breaking down the wall between artist and viewer, DeVille brings visitors into the process, insisting that they find a place in the performative processionals. Her installations act as interventions, as those passing through the layered process of referencing, recycling, and recalling become entangled in dueling histories and narratives, as aesthetics fuse with politics.

*Empire State Works in Progress* (2017), DeVille's piece for the Whitney Museum's "Calder: Hypermobility" exhibition, brought many of these aspects together in an all-encompassing, collaborative event that included assemblages, a film, and a performance. The title purposefully quotes Alexander Calder's *Work in Progress* (1968), his only work for theater, presented at the Opera House in Rome. Calder was involved in every aspect of the project, from the concept to the set designs, costumes, music (by three Italian composers experimenting with electronic sound), and choreography (one part featured bicyclists doing figure-eights on stage); he even included stabiles and mobiles as part of the performance.

Like Calder, DeVille aimed to engage viewers in a total theater experience. Her sculptures—some recycled from earlier installations and others newly constructed—were all installed on multi-sided, movable frames or mounted on wheels, so that they could be pushed and turned about. Several were constructed out of black, brown, and white plastic mannequin parts—in one, multiple legs mounted on a wooden boat rose up as if kicking; another contained busts, legs, and other limbs hanging from a clothing rack that knocked together when pushed; and one very large sculpture wedged the mannequin parts into a steel frame, along with shopping carts, tarps, and metal scraps all bound together with chains. Imprisoned within entangled environments, these disassembled mannequins acted as surrogates for the body, and in particular, the black body in the diaspora—parts without heads or identity, moving and passing through, caught between past and present function. Other pieces assembled out of garbage cans or accumulations of found objects and glowing plastic filament similarly trapped viewers between contradictory impulses. Were these desirable commodities or discarded waste, something to collect or overlook? Awaiting activation through performance, DeVille's sculptures asserted the aggressive properties of their fabrication—a process as intense and powerful as the juxtapositions of figures and objects. Set in motion when pushed or pulled, they forced viewers to choose where they stood and how to respond to the what, where, and how of their ever-shifting, even chaotic surroundings.

The *Empire State Works in Progress* formed a key part of *The Invisible Project*, a performance directed by Charlotte Brathwaite, and a collaborative film projection produced by DeVille and Brathwaite. Immersive and visionary, *The Invisible Project* transformed the Whitney's white box performance space into a place of dramatic spectacle. Audience members entered a dark, semi-lit room, making their way through a maze of sculptures with the aid of LED lights mounted on headbands. As they turned their heads, shifting their attention and gaze, many small beams of light gathered in an odd spotlight effect on sculptures and performers. Like the lights, the sculptures, performers, and spectators were in constant motion, further disrupting any possibility of passive looking or non-engagement. No one could remain detached or in one spot—it was either participate or get out of the way. As the performance unfolded, spoken texts by Martin Luther King Jr., Ralph Ellison, and Frank B. Wilderson III resonated through the room, part of a mix-tape of words,

VOGUE

Abigail Deville
Vogue
December 5th, 2017
by Eve Macsweeney

CULTURE > ARTS

## The Women to Watch at Art Basel Miami

DECEMBER 5, 2017 11:59 PM
*by* EVE MACSWEENEY

Abigail DeVille, *Lift Every Voice and Sing*, 2017
Photo: Fredrik Nilsen Studio / Courtesy of the artist

The 2017 edition of Art Basel Miami Beach is putting women's creativity at center stage. From grand to guerrilla, a range of exciting female-driven projects stand ready to inspire, enchant, and provoke this month. The brand-new ICA Miami, under the direction of Ellen Salpeter, has opened its doors in the Design District with a group show including an explosive outdoor sculpture on the theme of beleaguered refugees by Abigail DeVille and an installation by Senga Nengudi, the increasingly influential artist who works with objects familiar to women's everyday lives, including pantyhose and trash bags. Pro tip: The museum is a good meeting point to connect with friends among the crowds.

Meanwhile, the newly renovated Bass Museum reopens today, Wednesday December 6, with a solo show by the rising Argentine artist **Mika Rottenberg**. In installations, sculptures, and video, her mind-bending immersive world of capitalism run amok is a must-see that may require shades indoors as well as out. Ditto for **Allison Zuckerman**'s Pop-surrealist work at the Rubell Family Collection, where she is currently an artist in residence, making mash-ups of painting and photography in her canvases and 2-D sculptures. Elsewhere, "Perfect Stranger," a survey show of **Dara Friedman**'s films, is still on view at Miami's gorgeous Pérez Art Museum through March 4, 2018. "For me, it was like Oz," Friedman told Vogue in November, an artist in her 40s whose work has evolved in the past two decades from Super 8 films to sustained and ambitious pieces involving multiple participants.

Cool independent local galleries in Little Haiti and elsewhere in town include **Nina Johnson**, showing work by **Katie Stout**; the BFI (Bas Fisher Invitational), run by cinematographer **Naomi Fisher**; and the experimental art space Spinello Projects, exhibiting **Augustina Woodgate**. Brickell City Centre on South Miami Avenue is hosting a free, public-friendly, all-women art fair with more than 50 iconic female artists including **Yoko Ono** and the **Guerrilla Girls**. Its Wednesday afternoon opening party, starting at 4:30 p.m., will feature performances by **Virgo**, **Suzi Analogue**, and **Poorgrrrl**'s **Tara Long**.

Last but not least, the NADA art fair has partnered with Downtown for Democracy, offering space to help the organization's aim to flip the vote. (The fair is located in a congressional swing district.) A pair of walls will be wheat-pasted with **Marilyn Minter**'s open-source file Trump poster, and the space will house four artists' editions, including Minter's faux brass plaque memorializing the president's interview with Billy Bush and a print by painter and activist **Cecily Brown**. And after so much feistiness on display, you can finish your visit on Saturday night at Swing Left's "Take Back the House" event in NADA's garden, deejayed by artist and performer **Jessie Gould**.

frieze

Abigail DeVille
Frieze
July 3rd, 2017
by Emily McDermott

# In Profile: Abigail DeVille

The New York-based artist on her exploration into lost and found histories, installation as urban tapestry and the paradox of ancestry

It wouldn't come as a shock to see Abigail DeVille sifting through a dumpster or scouring piles of rubbish in a junkyard. Her sculptures comprise disused materials sourced from the location in which she's exhibiting and there's even a video of her pushing a cart filled with discarded items down a Harlem street. One person's trash is another's treasure, as the saying goes, and for DeVille this couldn't be more true.

A New York City-native, DeVille combines her found objects into site-specific sculptures and installations, often made in response to lost or forgotten histories. For example, an installation currently on view at the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis is centred around a large skeletal wooden dome inspired by the architectural structure of the local courthouse where slaves were once sold and where the landmark Dred Scott v. Sandford case – ruling that black slaves could not be U.S. citizens – was first heard. In her practice, the process of researching and understanding a location or population's history is just as important as the final output.

DeVille, who received her BFA from the Fashion Institute of Technology and her MFA from Yale, is currently competing the Rauschenberg Residency in Captiva, Florida and recently debuted new installations in Moss, Norway for the biennial Momentum 9 (which runs 7 June – 11 October). More than sculpture and installation, DeVille also incorporates public performances (which she terms 'processionals') and set design for theatre productions into her practice. Shortly after she returned from Moss, I spoke with the artist over the phone.

**Emily McDermott** You often use the metaphor of a black hole for the forgotten and unknown histories you explore. When did you start using this terminology?

**Abigail DeVille** I started thinking about supernovas around 2008. Then, in 2009, when I was in grad school, I found out that my maternal grandfather Francisco Antonio Cruz – who was Dominican, never spoke English and passed away when I was two months old – had written multiple books. He was a former journalist, and in 1947 wrote a book titled *Genesis, Evolution and Agony of the Dominican Communist Party*. He was run out of the country in the early '60s which is why my mother emigrated to New York City. Anyway, I found one of his books of poetry via an interlibrary loan and had friends help me translate the Spanish text. It was all about the cosmos. So as I was thinking about these invisible histories and invisible conversations, I also started thinking about cosmology and black holes as a compositional device, as a way to organize vast amounts of material and information. Since black holes are invisible, they can take any form.

**EM** Most of your work deals with American history. I'm curious how being in Moss, Norway affected your process.

AD It was very challenging, which I love. I couldn't find any local history in English, so I had to make the pieces based on what is happening now and in the last 20 years. Moss was founded by the Vikings 900 years ago and in the 1600s it became an industrial hub. It still has one or two functioning factories, but the town is teetering on becoming post-industrial. Factories that were open for 300 to 400 years have recently shuttered. Many homes in one specific neighbourhood are small-scale and modest; immigrants live here and all of the houses are going to get demolished because the city wants to expand the train station. These expansion plans were set in place 20 years ago when there were more factories. Then there's a paper mill across from the installation I made which closed in 2012. Everything except the smokestack is going to be demolished to make room for luxury condos, to make the town attractive to people in Oslo.

**EM** How do you balance research and production? Where does one end and the other begin?

AD The research is the preliminary foundational layer of why something has a reason for being. I have a non-stop questioning process, including questioning myself, as to why a thing should be made, what it is, how people interact with a space, and what the forms mean in reference to the history I'm navigating. Without that information, nothing can happen. I respond intuitively, but it's an informed intuition. I have to know *why*.

**EM** Can you tell me about the thought process behind your 'processionals', which have taken place in New York, Baltimore, and Washington D.C.?

**AD** I was originally thinking about the Great Migration and the six million African-Americans who went from the South to the North, East and West of the US, populating city centres throughout the 20th century. Now there's a reversal, where people are leaving these city centres because they can't afford to live there anymore. People who were redlined to specific neighbourhoods now can't stay because of gentrification. So people have slowly started moving south, the place their ancestors left 100 years ago. So I'm thinking about the migratory patterns of people leaving because of discrimination throughout American history, and more specifically African-American history.

The processions are in defiance of active and strategic historical erasures that proliferate our present moment.

Each processional is different, but one garment has stayed the same. It's a 15-foot-long wearable net, a catchall of domestic items, such as clothing, musical instruments, pots and pans. You are carrying everything in your life or history as you move from place to place. Things get caught in the net, things get dragged along with you, or they fall off. It is also about the reclamation of space – in spaces that have been privatized and their uses obscured by bureaucracy. The processions are in defiance of active and strategic historical erasures that proliferate our present moment.

**EM** What helps you come to terms with this struggle when showing in a commercial space?

**AD** What grounds me goes back to DNA – how your genome is 500 years of ancestry and how you can have conversations with ancestors that you don't know about. I can go back and learn from information that is lost to myself. When I was a kid, I would draw in the air a lot. My parents thought I was strange, but I was drawing my grandfather's face – the one who died when I was two months old, who I never met. I'm always thinking about this connection or conversation you can have with people who you never knew, yet they're a part of you and their history is part of what makes you who you are.

I think about a quote from an *LA Times* article: 'Ancestors are a paradox: They are you, and they are not. "You are walking with all the DNA of your ancestors for 500 years in your genome, so you're a walking extension of them," said [Henry Louis] Gates [Jr.]. "They are not talking to you, but they are walking with you."'

EMILY MCDERMOTT

Emily McDermott is a Berlin-based freelance writer and editor.

CARNEGIE
MUSEUMS OF PITTSBURGH

Abigail DeVille
Carnegie
Fall, 2017
by Hannah Turpin

# Face Time: Abigail DeVille

*By Hannah Turpin*

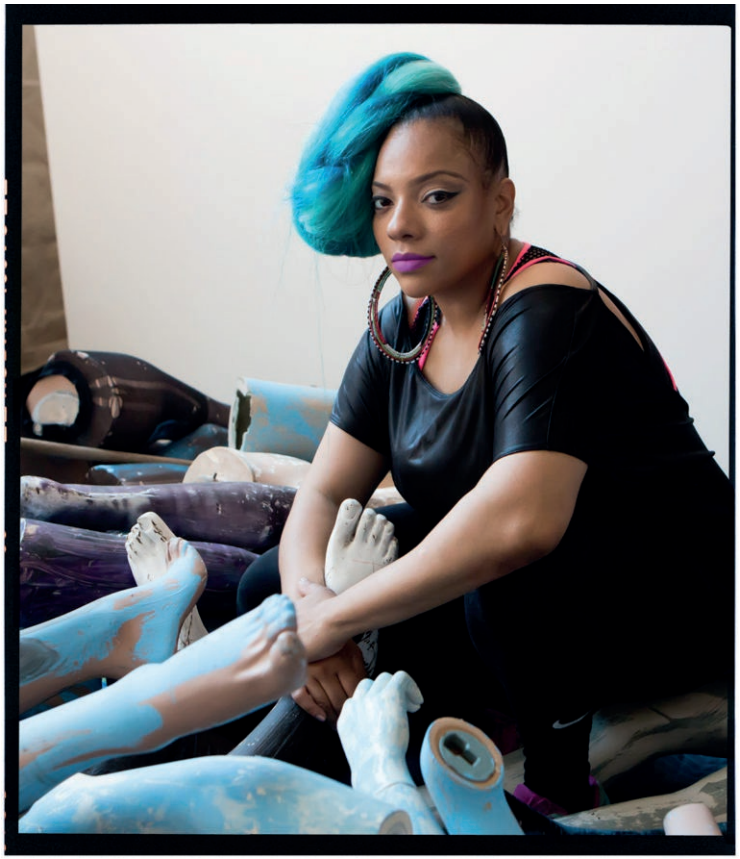


Photo: Melissa Blackall/The Cooper Gallery

Abigail DeVille is an artist unafraid to dig deep. Whether creating paintings, sculptures, installations, or performance works, she's constantly scavenging for unwanted materials that surface histories and communities similarly cast aside. "I'm interested in telling invisible histories," she says. Born and raised in the Bronx, New York, the borough she still calls home, DeVille has witnessed the shifts and struggles of that city her whole life. In her work, she looks to trash as "archaeological evidence" that reflects a specific site in time and especially how it has been transformed through systemic oppression and abandonment. Equally interested in art and American history, her practice sheds light on how national conversations and policymaking influence issues of gentrification, disenfranchisement, and poverty. *St. Louis Blues* (2017), for example, responds to the city's Old Courthouse, a historic site of slave auctions, the Dred Scott trials, and redlining. Because her works are site-specific, she develops them through research and intuitive response. Each unique environment, says DeVille, allows her work to reveal just how far-reaching and habitual discrimination has been in American society. "I call it the hangover of slavery," says DeVille. Yet there's a sliver of hope, too; a reminder that we can also have a positive effect on our future. Her work *Harlem World* (2011), currently on view at Carnegie Museum of Art as part of the group exhibition *20/20: The Studio Museum in Harlem and Carnegie Museum of Art*, includes found trash combined with paintings made by 8- and 9-year-olds of imagined universes designed for superheroes. DeVille's work reminds us that we as a nation can still design our own shared universe. It just takes, in her words, "an exercise of acknowledgment."

**When did you first realize you wanted to be an artist?**
Kindergarten. I was in a large kindergarten class and they had different learning centers that kids would be broken up into, and I would always make a beeline to the arts center with the easel. I remember one day when they forced me to go to the writing center and I cried. So I always loved art from very early on.

**What sparked your choice of using trash?**
I was really interested in painting, but I didn't have any money for oil paint and stuff like that, so I just started scavenging from the street and using materials around school.

**You talk about trash being a witness to and record of our time. Is that something you identified from the beginning?**
It grew. I think you have all this excitement and pleasure with making. But then I feel like where the hard work is conceptually: What kind of artist do you want to be? How's this taking shape? And what are you actually talking about; what histories are you engaging with and communicating through this specific material? I say that trash is the archaeological record of our present moment. So I'm historicizing our present moment and trying to tease out this longer history.

**Given the mission of your work, do you view it as political or activist?**
I don't think of it in that way. I don't think of it in a scientific way, either, in terms of archaeology. But it's definitely a constant digging up of "no, you can't bury this." If we don't understand what is constantly being buried, then we can't understand the present moment or all the decisions and things that continue to pile up because of all these other decisions that were made that have been glossed over. We feel it; we see it. It ripples through every fabric, every moment of society. It affects everything that we do. I call it the hangover of slavery. We just can't get over it. People just can't deal with our legacy of racism. So it's like the constant act of digging holes. I feel a little bit like Bugs Bunny.

**The overarching theme of *20/20* looks at this current moment of tumultuous change in our social and political landscape. What do you think the artist's role is in all of this?**
I think it's the role of all of us, where we have—even more so than ever—the responsibility to be active participants as citizens in this country and to not fall asleep at the wheel. Where you don't have the privilege to act like you don't live here or that your vote, your voice, your actions that you take from day to day don't matter; they affect people and the world around you.

I think artists are in an interesting position where they can potentially talk about the things that they're passionate about, or make observations about the world around them, and people will listen. But even so, I think of art as being a time capsule and a container of its time and place. It's like alternative history. It's the stuff that is forgotten in the 24-hour news cycle of whatever dominant corporate thing that you're supposed to be learning, when there's actually a lot more going on that we never hear about or we don't know about. It's thinking about making work that's just in contrast and counter to the dominant narrative.

See you there

Abigail DeVille
See You There
July 2nd, 2017

## NEW YORK ARTIST ABIGAIL DEVILLE ABOUT HER BRUSSELS SHOW

**Thirtysomething Abigail DeVille was born and raised in New York, where she still lives and works today. The city and its history have been playing a pivotal role in her work, which is almost always site-specific while trying to shine a light on marginalized people and places. "Over the last seven years, I made about 100 installations in different places", she says. "Most of them are trashed by now, but sometimes I reconfigure them into a sculpture, and some elements become part of the vocabulary I'm using." When Abigail came to Brussels earlier this year, she, as always, dived into the history of the location, laying bare a part of Belgian history that is not often talked about. We had a chat with the socially and politically engaged artist about her exhibition "Chaos or Community?" at Brussels gallery Michel Rein, dealing with opposition to her art, and much more.**

**I was impressed to learn that you thought up and mounted your exhibition in only ten days. Plus, you mostly work site-specifically - sounds like quite a challenge for a gallery show in Brussels!**

Gallery exhibitions, which are commercial spaces, are always challenging. It's not really a context for excavation and thinking about the layered histories of a site. Originally I had the idea to make works based on the book of Martin Luther King from 1967: "Where do we go from here: Chaos or community?". But then I stumbled upon the history of Leopold II, and I was flabbergasted. About 10 million people were killed during his reign! I was really shocked because it's not really talked about. I don't understand why. I'm wondering if it's an abstraction for the collective consciousness of the country because it all happened far away in Congo. It's not like there were slave markets in Belgium.

**How did you come across it?**

People asked me before I came here: What are you going to do over there? But I didn't really know much about Belgium. A friend of mine, a curator, showed me a catalog from the last Biennale, where a show responded to this issue. That's when the wheels started turning. And I also had heard my dad yelling about it recently, who's a bit of a history nut. I think he learned about it sometime last year. There were little nuggets here and there and when I got here I started investigating.

**How did you translate it all into your show?**

The sculpture with the bottles and the lights is called .0001%. I wanted to have 1000 things to show that .0001 is 1000 of 10 million: a visual representation of the numbers, which are pretty much incomprehensible. It's also embedded with meaning that comes from West Africa. There are a lot of seashells in the things I made. I got them here in Belgium, but it refers to a tradition from Congo, where they put seashells on the graves of the dead. There are also references to the understanding that African Americans have of their culture and identity through the slave trade, which is why there's so much blue in the exhibition. That's why the sculpture I made of Leopold II is also covered in water. I named it after the bronze statue of him on a horse in Brussels. It's the statue that a performance artist painted in red back in 2008. I saw this amazing video about it on Youtube. In the end, he gets arrested and rants about how Leopold wasn't a hero but a criminal and a murderer. I also read that in 2015 there was a celebration planned for the anniversary of his coronation but people got upset and it was canceled. Crazy. That was only two years ago!

**Where did you get all the found objects you used in your works?**

Mainly at the flea market at Place du Jeu de Balle. It's great. I went there a couple of times. And then there's a second-hand shop a few blocks away from here where I got the rest of the stuff.

Was it always clear to you that if you made art it should have a political or social component?

I think from the time that I was eight or nine years old, history was my favorite subject. I'm interested in things that get lost as time progresses and things move on.

**How did you know you wanted to become an artist?**

Already in kindergarten I always wanted to go to the art center where I felt at ease. I think I knew what I wanted to do pretty early. That's why I went to an art high school. When I was in undergrad there was this moment where I got lost in making something, and I just got so much joy from it. I forgot where I was and time stood still and in that moment I realized this is what I wanted to do. There was never anything else.

**Do you have any advice for young artists who are just starting out?**

Make the best possible work you can make and take opportunities as they come. I've shown a lot in institutions for very little money, but it helped grow my reputation and built up momentum. Things will come to you if you work hard. You got to be rigorous in what you do.

**You work a lot with marginalization, and race repeatedly plays a role in your work. What's your take on the recent heated discussion surrounding Dana Schutz's "Open Casket" painting at Whitney Biennal?** *(The painting replicates a photo of the corpse of Emmett Till, an African-American boy who was murdered in Mississippi in 1955 after he had been falsely accused of flirting with a white woman. Some find that "it is not acceptable for a white person to transmute Black suffering into profit and fun", as it says in an*

*open letter signed by over 30 people.)*

Oh Lord (laughs). This photo of Emmett is so historically significant and has all this weight and power, which is completely devoid in the painting. I'm giving her the benefit of the doubt and think that it was coming from a really earnest and sincere place, but even if she's trying to process through her feelings on continuous racial discrimination...I think she was being lazy in her thinking, in how she approached the subject. She should have thought it through more. It can't be so simplistic. You're stylizing this person's death. It shouldn't be a painting exercise but a real investigation, something that is coming from your heart. People pretty much have the right to do whatever they want, but there has to be genuine thought and clarity and intent behind it. I find it unfortunate that so much conversation got spent on that, when it was the first Whitney Biennal curated by two people of color, featuring many works by people of color.

**Has it happened to you that you had to defend your work or that you had to deal with protests?**

Yes. There was a situation in Washington DC a couple of years ago. It was the first public art project I did. There was a lot of opposition and it was all taken down a month early.

**What happened?**

I participated in a project called "5 by 5" by the DC arts commission. Five curators each picked five artists to do site-specific works. They took us around DC on a bus proposing different sites and we saw a lot of places that were recently leveled, with these glass structures on top of it, and it made me wonder where the actual communities are that clearly had been redeveloped out. I was intrigued by a neighborhood in the South East, a black and economically depressed area, one of the first that got national historic preservation status. There are all these old houses but you aren't allowed to knock them down. So the government has quietly been buying all these properties and lets the houses fall beyond repair. I saw houses that were sliding and crumbling. They just want them to fall apart so that they can redevelop. There were a lot of buildings with empty storefronts, and I got the idea to do something in there based on a series on the Great Migration by African American artist Jacob Lawrence. From the 1940s to the 1970s African-Americans were moving from the South to the North and West, looking for economic opportunities and creating their own communities. I took a 10-day road trip down South to collect all the material.
The local community didn't understand why someone came here and put all this "trash" in these spaces. Some actually thought the ceiling had fallen in. The real issue was that people were upset because these storefronts hadn't been accessible to them for ten years, but I got access. They wanted to open businesses in there, which I totally understand. But I didn't know all that. It didn't help that the art commission had done no community outreach at all. I kept asking about it. I was naïve and thought I'll just go down there for a month, and meet people and talk to community members. I had this New York frame of mind to get things done. I called, churches, everything, but no one wanted to talk to me because I wasn't from there. The organization kept rerouting me to the developers. It was a terrible combination of things and it exploded.

**Did they protest in front of your installations?**

No, they shut it down by making phone calls. They kept calling their councilman and representatives who then made the fire department take it all down.

**It's hard to sell a site-specific work. Is this something you think about?**

I haven't thought about it much, but I'm starting to ask myself what I could make that is more lasting. The sculptures here can be bought. I think it's one of the first times that it's something site-specifically made that's actually sellable. The last show I did with Michel Rein in Paris was a mess in this sense: it covered two rooms but nothing was sellable (laughs).

**You live and work in New York. What kind of place is that for an artist?**

I think New York is very hard. It's difficult for people to come without any kind of contacts to become an artist. It costs so much to just maintain to be there. And then to find the time and space to actually be able to make work is challenging. I'm from New York, I had advantages, I could live at my grandmother's apartment. On the other hand, you can make a lot happen there in a very short period of time. You go to an opening and get drunk with someone and maybe you'll be in a museum show at the end of the conversation. There are casual opportunities all over the place.

*Upcoming solo shows:*
*Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, USA*
*Pica, Portland, USA*

La Libre BELGIQUE

Abigail DeVille
La Libre Belgique
May 17th, 2017

Vue partielle de l'exposition d'Abigail DeVille à la galerie Michel Rein Bruxelles. A gauche la statu(r)e royale enjuponnée et à droite l'installation inspirée de Jeff Wall.

**Cible Coloniale**

C'est la première fois qu'elle expose en Belgique et tous ceux qui auront vu l'exposition s'en souviendront. Afro-américaine (1981, NY-Bronx), Abigail DeVille débarque dans les lieux où elle expose en considérant l'histoire du pays. Et dans celle de la Belgique, ce qui l'a intéressée et sensibilisée pour réaliser les interventions qui saturent pratiquement l'espace de la galerie, c'est le passé colonial et son personnage central le roi Léopold II qui a offert à la Belgique un cadeau royal : le Congo. Drapé dans ses habits de fortune, il trône et règnesur l'ensemble de l'exposition, fort de sa stature qui lui vaut bien une échelle faute de cheval. Tout ce qui a été mis en place a été réalisé in situ avec les moyens du bord, récupérés jusque sur les poubelles, la nuit, dans les rues. On prendra garde aux sept juges, construits de bric et de broc et de pâte à sel, installés dos à la fenêtre avce leur regard inquisiteur. L'installation, avec les bouteilles vides et les lampes, en réfère directement à la photo de Jeff Wall «Invisble Man» inspirée d'une nouvelle de Ralph Ellison qui parle d'un Afro-américain vivant reclus dans un soubassement. Dans l'ensemble de ses oeuvres, l'artiste pointe des situations (in) humaines vécues par les minorités, les défavorisés, les sans-grade, les sans-papiers, les sans-abris, les migrants et autres laissés pour compte. L'accumulation de verres cassés, est à leur image !

*Abigail DeVille, «Chaos or Communauty ?». Galerie Michel Rein, 51A, rue de Washington, 1050 Bruxelles. Jusqu'au 27 mai. Du jeudi au samedi de 10h à 18h. www.michelrein.com*

ARTFORUM

Abigail DeVille
Artforum
April 24th, 2017

## Rome Prize Announces 2017–18 Winners

The American Academy in Rome has announced the recipients of its annual Rome prize, which supports innovative and cross-disciplinary work in the arts and humanities through fellowships at its eleven-acre campus in Rome. Sanford Biggers, Abigail Deville, Rochelle Feinstein, Allen Frame, and Beverly Mciver are the awardees for the visual arts category. They will be provided with room and board, a stipend that ranges from $16,000 and $28,000, depending on the length of the fellowship, and studio space.

Chaired by Holly Block, executive director of the Bronx Museum of the Arts in New York, the jury for the visual arts comprised artists Polly Apfelbaum, Josephine Meckseper, and Lorna Simpson.

Brandon Clifford and Keith Krumwiede won fellowships in the architecture category, while Jennifer Birkeland, Jonathan A. Scelsa, and Tricia Treacy received fellowships for design.

MOMUS

Abigail DeVille Unburies Bodies at The Contemporary
MOMUS
June 13th, 2016 - online
by Owen Duffy

# Abigail DeVille Unburies Bodies at The Contemporary

BY OWEN DUFFY • REVIEWS • JUNE 13, 2016

Abigail DeVille, "Charm City Roundhouse," 2016. Courtesy The Contemporary.

Justin and Kenita Hicks performing at the opening. Courtesy The Contemporary.

What happens to history in a black hole? Abigail DeVille's exhibition *Only When It's Dark Enough Can You See the Stars* is a dense, massive force that ruptures the grand narrative of America and recasts it as a multiplicity. Through fecund accumulations of debris and detritus, DeVille, who was commissioned by Baltimore's nomadic art museum The Contemporary, has transformed ten spaces in the Peale Museum into a temporal entanglement. As an interconnected complex, the past and present slip into one another. DeVille reinvigorates the Peale by unearthing the invisible bodies and silent voices of its previous lives.

There is no building in America like the Peale. Rembrandt Peale opened it in 1814 as the first edifice in the Western hemisphere designed and constructed as a museum. It served as Baltimore's first city hall and later became the city's first grammar school for black children. At another point it was filled with trash. From 1931 to 1997, it was reincarnated as the Municipal Museum of Baltimore. Since then, one of the city's (and nation's) most important buildings sat empty, until 2016, when DeVille refilled it with a myriad of refuse. The Peale, which faded from Baltimore's cultural landscape, finds new purpose as a vestige of matter and memory.

In the museum's antechamber, DeVille immediately establishes a framework for viewers: one of civil disobedience and struggle, of radical politics and protest. Climbing up the walls like kudzu, picket signs frame the exhibition's ingress. They lack text and any sense of specificity. There is a politicized kinship with the work of Allan McCollum here – these signs of protest are surrogates for social action everywhere. Yet it's impossible to divorce these objects from their immediate context. This is Baltimore: a flashpoint of Black Lives Matter activism, of uprising in the wake of Freddie Gray. Even though DeVille excavates the history of the Peale over the course of the exhibition, *Only When It's Dark Enough Can You See the Stars* is also very much about today.

The first room viewers pass through is *Colored Grammar School No. 1 1874-1888*. In the center of the space a mannequin sits upright at a desk, wearing an Orioles hoodie, its face marred by mirrored shards. A reproduction of *Cornell's Primary Geography*, a textbook from the 1850s that was likely part of the children's curriculum, lies open-faced on the mannequin's desk. This central tableau is surrounded by all sorts of material that refers back to the people of Baltimore: shoes dangling from the ceiling, sepia-toned photographs of families, and six-hundred slabs of slate. The stone palimpsests refer to the students' writing surfaces, but they also point toward the ever-shifting function of the Peale itself: a somatic site in which history is continually performed, inscribed, erased.

We then meander through an imagined reconstruction of the first museum, replete with a cabinet of curiosities stuffed with taxidermy, a pile of ceramic rubble spilling out from the fireplace, and reproductions of portraits of the Peales. In *Charm City Roundhouse* (all works 2016), a tattered tarpaulin star-spangled banner blankets an entire wall. Sunlight filters through the red, white, and blue's rips and holes. Ornate chandeliers found in the Peale's basement hang above us. Piles of paper, turned shades of brown by time, are scattered throughout the space. As other critics have noted, DeVille impresses on the Peale an air of theatricality. Each room is like a stage set. However this is no Baroque reanimation of history for its own sake. Environments like *Charm City Roundhouse* recast viewers as active interlocutors with the past, creating reciprocity between then and now.

The title of the exhibition is a line from Martin Luther King's speech "I've Been to the Mountaintop." King offered his hopeful words in 1968, a time when the world seemed to be in total crisis. America's crux today is a political one, and this country feels more polarized than at any point in recent memory. Less than six months out from the presidential election, the nation is divided between those who seek the restoration of an imagined American exceptionalism built on racial exclusion, and those hoping for inclusive alternatives. In a certain sense, this divide is predicated on the collective failure of many white Americans to acknowledge this country's troublesome past as deeply knotted; so-called "progress" has occurred alongside the systemic marginalization of black and brown persons.

*Only When It's Dark Enough Can You See the Stars* implores viewers to speak out against such inequities. With the addition of a bullhorn and a ladder, the Peale's garden has been transformed into the *Airing of Grievances*. If a person is so inclined, they can climb a few feet up and shout at the bureaucrats in Baltimore's city hall, only a few blocks away. On the second floor, in *The People's Theater*, an open mic always remains turned on under the starry sky of a battered black tarp, waiting there for those who wish to declare, to voice dissent. Viewers are encouraged to become dialogists not only with the exhibition, but with history and the city of Baltimore.

The exhibition's most disorienting space is the cosmic *Black Whole*. On the second floor of the Peale we find ourselves surrounded by five-hundred metal trash cans. After DeVille uncovered a nineteenth-century songbook during research, she asked composer Justin Hicks to create a score that would honor the school's children. The result is *Home Sweet Home*, a cacophony of haunting voices that booms from the trash cans. The voices of the unheard are materialized. For the assemblage itself, DeVille implements the idea of the bottle tree, a folk practice meant to invoke the presence of the dead, underscoring the theme of reification. The result of all this material and conceptual accumulation is vertigo, compounded by the effects of blinding strobes and unknown objects tread underfoot through the cramped space. The weight of history is not simply alluded to, but felt.

Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben posits that the true contemporary is one who "firmly holds [their] gaze on [their] own time, so as not to perceive its light, but rather its darkness." DeVille assumes the role of Agamben's contemporary through the metaphor of the black hole, an ineffable darkness. What, therefore, do we gain by gazing into the abyss DeVille has quarried? Are we, as beholders, left with a more complete understanding of our nation's shadows? It's difficult to avoid comparing *Only When It's Dark Enough Can You See the Stars* to Fred Wilson's legendary institutional critique, *Mining the Museum* (1992-3). Commissioned by The Contemporary over twenty years ago, the exhibition performed a kind of museological psychoanalysis on the Maryland Historical Society by delving into the deepest recesses of its collections and installing a series of object relations (a toddler's Ku Klux Klan outfit placed in a baby carriage, period chairs facing a whipping post). As pioneering and necessary as Wilson's project was, such art historians as Darby English have, with the benefit of critical distance, pointed toward the constraints of the show's approach to identity as a stable entity. Not unlike Wilson, DeVille has us look deeply into the dark in order to reclaim scenes from forgotten eras and pierce constructions of nationhood that omit the experiences of black and brown Americans. Yet by virtue of its space-time compression, DeVille's exhibition thrusts us into a fusion of disparate temporalities in which inflexible models of race and nation – the ones that have fueled the present resurgence of nativist identity politics in America – are exploded.

Let me posit, then, that we are hovering at the edge of an event horizon, and that our narratives about America are being stretched to the point of evisceration. The splendid black hole of history that is *Only When It's Dark Enough Can You See the Stars* offers resolution by ripping apart narrow views of America, leaving DeVille's ragged, permeable banner. And, by this immense force, a multiplicity of voices is heard. Alterity is grace.

NEWS. ARTS. CULTURE. EVENTS. MARKETPLACE. BALTIMORE
CITY PAPER

Abigail DeVille
City Paper
May 25th, 2016 - online
by Rebekah Kirkman

Arts / Visual Art

# Abigail DeVille dwells in history, interpretation, and power at the former Peale Museum

'Charm City Roundhouse' by Abigail DeVille (Courtesy/The Contemporary)

By **Rebekah Kirkman · Contact Reporter**

MAY 25, 2016

**In the middle** of the large back room in the former Peale Museum, there is an old stack of brown paper or cardboard, bound with twine. The stack is smushed, water-logged, and anonymous, label-less. It's a relatively small detail; the floor is covered with stacks and spread out sheets of large, wrinkled, brown paper. Five or six chandeliers hang low from the ceiling, and to the right, an enormous, ratty, plastic recreation of the War of 1812 flag hangs from wall to wall—and it's too big for the wall, so it drags and bunches up onto the floor.

This installation, and all of Abigail DeVille's "Only When It's Dark Enough Can You See the Stars" (presented by The Contemporary), revels in the messiness of history—even this building's own documented history—mining materials and stories from this place's past.

A glimmer of that history, real quick: In 1814, the Peale Museum opened as the first museum building erected in the Western Hemisphere, and its original purpose was to be "entertaining and scholarly, and to be used as an instrument of democracy," according to the Contemporary. The museum closed in 1829, and the next year, it became Baltimore's first City Hall. From 1878 to 1887 the building operated as "The Male and Female Colored School No. 1" (the first public secondary school for African-Americans in this city). Then it was the city's Bureau of Water Supply, and then it was a rental space for shops and factories, before it was condemned in 1928. It reopened as a museum in 1931 after more than 100 years as everything but a museum, and closed again in 1997. A non-profit group called the Peale Center for Baltimore History and Architecture is currently working to reopen it as a museum later this year.

But now, for just a few more weeks (the exhibition closes on June 11) the building houses a site-specific art installation, containing materials that point to those histories, mingling with contemporary stories and interpretations. DeVille transforms and overwhelms each room with visual and aural information, offering historical facts and narratives in theatrical pieces.

You can start wherever you like, but the room to the right as you walk in, on the first floor, is filled with slate, found photographs of Marylanders from 1870 to 1970, window panes, and mannequins semi-hidden by dark tattered curtains—a nod to the schoolchildren. The adjacent room recognizes the building's origins, with portraits of some of the men involved with opening the museum, and Charles Willson Peale's painting 'The Exhumation of the Mastodon,' and a few taxidermy animals housed in a wooden curio cabinet (a Mastodon skeleton uncovered by Charles Willson Peale, I later learned, was part of the Peale Museum's first featured exhibit). The aforementioned room with the piles of papers and the flag references the Peale's "humble beginnings and its time as City Hall." Each of these rooms are lit in specific ways, with blue and red gels or projections or colored fluorescents; or they're ordinary bulbs, but there's an excess of them, a tribute to Rembrandt Peale, who helped start the Gas Light Company of Baltimore—the progenitor to BGE.

As you wander around the museum, you can keep pulling out details like that or jot down notes and then get lost in a rabbit hole of research later, but you'll also miss or forget things because there is so much. We think of a museum, particularly a history museum, as something that offers clarity, that presents a narrative of the past to help us understand it in a specific way. But DeVille argues that clarity and concision are a farce, that history is messy, fraught, and moldable. It's impossible to catalogue or fully describe the exhibition, the materials in it and their provenance—with the exception of a few notes in the exhibition title list, we aren't told whether those mannequin parts, tarps, and chandeliers came from DeVille's New York studio or the Loading Dock in Baltimore, or the Peale Museum's basement.

One thing you could easily miss as you walk up the staircase is a series of six wheatpasted posters on the wall that briefly describe riots that have occurred in Baltimore, from the 1812 newspaper riots and the 1835 bank riots. The most recent riot included here is the 1942 March on Annapolis, when a reported 1,800 Black people marched against police brutality, after a police officer shot and killed Thomas Broadus, an African-American private in the army. The march led to the Baltimore Police

Department hiring the city's first Black police officers, as well as "the formation of a statewide 'Commission on Problems Affecting the Negro Population.'" This probably felt like monumental progress at the time, but it's something people shrug at today—particularly in post-uprising Baltimore, where we know that while representative leadership is important, the plentiful Black leadership in a city does not solve the problem of institutional racism.

Each of the rooms on the second floor grapple with these systemic issues, Blackness, and uprisings. Around the corner from the stairs, a room called 'Invisibility Blues' is a dream-like space full of blue light and barriers—whitewashed, wooden fences and lattices and doors—and found fragments of informational placards, from when this place was the Baltimore City Life Museum. The fragments explain more of the building's history as a segregated school for African-Americans, and depict poor housing conditions for some Baltimoreans in the early 1900s. A prompt on one of the fragments that says "Who I am determines where I live" asks leading questions about privilege like "Have I had much schooling?" and "How much do I earn?" and "What is the color of my skin?"

In the next room, a wall of televisions builds upon those questions, playing looped footage of protests from the Real News Network, Malaika Aminata's "Not About a Riot," Critical Past, and "One Document for Hope" by Margaret Rorison. In the same room, there's also an old dry cleaning rack, which holds pots and pans, wigs, bicycle tires, an ice skate, a blowdryer, rusty pipes, dolls, and various other unexplained objects on strings. Aggressively, loudly, and with a clanking and deep hum, the rack rotates around its track and then switches directions without stopping, left and right, right and left. The title of this room is taken from Martin Luther King, Jr.'s 1968 Mountaintop Speech: 'But somewhere I read of the freedom of assembly. Somewhere I read of the freedom of speech. Somewhere I read of the freedom of press. Somewhere I read that the greatness of America is the right to protest for right.' This speech is where the exhibition's title comes from, too.

Though DeVille works hard to engage your senses of sight, touch, and sound all at once, the room titled 'Black Whole'—a very powerful, very dark, narrow passageway with two long corridors that don't seem navigable—disorients us and deprives us of our sight. Lit only by a white strobe light, we can only catch brief glimpses of these dark corridors, which contain rows upon rows of metal trash cans (500 in all, according to the exhibition title list, "to consider the voices lost to time, space and recorded history; to the histories that speak to us that are embedded in our genome; to 500 years of ancestry living in our DNA"), filled with trash and glass bottles and other objects. In all of the other rooms I feel compelled to get close and scrutinize each detail, but here, that impulse is futile. You can hear songs (composed by Justin Hicks and featuring Kenita R. Miller-Hicks and Jade Hicks) faintly in some rooms and loudly in others; in here, with your diminished sense of sight and recognition, their harmonies are intensified, their sensations and sounds just wash over you.

The songs are loudest, though, in 'The People's Theater,' a sanctuary that is mostly empty except for a set of pews, a small stage, a black, tattered tarp that covers the ceiling (with light shining through the tarp's holes), a few protest signs and photographs, and a microphone, which is always on and open to the public. There have been scheduled "Sunday Salons" in this room every Sunday since the opening, featuring many local singers and poets and storytellers, such as Elon, Meccamorphosis, Tariq Touré, Abu the Flutemaker, Bilphena Yahwon, and others.

At the opening reception, I wormed my way through the crowd to the packed courtyard to watch Dimitri Reeves perform his best Michael Jackson. And then, upstairs in 'The People's Theater,' Joy Postell sang a few songs and got the whole crowd to clap the rhythm for her. Justin Hicks and Kenita Miller-Hicks performed their harmonious, hymn-like call-and-response, beginning downstairs and winding their way upstairs, snaking around the crowds of people, drawing in everyone to the theater who wasn't already there. These performances and the weekly salons underscore the notion that all of this—history, legacy, art—are living and breathing things.

*For more info on the Sunday Salons and other programming, visit contemporary.org*



**This article is related to:** Museums, Baltimore Police Department

Baltimore
MAGAZINE

Abigail DeVille
Baltimore Magazine
May 5th, 2016 - online
by Gabriella Souza

# New Project From The Contemporary Explores our Relationship with History

**Work by New York-based artist Abigail DeVille occupies historic Peale Museum.**

By Gabriella Souza. *Posted on May 05, 2016, 10:58 am*

"The People's Theater," which is part of Abigail DeVille's "Only When It's Dark Enough Can You See The Stars." -*Courtesy of The Contemporary*

It's nearly impossible to view "Only When It's Dark Enough Can You See The Stars" and not feel challenged. It begins when you enter the lowly-lit first room at the Peale Museum, which houses this newest project from The Contemporary, and see the seated figure with its face comprised of light bulbs and broken glass, while the sounds of chalk on a blackboard screech in the background.

Perhaps you first view the figure, and the soles of shoes that dangle from a line above him, as jarring. But the more time you spend in the room, you start to notice details that give it depth. The seated being is wearing an Orioles hoodie—making it oddly familiar—and throughout the room are old photographs of African-American communities displayed on broken glass windows. Perhaps they're reminding us that a way of life, and point in history, has been shattered.

New York artist Abigail DeVille has created an ambitious piece, transforming sound and light as well as everyday materials—trash bags, tarps, light bulbs, glass, a dry-cleaning rack—into installations throughout both floors of the building. But what makes this project so remarkable and dynamic is how it forces us to examine our sometimes messy relationship with history and the ways it defines us.

History seems to inhabit every facet of the work, starting with its setting—the stately, 19th-century Peale Museum, down the street from City Hall, which was the first building in the Western Hemisphere built specifically as a museum and, incredibly, was empty until now (luckily it has been maintained by a loyal board of directors). DeVille explores the Peale's various roles in each room, and the first room pays homage to its use as one of the first Maryland schools for African-American children. The shoes, 600 pieces of slate, and perhaps even the figure, are meant to symbolize those schoolchildren.

The other two rooms on the first floor continue a literal representation and interpretation of the Peale's history—taxidermy in one that harkens back to its time as a national (natural?) history museum; Old Glory painted on a tarp and large, yellowed sheets of parchment paper haphazardly covering the walls and the floor in the other relates to when it served as City Hall. (Could we be reading into DeVille's take on history here, and perhaps a reminder that laws and documents are really just paper?)

The rooms on the second floor are more conceptual and transporting in nature, and it is here that DeVille is perhaps the most revelatory. Here, we begin to realize history's cyclical nature.

Walk through a completely black room with strobe lights called "Black Whole" to find a room with a clattering dry-cleaning rack, which holds materials of various textures and sizes. The rack stops and starts sporadically, and a wall of TVs plays footage of marches from the Civil Rights Movement through last year's demonstrations after the death of Freddie Gray. Interestingly, it's difficult to distinguish the time period of the footage.

DeVille intended for the dry cleaning rack "to honor all those who marched," as she states in the exhibit notes, and that context adds much depth. As they whirr by, the materials almost seem to resemble skin and body parts—as if to represent that the marchers had given everything, even their bodies, to the cause of civil rights.

If you feel overwhelmed, take respite in an adjoining room that serves as a theater, where a trash bag holes creates a constellation against the ceiling. It is here that The Contemporary holds Sunday afternoon performances by local musicians, singers, and poets. The room also has a regular soundtrack of soothing vocal tones, where performers have mimicked the cadence of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Mountaintop" speech, which he gave the night before he was assassinated. Incidentally, this speech is where the title of the exhibit comes from.

Sitting in the room's church pews, with the hymn-like soundtrack playing, it's the perfect spot to reflect on the enormity of what you've experienced.

*"Only When It's Dark Enough Can You See The Stars" is on display through June 11. It's open for viewing on Thursdays and Fridays from 12 to 8 p.m., and Saturdays and Sundays from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., 225 North Holliday St.*

The New York Times

Abigail DeVille
The New York Times
December 24th, 2015
By Holland Cotter

ART REVIEW

# 'If You Leave Me Can I Come Too?' A Show Whose Subject Is Death

Abigail DeVille's "Untitled (Till, Martin, Garner, Brown)," whose materials include debris and mannequin parts. Natalie Conn

By Holland Cotter

Dec. 24, 2015

This carefully textured group show takes its title from a 2003 painting by Friedrich Kunath: an image of a seemingly impassable solid-black door to which a prismatic shaft of rainbow colors seems to lead like a path. In almost every other piece chosen by Arden Sherman, the curator of Hunter East Harlem Gallery, and Javier Rivero, an exhibition fellow at Hunter College, death is a light-and-dark matter.

Though not necessarily evident at first viewing, the images of crowds of colorfully dressed passengers on ships at sea in Xaviera Simmons's photo mural "Superunknown (Alive in the)" are harvested from Internet reports of fleeing political refugees. Only a wall label fully identifies a vivacious assemblage by Abigail DeVille called "Untitled (Till, Martin, Garner, Brown)" as a monument to a history of racist violence.

ARTFORUM

Abigail DeVille
Artforum
July, 2015, online
By Tobi Haslett

## "From the Ruins"

**601ARTSPACE**
**601 West 26th St., Suite 1755**
**May 8–September 19**

Abigail DeVille's *Haarlem Tower of Babel*, 2012, is a steel tower that has had the top lopped off. It's in two pieces, both of them choked by rusting metals, broken branches, and bits of cloth and paper that seem to shed like snakeskin. *Babel* is the centerpiece of a group show curated by Jane Ursula Harris, and DeVille's motifs—assemblage, foliage, the growl of defunct technologies—seep outward like nuclear waste until each piece glows with green-grey apocalypticism. Doom registers in the punch-click of Luther Price's *Light Fracture*, 2013, an old-school slide projector casting images of smashed insects and bubbling paints on the wall, and each slide change marking time slowly, methodically. Foreboding, too, is Julie Schenkelberg's *Hearsay*, 2013, a booth composed of bashed doors and household objects that slumps in the corner like a battered fort—home, destroyed.

**Abigail DeVille, *Haarlem Tower of Babel*, 2012,** reclaimed lumber, accumulated debris, family heirlooms, 72" x 72" x 16'.

So perhaps what's being worked out here is how to shove the question of environmental collapse into the dainty vase of Art. Miniatures and models abound, like Christain Holstad's *Flotsam*, 2012-2013, a fabric and metal work that reproduces, in microscopic scale, the vast island of trash floating somewhere in the Pacific Ocean. But for all the fantasy and bricolage, the works that seem boldest, the most regal in their mourning even as they traffic in chaos and dread, are LaToya Ruby Frazier's photographs of Braddock, Pennsylvania. The shots are a grid of perpendiculars, buildings propped up like stage sets but still settling into dust. Braddock is a steel town that was swallowed by the Rust Belt, and these photographs, less "contemporary" than current, sum up the show's sensibility: they're about memory and relics and ruin, and yet they carry with them a portent, some chilling prophecy of a future of pitted landscapes and empty space.

— *Tobi Haslett*

ARTSY

The Armory Show 2015
ARTSY
March, 2015, Online
By Alexxa Gotthardt & Alexander Forbes

## Art World Picks and Purchases at the Armory Show VIP Preview

At any art fair, there comes a time when fairgoers are forced to pick favorites. Yesterday's Armory Show vernissage was no different, with a flood of art-world darlings, collectors, and curators poised to pounce on the choice selection of works on offer. Among others spotted strolling through the aisles were institutional leaders like the Brooklyn Museum's Arnold Lehman and the Andy Warhol Museum's Eric Shiner, artists Maurizio Cattelan, Lucien Smith, and Kadar Brock, mainstay collectors Don and Mera Rubell and Susan and Michael Hort, and a few somewhat incognito celebrities—Tobey Maguire and Neil Patrick Harris, to name a couple surprises. Over the course of the day, Artsy caught up with influencers from across the art world, who talked us through their favorite projects.

*Bernard Lumpkin with work by Abigail DeVille at Michel Rein's booth. Photo by Christophe Touzaudmana for Artsy.*

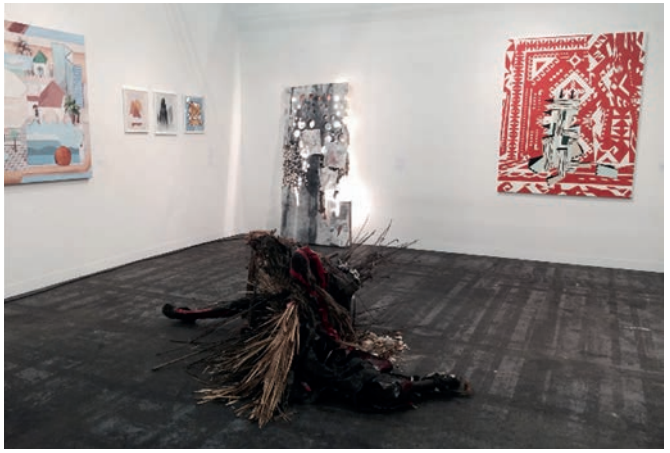
**Bernard Lumpkin, Collector**

"Abigail DeVille makes these amazing sculptural, installation-esque pieces, which involve objects that she gathers and collects and finds and then puts together in amazing, surprising ways. I'm a trustee at the Studio Museum, and we are big supporters of her work. She just did our artist-in-residence program last year. I love these works. They make you think creatively as a collector about how to live with art. It's always easy to live with paintings or photographs, the kind of thing you can just put on the wall and it looks pretty and is easy to manage and move around. These sort of works require a different kind of commitment. But I also think the reward is different and deeper, when living with work like this that makes familiar objects seem strange and everyday articles feel out of the ordinary."

artnet news

The Armory Show 2015
Artnet News
March, 6th, 2015, online
By Rozalia Jovanovic

## Rozalia Jovanovic's Top 10 Booths at the Armory Show 2015



**1. Michel Rein**

The two works on view by Abigail Deville in this booth blew us away. An assemblage of branches, shells, shoes, and burned objects held court at the center of the booth like debris from a ritual or some dire event. A more subtle work, *Nobody Knows Your Name* (2015), of wood, mirror, and neon was propped upright against the wall. Born in 1981, the socially and politically committed artist was an artist-in-residence at the Studio Museum in Harlem this past year. "She tries to make visible invisible people," said gallery owner Michel Rein, "especially people who are not present in the history of the US." The work against the wall sold to the Hort Collection in New York ("They knew the work," said Rein) (see Want a Peek Inside the Exclusive Hort Family Collection?), while the more challenging assemblage had yet to find a taker. "There's a lot of interest in the sculpture." Also in the booth were bright, eye-grabbing paintings by Syrian artist Farah Atassi whose work seems to borrow from Magritte and the cubists as much as it does modernist textile patterns.

The New York Times

Abigail DeVille
The New York Times
August, 28, 2014 - Online
By Holland Cotter

# The Stuff of Life, Urgently Altered

## Artists in Residence Display Work at Studio Museum in Harlem

[...]

Abigail DeVille's big, busy, conglomerate sculptures speak street talk. Almost everything that went into their making — shopping carts, cinder blocks, plastic bags, clothes mannequins — was harvested from the neighborhood surrounding the museum. She combines the material in very intricate ways, but still leaves the components warm with their individual histories. (An installation she made for the group show "Fore" at the museum in 2012 included cigarette butts from her grandmother's home in the Bronx.)

Abigail DeVille's "Harlem Flag," part of "Material Histories: Artists in Residence 2013-14." The exhibition presents the works of Kevin Beasley, Bethany Collins and Ms. DeVille, who are participating in the Studio Museum of Harlem's annual art residency program.
Emon Hassan for The New York Times

Now in her early 30s, Ms. DeVille has been exhibiting in the city for nearly a decade and developing increasingly refined and cogent forms of sculpture and installation. Her work at the Studio Museum, some of her best so far, leans in a distinctly sculptural direction, with "ADDC Obelisk" being the show's tour de force. It is a 15-foot-long skeletal version of the Washington Monument, tilted on its side, propped up by box springs, its innards exposed, revealing tangles of rope and wiring, chicken-wire walls and mannequin limbs in illogical combinations.

Ms. DeVille's "Doubly Invisible" is on display. Almost everything that goes into her sculptures — shopping carts, cinder blocks, plastic bags, clothes mannequins — was harvested from the neighborhood surrounding the museum.
Emon Hassan for The New York Times

As with everything Ms. DeVille does, the piece is expansively theatrical. (She has done stage design, most recently for the Peter Sellars production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" at the Stratford Festival in Ontario.) But it's deliberately shaped and self-contained enough to make a statement, which I take to be a political one: about the attention deficit of an American government that allows monumental degrees of racism to fester under its very eyes.

"ADDC Obelisk," by Ms. DeVille. It is a 15-foot-long skeletal version of the Washington Monument, tilted on its side, propped up by box springs, its innards exposed, revealing tangles of rope and wiring, chicken-wire walls and mannequin limbs in illogical combinations.
Emon Hassan for The New York Times

The exhibition, organized by Lauren Haynes, an assistant curator at the Studio Museum, also has the closest thing to painting I've yet seen from Ms. DeVille, an abstract collage assembled on pieces of Sheetrock attached to a gallery wall. The main material is paper, plain but imprinted with rubbings she made of the surface of local streets. With areas of drilled perforations and the addition of a brightly colored but paint-flaking found door, the result looks like a giant, distressed Anne Ryan collage, an aria to art history and to the story of everyday urban life. Its title is "Harlem Flag." A salute to Mr. Hammons? My guess is yes.

# *TEXTS*
# *TEXTES*

## *Chaos of Community ?*

Michel Rein, Brussels

Text: Abigail DeVille

21.04 - 27.05.2017

*"President Lyndon Johnson's high spirits were marked as he circulated among the many guests whom he had invited to witness an event he confidently felt to be historic, the signing of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. The legislation was designed to put the ballot effectively into Negro hands in the South after a century of denial by terror or evasion. The bill that lay on the polished mahogany desk was born in violence in Selma, Alabama, where a stubborn sheriff handling Negroes in the Southern tradition had stumbled against the future... President Johnson, describing Selma as a modern Concord, addressed a joint session of Congress before a television audience of millions. He pledged that "We Shall overcome," and declared the national government must by law insure to every Negro his full rights as a citizen... The President announced that "Today is a triumph for freedom as huge as any victory that's ever been won on any battlefiele... today we strike away the last major shackles of... fierce and ancient bonds."*

*A year later, the white backlash had become an emotional electoral issue in California, Maryland and elsewhere. In several Southern states men long regarded as political clowns had become governors or only narrowly missed election, their magic achieved with a "witches" brew of bigotry, prejudice, half-truths and whole liese... The white backlash had always existed underneath and sometimes on the surface of American life... With Selma and the Voting Rights Act one phase of development in the civil rights revolution came to an end. A new phase opened, but few observers realized it or were prepared for its implications. For the vast majority of White Americans, the past decade- the first phase- had been a struggle to treat the Negro with a degree of decency, not of equality. White America was ready to demand that the Negro be spared the lash of brutality and coarse degradation, but it had never been truly committed to helping him out of poverty, exploitation or all forms of discrimination.*

*Overwhelmingly America is still struggling with irresolution and contradictions. It has been sincere and even ardent in welcoming some change. But too quickly apathy and disinterest rise to the surface when the next logical steps are to be taken. Laws are passed in a crisis mood after a Birmingham or a Selma, but no substantial fervor survives the formal signing of legislation. The recording of the law in itself is treated as the reality of the reform."* –Dr. Martin Luther King, JR. – Where Do We Go From Here Chaos or Community?

In 1967 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote a book deciphering and teasing out the strands of confusion rampant in the Civil Rights movement. In accessing where they were and the underlying causes he wrote Where Do We Go From Here Chaos or Community? Using this text as the primary source and inspiration for the exhibition I was startled to learn (when I got to Brussels) about the legacy of King Leopold II and his reign of terror in the Congo. Studying this legacy and its effect I saw parallels to the White American denial and backlash Dr. King puts forth as a result of the progress made prior to 1967.

In 2015 Brussels was set to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the coronation of King Leopold II. This public-funded parade and meeting at the city hall was forced to cancel because of public outrage. The commemoration was still held but behind closed doors.

"In (his) forty year presence in Congo, the bloody King eliminated more than half of the Congolese population; that is over 10 million people. The consequences of colonization are still felt today. Belgium has its hands stained with blood due to its actions in the past but also in the present. We will not silence the cries of our deaths, we will not silence history. We will not let you walk over our dignity. We believe it is our duty to mobilize for the memory, for the recognition of history and to end the hegemony of colonial thinking," – The groups that directly spoke out against this outrageous celebration were New Anti-Colonial Way (JOC) and Intal Congo.

This led me to believe that there is a lack of reckoning and denial of the impact this rule of terror inflicted on the lives of millions. I stumbled upon the documentary King Leopold's Ghost (2006). In it there are detailed accounts of the atrocities inflicted on the Congolese at the hands of Belgians; most of all the murder of 10 million, men, women and children. The United States was the first country in the world to recognize Belgium's legitimacy in the Congo and again interfered with the Congo by assassinating the first and only democratically elected President Patrice Lumumba in 1961.

In 1961 the Civil Rights Movement was in full swing. It is the year of the Freedom Riders, when Americans black and white rode together on buses through the segregated south on the newly desegregated interstate highways. African Americans are fighting to be recognized by the government and protected by the same laws that shield and insure white Americans. Simultaneously, President Eisenhower commissioned the death of a democratically elected President Patrice Lumumba. As an American of African decent it is madding that my government continues to undermine governments and peoples all across the globe no better than an imperial colonial power. Americans were not chopping of right hands in the Congo but they sharpened the blade.

*Abigail DeVille – May 2017*

## *America*

Michel Rein, Paris

Text: Daria de Beauvais

22.10 –19.12.2015

« De la même manière que la théorie du Big Bang existe comme un modèle cosmologique pour l'histoire de l'univers, les œuvres d'Abigail DeVille entremêlent des déviations temporelles et spatiales afin de livrer des nouveaux modèles pour son avenir. » (Nico Wheadon)

À l'occasion de sa seconde exposition personnelle à la galerie Michel Rein (après Beyond the Veil, 2012), Abigail DeVille rend hommage à l'Amérique et à ceux qui l'ont faite – des cultures précolombiennes aux esclaves originaires d'Afrique, en passant par les colonies françaises outre-Atlantique jusqu'aux minorités invisibles d'aujourd'hui. Pour ce faire, elle modifie radicalement l'espace d'exposition : « ce que je veux, c'est perturber les espaces qui accueillent mes œuvres ». Et pour construire, il faut détruire ; récupérer et modifier les objets abandonnés qui nous entourent afin de les regarder d'un œil neuf.

S'inspirant des pyramides mayas, Abigail DeVille parsème l'espace de structures pyramidales s'élançant du sol ou tombant du plafond, dont on ne sait si elles sont en cours de construction ou au contraire les traces d'un passé lointain. Elle indique ainsi que pour ce projet « toutes les Amériques sont réunies, à toutes les époques ». Le langage formel de l'artiste est comme un code secret dont la clé n'a pas encore été trouvée, entre formes archaïques et symboles afro-futuristes. Il s'agit de « transformer l'espace en territoire » – une manière symbolique de reprendre possession de quartiers entiers actuellement transformés par la 'gentrification', alors qu'ils sont traditionnellement afro-américains.

L'artiste interroge donc dans ses sculptures, installations et environnements, la place de chacun dans la société, mais surtout sur l'absence de place dont sont victimes certains – ceux et celles que la société ne peut ou ne veut pas voir, les exclus quels qu'ils soient. Abigail DeVille est une archéologue du quotidien, dénichant parmi nos déchets une parfaite définition de la société ; tandis que ses œuvres immersives et proliférantes sont d'apparence post-apocalyptique.

Ces créations réalisées in situ, tenant profondément compte du contexte qui les accueillent, parlent un langage urbain, celui des quartiers déshérités, de la pauvreté et de la lutte des minorités pour exister. Mais il s'agit aussi d'un travail théâtral, mettant en scène des problématiques actuelles. Ses constructions sont autant de simulacres de recherches archéologiques – riches en références historiques, culturelles et sociétales ; quand ses installations opaques sont le reflet des problèmes de répression et de discrimination.

L'artiste utilise des débris architecturaux ou des déchets domestiques – ce que la rue lui donne elle lui rend au centuple avec ses œuvres coup de poing. Ainsi qu'elle l'exprime, « ce qui m'intéresse c'est de raconter les histoires invisibles, à propos de gens occupant des espaces qui n'existent plus ». La magie de son travail permettra peut-être au visiteur, à la faveur d'un court-circuit spatio-temporel, d'entre-apercevoir ces gens et ces lieux aujourd'hui disparus à nos yeux.

"In the way the Big Bang theory serves as a cosmological model for the history of the universe, works by Abigail DeVille weave together temporal and spatial deviations to deliver new models for its future." (Nico Wheadon)

For her second solo exhibition at Michel Rein gallery (after Beyond the Veil, 2012), Abigail DeVille pays homage to America and to those who created it - from pre-Columbian cultures to slaves of African origin, via French overseas colonies through to invisible minorities of today. In order to do this, she radically modifies the exhibition space: "What I want is to disrupt the spaces that welcome my works." And in order to build, one must destroy; recover and change abandoned objects surrounding us in order to see them in a new light.

Drawing inspiration from Mayan pyramids, Abigail DeVille scatters the space with pyramidal structures rising from the ground or falling from the ceiling. Are these structures under construction or, on the contrary, traces of a long forgotten past? In this way, she indicates that for this project "all of the Americas are united at every period in time." The formal language of the artist is like a secret code for which the key has not yet been found, between archaic forms and afro-futurist symbols. It's about "transforming space in a territory"; a symbolic way of winning back entire neighbourhoods, currently being transformed by their gentrification, although they are traditionally Afro-American.

In her sculptures, installations and environments, the artist therefore questions everyone's place in society, but above all the absence of place that some are victims of; those that society cannot or will not see, the excluded, whoever they are. Abigail DeVille is an archaeologist of daily life, digging out amongst our waste, a perfect definition of society; while her immersive and proliferating works are post-apocalyptic in appearance.

These creations, site specific, taking deeply into account the context they are met with, speak an urban language, that of deprived neighbourhoods, of poverty and the struggle of minorities to exist. However, it's also a theatrical work, staging current problems. Her constructions are all pretences of archaeological research; rich in historical, cultural and societal references; whereas her opaque installations are the reflection of repression and discrimination issues.

The artist uses architectural debris or domestic waste; whatever the street gives to her, she gives it back a hundredfold with her punchy works. As she puts it "I'm interested in telling invisible histories, about groups of people that occupy the space that no longer exists ". The magic of her work will maybe allow visitors, through a space-time short circuit, to steal a glimpse of these people and places, today disappeared to our eyes.

***INVISIBLE MEN: BEYOND THE VEIL***
Michel Rein, Paris

24.10 –23.11.2013

Les œuvres d'Abigail DeVille sont des constructions archéologiques empreintes de repères culturels et historiques qui renvoient aux sculptures canoniques de l'histoire de l'art récente, aux questions sociales contemporaines et au mouvement des corps célestes. Ses installations sculpturales se nourrissent de désintégration et de décadence, reflet de l'oppression sociale et culturelle, de l'identité raciale et de la discrimination dans l'histoire de l'Amérique.

Abigail DeVille s'intéresse aux récits de déclassement et de marginalisation. A travers ses installations et ses sculptures tentaculaires, elle offre une incarnation aux personnes « invisibles » dans l'espace privilégié des institutions. La notion d'invisibilité comme condition sociale a une grande importance, plus particulièrement pour les artistes noirs après la publication en 1952 du texte de Ralph Ellison "Invisible Man". Le roman d'Ellison associait en particulier la race noire à l'idée d'invisibilité. De même, les écrits de la théoricienne Michele Faith Wallace et les notions du sociologue W.E.B. Du Bois sur la «double conscience» ont introduit l'idée d'effacement et d'identités en conflit. La pratique socialement engagée d'Abigail DeVille répond au concept original d'Ellison et par extension, interroge la pauvreté, la privation de droits civiques et l'absence de domicile, toutes ces causes qui marginalisent et effacent les gens et les histoires.

Dans le contexte de la galerie Michel Rein, l'installation crée un nouvel espace qui permet d'observer ce que l'institution artistique représente au sein d'une culture : un espace symbolique de privilège économique et intellectuel ou, grâce à la production artistique, un lieu potentiel de résistance. Les artistes qui ont directement influencé le travail d'Abigail, Edward Kienholz (1927-1994), David Hammons (né en 1943) et Ilya Kabakov (né en 1933) et ceux dont elle se sent formellement proche, tels Arman (1928-2005) et Thomas Hirschhorn (né en 1957), ont utilisé l'installation comme forme de critique institutionnelle. Pour Abigail DeVille, l'installation devient le moyen de déplacer hors des murs du musée pour interroger les sujets importants à ses yeux : sa propre histoire et celles de toutes les victimes des mêmes circonstances. À certains moments, elle a même évoqué le cadre de ses installations comme étant des "trous noirs... des conteneurs remplis d'informations perdues - l'absence de lumière, de pouvoir, de connaissance et le signe annonciateur d'erreurs historiques."

Pour cette exposition, Abigail DeVille réalise un projet in situ composé d'œuvres inédites de la série Invisible Men : Beyond the Veil. Cette série retrace l'histoire d'une famille américaine à travers des objets récupérés, peintures et collages.

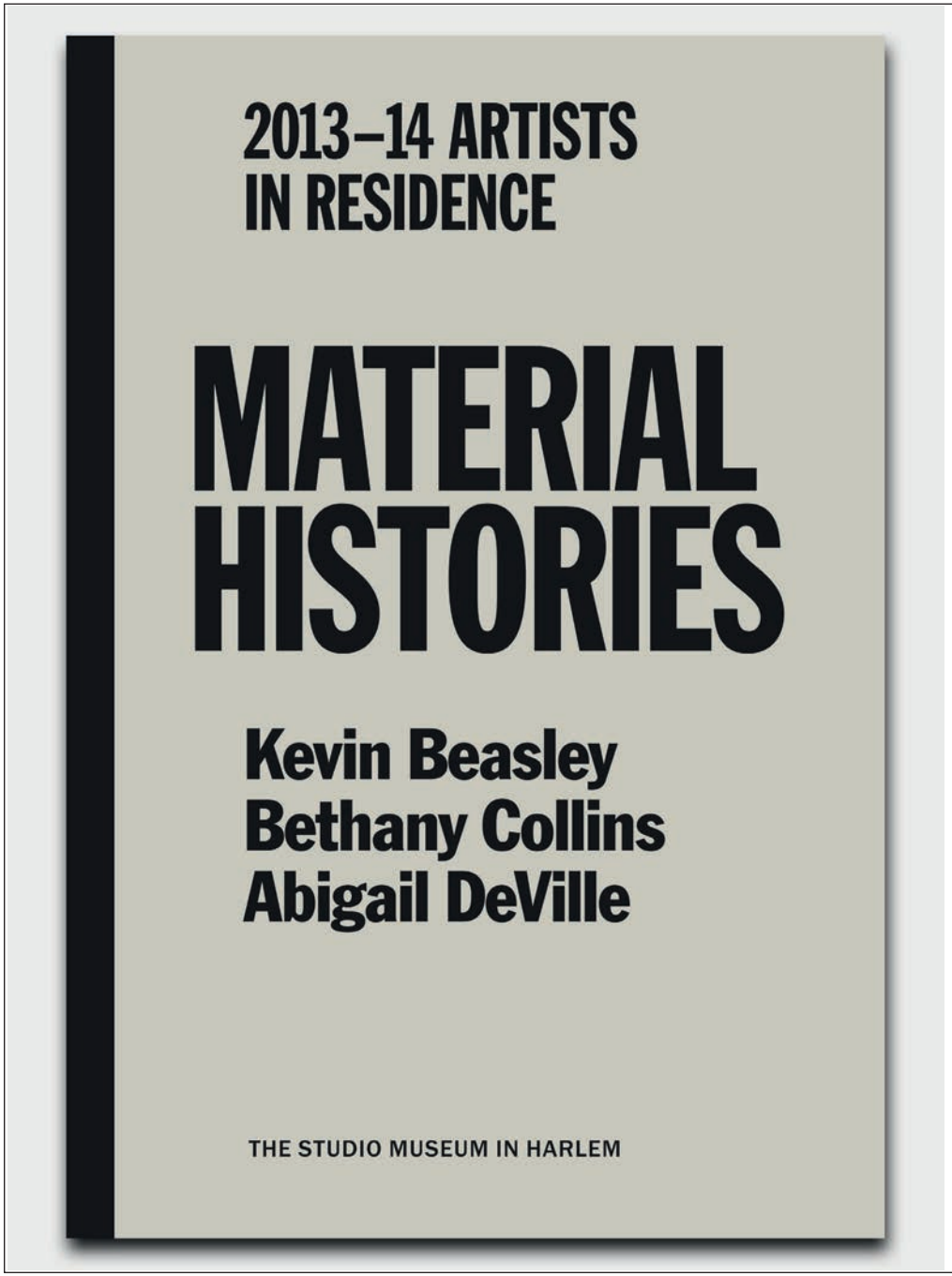
Abigail DeVille's work is comprised of archaeological constructs imbued with cultural and historical cues, referencing canonical sculptures from recent art history, contemporary social issues, and the movement of solar bodies. Her dark sculptural installations are steeped in destruction and decay, acting as reflections on social and cultural oppression, racial identity, and discrimination in American history.

Abigail DeVille is concerned with narratives of displacement and marginalization, and through her sprawling installations and sculptures, she gives pronounced physical presence to “invisible people” within the privileged space of institutions. The notion of invisibility as a social condition has held much significance, particularly for black artists working after the release of Ralph Ellison’s seminal text Invisible Man in 1952. Ellison’s novel posits race, black-ness in particular, as analogous to invisibility. Similarly, the writings of theorist Michele Faith Wallace, and sociologist W.E.B. Du Bois’s notion of “double consciousness,” engage the idea of erasure and conflicted identities. Abigail DeVille’s socially engaged practice speaks to Ellison’s original concept, and by extension interrogates poverty, disenfranchisement and homelessness, other means by which people and histories are marginalized and left unseen.

In the gallery setting, installation creates a new space to consider what an art institution represents within a culture—a space symbolic of economic and intellectual privilege or a potential site for resistance through visual production. Artists who have been directly influential to DeVille’s practice, such as Edward Kienholz (1927–1994), David Hammons (b. 1943) and Ilya Kabakov (b. 1933), and those with whom her work has formal resonance, such as Arman (1928–2005) and Thomas Hirschhorn (b. 1957), have employed installation as a form of institutional critique. For DeVille, installation becomes a vehicle to move outside museum walls and discuss matters of personal significance—her own narrative and those narratives that have become casualties of circumstance. At times, she has referred to the framework of her installations as “black holes . . . containers laden with forgotten information —the absence of light, power, knowledge, and the harbinger of historical inaccuracies.”

For the exhibition at the gallery Michel Rein, Abigail DeVille will realize a site-specific project with new works from the ongoing series Invisible Men: Beyond the Veil that documents an American family’s history through discarded and reclaimed objects, paintings and collages.

# *PUBLICATIONS*
*PUBLICATIONS*




# Abigail DeVille

## THAT WHICH SINGS AND CONTEMPLATES IN YOU

by Nico Wheadon

> Of time you would make a stream upon whose bank you would sit and watch it's flowing. Yet the timeless in you is aware of life's timelessness, and knows that yesterday is but today's memory and tomorrow is today's dream. And that that which sings and contemplates in you is still dwelling within the bounds of that first moment which scattered the stars into space.[1]
> —Khalil Gibran, *The Prophet*

Building upon the Big Bang theory as a cosmological model for the origins of the universe, Abigail DeVille further explores the interconnectivity of matter and the spatiotemporal confines that limit our understandings of the physical world. DeVille straddles the fertile expanse between archeology and futurology, excavating the ephemera of pasts buried or forgotten to resituate them within new contexts. DeVille's site-specific works recycle the histories inscribed on our sociocultural detritus to discuss the human condition and the future of modern society. Her immersive, bricolage installations are all at once Gibran's *streams* and *banks*, sites of progressive movement and respites for meditation.

DeVille's unique aesthetic visualizes elements of Afrofuturism and gives shape to contemporary discourse surrounding notions of race, space and place. Channeling the poetic curiosity that drives Octavia Butler's literary observations of society and culture, and the soul animating the musical riffs of

George Clinton and Sun Ra, DeVille's itinerant works sing as much as they contemplate. Works like *Harlem Flag* (2014)[2] —pieced together from discarded clothing, collected debris, and local heirlooms—deconstruct issues affecting people of color, historically and today right here in Harlem. DeVille uses rubbings of local streets to create the rich texture of the flag's fabric, and mines Harlem's collective memory to unearth the relics of shared importance that adorn it.

By staging familiar objects in new settings, DeVille forces us to confront the stereotypes, behaviors, and memories we attach to concrete forms. Furthermore, she stages this confrontation within a greater unraveling of mainstream aesthetics, inviting beauty to shine through in the sheer essence of materials, scavenged from dusty attics, trash heaps and wastelands. DeVille's *Street Work* (2014)[3] is a series of public sculptures assembled from discarded materials that evolve in reaction to the community's engagement with them, embodying the transmutation that some theorists assert occurs through sheer observation of the material world. Deville agrees, saying, "Everything is connected. In Quantum Mechanics, the observation of a subatomic particle changes it. You can never really be sure if it even existed before you looked at it. Since you looked, you actually interfered with whatever was before. We affect everything around us just by how we see it or what we believe. In drawing, cutting and smashing materials to an altered state, I hope to talk to a larger question of time, the time we live in and reoccurring societal problems, all the way back to the beginning of everything."[4] Through characterizing the spatial and temporal links that bind subjects and objects in eternal rotation, DeVille's works investigate how human attention and behavior can change the universe on a spectrum of scales.

Through shifting perspectives and positioning viewers as co-authors to her own observations of the physical world, DeVille paves the way for a new genre of storytelling and model for engaging the collective imagination. Science Fiction writer David Wyatt asserts, "Speculative fiction is a term which includes all literature that takes place in a universe slightly different from our own. In all its forms, it gives authors the ability to ask relevant questions about one's own society in a way that would prove provocative in more mainstream forms…it is a literature of freedom, freedom for the author to lose the chains of conventional thought, and freedom for the reader to lose themselves in discovery."[5] Speculative fiction challenges the status quo and democratizes access to free thinking, opening up inquisitive space in which cultural critics such as DeVille can investigate the social responsibilities that parallel this autonomy. In said space, DeVille challenges the legitimacy of the histories we've been taught and asserts that all facts are fiction and the only truth lies in the lifecycles of objects.

It is in DeVille's handling of her own personal history that this suspension of disbelief materializes and we are able to witness the interconnectivity of all matter in human terms. She recalls, "In 2009, I discovered through Google and interlibrary loan that my maternal grandfather, Francisco Antonio Cruz, had written multiple books of poetry before his death. In translating his poetry, I found that he was writing about the infinite and the cosmos, a discovery that happened after I had already begun thinking about the structure of my work in relation to supernovae and black holes. When I was a child, my parents said that I drew pictures with my finger in the air and I never told them what I was drawing. I was drawing my grandfather's face, invisible pictures of a man deeply concerned with the infinite. I was animating an unspoken history of my own."[6] What resonates here is the presence of forces beyond human cognition, memory and language that bind us to the otherworldly; DeVille's shared theology with a man she'd barely met and could only describe through gesture, is only comprehensible in a world where all matter is finite and the lifecycle of this matter is dynamic and limitless.

Inspired greatly by her grandmother—a dynamic fixture of her Bronx neighborhood known for collecting and transforming neighbors' discarded belongings—DeVille translates the act of collecting into not only a tool of sociocultural archiving, but also one of self discovery and explorations of otherness. Travelling through the dark wormholes forged in DeVille's works, we are first introduced to the versions of our past selves we know all too well and called to atone for the attitudes and behaviors that have come to define us as a society. Once we've come to terms with our incalculable position along the vast timeline between creation and extinction, we are drawn deeper still, past the familiar, to a light on the other side that reflects the future selves we have yet to meet.

1 Gibran, Khalil. *The Prophet*, pg 68. Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. New York. 1923.
2 *Harlem Flag*, 2014, discarded clothing, tape, paint, zip ties, paper, collected debris, heirlooms, dimensions variable.
3 *Street (work)*, 2014, discarded materials, mannequin parts, paper, Harlem heirlooms, dimensions variable.
4 Interview with the artist in her studio, April 2014.
5 Wyatt, David. *Context Science Fiction Blog, "Speculative Fiction", 2007*: www.contextsf.org/blog/2007/12/speculative-fiction.html
6 Interview with the artist in her studio, April 2014.

ABIGAIL DEVILLE
Born 1981, New York, New York

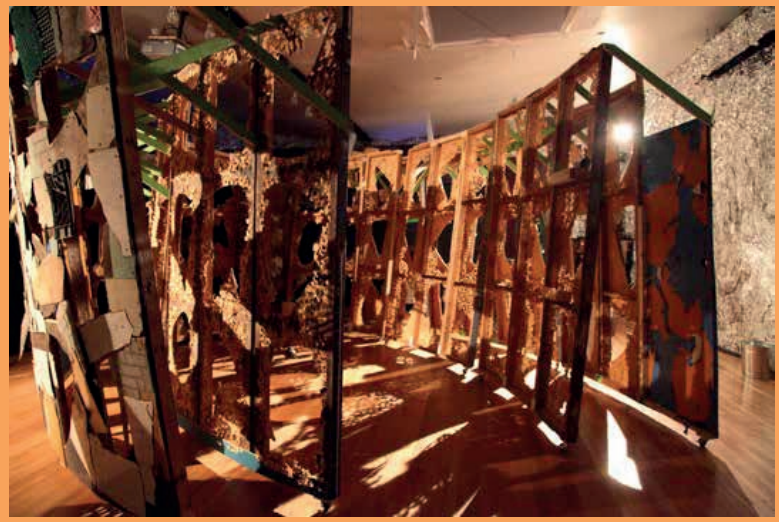
EDUCATION
2011 MFA, Yale School of Art, New Haven, CT
2007 Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Madison, ME
2007 BFA, Fashion Institute of Technology, New York, NY

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS
2014 *Home*, Morris-Jumel Mansion, New York; *Sensitive Instruments*, Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago, IL; *Rites of Spring*, Contemporary Art Museum Houston, Houston, TX
2013 *Guts*, Abrons Art Center, Henry Street Settlement, New York, NY; *Black in the Abstract*, Contemporary Art Museum Houston, Houston, TX; *Invisible Men: Beyond the Veil*, Galerie Michel Rein, Paris, France; *Gastown Follies*, Artspeak, Vancouver, BC; *Who Wants Flowers When You're Dead?*, The Poor Farm, Little Wolf, WI; *Bronx Calling: The Second AIM Biennial*, Bronx Museum, Bronx, NY; *Future Generation Prize Exhibition*, The 55th Venice Biennial, Venice, Italy; *They might as well have been remnants of the boat*, Calder Foundation, NY; *XXXXXXX*, Iceberg Projects, Rogers Park, Chicago, IL; *Njideka Akunyili & Abigail DeVille: New Paintings*, Gallery Zidoun, Luxembourg.
2012 *Fore*, Studio Museum, New York, NY; *Future Generation Prize Exhibition*, Pinchuk Art Centre, Kiev, Ukraine; *Space Invaders*, Lehman College Gallery, Bronx, NY; *If I don't think I'm sinking, look what a hole I'm in*, Night Gallery, Los Angeles, CA; *First Among Equals*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia, PA; *Invisibility Blues II*, M55 Gallery, Long Island City, NY; *Invisibility Blues*, Recess Gallery, The Dependent Art Fair, New York, NY; *The Ungovernables*, The New Museum Triennial, New York, NY
2011 *Bosh Young Talent Show*, Stedelijk Museum, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands; *The (S) Files 2011*, El Museo del Barrio, New York, NY; *The Un-nameable Frame*, MFA 2011 Thesis Exhibition, Green Gallery, New Haven, CT; *Reflecting Abstraction*, Vogt Gallery, New York, NY
2010 *Bonzai*, Red Lotus Room, Brooklyn, NY; *Planet of Slums*, Mason Gross Galleries, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ; *Dark Star*, Recess Gallery, New York, NY; *Critical Perspectives*, Green Gallery, New Haven, CT; *Gold Mountain*, Marginal Utility, Philadelphia, PA; *Rompe Puesto*, The Bronx River Art Center, Bronx, NY
2009 *How the Other Half Lives*, Green Gallery, New Haven, CT; *A proposito: Pan Latino Dialogues*, Ely House, New Haven, CT; *The Open*, Deitch Studios, New York, NY; *Black Gold*, The Bronx River Art Center. Bronx, NY
2008 *Bronx Council of the Arts Open Studio Tour*, Haven Gallery, Bronx, NY
2007 The Bronx River Art Center, Bronx, NY; DK Magazine, Pro qm, Berlin, Germany; *Fine Arts BFA 2007 Thesis Exhibition*, The Museum at FIT, New York, NY; *CAA & NYCAMS BFA Exhibition*, New York Center for Art & Media Studies, New York, NY
2006 *Selections 2006*, Fashion Institute of Technology, New York, NY; ArtStar, Deitch Projects, New York, NY

GRANTS, FELLOWSHIPS & RESIDENCIES
2014 The Radcliffe Institute for Advance Study Fellowship, Cambridge, MA
2012 The Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant, New York, NY; Artist in the Marketplace, Bronx Museum of Art, Bronx, NY; LMCC Swing Space Resident Governors Island, New York, NY; Recess in Red Hook, Artist in Residence, Brooklyn, NY; The Edward and Sally Van Lier Fund of the New York Community Trust, International Studio and Curatorial Program, Brooklyn NY
2011 Alice Kimball Traveling Fellowship, Yale School of Art, New Haven, CT
2007 Camille Hanks Cosby Fellowship, Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture, Skowhegan, Maine
2005 The Frank Shapiro Memorial Award 2005 for Excellence in Fine Arts



*Intersection*, 2014 Photo by Hao Bai



*Intersection*, 2014 Photo by Hao Bai

26 ABIGAIL DEVILLE

*Negation: Dusk to Dust*, 2013

27 ABIGAIL DEVILLE

*Subjugation*, 2013

28 ABIGAIL DEVILLE

FROM LEFT

Abigail DeVille
Kevin Beasley
Bethany Collins


## ABIGAIL DEVILLE (B. 1981, NEW YORK, NEW YORK)

"This market way of life promotes addictions to stimulation and obsessions with comfort and convenience. Addictions and obsessions – centered primarily around bodily pleasures and status rankings – constitute market moralities of various sorts."
—Cornel West, *Race Matters* (1993)

Abigail D. DeVille's series of bricollage sculptures entitled *Universal Diagrams of Discourse* are based upon the writings of Cornel West. DeVille gives form to West's ideas within a pictorial format that highlights issues of contemporary history, and current concerns within American society. The work is layered, dense and loaded with imagery. DeVille is interested in a vision of excess. Each composition mirrors the complexity of the black image in the United States. DeVille's sculptures address an interwoven racial subtext that highlight enduring racial tensions. Deville's projects pose a consideration of the manifold problems within American society by tying together threads of influence ranging from African sculpture, textiles, biology, popular culture, the artist's grandmother, and the decay of social structures found within urban centers across America.

"Este estilo de vida del mercado promueve la adicción a la estimulación y la obsesión con la comodidad y la conveniencia. Las adicciones y obsesiones, centradas principalmente alrededor de los placeres físicos y del estatus, se vuelven varios tipos de moralidad del mercado."
—Cornel West, *Race Matters* (1993)

La serie de esculturas de bricolage de Abigail D. DeVille titulada *Universal Diagrams of Discourse* (Diagramas universales del discurso) se basan en los escritos de Cornel West. DeVille le da forma a las ideas de West dentro de un formato pictórico que subraya cuestiones de historia contemporánea y preocupaciones actuales con la sociedad estadounidense. La obra tiene varias lecturas, es densa y llena de imágenes. A DeVille le interesa una visión del exceso. Cada composición refleja la complejidad de la imagen de lo negro en los Estados Unidos. Las esculturas de DeVille se dirigen a un subtexto racial complejo que destaca las tensiones raciales que aún perduran. Los proyectos de DeVille abordan los múltiples problemas de la sociedad norteamericana tejiendo los hilos de varias influencias, incluyendo la escultura africana, los textiles, la biología, la cultura popular, la abuela de la artista y la desintegración de las estructuras sociales en los centros urbanos en todos los Estados Unidos.

### EDUCATION

MFA, Painting, Yale University School of Art, New Haven, CT

BFA, Fashion Institute of Technology, New York, NY

### RECENT SOLO SHOWS

2010
*Gold Mountain*, Marginal Utility, Philadelphia, PA

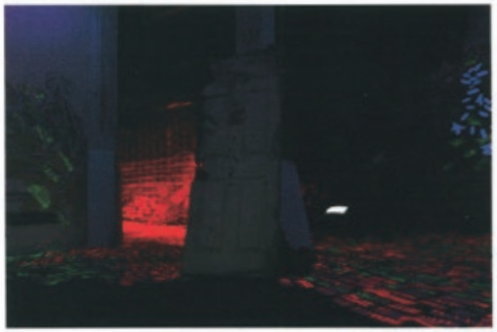
### RECENT GROUP SHOWS

2010
*Dark Star*, Recess Gallery, New York, NY

*Planet of Slums*, Mason Gross Galleries, New Brunswick, NJ

2009
*The Open*, Deitch Studios, Long Island City, NY

*Black Gold*, The Bronx River Art Center, Bronx, NY



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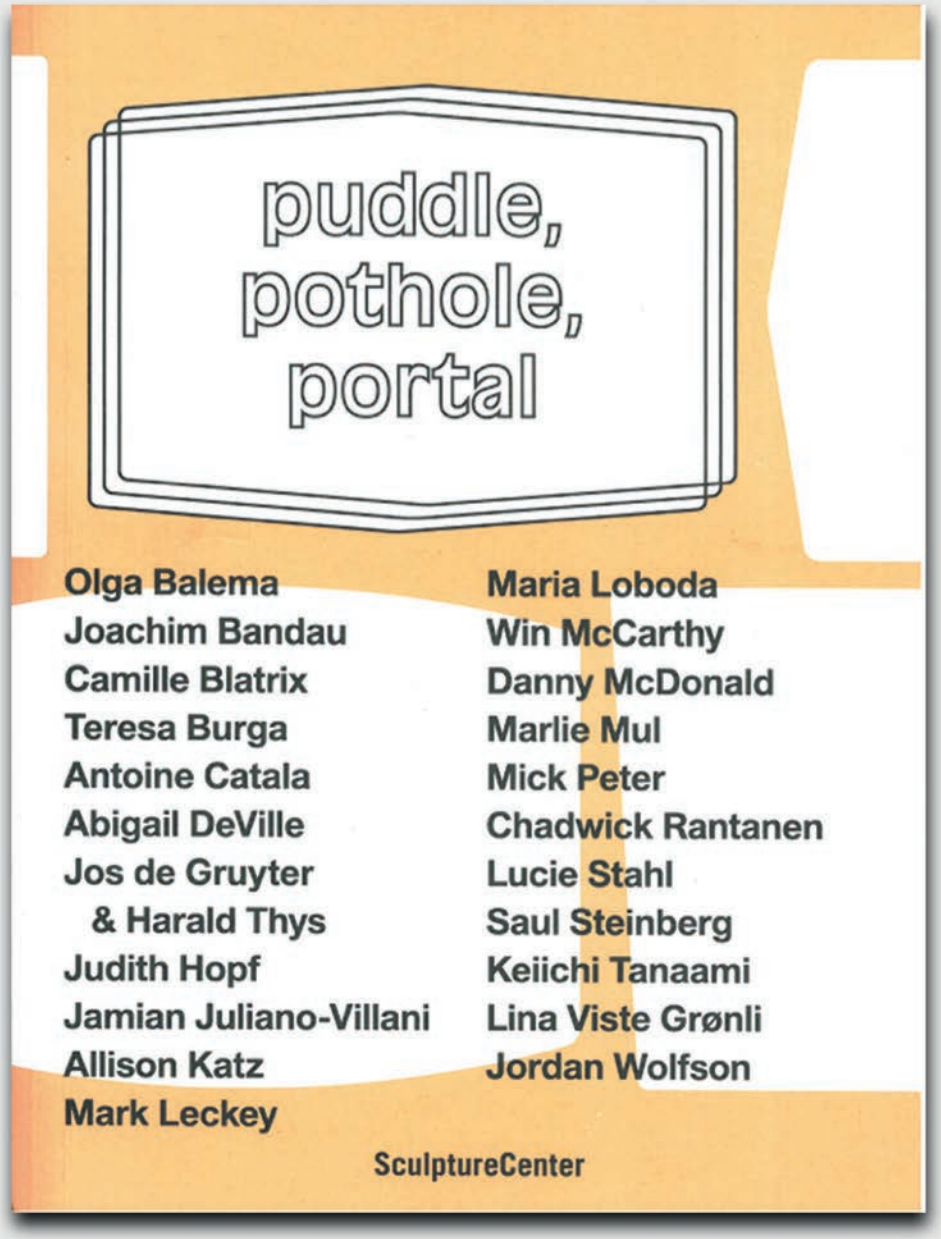
LEFT
*Gold Mountain* [*Black Hole that has consumed a history*] [*Montaña dorada* [*Agujero negro que ha consumido una historia*]], 2010
Installation with found door, garbage bags, tarps, burnt timbers, paint, styrofoam
120 x 120 in.
Photo: LaToya Ruby Frazier

RIGHT
*Gold Mountain* [*is a view of the sculpture titled New York at Dawn*] [*Montaña dorada* [*es una vista de la escultura titulada Nueva York al amanecer*], 2010
Plaster, garbage bags, paint, tarp, concrete, American flag
120 x 180 in.
Photo: LaToya Ruby Frazier

NOT ILLUSTRATED
*Untitled* [*Sin título*], 2011
Mixed media installation
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist




Taking an archaeological approach to ordinary detritus, Abigail DeVille salvages found materials to build monumental spirals, walls, and tunnels. Objects discarded in the past narrate current sociopolitical conditions, focusing on acts of displacement and marginalization, and suggest an unknowable future. Using materials that are imbued with specific histories, DeVille builds spaces and objects that themselves reference art historical precedents, such as Claes Oldenburg's claustrophobic found-object installation *The Street* shown in 1960 at the Judson Gallery on Washington Square in New York.

In each of DeVille's works, a swirling mass of objects occupies a space that is at once densely, oppressively packed and infinitely open, producing a contradictory duality comparable to fluid movement and unexpected apertures, suggesting mysterious black holes within a cosmology of her invention. Reconstituting the past, she opens up possibilities that attract yet seem to transcend one's cognitive reach: she has recently described her work as "new monuments to forget the future."[2]

MH

# Abigail DeVille

(Born 1981 in New York City. Lives in New York City.)

W. E. B. Du Bois's notion of "double-consciousness"—the experience of a shift in identity that occurs when one observes oneself not from the inside out, but from the outside in, as if through the eyes of others.[1] To realize this two-channeled effect in her labor-intensive installations, DeVille engages in hyperlocal collaboration with the context in which she is working. She binds together orphaned materials with evidential traces of their past, bringing into mutual proximity their individual material histories. When complete, DeVille's structures are massive and weighty, yet her architecture is one of

Abigail DeVille, *Street Life: A Vortex*, 2012. Accumulated debris, scavenged materials, and heirlooms. Dimensions variable. Courtesy the artist, Galerie Michel Rein, Paris, and the Pinchuk Art Centre, Kiev. Photo: Sergey ILLIN.

1 See W. E. Burghardt Du Bois, "Strivings of the Negro People," *Atlantic Monthly* (August 1897).

2 See www.radcliffe.harvard.edu/event/2015-abigail-d-deville-fellow-presentation.

# *BIOGRAPHY*
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Born in 1981 in New York (USA). Lives and works in New York (USA).

She trained in painting at Yale University and the New York Fashion Institute of Technology. She creates part-archaic, part-Afrofuturist sculptures and installations using rubbish and found objects, such as the wooden door and four brooms that make up *Talismán*, continuing the tradition of assemblage developed in the United States and Europe. For DeVille, history is recorded in these objects – which are often items from everyday life – that are the receptacles of lost voices. When she talks of her work, she recalls the unfailing optimism of the African-American communities in the face of the weight of the past, and readily recites the Martin Luther King's final speech: "But I know, somehow, that only when it is dark enough can you see the stars."

Abigail DeVille's work has been exhibited at Punta Della Dogana Venice), Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis (St Louis), Institute of Contemporary Art (Los Angeles), The Studio Museum in Harlem (New York), the Pinchuk Art Centre (Kiev), New Museum (New York), Stedelijk Museum (Amsterdam). DeVille has designed sets for theatrical productions — at venues such as the Stratford Festival, directed by Peter Sellers, Harlem Stage, La Mama, JACK, and Joe's Pub directed by Charlotte Brathwaite. She has received honors fellow at The Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard, Creative Capital grantee, received a OBIE Award for design, and nomiated for The Future Generation Art Prize in 55th Biennale di Venezia. She was in residence at the American Academy in Rome in 2017-2018.

Her work is part of prestigious collections as Collection Pinault, Memphis Brooks Museum of Art (MBMA), Kadist Art Foundation (San Francisco), Kaviar Factory (Henningsvaer), The Bronx Museum of the Arts (Bronx), The Studio Museum (Harlem), Centre National des Arts Plastiques (Paris), among others. She teaches at the Maryland Institute College of Art (Baltimore), and she's a visiting critic at the Yale School of Art (New Haven) and Columbia University MFA program (New-York).

Née en 1981 à New York (USA). Vit et travaille à New York (USA).

Elle a suivi une formation en peinture à l'université de Yale et au New York Fashion Institute of Technology. Elle créée des sculptures et des installations mi-archaïques, mi-afrofuturistes à partir de déchets et d'objets trouvés, comme la porte en bois et les quatre balais qui composent *Talismán*, poursuivant ainsi la tradition de l'assemblage développée aux États-Unis et en Europe. Pour DeVille, l'histoire s'inscrit dans ces objets - souvent issus de la vie quotidienne - qui sont les réceptacles de voix perdues. Lorsqu'elle parle de son travail, elle évoque l'optimisme indéfectible des communautés africaines-américaines face au poids du passé, et récite volontiers le dernier discours de Martin Luther King : "Mais je sais, d'une certaine manière, que ce n'est que lorsqu'il fait assez sombre que l'on peut voir les étoiles".

Le travail d'Abigail DeVille a été exposé à Punta Della Dogana (Venise), au Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis (St Louis), à l'Institute of Contemporary Art (Los Angeles), au Studio Museum in Harlem (New York), au Pinchuk Art Centre (Kiev), au New Museum (New York), au Stedelijk Museum (Amsterdam). DeVille a conçu des décors pour des productions théâtrales - dans des lieux tels que le Stratford Festival, dirigé par Peter Sellers, Harlem Stage, La Mama, JACK, et Joe's Pub dirigé par Charlotte Brathwaite. Elle a été boursière d'honneur au Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study de Harvard, boursière de Creative Capital, a reçu un OBIE Award pour la conception et a été nominée pour le Future Generation Art Prize à la 55e Biennale de Venise. Elle a été en résidence à l'Académie américaine de Rome en 2017-2018.

Son travail fait partie de collections prestigieuses comme la Collection Pinault, le Memphis Brooks Museum of Art (MBMA), la Kadist Art Foundation (San Francisco), la Kaviar Factory (Henningsvaer), le Bronx Museum of the Arts (Bronx), le Studio Museum (Harlem), le Centre National des Arts Plastiques (Paris), entre autres. Elle enseigne au Maryland Institute College of Art (Baltimore), et est critique invitée à la Yale School of Art (New Haven) et au programme MFA de la Columbia University (New-York).

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