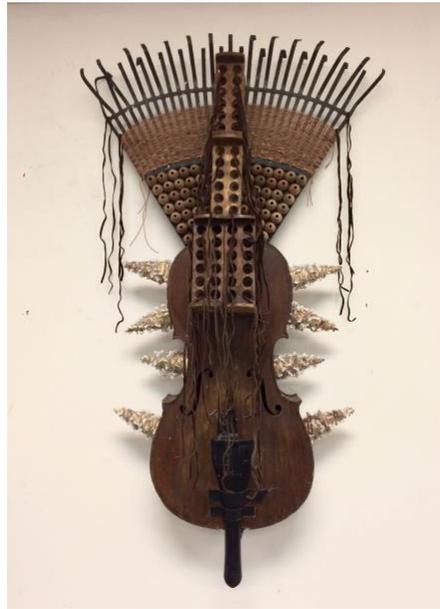


**THE SHELLEY & DONALD RUBIN FOUNDATION
ANNOUNCES**

***Sedimentations:
Assemblage as Social Repair***

**AN EXHIBITION FEATURING EL ANATSUI, MARY
MATTINGLY, MICHAEL RAKOWITZ, JEAN SHIN, SHINIQUE
SMITH, MIERLE LADERMAN UKELES, AND OTHERS**



Michael Kelly Williams, *Wodakota*, 2017. Courtesy of the artist.

The 8th Floor, 17 West 17th Street, NYC

June 21 – December 8, 2018

Opening Reception, Thursday, June 21, 6 to 8pm

New York, New York, April 27, 2018 – The Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation is pleased to announce ***Sedimentations: Assemblage as Social Repair***, a new exhibition featuring artists who employ strategies of reuse in their artmaking. The artists incorporate found and repurposed materials, from accumulation and assemblage to the construction of landscapes and discrete objects, that reference a multitude of timescales and politics. Artworks in the exhibition are

embedded with content such as cultural heritage and preservation, technological obsolescence, spiritual engagement, sustainable ecology, the impacts of gun culture on the environment, and more generally, social responsibility, using artifacts of human existence to reinterpret the cycles of creation, consumption, and waste.

The title of the exhibition alludes to the late artist Robert Smithson's essay "A Sedimentation of the Mind: Earth Projects," in which he associates the shifting of the earth with flows of thought, positing that the "mind and earth are both in a constant state of erosion...ideas decompose into stones of unknowing, and conceptual crystallizations break apart into deposits of gritty reason."¹ Smithson makes a case against refinement in favor of the ever-changing, natural state of material, rather than technological finishing processes of artistic production. While Smithson was applying this approach to earth works, his argument supports the kind of material reuse that connects many of the artists in the exhibition.

Sedimentations: Assemblage as Social Repair proposes that disused objects, waste material, and quotidian gestures can accrue new meaning and value through the artistic process of making. Together, they demonstrate symbolic and literal reversals of the decay associated with ecological loss as well as its entanglement with the geopolitics, culture, and the safety of our planet. The show will include artworks by **El Anatsui, Maren Hassinger, Elana Herzog, Samuel Levi Jones, Mary Mattingly, Lina Puerta, Michael Rakowitz, Jean Shin, Shinique Smith, Mierle Laderman Ukeles, Roberto Visani, and Michael Kelly Williams.**

The curatorial premise for *Sedimentations* was initially inspired by Rubin Foundation grantee Materials for the Arts' (MFTA) Artist-in-Residence program, where three artists in the exhibition, **Lina Puerta, Jean Shin, and Michael Kelly Williams,** have had workspace for six months at a time, with unlimited access to MFTA's warehouse. Located in Long Island City, MFTA's redistribution of donated supplies

¹ Robert Smithson, "A Sedimentation of the Mind: Earth Projects," *Artforum*, September 1968, Vol. 7, No. 1

diverts over one million pounds of materials from the landfill each year. During her residency, Shin found materials for *Spring Collection* (2016), which she made from leather scraps from fashion houses' handbag lines. Puerta's installation-based botanical artworks suggest the melding of natural and built spaces. The artist's *Botanico* series (2011 – ongoing) appear as if emerging from architectural elements — corners, ceilings, and columns — of the gallery, while in *Untitled (Tree and Frame)* (2014), a wooden frame is conflated with the knotted roots of a tree. Known for sculptures that incorporate musical references and objects imbued with spiritual energies, Williams' *Wodakota* (2017) is named after the Dakota word for peace, an assemblage that fuses disparate objects – a violin with a rake – made in honor of, and in solidarity with, the Native American water protectors of Standing Rock, North Dakota.

Similar in approach to Williams' radical and poetic transformation of found objects, **Roberto Visani** has long explored the history and circulation of guns in both the United States and Ghana, where his research on the topic began in 1997, during a Fulbright fellowship. His recent series of iron casts of decommissioned guns, to which he was given access by the Paterson, New Jersey Police Department, register as fossils of the very weapons that are at the crux of the gun control controversy underway in the United States. While **Mary Mattingly's** ecological art practice has often been situated in community-based and participatory public art projects like *The Waterpod* (2009), *Wetland* (2014), and *Swale* (2017), her recent photographs serve as documents of landscapes being mined for raw material used in the production of guns. Together, Mattingly and Visani raise awareness of the negative impact that gun production is having on the environment, from the devastating loss of human life to the depletion of natural resources.

Within the exhibition, material reuse takes many forms in artworks by **El Anatsui**, **Samuel Levi Jones**, and **Shinique Smith**, all of whom work in the language of abstraction to create textural pieces with sculptural and painterly effects. Anatsui's *Metas II* (2014) is assembled entirely from found aluminum, stitched together with

copper wire, while Smith's makes a more pointed critique of our habits of waste with her *Bale Variant* series, in which cast-off clothing and textiles are compressed into minimalist structures. At first glance, Jones' *Gris* (2017) reads as a color field painting, with the colors drawn from the covers of deconstructed Ohio state law books. Like many of Jones' book-based works, *Gris* counters the systems of law and justice, questioning how well they uphold the human rights they were designed to protect.



Maren Hassinger, *Pink Trash*, 1982. Courtesy of the artist.

In their performative practices, both **Mierle Laderman Ukeles** and **Maren Hassinger** implicate us in considering our relationship to public space and public life. In her seminal project *Touch Sanitation* (1977-80/2017), Ukeles shadowed New York City Sanitation workers, literally performing the gestures of their physical work alongside them as a way of understanding the scope of their jobs, although *Touch Sanitation* is known as a platform for Ukeles to individually thank all 8500 sanitation workers for keeping New York City alive. Similarly gestural, Hassinger's *Pink Trash* (1982) involved collecting trash from

three New York City parks (Van Cortlandt, Central and Prospect), painting the objects pink, and putting them back where she found them. Both Ukeles' and Hassinger's projects provoke questions about maintenance and sustainability: where does our waste go? Who is responsible for its removal?

In Ukeles' practice, she proposes a reconsideration of the value of our waste objects and cultural objects. Both **Elana Herzog** and **Michael Rakowitz** reflect on artifacts of cultural import. Rakowitz's series *The invisible enemy should not exist* (2007 – ongoing) is a symbolic reconstruction of artifacts looted from the National Museum of Baghdad following the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003. Each object in *May The Obdurate Foe Not Stay in Good Health* (2016), a museological display, represents a lost relic made from the packaging of Middle Eastern foodstuffs. Since the late 1990s, Herzog has been making site-specific and architecturally embedded installations that raise questions about the reversibility of decay. Using found textiles like Chenille and woven fabrics, this body of work includes *Untitled #4* (2001), a piece that reveals a partial view of a U.S. flag, which can be interpreted as receding away from view, or, alternately, emerging from obscurity.

As Herzog and Rakowitz provide moments of reflection on the ideological implications of eroding cultural symbols, many of the artists in the exhibition have committed to assembling meaning from the rubble of our so-called civilization. This is not to say that long-held habits of waste and excess can be reversed by art alone, but artistic reuse can impart an appreciation for what Smithson described as rust being a fundamental property of steel, proposing “why steel is valued over rust is a technological value, not an artistic one.”²

About The Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation

The Foundation believes in art as a cornerstone of cohesive, resilient communities and greater participation in civic life. In its mission to make art available to the broader public, in particular to underserved

² Ibid.

communities, the Foundation provides direct support to, and facilitates partnerships between, cultural organizations and advocates of social justice across the public and private sectors. Through grantmaking, the Foundation supports cross-disciplinary work connecting art with social justice via experimental collaborations, as well as extending cultural resources to organizations and areas of New York City in need. sdrubin.org

About The 8th Floor

The 8th Floor is an exhibition and events space established in 2010 by Shelley and Donald Rubin, dedicated to promoting cultural and philanthropic initiatives, and to expanding artistic and cultural accessibility in New York City. The 8th Floor is located at 17 West 17th Street and is free and open to the public. Schools groups are encouraged. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 11am to 6pm. the8thfloor.org

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