



Loving After Lifetimes of All This

Curated by Danny Orendorff

Charlotte Street Foundation's la Esquina | Kansas City, MO | November 7, 2014 - January 3, 2015

The Center for Craft, Creativity & Design's Benchspace Gallery | Asheville, NC | January 15 - May 30, 2015



Loving After Lifetimes of All This features artwork and artifacts that pay tribute to the overlapping and inventive practices of craft, care, and cultural resistance, defined as the nonconformist practice of combatting dominant culture through aesthetics and protest.



Informed by people's movements, volunteerism, and counter-narratives to mainstream American history, artists included in this exhibition find inspiration in the hard work and survivalist strategies of ancestors, often descending from historically disadvantaged and under-represented populations. Combining contemporary making with archival research, these works are simultaneously emotional and interpretive.



An expanded definition of 'craft' is employed in the organization of these works to include such domestic and habitual practices as scrapbooking and storytelling, and such grassroots self-care strategies as grooming and gardening. These often small-scale, local, and self-generated gestures represent creative and resistant acts of remembrance against the threat of cultural erasure, and also represent personal expressions of love and care - for one's self, communities, heritage, and histories.



Tanya Aguiñiga

The third in her ongoing series of public and often collaborative projects known as *Performance Crafting*, Tanya Aguiñiga's *Community Felt-In* entailed the ersatz production of 3 large-scale felt textiles in the Red Car River Park section of the Los Angeles River in late October, 2014.



Inspired by the rural women's weaving and crafting communities of Chiapas and Oaxaca, Mexico, Aguiñiga utilizes pre-industrial craft techniques, often on the verge of extinction, within her public actions - boldly reclaiming the occupancy of public lands, and drawing attention to issues of tradition-maintenance in the age of uneven global economic development.











Jon D. Barnett

A general contractor, activist and writer, Jon D. Barnett began crocheting his psychedelic, often off-pattern rugs to combat the delirium induced by a cocktail of over 20 pharmaceutical drugs prescribed to treat conditions associated with his HIV. Founding the Kansas City chapter of the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT-UP) in the late 1980s, Barnett initiated his craft practice in the mid-90s as a self-care, healing method against depression, and to keep his brain sharp - stimulating his interests in patterns and systems, be them societal or woven.



Represented by sprawling family trees and humorous video spoofs of PBS-style ancestry documentaries, Levy points to the creativity inherent to archival work - wherein reading between the lines and intimations must fill in the gaps of virtually unknowable lives obscured and disrupted by slavery, immigration, war, diaspora, colonization, and intolerance.



Tina Takemoto

Inspired by her archival research into the life of gay Japanese-American Jiro Onuma, Tina Takemoto's *Looking for Jiro* performance film, and the handcrafted objects included in *Gentleman's Gaman*, pay tribute to Onuma's survival strategies while enduring interment at a Japanese incarceration camp in Utah during WWII.



Making objects from the kind of commonplace materials that would have been available to inmates (tarpaper, lemon juice, wood, rubber-scrap, pipe-cleaner), Takemoto honors Onuma's gentlemanly individuality while highlighting his craft-oriented methods against boredom and deprivation. A bread-baker in the mess hall and lover of muscle-men, Onuma's eccentricities and desires are interpreted in Takemoto's film, also featuring excerpts of official US propaganda footage of the camps.



Christopher Leitch

An avid dream-journalist, on view is but a sample of Christopher Leitch's extensive, and highly intimate, collection of drawings remembering the lives of friends and former lovers lost to HIV/AIDS. Completing new drawings on a routine basis, Leitch's work represents an alternative method of remembrance and his prolific portfolio of drawings is a sublime accumulation of daily, craft-like, habit. Each drawing stamped with the date of its completion, Leitch has produced an alternative, or queer, archive of lives specific to his own, while indicative of the much larger, and ongoing, crisis.



Temporary Services

As stated on their bookmark-manifesto, artist collective Temporary Services does not make “the distinction between art and other forms of creativity.” On view here is their *Booklet Cloud*, doubling as a retrospective of the collaborative works they’ve self-published on their imprint, Half Letter Press, and as an expression of the possibilities for free-information in the age of digital media and cloud-servers.



Often produced in collaboration with those that are disenfranchised from mainstream art outlets and lacking access to publishing resources (including working-class laborers, incarcerated individuals, and non-commercial / low-income artists) the work of Temporary Services is a politicized and anti-capitalist expression of the DIY, or do-it-yourself, ethic.



Ramekon O'Arwisters

Utilizing commonplace fabrics braided and woven together into rag-rug resembling textiles, Ramekon O'Arwisters produces sculptures and wall-hanging installations inspired by folk art traditions and family history. The textiles O'Arwisters utilizes have been produced at events known as *Crochet Jams* - wherein the public is invited to volunteer a bit of themselves, their labor, their stories, and their time in the production of the tapestry material. Featuring 40 vintage family photographs, an African mask, and a framed portrait of James Baldwin, *Where We Are* is a representation of O'Arwisters' own experiences of diaspora.



Sonya Clark

Sonya Clark's textile works explore the intersecting roles that hair-care and labor have played in the economic and community development of black populations in America.



Inspired by the innovations and techniques of hairdressers, Clark's work is frequently composed of human hair, black pocket combs, and of fibers twisted, braided, and embroidered much in the tradition of salon aesthetics. With a keen, and critical, eye on history, Clark's artistic re-interpretations of iconic objects and patterns (a barbershop pole, a classic Waverly print, a \$5 bill) offer counter-visions to the status quo of these prefab forms, while also paying tribute to the labor, all too often made invisible, of black individuals integral to the advancement of American culture.



Gina Adams

As an artist and researcher, Gina Adams explores the many histories and methods used by the US Government in the assimilation of American Indians into dominant culture. Focusing her current work on the development of athletics programs at boarding schools, Adams uses found, archival photographs and the generic form of a basketball to make a statement about the loss of individuality or tribal specificity over decades of forced integration. Coating photographic panels and ceramic basketball molds with thick layers of wax encaustic, Adams then carves patterns analogous to that of beadwork common to her own Ojibwa heritage upon each surface - an act Adams likens to honoring and adornment.



Natalie M. Ball

The descendant of African slaves, English soldiers, and the leader (Kientpaush, aka Captain Jack) of the Modoc Tribe's resistance to the US Army during the Modoc War of 1872, Natalie M. Ball describes her painted-quilt installations as 'auto-ethnographic narratives.' Understanding her mixed-heritage as the byproduct of myriad forced migrations and transformations throughout American history, the patchwork aesthetic of Ball's artwork represents the many, often conflicting, influences of personal and tribal histories. Suspended like protest signage upon long, mobile wooden-poles, the implied militancy and emotion of Ball's quilts are grounded with personal and tribal artifacts installed along the floor.



NedRa Bonds

Interested in the historical relationships between quilting, cotton, black women, and slavery, NedRa Bonds produces quilts with explicit political commentary from found and mass-produced textiles. Strategically occupying a 'crazy-quilt' aesthetic through the use of childlike, inexpensive, and intentionally 'bad-taste' textiles, Bonds intends for her quilts to speak on behalf of low-income black women - voices all too frequently neglected, derided, or left out of public discourse. Remaining critical of power and authority as an activist and artist for over 40 years, Bonds produces her quilts with an uncensored politics as a method of dissent.



Matthew Dehaemers

Matthew Dehaemers produces wood, found-element, and kinwashi-paper sculptures inspired by the farming and scrapyards legacies of his Belgian immigrant ancestors, settling in Shawnee, Kansas. Described as 'truck farmers' both for their direct-to-consumer sales at farmer's markets and for their use of discarded auto-elements within their box gardens, Dehaemers merges this history and blends the natural and the manmade in his own patchwork creations resembling speculative inventions. Meticulously handmade and utilizing locally foraged components (honey locust thorns, tree roots), Dehaemers' work is a tribute to the survivalist practices of low-income ancestors and the specificity of the place that made their lives viable.



Josh Faught

Josh Faught honors the unsung heroes of the AIDS epidemic in his multi-media, woven textile *Triage* - the hospice and home-care volunteers who attended to the needs, both physical and emotional, of those living with the disease. Punctuated with self-help books, pulp paperback novels, and pink triangle buttons worn by AIDS activists, Faught's work represents the domestic support and downtime of illness. Completed with an intentionally messy and self-effacing sense of campy humor, the tender unusualness of Faught's textile is belied by the real and dedicated labor of its making.



Black Archives of Mid-America & Gay and Lesbian Archives of Mid-America

As part of my research for this exhibition's initial presentation at The Charlotte Street Foundation's la Esquina gallery in Kansas City, MO, I spent time at both the Black Archives of Mid-America and the Gay & Lesbian Archives of Mid-America uncovering local histories reflecting the overlap of craft, care, and cultural resistance. On view for this presentation are remnants and reproductions of my research into the lives of two individuals I discovered at each respective archive, Samuel Eason, at the Black Archives of Mid-America, and Phyllis Shafer, at the Gay & Lesbian Archives of Mid-America.



While neither Eason or Shafer identified as an artist, their cultural practices, methods of making, and daily habits nevertheless harmonize with the themes of the artworks included as part of this larger exhibition and, indeed, could be considered forerunners to the kinds of socially-engaged and community-based art practices increasingly common within contemporary art.

Loving After Lifetimes of All This

By Danny Orendorff

All Images c/o E.G. Sempf

This research was supported by a Craft Research Fund grant from The Center for Craft, Creativity & Design, Inc.