

Craft Contemporary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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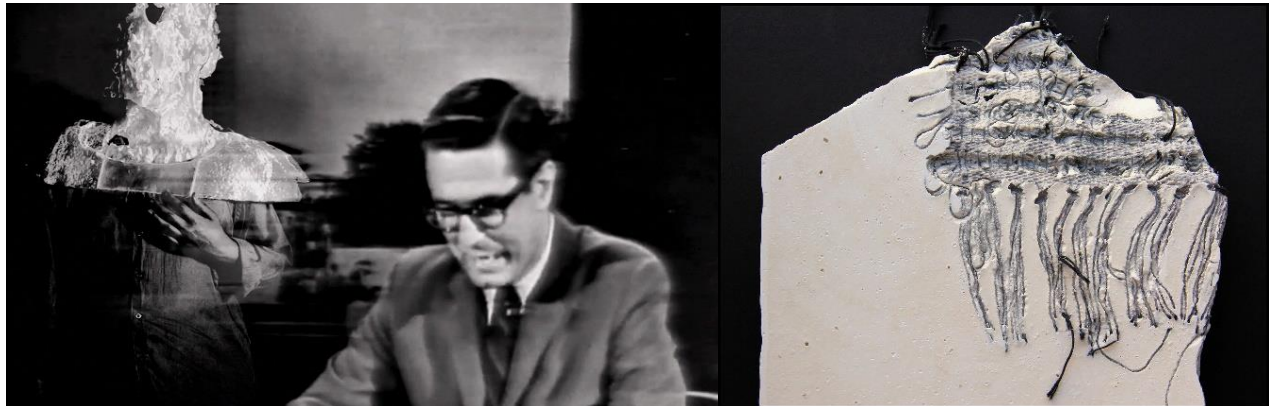
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Tactics of Erasure and Rewriting Histories

October 2, 2022- January 8, 2023



Left: Ryat Yezbick, *growth lies, pack of truth*, 2022. Video still. Courtesy of the artist.

Right: Fafnir Adamites, *The Presence of Absence*, 2019. Hydrostone, cotton string. Dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist.

LOS ANGELES - *Tactics of Erasure and Rewriting Histories* is a juried exhibition that highlights diverse artworks documenting acts of reclamation and removal as a process of making history. The five artists selected – Fafnir Adamites, Andre Keichian, Alberto Lule, Miller Robinson, and Ryat Yezbick – make use of archival and forensic materials, found objects, and casting to investigate how state-sanctioned censorships create a system of oppression that impacts their sense of identity. What role does erasure play in informing one's place in history? What other

forms of representation can capture the fluidity of marginalized identities, the pains of inherited traumas, and the unstable truth of history?

One artistic strategy employed by some artists is the subversion of systems of categorization and obfuscation of truth in data collection, which reveals the perpetuation of violence on different levels of society. In the absence of material evidence and records from official narratives, other exhibition artists have created their own archives from personal artifacts and used items. These gaps in official narratives give space for the artists' speculative interpretations that reconcile with past and present traumas, while rewriting the future towards more tender, hopeful outcomes.

Alberto Lule and Ryat Yezbick use the language of power to address the inherent violence in systems that seeks to divide, categorize, and criminalize by instilling fear and centering on difference. Lule examines control and manipulation of bodies in the US carceral system and questions who is granted authority over the bodies of others. He creates self-portraits following systems of identification and tools used by the police on incarcerated people. Reminiscent of the Bertillon system, which was developed in the 19th century to classify "the criminal's" physiology by French policeman Alphonse Bertillon, Lule's piece, *Am I Truly Free?* (2022), is a triptych composed of different identifiers based on the artist's prison issued identification card. *Am I Truly Free? (a)*, on view in the exhibition, is a collage on plexiglass that multiplies the copy of Lule's prison-issued identification card, sectioning the artist's face to his eyes, alternating them with graphs and excerpts on eugenics and reductive terms pertaining to criminal physiology. His *Investigation* (2019 -) series abstracts the artist's body to traces of positions in which the police had placed him during his arrest. The positions are revealed through forensic ink blurring, rather than codifying, the body it seeks to identify.

Ryat Yezbick creates a blurry line between enunciator and enunciated, victim and perpetrator in their video installation, *growth lies, pack of truth* (2022). News footage of the University of Texas tower shooting in 1966 has been edited to give space for an alternative universe in which vulnerable masculinity may alter the course of the future. This film, the first in a series from Yezbick's growing archive of news coverage of mass shootings in the United States, presents a speculative narrative about a mysterious creature that spreads like a virus causing its hosts to go into a temporary state of physiological confusion. Housed in a tombstone, the film is a haunting reminder of the psychological trappings of fear and the objectification of the Other. The artist's background as a cultural anthropologist informs their practice as they engage with the impact of digital surveillance technology on the collective American psyche and sense of co-responsibility.

In contrast to the abundance of information in Lule's and Yezbick's works, Andre Keichian, Miller Robinson, and Fafnir Adamites seek to give shape to histories that have been erased. Andre Keichian's *Salt in the I* (2019), is a lyrical mapping of his family's diasporic journey from the war-ravaged Middle East to France, Argentina, and the United States through the manipulation of his family photo album. Using salt and water to develop the negatives and bend wood for the frames, the different elements of the work collapse topographies of ocean,

land, and temporalities. The artist stretches the possibility of the archive to blend truth and fiction and insert the narrative of his Armenian-born, Argentinian grandfather who marks the beginning of his family's migration as a stand-in ancestral queer. The act of speculation also comes from the influence of the Armenian Genocide on the artist's family's history of migration, the impact of which is still not fully recognized by the Turkish government. The artist asks, "*If this happening can exist without the privilege of becoming official history, then what new alternative possibilities may emerge within modes of art and narrative within this gap?*"

The archive, in Miller Robinson's work, is a mode of operation that serves to defy both the system of linear time and Eurocentricity and to offer an understanding of how lineage can be formed outside of those constraints. Conceived as a site-specific intervention, the artist introduces elements of past and present works – ranging from a drawing on latex rubber that has been rubbed until it reflects like salmon skin to hand-carved fossils of transitional species – cyclically, stretching between cosmic, geological, and human time. In particular, the collection of objects in *kit'ánamahach (Little Grandma)* pays tribute to histories of colonization, the attempted erasure and forced assimilation of Indigenous peoples, and the delicate balance between the artist's own Karuk/Yurok and white heritages.

The discreet objects of Fafnir Adamites give voice to the invisible labor of women and hidden familial stories. The 25-foot-long banner of woven used cotton T-shirts, entitled *A Record of Obscured Meaning* (2018), is a testimony to the repetitive process of weaving discarded artifacts. The artist compares the gesture to the Sisyphean task of gathering and safekeeping that which falls out of our grasp. Materials and action embody the trauma, memory, and legacy of emotional turmoil inherited from past generations. The multiple hydrostone castings of *The Presence of Absence* (2019) serve as counter-monuments for people, places, and memories that are no longer present. For Adamites, the refusal to name and categorize traumatic events is different from their erasure; one can acknowledge the brutality of an event and move forward by giving breath to the irrepresentability of the experience.

PROGRAMS in conjunction with *Tactics of Erasure and Rewriting Histories*

For a full list of exhibition programs, visit <https://www.craftcontemporary.org/programs/>

Exhibition Opening Reception

Sat, Oct 1 | 6:00–9:00 pm | in-person, courtyard and galleries

\$12 | members free

Join us as we celebrate the opening of our new exhibitions *Lezley Saar: Diorama Drama*; *Luis Flores: Because of You, In Spite of You*; and *Tactics of Erasure and Rewriting Histories*. Guests enjoy first access to the galleries, complimentary beverages, and live DJ music.

Artists in Conversation:**Tactics of Erasure and Rewriting Histories**

Sun, Oct 30 | 12:00 – 1:30 pm | in-person, indoors | free

Prima Jalichandra-Sakuntabhai, Curator and Craft Contemporary Exhibitions Manager, will be moderating a provocative conversation with the exhibition artists. Learn more about the artists and how their practices and diverse artworks reclaim and rewrite erased, forgotten, or untold histories.

CREDITS:

Tactics of Erasure and Rewriting Histories has been organized by Prima Jalichandra-Sakuntabhai, Craft Contemporary Exhibitions Manager. This exhibition is supported in part by the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs and the Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture.

Located on Los Angeles' historic Miracle Mile since 1965, Craft Contemporary reveals the potential of craft to educate, captivate, provoke, and empower. With a focus on contemporary art made from craft media and processes, Craft Contemporary presents dynamic exhibitions by established and emerging artists and designers who are often underrepresented in larger art institutions. Through a robust roster of regular programs and events, Craft Contemporary offers creative opportunities for the public to participate in hands-on workshops led by professional artists. Craft Contemporary cultivates an environment for people in Los Angeles to deepen their relationship to art, creativity, and one another. For more information, visit www.craftcontemporary.org.

LOCATION: 5814 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90036

ADMISSION: FREE every Sunday

REGULARLY: \$9 for adults; \$7 for students, teachers, seniors; free for Craft Contemporary members

HOURS: Tuesday - Sunday, 11:00 AM to 5:00 PM (starting October 2, 2023)