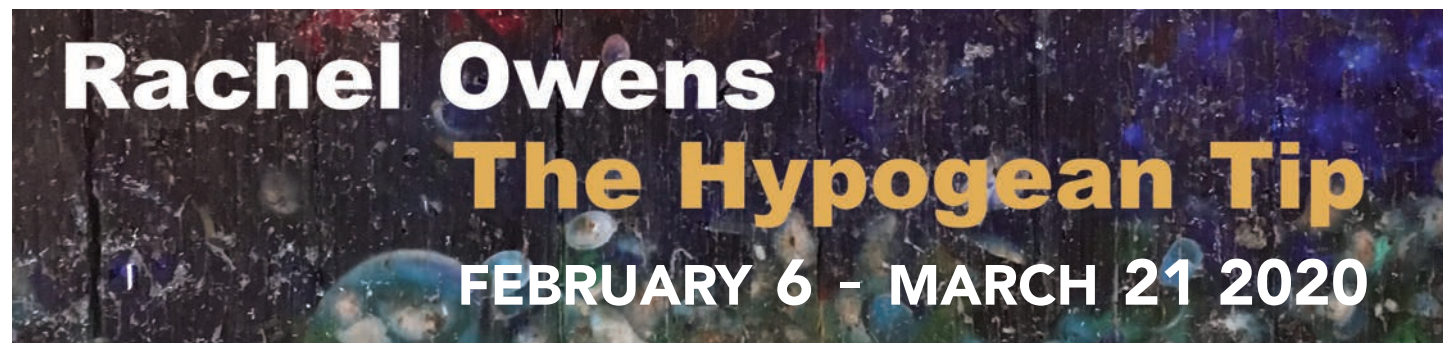




Rachel Owens

The Hypogean Tip



HOUSATONIC
MUSEUM OF ART

INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All landscapes are cultural landscapes. Stunning rock formations like Bryce Canyon in Utah or the Vermilion Cliffs National Monument in Arizona, fill us with awe and pride, shaping our national identity and symbolizing the American spirit. But everyday landscapes - rural, suburban, and urban - equally reflect the cultural ideals, values and achievements of a community. These are the places that hold our personal and collective memories, define who we are and contribute to a sense of belonging.

Little Liberia is one such community. Located in Bridgeport's South End, this waterfront neighborhood was home to three siblings, Mary, Eliza, and Joel Freeman, who were instrumental in founding the town and building a community that worked for the betterment of all its residents. Joel Freeman's name appears on many land and property deeds in Little Liberia while his sister, Mary, held the mortgage loans that enabled fellow citizens to purchase property and own homes. Founded on the ideals of economic and social justice including fairness, equity, and equality, Little Liberia was a model town. But this history has only been unearthed relatively recently and plans to restore Mary and Eliza Freeman's homes are slowly being realized.

Inspired by this rich history, sculptor Rachel Owens, set about documenting the structures and natural features of this historic settlement. Casting molds and embedding imprints of porch floors, grasses, shells and leaves within richly-colored cast glass mounted on orange scaffolding, Owens transforms a particular place into abstracted space, constructing contemporary narratives and forming new landscapes. Each sculpture signifies a place of transition—a liminal stage—the threshold between the past and the future. As writer Margaret Drabble notes, "The past lives on in art and memory, but it is not static: it shifts and changes as the present throws its shadow backwards. The landscape also changes, but far more slowly; it is a living link between what we were and what we have become."

The Housatonic Museum of Art is pleased to present Rachel Owens installation, *The Hypogean Tip*, part of a larger ongoing project titled *Life on the Other Side of a Cracked Glass Ceiling*, commissioned by the Housatonic Museum of Art with additional funding from the Eugene Grant Faculty Incentive Fund, Purchase College Foundation, the United University Professional Faculty Support Grant and Powerhouse Arts. This catalog offers a foreword by Maisa Tisdale, President/CEO of the Mary and Eliza Freeman Center for History and Community and an essay by Stamatina Gregory, Director of Curatorial Programs at the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art in New York City.

The Housatonic Museum of Art also receives support for its exhibits and programs from the Werth Family Foundation, the Housatonic Community College Foundation, and Housatonic Community College as well as numerous individual donors.

I offer my deepest thanks to Rachel Owens for her enthusiasm and commitment to this project and Maisa Tisdale for sharing her expertise and allowing access to the Freeman Houses. As always, these exhibits could not be realized without the skills and talent of Savannah Strenz, Vincent Dion, Matt Shropshire and Courtney Linderman for installation; Laura Roberts of Laura Roberts Marketing; and Michael Wasik for Graphic Design and printing. A very special thank you to Dennis Minella and his staff for meeting our daily demands cheerfully and efficiently.

- Robbin Zella
Director

¹ Drabble, Margaret. *A Writer's Britain: Landscape in Literature*, Knopf, (New York, NY, 1979), p. 275.

FOREWORD

I often watch a dignified older gentleman - wearing a handsome hat, skin like copper pennies - ride his bicycle to the Mary and Eliza Freeman Houses. He dismounts, says a prayer, quietly gazes for a while, and then continues on his way. I don't know if he is the one who occasionally leaves flowers behind, neatly arranged in a coffee can, but somehow that tribute finds its way to the fence at the foot of the houses. You see, some people are called to this place. They hear the whispers of history call out to them across time - through the doors, over the porches, across the front yard - to greet them on the sidewalk. And we just know there is more to these "ramshackled" old wooden houses than meets the eye.

Many see the beauty of a distant time and lost landscape. We feel the pull of a poignant, nearly forgotten, historical narrative: the story of two sisters, of free Blacks and Native Americans. The whispers become roars, and we are engulfed by the fire of Little Liberia's Black abolitionists and flooded by visions of economic bounty brought to this shore by savvy Connecticut Black Jacks, brought here from like free settlements that comprised a larger Black Atlantic community. These investments and settlers - actually from both US coasts, from Jamaica, Haiti, and Cape Verde - allowed Bridgeport's "Liberia" (which means Free Land) to grow and thrive right here on Connecticut soil, defying this nation's Era of Barbarism and Chattel Slavery.

When Little Liberians established their settlement in 1822, ninety percent of their Black brethren were in shackles, and the tribal nations of the Indian families were all but lost to genocide. Women could not vote. Yet, in 1848, the very year that the State of Connecticut ended slavery, Mary and Eliza Freeman built their homes, bold and brightly painted; vibrant monuments to unprecedented roles for Connecticut's Women of Color. For 172 years these two homes, now being restored by The Mary & Eliza Freeman Center for History and Community, have borne witness to a chapter deleted from American history books.

As I marvel at the sheer beauty of the Rachel Owens glass casts of Mary Freeman's porch - strong enough to stand on; clear, complex swirls of color, texture and time - I know that the vision of Bridgeport's Little Liberians and the aspirations of Mary and Eliza Freeman truly are transcendent. Rachel Owens heard the call, and like so many others found her way to the fence in front of the Freeman Houses. But she didn't stop there! With a broad smile, keen wit, and generous spirit, Rachel scrambled right up onto Mary's porch and spent days there, watching and feeling the decades pass, capturing them in glass. And well...the rest is history, the rest is art.

One last thing...I have to chuckle! When Robbin Zella, Director of the Housatonic Museum of Art, invited me to meet Rachel Owens over lunch, I gladly gave Rachel permission to access the property. And then Rachel asked me a very unexpected question. Was it appropriate for her, as a white woman, to interpret this story at all? I looked at the discerning scholar/artist who sat waiting for my answer on the far side of the table...and told her about Charles Brilvitch, the Lithuanian American historian, who happened upon the houses one hot, summer day, then painstakingly researched and resurrected their histories. He "discovered" Little Liberia and gave it back to us. Brilvitch's seminal work, combined with that of African American scholar Dr. Jamila Moore-Pewu, are but opening chapters of an important American saga that requires all of us to research and tell.

Although the legacies of the Freeman sisters and Little Liberia are the inheritance of African and Native Americans, this history must be returned to the larger, American, historical narrative as a proud story of these United States, to be embraced and retold by everyone. Thank you, Rachel Owens!

Maisa L. Tisdale, President/CEO
The Mary & Eliza Freeman Center



Photo credit: Paul Mutino

A STAGE TO HOLD HISTORY

by STAMATINA GREGORY

In her iconic 1928 essay, "How It Feels to Be Colored Me," Zora Neale Hurston described her childhood memories of engaging with white Northerners passing through her primarily Black southern town from the security of her porch. While the realities of the Jim Crow south made most adults in her community rightly averse to freely starting conversations with white strangers, Hurston compares her habitual position on the porch as a "gallery seat," and a "proscenium box for a born first-nighter."¹ Shouted greetings and rejoinders, a performative, public give-and-take laid the conceptual groundwork for Hurston's dialogically expressive novels and plays, as well as her anthropological research (focused on oral histories in Florida and the Caribbean). As theater setting, literary structure, or silent character, the liminal space of the porch was uncommonly foundational to her work: a place to gossip, teach, and learn; to solidify community and test it; to see and be seen.

Since the return of Hurston's long overlooked work to public view, the porch has become critically studied as an element of American cultural formation. In her social history of the shotgun house, Sheryl Tucker positions vernacular architecture as helping define community and resistance for formerly enslaved people, in which "identical facades of a row of shotgun houses create a sense of collective identity, the front porches transform the street edge into a collective gathering space."² Mabel Wilson, partner in the design collaborative KW:a, posits the porch as the facilitator of "lyrical exchanges, from the street to the chair... a spatial seam stitching the public realm of the neighborhood to the domestic sphere of the house,"³ and theorist and historian Nnamdi Elleh has proposed that the critical juncture of Mississippi Delta construction booms, racial segregation, targeted curfews, and the semipublic space of the porch facilitated the birth of the Blues.⁴ Journalist Audra D. S. Burch expressively wrote "From the narrow shotgun homes of Atlanta to the dormer-windowed bungalows of Chicago, the front porch has served as a refuge from Jim Crow restrictions; a stage straddling the home and the street, a structural backdrop of meaningful life moments. It is like the quietest family member: a gift where community lives and strangers become neighbors."⁵

Quiet survivance, creative adaptation, connection, gestation: states of being, tacitly coded as feminine, in spaces humbly built and decidedly unmonumental. A fragment of one of these spaces is installed in the first gallery of Rachel Owens' installation—the floorboards from the porch of a now-vacant property on South Main Street in Bridgeport. One can trace the grains of the wooden boards, the smooth depressions of nails, and the gouges of time and weather on its surface—although the sculpture is not displaced from the home, but instead cast directly from it in several parts, using resin. Owens mounts these five sections horizontally onto scaffolds of varying height, making them visible from above and below, and allowing light to shine through the translucent material. Close observation reveals the shapes and objects suspended within it—broken glass, leaves and collected objects—which organize its broad expanse into various fields of color and transform it into something almost animated, shimmering and alive. Unmoored from its domestic context, mounted at varying heights to be accessed from above and below, this transformed porch seems to await another presence.

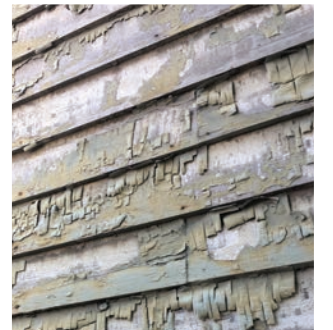


Photo Credit Matty Crisson

¹ Hurston, Zora Neale. "How It Feels To Be Colored Me." *World Tomorrow*, 11 (May 1928) 215-216.

² Tucker, Sheryl. "Reinnovating the African-American Shotgun House." *Places*, 10, no.1 (1995). 5

³ Wilson, Mabel. "Eight Memories," in *Row: Trajectories Through the Shotgun House. Architecture at Rice 40*, eds. Brown, D. and Williams, W. (Houston: Rice University School of Architecture, 2004), 175-187. Cited in Elleh, Nnamdi, *Reading the Architecture of the Underprivileged Classes* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 177.

⁴ Elleh, 83.

⁵ Burch, Audra D. S. "On the Front Porch, Black Life in Full View." *The New York Times*.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/design/on-the-front-porch-black-life-in-full-view-a8672596.html> (Accessed November 2, 2019).

The home on South Main Street belonged to Mary Freeman, who bought adjoining lots with her sister Eliza in 1848, the year that the train line from New York City to Bridgeport was completed, allowing Mary to commute to her job as a chef in a major hotel.⁶ Bridgeport itself had come into being only in 1821, and in the town's southern reaches, a community of "free people of color" initially known as Ethiope began to form, populated by free people of color born in Connecticut, runaway enslaved persons from southern states, and some of the remaining members of indigenous tribes from the area and from New York State, including the Golden Hill Paugusset tribe.⁷ Their brother, Joel Freeman had been living in Bridgeport since 1828, was deeply ingrained into the community and integral to the thriving of what later became known as Little Liberia: officiating at weddings and executing wills, serving as a church trustee, even lobbying the state of Connecticut for a school. Little Liberia grew in self-sufficiency, building churches, a school, and a library, and until approximately 1857 was on the map as a place for where free people of color could live in relative safety, be active and public members of community, and even own property. Central to the economic self-sufficiency were the Freeman sisters' social and economic investment in the town. Over the course of their lives, the Freeman sisters invested in Bridgeport literally and figuratively, developing a mortgage system enabling otherwise disenfranchised South End residents to own homes. Much like several other historical communities in Connecticut—Bristol, Deep River, New Haven, and The Birches in Plainville—Bridgeport was home to networks of creative survival, where free people of color, often intermarried with Native populations, founded some of the first Black-owned businesses in the country—restaurants, caterers, barbershops, laundries—and worked in seafaring industries.⁸ As Maisa Tisdale (Director of the Mary and Eliza Freeman Center) has noted, "The sea was the only place where Black men could make the same amount of money as white men."⁹ Although contingent on a number of factors and privileges not afforded to all people in the antebellum period, including literacy, prosperity was, for people of color, singularly possible. At the time of Mary's death in 1883, she had become the second wealthiest person in Bridgeport, with a net worth of more than thirty thousand dollars.



While the Freemans both prospered and boosted the self-reliance of fellow free people of color, it was that freedom, and impending emancipation in the South, that led to their community's rapid dissipation. With the disappearance of free enslaved labor on the horizon, industrialists were motivated to find new avenues for wealth outside of slavery, and by the early 1960s, the swampland around Little Liberia (whose settlers made use of land that was less desirable than that of neighboring white communities) was being filled in for the building of factories. Employment in the new industries was barred from Black and Native residents, as was the new housing built to support the populations of southern European immigrants recruited for factory work. Eventually, the Freeman houses were the only homes from the former community to remain, a smokestack rising behind them in the distance. Through the work of those who have fought to preserve these properties (Tisdale in particular), the last architectural elements tied to the enclave of Little Liberia will be monumentalized. As a field institutionalized in the 1960s (and codified in the National Historic Preservation Act in 1966), the movement for historic preservation sought to contain the loss of historically and architecturally significant sites razed, damaged, or abandoned by the wave of postwar urban renewal. In many cities across the United States (Bridgeport included) this urban renewal was followed by urban blight, as cities were deindustrialized and city government pursued segregationist housing policies, incentivizing "white flight" to the suburbs.¹⁰ In the longer context of ongoing racist and extractivist policies that have governed their surrounding environment for a century and a half, the material survival of these simple clapboard houses seems both prosaic and transcendent—like the fact of the sisters' prosperity itself.

⁶ Harris, Katherine J. "The Rise of Communities and the Continued Quest of Freedom for All," in *African American Connecticut Explored*, ed. Elizabeth J. Norman (Wesleyan University Press, 2014), 52.

⁷ Brilvitch, Charles. "Mary and Elizabeth Freeman Houses." bportlibrary.org (Accessed November 20, 2019).

⁸ Harris, 52.

⁹ Quoted in Ofgang, Eric, "An Endangered Last Remnant of a Unique Community of Color," *Connecticut Magazine*. https://www.connecticutmag.com/history/an-endangered-last-remnant-of-a-unique-community-of-color/article_32b98ca2-9e52-11e8-8552-0b1ecd708e31.html (Accessed November 25, 2019).

Owens' multiple casts of Mary Freeman's porch also strike this near-impossible balance. Formally, through their shapes and glowing translucence, her sculptures hold the qualities of both the ethereal and the everyday. Bearing the indexical traces of the Freemans—one imagines the wood bearing the worn imprints of Mary and her community and family over time—as well as incorporating the materials that surround the home, both "natural" materials and the fragments of material culture, the sculpture seems to embody a creative archaeology, a palimpsest of experience. Critically, they also acknowledge the historical space of the porch as a narrative platform that shapes culture and community, and relocates that lost space into the space of the gallery. There, the sculptures become a platform and a space for public address: for visitors to climb on and stand, and for artists, poets, and others to, momentarily, reimagine the site and the histories it holds. (Performances are planned over the course of this exhibition by artists including Lachelle Workman, whose work explores questions around visibility and monumentality, and Laura Ortman, a musician whose practice connects to visual art and is rooted in Native experience.)

Owens' installation of the porch casts in the first gallery seems to anticipate the potential and the limitations of the process of historic preservation. Transforming and rehabilitating historical sites holds permanent space to immerse visitors in narratives that have been erased, suppressed, or undervalued: in a utopic sense, they can connect present and future publics with the knowledge and inspiration to help build a more just world. There is also the potential of loss: for one, the transformation of those histories into a version palatable for patrons and publics invested in upholding contemporary social norms. Owens acknowledges that preservation (like the historical space of the porch) is also a platform. Its meanings are constructed not through the lost aura held in the walls and foundations of particular spaces (in fact, the original floorboards of Mary Freeman's aged porch will not survive the necessary upcoming rehabilitation process) but instead through the radicality of the potential conversations held within them.



Critical to envisioning a more just future is an acknowledgment of an unjust past. In the back gallery, Owens presents us with works that point to other forces that worked to shape the history of Bridgeport and the wider US. Mary Freeman's wealth at the time of her death came second only to the fortune of P.T. Barnum, the Connecticut-born entrepreneur who adopted Bridgeport as his home after traveling there to meet Charles Sherwood Stratton in 1842. (Stratton, four years old at the time, had stopped growing likely due to a pituitary gland issue: essentially loaned from his parents and renamed Tom Thumb, he was exhibited as a "wonder" in Barnum's New York City museum.) Building mansions, serving on the Connecticut legislature, and eventually becoming mayor of Bridgeport for a single term, he focused on "improving and beautifying our city" and its infrastructure while noting that he substantively benefited from what he called "profitable philanthropy."¹¹ Popular narratives on Barnum tend to focus on his singular transformation of American entertainment culture (as well as his vocal commitment to public works, Unionism, and abolition) while eliding his rapacious capitalization on the American obsession with the racial other.¹²

¹⁰ For an extensive discussion of this issue including numerous case studies, see Trounstine, Jessica. *Segregation By Design: Local Politics and Inequality in American Cities* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

¹¹ Homayonpour, Marietta. "Town gets grant to promote Barnum." *NewsTimes* (Danbury area). <https://www.newstimes.com/news/article/Town-gets-grant-to-promote-Barnum-247169.php> (Accessed November 22, 2019).

¹² Wright, James R. "How the public autopsy of a slave Joice Heth launched P.T. Barnum's career as the Greatest Showman on Earth," *Clinical Anatomy*, Volume 31, Issue 7, October 2018; and Vognar, Chris. "'Greatest Showman' P.T. Barnum was also a master racial mythmaker." *The Dallas Morning News*. <https://www.dallasnews.com/arts-entertainment/architecture/2017/12/15/greatest-showman-p-t-barnum-was-also-a-master-racial-mythmaker> (Accessed November 22, 2019)

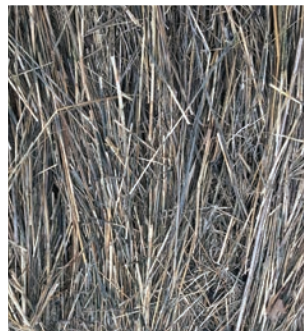


Photo credit: Paul Mutino (Left and Right)

Barnum's specter is invoked through Owens' sculpture of a top hat, a commonplace silhouette in the days of Barnum and Freeman, later associated with caricatures of greed and imperialism. Here, it is cast in coal dust, and its cylinder is absurdly extended to resemble a chimney. The piece connects Barnum's ruthlessly exploitative relationship to othered bodies to his own role in Bridgeport's industrialization and its continuing effects, including the still-operating, coal-fired Bridgeport Harbor Station. The station's emissions disproportionately impact its surrounding communities of color (including multiple schools) through diminished air quality and high rates of chronic respiratory illness, and its smokestack still looms over the Freeman Houses.¹³ Other sculptures take their shape from molds made of the landscape surrounding the houses: also cast in coal, they seem to acknowledge both the incineration dust that pervades the area, and the depth to which extractivist policies have permeated the very soil of this and other cities. Owens' formal arrangements literalize our historical and ecological vision of this project: they allow us to reflect on the impact on landscapes from above and below. This perspective is underscored by the exhibition's title, *The Hypogean Tip*: the term comes from the Greek words hypo (meaning "under") and gaia (referring to the earth, or to the primordial goddess). She incorporates bits of historical information—a "tip"—but a tip may also imply a toppling, of our expectations or our entrenched positions.

A strange figure also stands in the back gallery: a hybrid figure cast in marble, with a surface constructed in the shape of accumulated shells. Barnum is here again: the piece references the "Feejee Mermaid," constructed from the upper body of an ape sewn to the lower half of a salmon, which he exhibited in the United States years after it had been successfully toured (and later debunked) by another entrepreneur in London. (While the mermaid no longer exists, a replica is in the collections of the nearby Barnum Museum.) Although Barnum's most famous "hoax object" was eventually debunked in the US also, the mermaid seemed to seize the popular imagination like few of his other cons: indeed, the object preceded Barnum by at least half a century. The mermaid is one of mythology's liminal figures, present across multiple cultures. Straddling physical and conceptual realms, she (always a she) is both culturally embraced and an inhuman other; bound to the sea but also to the inhabitants of land. Luring seafarers through song, her performance for humans ultimately constitutes her being.

Owens' mermaid is not carved from marble, that traditional sculptural material held up, elevated, and enduring in the history of Western art, but cast from its dust: a hybrid and adulterated form that can take on otherwise impossible shapes. In this case, its mold comes from the shell detritus along the edge of the Long Island Sound, behind the Freeman Houses: tracing the ways in which the shoreline, like the space of the porch, becomes a conceptual border between the known and the other, between shelter and self-realization. Like this mermaid, memory is a strange figure also: it returns in unexpected ways and in unintended shapes, sublime, banal, or monstrous. She seems to hold the fraught nature of grappling with the enormous task of memorialization in this particular time and place: the distortions it can produce, and the truths it can reveal.



¹³ Sourcewatch.org. https://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php/Connecticut_and_coal (Accessed November 22, 2019)

CHECKLIST

Mary Freeman's Porch – Marsh to Ground (Life on the Other Side of a Cracked Glass Ceiling), 2020
Broken Glass, Steel, Scaffold, Acrylic Mirror, Marble Dust, Resin, Marsh Grasses and Shells
75 x 74 x 33 inches

Mary Freeman's Porch – Sunset Over Sea (Life on the Other Side of a Cracked Glass Ceiling), 2020
Broken Glass, Steel, Scaffold, Acrylic Mirror, Marble Dust, Resin, Marsh Grasses and Shells, Metal Filings
75 x 74 x 33 inches

Mary Freeman's Porch – Horizon Water (Life on the Other Side of a Cracked Glass Ceiling), 2020
Broken Glass, Steel, Scaffold, Acrylic Mirror, Marble Dust, Resin, Marsh Shells
75 x 74 x 33 inches

Mary Freeman's Porch – Kitchen Garden (Life on the Other Side of a Cracked Glass Ceiling), 2020
Broken Glass, Steel, Scaffold, Acrylic Mirror, Marble Dust, Resin, Brick, Stone, Soil, Mint Plants
75 x 74 x 33 inches

Mary Freeman's Porch – Pink Sky/ Purple Marsh (Life on the Other Side of a Cracked Glass Ceiling), 2020
Broken Glass, Steel, Scaffold, Acrylic Mirror, Marble Dust, Resin, Marsh Grasses and Shells
75 x 74 x 33 inches

Epigene, 2020
Coal, Resin, Steel, black bottles
63 x 66 x 46 inches

Hypogene, 2020
Coal, Resin, Steel, black bottles
54.5 x 66 x 46 inches

Siren, 2020
Skeleton Model, Resin, Marble Dust, Steel, Fishing Net
64 x 28 x 18

Hatstack, 2020
Coal, Resin, Steel
102.5 x 12 x 12 inches

Phragmites, 2020
Reeds, Blue Foam, Coal, Resin

SOLO AND 2 PERSON EXHIBITIONS

- 2020 *The Hypogean Tip*, Housatonic Museum of Art, Bridgeport CT
- 2019 *Museum of the Cave of the Anthropocene*, Untitled, Miami Beach
- 2017 *MOTHER*, Zieher Smith, NYC
- 2016 *Machinations*, Boris Yeltsin Center, Yekaterinburg, RU
Inveterate Composition for Clare, Purchase College, Purchase NY (ongoing)
- 2015 *Smile Always*, Zieher Smith & Horton, NYC
- 2013 *Inveterate Composition for Clare*, Frist Museum of Art, Nashville
Trans-Cultural Express, Almost Antipodeans, BAM, Brooklyn NY
- 2012 *Emergency Making Action*, New Museum Window, NYC
Verdantly, Reed Krakoff, NYC
- 2011 *Inveterate Composition for Clare*, Dag Hammarskjold Plaza (UN park), NYC
- 2010 *Props*, Zieher Smith Gallery, NYC
- 2008 *Harboring*, Zieher Smith Gallery, NYC
- 2007 *Wishing Well*, Special Outdoor project NADA Art Fair, Miami
- 2006 *Overthrows*, Zieher Smith Gallery, NYC
- 2005 *Rubble*, Sara Nightingale Gallery at the Scope Art Fair, NYC
Scatter Hoarder, Zieher Smith (project Space), NYC

SELECT GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2020 *Edu*, Hudson Valley Museum of Contemporary Art , Peekskill, NY
- 2019 *Ho Hum All Ye Faithful*, Bravin Lee Programs, NYC
12 x 12 x 12, Black Ball Projects, Brooklyn NY
- 2018 *Goulash*, REAL Tinsel, Milwaukee, WI
Time Bomb, Watermill Center, Watermill, NY
Art Aspen, Aspen CO
- 2017 *Inaugural Exhibition*, THE BUNKER, the collection of Beth Rudin DeWoody,
West Palm Beach FL (through 2019)
It's Happening: 50 Years of Public Art in NYC Parks, Central Park, NYC
Dead Horse Bay, Agnes Varis Center for the Arts, Brooklyn NY
Post-Election, September Gallery, Hudson NY (curated by Kate Gilmore and Kristen Dodge)
Double-Edged, Circuit 12, Dallas, TX
VOLTA 13, Basel
The Phillip Johnson Glass House, Summer Benefit Exhibition, New Canaan, CT
- 2016 *Gut Rehab*, Realty Collective, Brooklyn, NY (participant and organizer)
Untitled, Zieher Smith, 2 person booth, Miami FL
Brural, Temporary Storage, Brzooklyn, NY (curated by Ilya Shipolovitch)
KCAC 40 Year Anniversary Exhibition, Kansas City MO
Lucky Draw, Sculpture Center, LIC, NY

- 2015 *Alchemy*, DC Moore Gallery, NYC (curated by Priscilla Vail Caldwell)
Artists at Work, Cantor Center, Stanford University, CA (Curated by Allison Gass)
12x12x12, Black Ball Projects, Brooklyn, NY
- 2014 *Untitled*, Miami FL
- 2013 *X Krasnoyarsk International Biennial*, Krasnoyarsk, Russia (curated by David Harper and the Prokorhov Foundaton with The Brooklyn Academy of Music
Collider, Zieher Smith, NYC (participated and curated, artists: Tommy Hartung, Beth Campbell, Lucy Raven, Rachel Owens and Robert Heineken)
Creative Time Sandcastle Contest, Rockaway Beach (judged by Klaus Biesenbach)
- 2012 *Next Wave Art*, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Brooklyn, NY (curated by David Harper)
Permanent Collection, Nancy Margolies Gallery, NYC
Breadbox, zieher Smith pop-up, Nashville
Dealers Lounge, NYC
- 2011 *BNA to Brooklyn*, Nashville
2x2 for Aids and Art, Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas
Lucky Draw, Sculpture Center, Long Island City, NY
Watermill Center/ Robert Wilson Benefit, Watermill NY
Socrates Annual Benefit, Long Island City, NY
- 2010 *Nineteen Eighty Four*, Austrian Cultural Forum, curated by David Harper, Martha Kirszenbaum, & David Komary, New York
Evading Customs_Milan, Le Dictateur, Milan
Knock Knock Who's There? That Joke Isn't Funny Anymore, Armand Bartos Fine Art, New York
Whitney Art Party, NYC
- 2009 *NADA/ART IN/VISIBLE SPACES*, 395, Brooklyn, New York
Grand Reopening, Zieher Smith, New York
Evading Customs, Brown, London (curated by Peter Russo and Lumi Tan)
Lover, On Stellar Rays, New York (curated by Kate Gilmore and Candice Madey)
On From Here, video program, Guild and Greyshkul, New York (curated by Ana Wolovick and Mariah Robertson)
I Thought our Worlds were the Same, Zeitgeist Gallery, Nashville, Tennessee
Whitney Art Party, NYC
Lucky Draw, Sculpture Center, Long Island City, NY
- 2008 *The New Black*, Starr Space, Brooklyn, NY
Volta Fair, 3 artist booth, Zieher Smith Gallery, Basel
NADA, Miami (outdoor installation special project)
Deiu Donne, benefit show, NYC

2007 EAF Fellowship Show, Socrates Sculpture Park, Long Island City, New York
Sculpture Center Benefit Show, Sculpture Center, Long Island City, New York
Zoo Art Fair, 3 person booth, ZieherSmith Gallery, London

2006 Ionesco's Friends, Franco Soffiantino Artecontemporanea, Turin, Italy
Collage Party, ZieherSmith, New York
Empathetic, Temple Gallery, curated by Elizabeth Thomas, Philadelphia, PA

2005 No Apology for Breathing, Jack the Pelican Presents, Brooklyn
Hissing of Summer Lawns, Sara Nightingale Gallery, Watermill, New York

2004 Some Exhaust, Lehman Maupin Gallery, New York (curated by Matthew Lusk)
Postcards from the Edge, Brent Sikkema Gallery, New York
Andy Warhol's Living Room, Sara Nightingale Gallery, Watermill, New York
Falling in Love with the Jailer's Daughter, Project Green, Brooklyn

2003 Fear of Flight, Sara Nightingale Gallery, Water Mill, NY
An Accord, Weather Records, Brooklyn, NY
Brooklyn Underground Film Festival, DUMBO, Brooklyn, NY
Talent Show, Project Green, Brooklyn
Occurrences: The Performative Aspects of Video, Betty Rymer Gallery, Chicago,

2002 One Day, In a Day, Everyday, part of Exhibition Sans, APEX art, New York
New Homes for America Under Construction, Weather Records, Brooklyn, NY
Parallel Sensations, Williamsburg Art and Historical Center, Brooklyn, NY
Bellwether Summer Show, Bellwether Gallery, New York City, NY
Untitled Storefront, Weather Records, Brooklyn, NY

2000 Hit and Run 4, curated by Edward Winkleman NYC, NY
Project 1: The Green Room, Brooklyn, NY
Ship of Fools, The Frying Pan, New York City, NY

PUBLICATIONS/ REVIEWS/ INTERVIEWS

Yaniev, ETTY. Interview with Rachel Owens for exhibit "The Hypogean Tip." *Art Spiel*, February 2020

Owens, Rachel. Built Broken: Interview. *Glassy Magazine*, Shanghai Museum of Glass, Dec 2019

Hanes, Clarity and Kate Hawes. Interview for *Magic Praxis Podcast*, #13 Rachel Owens, April 2018

Halle, Howard. "This Artist made Colorful Casts of the Oldest Living Thing in NYC." *Time Out New York*, April 5, 2017

Meier, Allison. "Casting New York's Oldest Tree in Luminous Glass," *Hyperallergic*, April 5, 2017

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Fallon, Roberta. "Feel the Pain." *The Philadelphia Weekly*, November 5, 2006

Baker, R.C. "Shortlist: Rachel Owens." *The Village Voice*, June 8, 2006

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McGurr, C.C. "Hodge Podge Collage." *PaperMag*, March 24, 2005

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Harrison, Helen A. "Fear of Flying." *The New York Times*, November 2, 2003

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SELECT AWARDS/ GRANTS

Eugene Grant Research Award, 2019

Cultural Humanitarian Grant US Embassy Moscow, 2017

Faculty Research Grant, Purchase College, 2016 and 2017

Tiffany Foundation Grant nominee, 2015

Joan Mitchell Emergency Grant, 2012

Foundation for Contemporary Art, Emerging Grant, 2011

Pollack, Krasner Grant, 2008-09

Harpo Foundation Grant, 2007

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Engaged in broad fields of practice from large scale public installations and object based studio practice to activist oriented Theater/ performance, Owens is concerned with issues of hierarchical social conditions, consumption of the environment and the points where these things intersect. Using objects, video, sound, performance, images, and an intersectional feminist lens; materials that once existed with a specific function are reassigned within a new context. By folding together incongruous materials and forms, new meaning is created.

Owens has been included in exhibitions both in the US and internationally including The X Krasnoyarsk Biennial, RU; Franco Soffiantino Contemporary, IT; Austrian Cultural Forum, NY; The Frist Museum, TN; Socrates Sculpture Park, LIC; and the New Museum Window, NY among others. In March of 2017 her 7th solo show opened at ZieherSmith Gallery in NY with reviews and inclusion in publications including *The New York Times*, *Art in America*, *Modern Painters*, *Flash Art* and *Triple Canopy Anthology*. Her work can be found in many collections in the US and abroad, among them; The Beth Rudin Dewoody Collection, The Pritzker Family, Sprint Collection and D. Mullin JR. Owens is Assistant Professor of Art & Design and Chair of the Sculpture Department at SUNY Purchase College.

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EDUCATION

MFA, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Sculpture, 1999

BFA, University of Kansas, Painting, 1995

Tyler School of Art - Rome, IT, Fall 1994



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