

# The Brooklyn Rail

## MORE TIME LESS

Zac Hacmon, Elana Herzog, Aga Ousseinov, Tim Simonds, and Nari V  
DEC 20-JAN 21 By Sophia Ma



Installation view: *MORE TIME LESS*, Cathouse Proper, Brooklyn, 2020. Work by Aga Ousseinov, Nari Ward, and Elana Herzog. Photo: Dario Lasagni.

### **Cathouse Proper**

November 14, 2020 – January 17, 2021

Brooklyn

*MORE TIME LESS* consists of work by Zac Hacmon, Elana Herzog, Aga Ousseinov, Tim Simonds, and Nari Ward. This second ensemble show for Cathouse Proper, curated by David Dixon, invites viewers to examine cultural and informational exchanges across time: these allusions, both hidden and on the surface, draw connections between the works and within the works themselves.

Simonds's *Limb Ouroboros (was)* (2015) references some of the earliest and the most recent human creativity. About the size of a human heart, the work is made up of a dehydrated alginate cast of the artist's right arm. The delicate fingers holding a prescription-sized cylinder fold back toward the shoulder, creating the ouroboros loop. This ancient Egyptian symbol represents the cycle of life, death, and rebirth, in the form of a snake or dragon eating its own tail. The self-referential cycle in Simonds's piece is echoed in its production process. Alginate is normally used to form the mold that would then hold casting material. This water-based material shrinks as it dries. Simonds used the alginate instead as the casting material, allowing the shrinkage to take place and find its final form in the dense sculpture. By flipping the mold and cast in the object's formation, Simonds winks at the cheeky "chicken or the egg" question inherent in the ouroboros symbol. He ties the historical symbol to a contemporary, engineered, sustainable material that many herald as a potential source of salvation for our resource-shortage problem. Simonds points to a possible renewal for our planet.



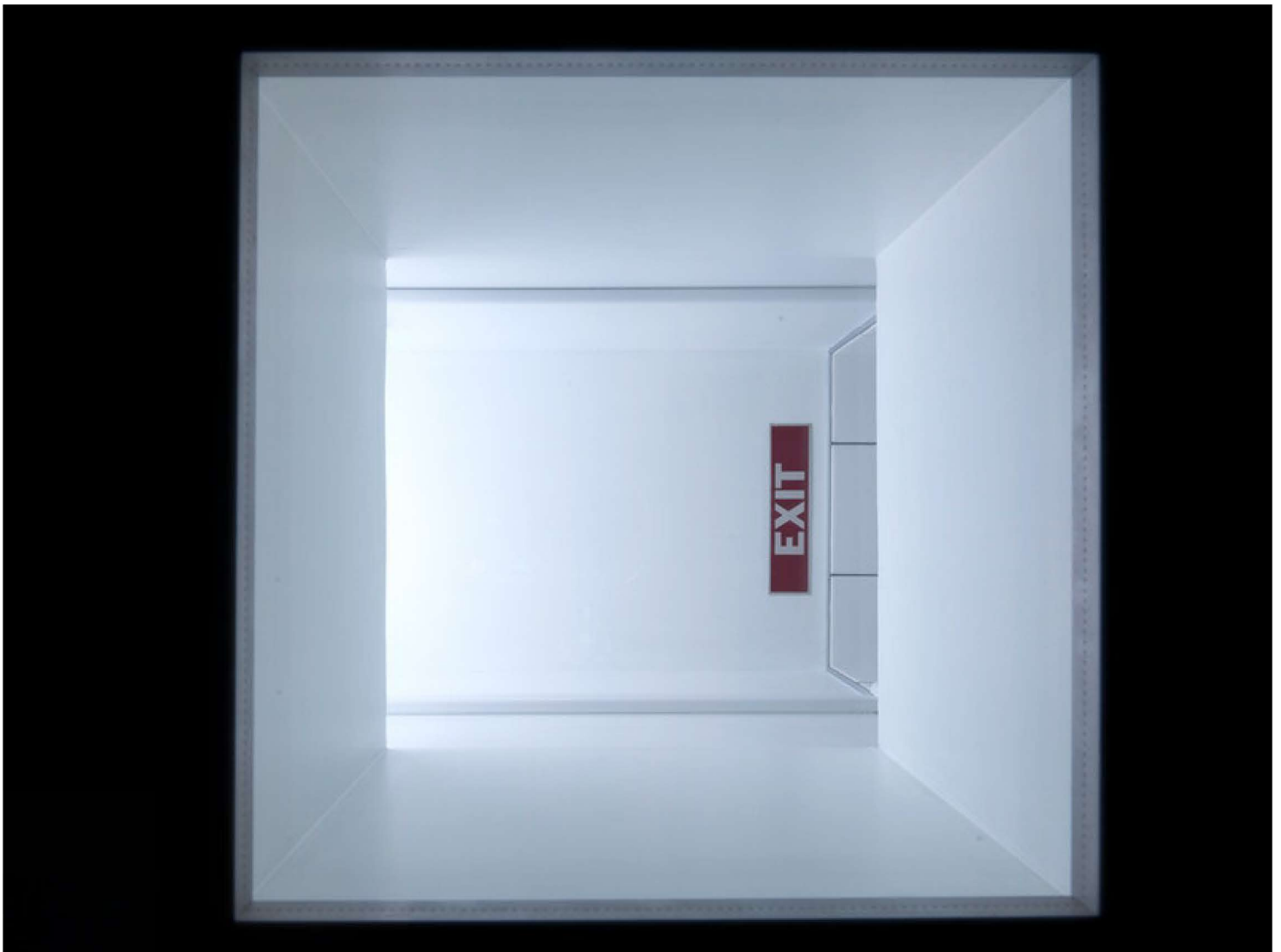
Installation view: *MORE TIME LESS*, Cathouse Proper, Brooklyn, 2020. Work by Zac Hacmon and Tim Simonds. Photo: Dario Lasagni.

Connected to Simonds's ecological and cyclical concern is Herzog's *Cross Pollination #1* (2020). The work precariously hangs on a rod placed on a zigzagging wall-mount, while thin red fibers thread up to the ceiling for additional support. The rod holds four collaged floral-patterned fabrics that Herzog collected from Scandinavia, Asia, Russia, and the United States. Following the floral pattern on two of the fabrics, Herzog has embroidered stems and leaves with neon-green thread, inserting her voice into the histories of these fabrics. By quilting the textiles together, Herzog envisions the patchwork relationships of our global reality, rather than the significance of any individual or nation. Herzog's engagement with floral fabrics began with her research in 2018 on pre-Soviet, Soviet, and Post-Soviet textiles, which solidified during her 2019 residency at Wave Hill, a botanic and art space in the Bronx that connects nature and culture in one. Plants call to mind the ouroboros's cycle in two ways. First is plants' own growth cycles of rebirth; secondly, plants also mimic the distribution of information and culture over space and time, as they are introduced to new lands by foreigners. Herzog uses her floral textiles and research to speak to the continuous cultural exchange.

Ousseinov's *Confusion of Tongues (Kite)* (2020), hung across from *Cross Pollination #1*, is another tall and visually striking piece, taking advantage of the gallery's high ceilings. *Kite* is comprised of three segments, stacked vertically on top of each other. Visually resonant with Herzog's constellation of red weight-bearing threads, the central panel of white interconnected sticks seems to reference Polynesian nautical navigational systems, used by Islanders to orient

themselves and plot voyages. The top panel uses traditional sail-making techniques that form another lattice structure visible on white rice paper silkscreened with an enlarged 100-franc Swiss banknote featuring Alberto Giacometti's *Walking Man* (1960). The bottom panel displays colorful sticker-sized images from various times, as if they are the new stars that people could use to navigate. Borrowing from traditional Japanese paper kite techniques, this portion of the work also reveals its internal wooden structure. Ousseinov's work uses imagery of travel and commercial exchange to display the interconnections and similarities between cultures and people rather than their differences.

The travel in Ward's stoic *Anchoring Escapement (Baule)* (2017) spans time and space. A feature of many plantation homes in the American South, the grandfather clock marks the activities of the bodies inhabiting space—when to eat, work, sleep, and breathe (to exaggerate). In the belly of this clock sits a figurative sculpture from the Baule people of the West African coast. Peeking out from the small window, the face looks out into the gallery space, hauntingly quiet. The figure not only silences the clock by taking over the pendulum tower, but it also represents the silent slaves, who hid under the floorboards of the First African Baptist Church (1777) in Savannah, Georgia, a stop on the Underground Railroad in the early 19th century. A Congolese cosmogram (representing birth, life, death, and rebirth) was drilled into the church's floorboards to allow escaped slaves to breathe. A copper cosmogram tops the face of the clock, demarcating time and giving life at the same time. The awful history of slavery attests to more troubling forms of travel and exchange: the enslaved traveling across the Atlantic and escapees finding their way to freedom are just two examples.



Zac Hacmon, *Capsule #5*, (detail), 2020. Photo: Dario Lasagni.

Hacmon's *Capsule #4* and *#5* (both 2020) are the latest additions to what the artist calls "one person living unit[s]." Akin to Ward's encasement, *Capsule #4* addresses another form of injustice. Demarcated by place and placelessness, the multimedia sculpture is meant to look as if it is a part of the architecture. Absent, however, are the bodies that are meant to inhabit it, uncomfortably. The distorted sound emanating from the work came from the US-Mexico boundary in Arizona where, in order to build the border wall, the Trump administration had blasted through the Tohono O'odham Nation's sacred land without permission. In addition to the explosion and a woman on megaphone, there are also artificial sounds suggesting scanners and surveillance technology. Hacmon's protectionist objective contains and alienates the body from others. Devoid of the humanistic touch that we find in Herzog's textiles or in Simonds's actual body, these coldly fluorescent spaces beep at a slow drone that could drive one crazy. *Capsule #4* becomes a no-place as we see humanity strip from spaces that could instead welcome exchange.

The exhibition's references span vast amounts of time, while the work included lives in the present, each one consolidating the observance and expression of our shared history, urging us to recognize the connections between people rather than the artificial national divides we have formed. The thoughtful show has been extended to January 17, 2021. Take a masked ride or stroll to Carroll Gardens and explore the relationships of such beautifully flawed humanity.

## **Contributor**

**Sophia Ma** is an emerging curator. Most recently, she participated in SPRING/BREAK Art Show New York 2020. As a Fall 2020 MA in Art History graduate from Hunter College, CUNY, Ma worked on the life and work of abstract painter Bernice Lee Bing. Having worked in development, programming, operations, and administration at the Museum of Chinese in American, Ma has varied experiences in museum work over the years. Currently, Ma is completing image research for the authors of a book on landscape architecture, due for publication in Fall 2021 with Rizzoli.