

Record.

Collect.

Compose.

Record. Collect. Compose.

A series of human decisions

**Marten Elder
Veronique d'Entremont
Aaron Giesel
Aspen Mays
Paul Mpagi Sepuya
Rimas Simaitis
Emily Sudd**

Organized by Masood Kamandy

Charlie James Gallery
969 Chung King Rd
Los Angeles, CA 90012

September 5 - October 17, 2015

COVER IMAGE:
RIMAS ŠIMAITIS
WAVES FROM THE EAST
OCTOBER 19, 2014. 6:47 AM
1296 MHZ
ACRA, NY

When making art with machines and technical processes, no matter what technique we use, every work begins with human need and desire. There is a tendency to believe that machines distance us, make us less ourselves, that they alienate us, but what we forget is that all machines are made by humans. Every object used in the process of making art is forged from human culture. You could go so far as to say that there is nothing more human than the machines we use to deepen our understanding of the world.

With photography as my point of departure, my goal here is consider many forms of *technical* media in the most *human* of terms.

What are the *human* actions involved that underpin the desire to create an indexical representation of the world?

The actions I've chosen are RECORD, COLLECT and COMPOSE. RECORD is a surrogate for memory. It's the impulse to keep track and our awareness of time's passage. COLLECT is the human need to gather and categorize, to see similarities and differences. COMPOSE is seeing a slice of the world. It is choosing what to put in and what to leave out.

These actions unite a diverse group of artists working in different media, whose pieces reveal a desire to create transformed representations of real world places and things.

On the following pages I've asked each artist two questions. These questions are intentionally conversational and many of them are the result of our studio visits.

—Masood Kamandy

Marten Elder

Is there a succinct way you might explain how a photograph transforms the world it depicts? How does that affect how you make pictures?

A photograph compresses the three-dimensional world onto a two-dimensional plane. Instead of working against that fact and trying to create the illusion of the photograph as a window into the world with deep pictorial space, I capture and weave the digital information in such a way that it reflects the inherent planarity of photography while also being a picture of the world.

Your work involves walking around Los Angeles, a place often criticized for its lack of a human-scale environment, yet the things you see are very human moments of appreciation of the overlooked city. Can you describe what it's like for you to walk around finding things to photograph?

There is a sort of feedback loop. I notice something in the world and maybe take a note or photograph it with my phone. I'll come back later or find a similar situation elsewhere and make a series of photographs with a "real" camera. The resulting picture looks different than the object itself and I learn something about the way the space or light translates photographically. Then the next time I am out photographing, I can be aware of the things that cause the photograph to behave in a certain way. One can learn to see more like the camera sees and it becomes more interesting to look at the world.





Veronique d'Entremont

PHANTOM LIMBS: LA MIRADA, 2014
PAPER, WOOD LATHE, PAINT CHIPS
AND OTHER RESIDUE
126 X 42 X 2 INCHES

I see ruins in many of your works, as if time has passed and you've created an artifact that tries to make us remember something, however imperfectly. When you're working in the studio, do you think about memory?

Definitely, memory is an important theme in all of my work. With my sculptures this theme shows up through the process of casting. I use found objects and materials to construct non-traditional molds, so the castings become stand-ins for a memory of the original object. They take on a structural or allegorical relationship to it, like the relationship our memories have to original events—inexact, shifting and fragile.

With the *Phantom Limbs* series, the original objects were construction debris from renovations and changes happening in certain neighborhoods of Los Angeles. It used to be that when I referenced memory in my work I was thinking about personal memories that are created within domestic spaces. With this work, I'm thinking more about social memory and maybe even history.

The paper in your sculpture had to touch the door that you made your cast from. Is this intimacy intentional? How do you negotiate intimacy and materials?

I think the intimacy of the process reflects the reality of using materials that have a history of domestic use, and goes back to this idea of memory.

The paper casting process lifts the residue off of the object and takes on in shape. I believe this is sort of what we do as people, we take on the shape of the spaces we inhabit and pick up habits like residue. I think we're really formed by the environments around us, that we are most directly in contact with. So yeah, I think that intimacy that you're talking about is relevant when you think about the forming of a person's identity.

Aaron Giesel

When I first saw your image I felt something slightly uncanny. It held me and didn't give itself away immediately. Do people see your photographs and expect that they are "real." Do you think they're real? Is this landscape a fantasy?

This is a landscape photograph of the "sun" or "moon" on the horizon of a desert environment. The photographs are of real phenomenological events happening. I place a round mirror on the horizon. It reflects the brighter side of a darkening sky and illuminates the surface. It's suggestive of something recognizable (i.e. a sun or moon) and, at first glance, provides a form of stability to the picture. This may change as one looks longer at the photograph. I'm interested in creating a photograph that is out of register enough to encourage engagement. This landscape is not a fantastical one. It's very real. The intervention I performed may be rooted in a fiction, but it is what one might experience in that landscape normally.



I've always wondered, especially in relation to desert artworks, where the impulse to manipulate the landscape comes from. What makes you want to work out there?

I once read that the desert is like a balm to sooth the inflamed psyche of an urbanite. The desert presents itself with endless possibilities. It's a tabula rasa, and an open, endless expanse. For me, there is the appeal of a minimalist aesthetic that is seductive but, more importantly, it's the quality of light. In Los Angeles we have a haze that contains billions of particles from sea salt. We have decomposing granite from the San Gabriels. We have emissions from combustion engines. In the desert there is a lack of particles and moisture. It makes the edges of everything sharper and offers clarity, unlike other landscapes. There is a sensorial thing that happens when you are out there. I tend to be more aware. This is what draws me out there to work.

ALGONQUIN MOONS #5 OF 12
(FLOWER MOON), 2015
C-PRINT
30 X 40 INCHES

Limitation seems to almost be a requirement in creativity. One of the reasons I'm drawn to your work is your acceptance of limitations and how they still seem to lead you into unexpected and unexplored territory.

How would you describe the gap between the objects that you use to make your images and the resulting images?

Aspen Mays

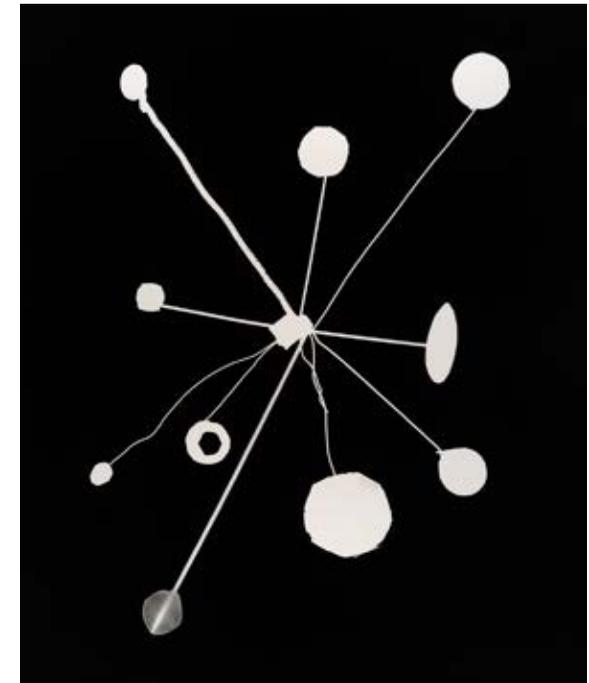
In this case, the objects I'm using to make the images are also tools used in the darkroom to make images. If used "properly" these makeshift dodging and burning tools are never actually seen in the resulting print; their use remains unseen or unknown. Intentionally misusing these tools – making them the images themselves – is a way to draw attention to them as artifacts and objects with their own formal qualities. These objects already exist in that gap.



I think of stellar phenomena when I see these works, but I see that they're actually tools for making photographs.

Is there a relationship between looking down in the darkroom and looking up at the night sky for you?

Yes absolutely. The experience of being in the dark powerfully links the two for me: the darkness needed to see into the night sky and the darkness needed to work in the darkroom. That experiential overlap makes me think of the metaphorical potential that somehow darkness is a requirement for sight or revelation – or that these conditions accompany each other. I think that is one reason working in the darkroom has continued to stay relevant for me as both a site and a process.



DODGE 7, 2014
SILVER GELATIN PRINT (PHOTOGRAM)
24 X 20 INCHES

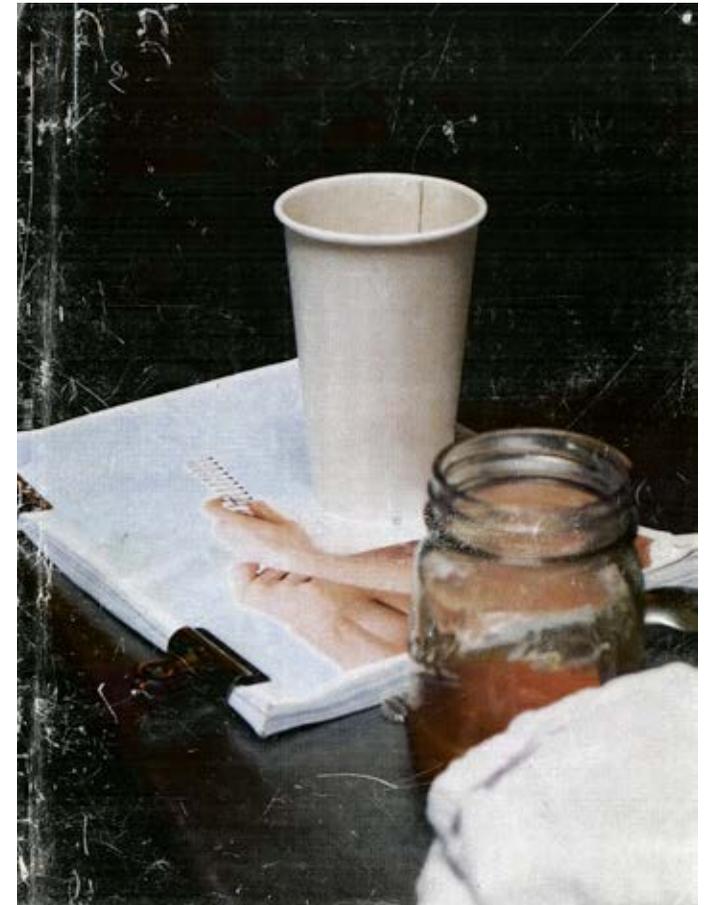
OPPOSITE:
BURN COLLECTION 2, 2014
SILVER GELATIN PRINT (PHOTOGRAM)
24 X 20 INCHES

Some might say that a part of photographing is making a “copy” of something out there. Your image is a copy of a copy of a copy... I’m actually not even sure how many times it’s been reproduced. Do you think there is ever a point where the image stops being a photograph?

They never stop being pictures, but photographs - I’m not so sure. They are then they aren’t and they are remade as photographs or prints. A photograph feels to me like a distinct object or screen image. Pictures on the other hand are free to migrate across surfaces. And, in time within my work, they become many things: framed for the wall, stacks of laser printouts on paper, books, zines, and installations of dated working material.

Your photography feels very connected with the people in your life. Photographers always have a machine between them and their subject. How has the camera affected your interactions with people?

I’d say that the camera itself affects and has affected very little. It’s the production of photographs and the materials I mentioned above that feeds back into those friendships, relationships and broader social networks. The ongoing practice of photography always allows for a return to desire and revision of narrative with multiple tenses overlapping. It’s a complication and a driving factor in my work.



Paul Mpagi Sepuya

KITCHEN, BROOKLYN, MARCH 3, 2013 - 2015
ARCHIVAL PIGMENT PRINT
32 X 24 INCHES

OPPOSITE:
IPHONE PHOTO TAKEN DURING A STUDIO VISIT.

As I'm writing this I'm surrounded by waves. As you are reading this, you are surrounded by waves. I think about your visualizations of invisible forms and wonder simultaneously about danger and beauty.

Do you think of your antennae as extensions of human senses? Do you ever wish you could see invisible things?

Visible light is a fairly small portion of the vast electromagnetic spectrum, and the portions of the spectrum that we can't see fascinate me. Radio signals are very physical in nature, and constructing antennae is a good exercise toward interpreting and understanding them. The Octoloop antenna for this exhibit contains a 500 foot length of copper wire used to receive radio signals anywhere from 10 to 100 kilometers in length. When lightning strikes it emits radio signals in this spectrum. The antenna and radio visualization system expand our perception, and allow us to interpret elements that are otherwise intangible. But to me the visualization process is an inherently abstract challenge. We can't see energy in this spectrum, so it is mysterious to imagine what it might look like.

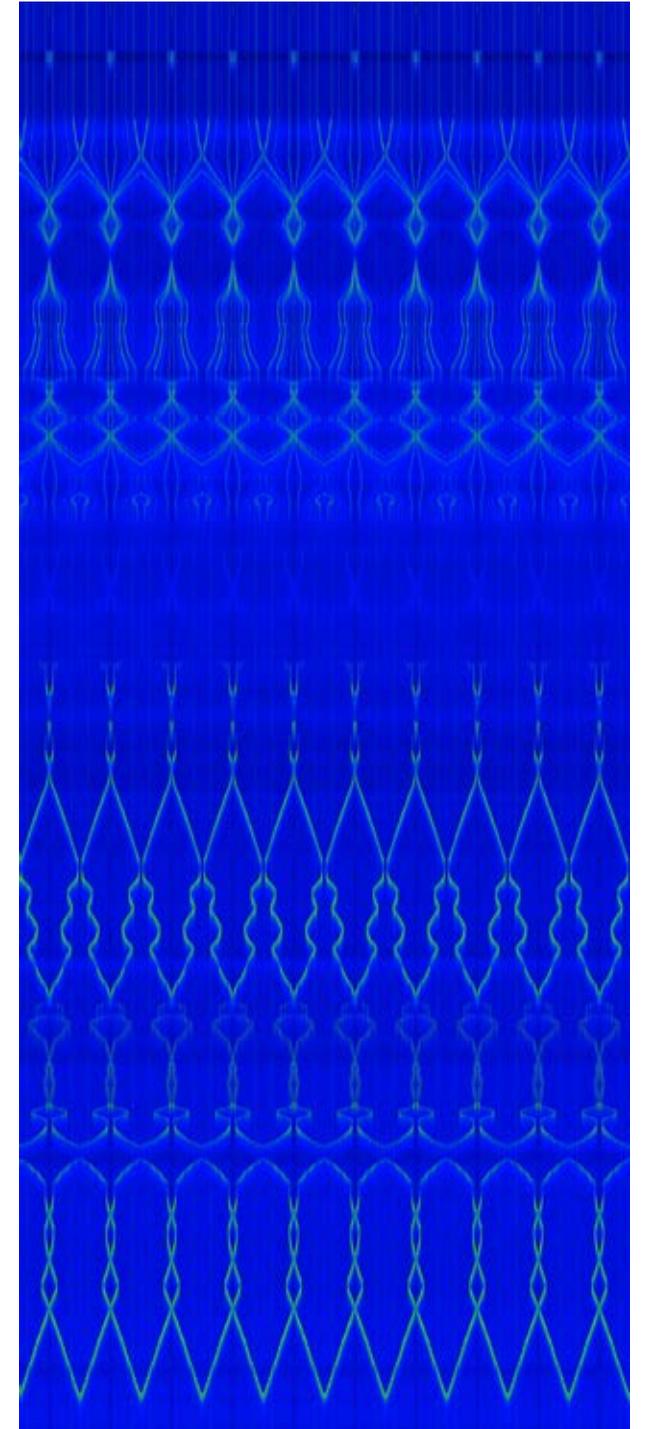
The patterns you record and then visualize evoke weavings from many peoples. When I look at them simultaneously knowing that they are radio waves, it's like I'm experiencing a bridge between ancient culture and modern technology. I also think of the background radiation from the big bang.

When you're out in the field making recordings, do you feel a connection to ancient phenomena or traditional artforms?

It seems that there are many specific locations on Earth that mystical and spiritual practitioners have tuned in to, but science hasn't been able to define what draws people to these locations. Simultaneously, the patterns found in weavings from many different cultures share similar aesthetics. A friend of mine recently mentioned that a Mexican weaving I have looks very similar to the weavings found in traditional Lithuanian culture. Perhaps there is inherent wisdom in these patterns. The Jacquard looms used to weave the tapestries I have been creating utilize technology that played an important role in the development of modern computing. I use data visualization software in order to create weavings that reference aesthetics of traditional and ancient cultures. They bridge the gap.

OPPOSITE:
WAVES FROM THE EAST.
OCTOBER 19, 2014. 6:47 AM.
1296 MHZ
ACRA, NY

Rimas Šimaitis



When I see your works I feel a strong balance between intuition and intention. I think about what it must be like to simultaneously know and not know what will happen as you move through your process. Is there a way of putting that intuition into words?

Intuition is a state of knowing without conscious reasoning. I'm sure that intuition plays into my working process, but at the core, I think my process is more built around allowing not-knowing to enter the work. I use objects that I don't understand because they allow for information to be revealed in the process of making. That information gives me something to work with. I negotiate between intention and acceptance of what the firing unfolds. I see it as a conversation between my intentions, knowledge, and the all of the unknowns that I invite into the work. I increasingly see my process as collaborative in this way.

Emily Sudd

What is it like to come upon an object that you know must be transformed into something new? Do you set out to find things, or does it just happen naturally?

In the beginning, I tried looking for specific things, but I didn't find it to be very effective. I now select items for a variety of reasons. Sometimes I can't resist something because it is extremely interesting to me – if it's really unique, funny, or perplexing. Sometimes I pick things up because they fill gaps in my repertoire. Or sometimes I know something is just a rare type of thing to find, so I pick it up in case I'll want it later. It's rare that I will look at something for how it will be transformed. I more approach the object as it is in its original state. I suppose I put myself in a challenging psychological state that way, forcing myself to let go of the urge to preserve the object. But, there is something really wonderful that happens when something that is interesting to start with becomes even more interesting in transformation, like a reminder not to fear risk, a reassurance that it's worth it to keep pushing beyond what is already good enough.

OPPOSITE:
UNTITLED DECORATIVE
OBJECT #6, 2014
COLLECTED CERAMIC
OBJECTS, CLAY, GLAZES,
FIBERGLASS, AND EPOXY RESIN
32 X 20 X 6 INCHES



September 5, 2015