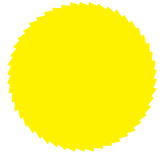


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GROUNDWORK

June 22 - August 5, 2023

SYDNEY ACOSTA
TERESA BAKER
MOIRA BATEMAN
LIZ ENSZ
HANNAH LEE HALL
ALEXA HOROCHOWSKI
KAHLIL ROBERT IRVING
SEITU JONES
STEPHANIE LINDQUIST

GUDRUN LOCK
SARNOA MARK
ANA MENDIETA
ALVA MOOSES
RYAN GERALD NELSON
NIKKI PRAUS
IAN TWEEDY
MATHEW ZEFELDT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dreamsong is pleased to present *Groundwork*, a group exhibition taking terra firma as both subject and medium. The artists, who span generations and territories across the United States, include: Sydney Acosta, Teresa Baker, Moira Bateman, Liz Enszt, Hannah Lee Hall, Alexa Horochowski, Kahlil Robert Irving, Seitu Jones, Stephanie Lindquist, Gudrun Lock, SaraNoa Mark, Ana Mendieta, Alva Mooses, Ryan Gerald Nelson, Nikki Praus, Ian Tweedy, and Mathew Zefeldt.

A wellspring of enlivening nutrients, a signifier of territory and identity and a site of conflict over indigenous rights and environmental protection, soil offers a

rich prism through which the present may be both imagined and imaged. From a material standpoint, earth immediately invokes the monumental Land Art tradition of the 1960s and 1970s. Unlike Robert Smithson or Michael Heizer, however, the artists in *Groundwork* eschew the romanticized grandeur of 'empty' Western spaces in favor of considered excavations of locally embedded and lived histories. Adopting anticolonial, queer, feminist, environmentalist, and other critical lenses, they seek communion with the specificities and spiritual meanings of place, burrow into the legacies and experiences of their ancestors, and express concerns about our collective future. Their poetic interventions into land center diasporic experiences,

treat the ground as a repository of ancestral time and memory, and lament the historically entwined damage wrought by colonialism and resource extraction. More attuned with the groundbreaking work of **Ana Mendieta**, whose film *Untitled: Silueta Series (Gunpowder Works)* (1980) is included in the exhibition, earth is treated in *Groundwork* as an invaluable storehouse of oft overlooked heritages.

Mendieta wrote, "My art is grounded in the belief of one universal energy which runs through everything: from insect to man, from man to spectre, from spectre to plant, from plant to galaxy." In the artist's *Silueta* series, Mendieta inscribed her body in the ground, producing ephemeral, earth-body sculptures resembling pre-Colombian forms. In the *Gunpowder Works*, a figure is burned into the soil as plumes of smoke swirl above it, producing a powerful feminine energy through a ritualistic act that fuses the body with the land. The series' poignancy is also marked by the artist's status as a Cuban exile, traumatically separated from her family at twelve-years-old as part of Operation Peter Pan (1961). Embedded in Mendieta's oeuvre is a deep longing for her homeland and communion with her ancestral roots.

Several of *Groundwork*'s artists directly consider the ominous consequences of a fast deteriorating planet, and the specter of climate grief haunts the exhibition. A deflated ceramic globe by **Alva Mooses** metaphorically lays bare the interrelationship between mapmaking, colonization, and environmental degradation, while the artist's chosen material – earth – underscores the disconnect between our planet's physical makeup and its cartographic representation as a series of divided polities. **Gudrun Lock**'s photographs of underwear, decomposed during their temporary burial in the superfund sites of Northeast Minneapolis's Shoreham Yards, provide physical evidence of the bacteria, fungi, and nemtodes in the still active complex, living soil. **Nikki Praus**' installation of rammed dirt pointedly asks: "Will we hold each other through this fire?" In **Ian Tweedy**'s overdrawn and overpainted found photographs, forest fires are projected onto the concrete walls of unnamed cities, linking our ongoing climate crisis to both

the past and future of urban civil conflict and unrest. The centrality of mapmaking to the violence of colonization and resource extraction is also visible in **Seitu Jones**' seed bombs formed into grenades, while **Liz Ensz**'s topographical weaving referencing Bdote, the sacred land at the confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers, emphasizes the glitches of Google Map's global surveillance project and **Mathew Zefeldt**'s photorealist painting of Grand Theft Auto's digitally rendered ground reveal colonization's new cartographic frontiers.

Mendieta's longing for her homeland lingers through *Groundwork* in artwork that confronts the consequences of both anthropocentrism and colonial violence. Navigating the specific histories of the land they excavate, the artists in *Groundwork* also address these harmful legacies through new languages of abstraction that build on connections between geography, memory, and identity. **Teresa Baker** memorializes the Northern Plains by creating abstract landscapes from both artificial turf and traditional organic materials important to her Mandan and Hidasta tribes. **Ryan Gerald Nelson** took the exhibition opportunity to honor his Mdewakanton Dakota ancestors while spending time in Bdote, considered by the Dakota people to be to be the center of the Earth (*Maka Cokiya Kin*). In 1862, this sacred site was used as a concentration camp for Dakota people, including Nelson's great-grandfather. Walking through this land, the artist took photos and collected fallen branches and broken roots which became tools and materials for a new painting.

Pushing the limits of organic material in works that render land as containers of memory and meaning, **Maira Bateman**, **SaraNoa Mark**, and **Hannah Lee Hall** use bog mud, sand, and stones, to carve intricate gestures into works that call to mind mysterious archaeological relics. **Alexa Horochowski**'s *Transient Landforms* (2023) references Brancusi's *Endless Column* while suggesting the possibilities of a posthuman modernism. **Stephanie Lindquist**'s works depict scenes from local community farms in soil collected on site, which she painted over ethereal cyanotypes. In each of these projects, the indelible connection between our modern built environment and its raw material is made explicit, our vast

inscription upon the earth metaphorized by materially innovative strategies that seek to collapse the boundaries between history, place, and representation.

More interested in the built urban landscape as a site for deep reflection, **Kahlil Robert Irving** creates monuments to the asphalt grounds of contemporary life. In *Concrete Nodes and Moon Chunks / Street stars and fragments (Mixed vessel)*, the artist collapses time and space by inscribing cosmic traces into clay slabs embedded with seemingly fossilized detritus fallen from the sky. The artist's uncanny topographies represent sky and ground simultaneously, employing the language of dreams and memories to build new relics of the present. In a similar vein, **Sydney Acosta**'s installation of twenty drawings (*Stumped, 2018*) was informed by the artist's daily walk from her home to her Los Angeles studio. By translating fleeting memories of daily ritual into unfixed charcoal on newsprint, the artist reflects on the subjective and transient manner in which we internalize our quotidian environments and routines. Through the excavation of land in artwork that takes the ground as both subject and material, this exhibition aims to encourage discussion about the earth's preservation, its local meaning, the contesting and often violent claims made to it, and above all the sustenance, both spiritual and physical, that we derive from it.

Groundwork is part of the Wakpa Triennial. Organized by Public Art Saint Paul, the inaugural edition responds to the theme "Network of Mutuality", a phrase from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Letter from Birmingham Jail, which speaks to social justice, mutual care, interdependence, and inextricable links among humans.

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