

GREG SHOLETTE

CV + PORTFOLIO

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WORKS



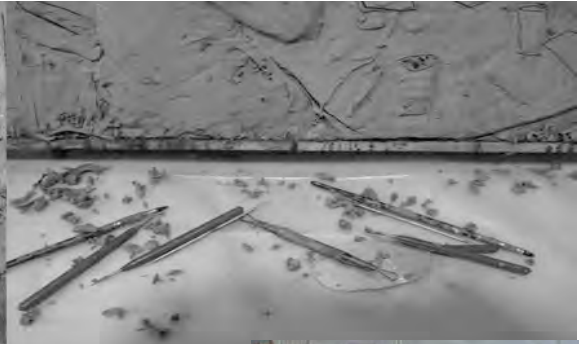
RECENT PROJECTS

"THE LAST MEETING"

for the exhibition

RE:WORKING LABOR

Chicago, 2019



GREGORY SHOLETTE

THE LAST MEETING (REWORKED/RESURRECTED)

Repetitive toil, unseen labor, the obligatory slog of activist organizing. This piece depicts the commonplace, overlooked, invisible work of activism. It is secondarily about the preposterous, but necessary effort to radically reform contemporary art. It is not so much a portrait of specific individuals, though the meeting depicted did take place on February 19, 2016.

In 2011, Gulf Labor Coalition (GLC) called for a boycott of the recently announced Guggenheim Abu Dhabi (GAD). GLC collectively asked: "Who Builds Your Architecture?" The appalling answer is that the GAD was to be constructed by underpaid, unjustly treated immigrant laborers. Thousands soon signed GLC's petition. And then the museum invited us to talk. And talk. And talk. Accomplishing little, the 2016 meeting "reworked" in this project was supposed to be different.

GLC gathered representatives from the Human Rights Watch, Building and Wood Workers International, Engineers Against Poverty, and International Labor Organization. Some appeared via Skype. Take-out coffee cups, notepads, documents, and laptops aglow with digital attendees made the conference table look like Frank Gehry's abstract GAD design. This preparatory meeting was tense, but also productive. Later that day GLC would meet Guggenheim Board members to hammer-out a practical and humane contract for the GAD workers. Or, so it was hoped.

Around noon, Sholette snapped a series of pictures thinking how very few images of gatherings like this exist. Sholette has spent untold hours laboring at similar meetings for more than 45 years. Sholette also confesses the absurd pleasure of rendering this moment in pseudo-classical, social realist style accompanied by a cephalophore, an undead saint carrying his own head about to frighten the devil. Let's call this style magic social realism.

Why was this meeting the last to date? Several months after GLC's seemingly productive encounter with the Guggenheim, the museum broke off all future contact with the group. Only later did GLC realize that a precipitous fall in petroleum prices made the Guggenheim project unfeasible for the time being. Rumors of the project's rebirth reappear on a regular basis. Meanwhile, GLC rests, halos and heads close at hand.

Gregory Sholette, *Last Meeting (ReWorked)* in progress, 2019



REWORKING LABOR "The Last Meeting" (2019) Faux Bronze (plaster) 18 X 24 X 1.5



EXHIBITION FLOOR PLAN

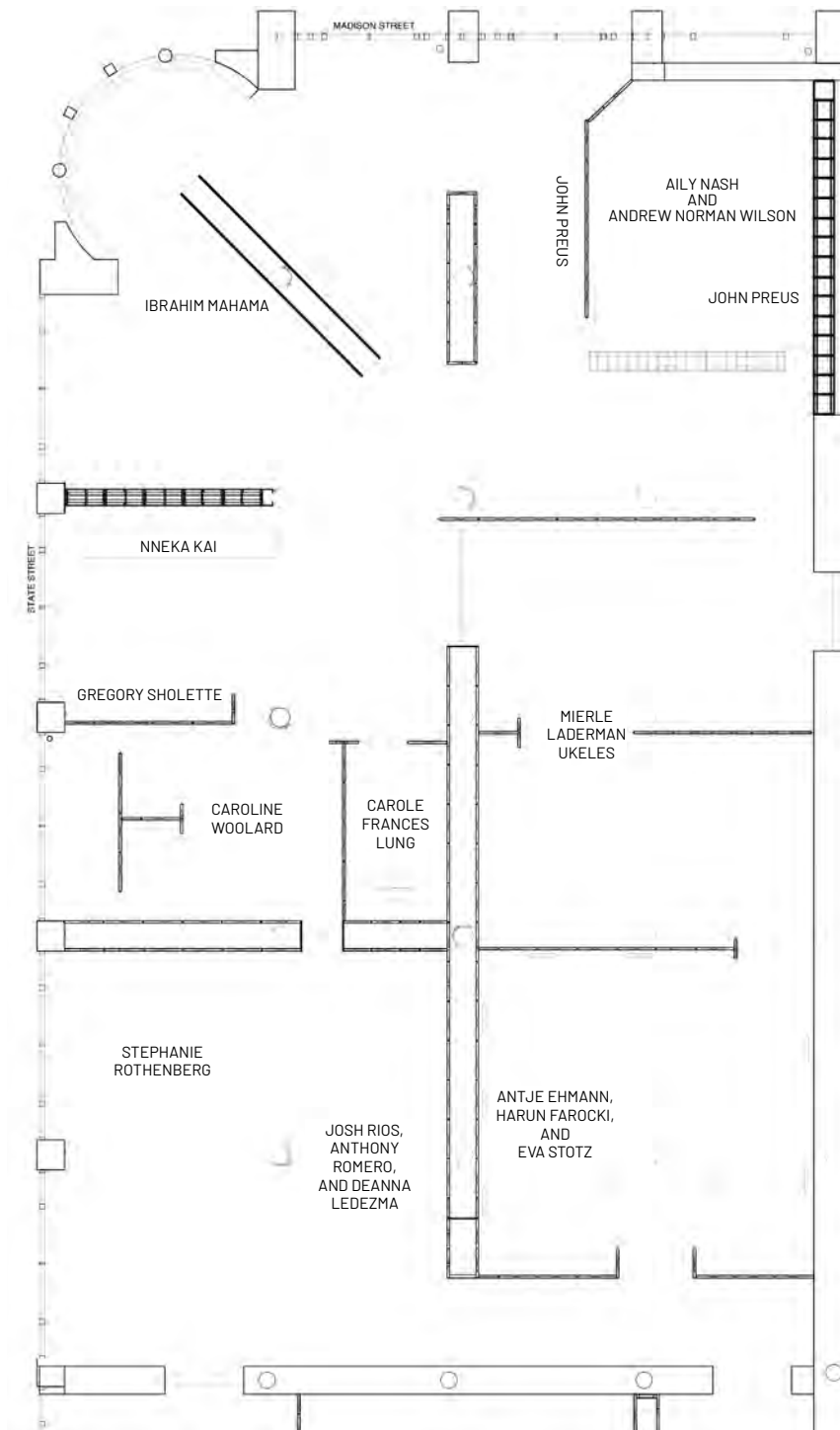
PROJECTS BY:

Antje Ehmann, Harun Farocki,
and Eva Stotz
Nneka Kai
Carole Frances Lung
Ibrahim Mahama
Aily Nash and Andrew Norman Wilson
John Preus
Josh Rios, Anthony Romero,
and Deanna Ledezma
Stephanie Rothenberg
Gregory Sholette
Mierle Laderman Ukeles
Caroline Woolard

IMAGE EMPLOYMENT

FILMS BY:

Yuri Ancarani
Anonymous
Stephanie Comilang
Kevin Jerome Everson
Harun Farocki
Cao Fei
Fabien Giraud and Raphael Siboni
Jenn Nkiru
Riar Rizaldi
Pilvi Takala
Ryan Trecartin
Leilah Weinraub
Li Ziqi





Artwork
2019
 Project: [illegible]
 Title: [illegible]
 The artwork is a large-scale bronze relief sculpture depicting a group of figures in a dynamic, contorted pose. The figures are rendered with thick, expressive brushstrokes, giving the work a sense of movement and energy. The sculpture is made of a dark, textured material, possibly bronze or a similar alloy. The figures are shown in various poses, some standing and some sitting, with their bodies arched and limbs extended. The overall composition is highly dynamic and expressive, reflecting the artist's style. The sculpture is displayed in a gallery setting, with a white wall and a window in the background.

Installation at Gallery 400 SAIC Chicago 2019

Art for the Future: Artists Call and Central American Solidarities



"INSURRECTION: REDUX" 1984/2022

INSURRECTION: REDUX

for the exhibition Art for the Future: Central American Solidarities



Insurrection original piece 1984 - mixed media - 109 inches wide by 37.5 high by 6 deep



Insurrection: Redux 2021

I am very pleased and honored to be part of *Art for the Future*, a contemporary remembrance/revisiting of the remarkable 1984 multi-venue anti-war project *Artists Call Against US Intervention in Central America* organized by Abigail Satinsky and Erina Duganne for Tufts University Art Galleries, Boston from January 27 to April 24, with a closing event April 23. Asked to submit my contribution to the project 28 years ago, I sheepishly admitted to the curators that my work was destroyed during the intervening years, but I immediately agreed to recreate, or more accurately, reinterpret the original for this exhibition. Here is a bit more about my project *Insurrection* and some anecdotes related to the work:

Insurrection was fabricated from wax, latex, wood, plastic, paper, and a silk-screened text, and uses a citation from the “naturalist” writings of Mr. [Ehpraim G. Squire](#) (1821-1888), who once served as the *Special Charge d'affaires for Central America* under President Polk. Squire’s book describes his view that the non-white peoples of Central America, along with what he perceives to be the “strange” zoology of the region (now primarily Nicaragua), will inevitably be superseded by the northern, white race along with its animal and plant life. *Deus Vult - it is the will of god* Squire proclaims in the 19th Century language of Manifest Destiny. And yet, in four repeated citations that make up the substrate of *Insurrection*, Mr. Squire’s words are first intervened upon and then completely submerged beneath the very same tropical forest that he forecast would soon go extinct, no doubt replaced with sugar, coffee, dairy and cattle farming.

...For if the United States, as compared with the Spanish American republics, has achieved an immeasurable advance in all the elements of greatness, that result is eminently due to the rigid and inexorable refusal of the dominant Teutonic stock to debase its blood, impair its intellect, lower its moral standard, or peril its institutions by intermixture with the inferior and subordinate races of man. In obedience to the ordinances of Heaven, it has rescued half of a continent from savage beasts and still more savage men, whose period of existence has terminated, and who must give place to higher organizations and a superior life. Short-sighted philanthropy may lament, and sympathy drop a tear as it looks forward to the total disappearance of the lower forms of humanity, but the laws of Nature are irreversible. DEUS VULT— it is the will of God!

From this point of view, it appears that the only hope of Central America consists in averting the numerical decline of its white population, and increasing the element in the composition of its people. If not brought about by a judicious encouragement of emigration or an intelligent system of colonization, the geographical position and resources of the country indicate that the end will be attained by those more violent means, which among me, as in the material world, often anticipate the slower operations of natural laws.

—*Ehpraim G. Squire* (1858)

This large horizontal work incorporates replicas of foliage from Latin America that gradually engulf Squire’s text. The original 1984 piece was made with assistance from Michael Anderson, an artist and exhibition technician at the American Museum of Natural History. As part of omnibus anti-war project *Artists Call Against US Intervention in Central America* my project was exhibited on view at the Marian Goodman gallery in NYC.

At the time I made this piece I was co-running a small business in Brooklyn with a partner called *PROTOcentrics* where we made advertising props and architectural models -usually miniatures- in a shop located on Douglass street in the Gowanus area, now gentrified. But as an artist I had become very interested in the fantastic unnatural-natural marginalia and drolleries in illuminated manuscripts vis-a-vis the writings of Jacques Derrida as a force of displacement or interruption and was exploring ways to combine this interest with my ongoing artistic and research focus on what might be called the politics of history, including both human and natural histories in a Marxist framework. These concerns would later lead to my involvement in the formation of REPOhistory in 1989 along with many other artists and activists.



So even before Artists' Call was initiated I was exploring using vegetal imagery including vines, flowers and foliage (artificially produced) as a means of interrupting a printed text in order to generate a new reading or even contrary reading to the underlying words. *Insurrection* in 1984 was the primary outcome of these ideas. My focus on Nicaragua and the region, however, came in large part from the growing seriousness of the situation in Central America and the possibility that the Reagan administration might attempt direct military intervention, as was the case between the US and Latin America dozens of times in the past. This concern was then weighing down on the collective mind of most if not all progressive artists that I knew in New York and elsewhere (at the time I was a founding member of *Political Art Documentation/Distribution or PAD/D* along with Lucy R. Lippard and others, Jerry Kearns, and a couple of dozen other people.

My recollection of finding the shocking Squire citation is that at the time I was searching for a text that linked US nationalist ideology with natural history (going back to my interests stated above). I was at the NY Public Library pulling books about Central American off the shelves when I came across this thick 19th C. book by Ephraim G. Squire and viola, what a find! Most of his voluminous volume was in fact dedicated to detailed descriptions of the natural history of the region that he had been given the US office of *Special Charge d'Affairs*. Thus Squire's book focused on geology, geography, botany and zoology. But then came a section on the local human populations of the Central American region, and it was there that I found this extraordinarily damning passage linking his alleged scientific objectivity with theories of Manifest Destiny, which is a severely warped reading of Darwinian survival of the fittest mixed with US colonial expansionism, racism and imperialism in Latin America that in short assures its adherents that the white race is destined to ultimately overcome and force other people into extinction. Squire's undisguised white supremacy matched the Reagan administration's rhetoric, even if the latter was cloaked in anti-communist rhetoric.

Coda: in 1997 the indy filmmaker Alex Cox (who also made the movie "Repo Man" which lent its name to REPOhistory) released "[Walker](#)" a film about William Walker, a US mercenary who takes-over Nicaragua in the 1850s and installs himself president with Ed Harris playing the lead. At some point in the movie Ephraim G. Squire briefly appears as a character (played by Richard Masur). I felt it was like a vindicating moment for me having previously come across these 19th century men and discovered their direct link to the devastating historical relationship between the US and Central American.

Many years later, in 2002, while I was faculty at School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC, and where coincidentally, I first met Abigail Satinsky), I was asked by Dean Carol Becker to introduce my friend Lucy R. Lippard who was the school's commencement speaker. I remember she was loudly booed by some attending parents when she spoke-out against the imminent invasion of Iraq. But during that same event, actor Ed Harris was to receive an honorary degree from SAIC for his role in the film *Pollock*, which he directed and starred two years earlier. I had a brief moment with him backstage and said to him that my favorite role of his was that of Walker. I recall him chuckling in what appeared to be agreement.

Art for the Future: Artists Call and Central American Solidarities

Artists Call is a project that brings together artists from Central America and the United States to create a collective work of art. The project is a response to the political and social challenges facing Central America and the United States. It is a call to action for artists to use their art to address these challenges and to create a more just and equitable society. The project is a collaboration between artists from Central America and the United States, and it is a testament to the power of art to bring people together and to create a better world.

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DRAWINGS & RELIEFS



"Dark Ammunition." Ink, pencil, paper. 24 X 18.75 Inches. (476.25 X 609.6 mm.) A collection of fantastic "rubber bullets" based on cartoon imagery that is related to such animators as George Herriman (Krazy Kat), and the Fleischer Brothers (Betty Boop and Coco the Clown). The work is owned by art historian Carol Duncan of New York City.

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“Occupy Museums: Pergamon Alter, Berlin.” Ink wash, acrylic, paper. 35.5 X 23.5 inches. (901.7 X 506.9 mm.) While they were participating in the controversial Berlin Biennial of 2012, Occupy Museums also carried out an action on the steps of the Pergamon inside the Pergamon Museum in Berlin. The Pergamon is a key feature of DARKER because of the reference to the historical novel *The Aesthetics of Resistance* (*Die Ästhetik des Widerstands*) by Peter Weiss in which the key protagonist is an anti-Fascist resistance fighter in Berlin in the 1930s who initiates the book (volume one of three, 1975-1981) with a powerful detailed description of the Pergamon Frieze, which is itself a depiction of a battle between the Olympian Gods and the Titans (or Giants) carved out of stone in 2nd Century BC Greece.



"Whither the Aesthetics of Resistance?" Ink, acrylic, collage on paper. 18.75 X 24 Inches. (476.25 X 609.6 mm.)

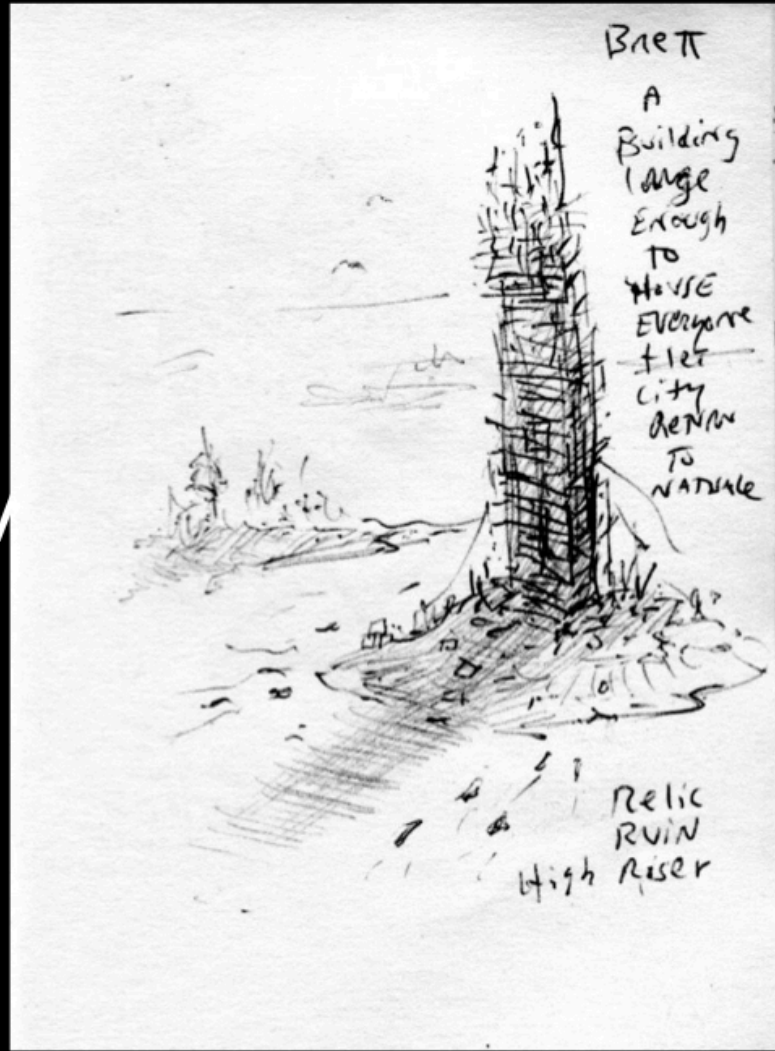
An experimental drawing using a sketch of the cover of The Aesthetics of Resistance adding ink and various acrylic media.



“Water Protectors, Standing Rock, N. Dakota” Ink wash, acrylic, paper. 35.5 X 23.5 inches. (901.7 X 506.9 mm.) Based on an image downloaded from the protest camp found on the Internet.



"Decolonize This Place, AMNH." Ink wash, acrylic, paper. 33.5 X 23.5 inches. (850 X 506.9 mm.) This drawing was based on a flip-phone snapshot I took on the day of this action organized by Decolonize This Place that took place at the American Museum of Natural History on October 10 2016



Notebook sketches for 15 Islands



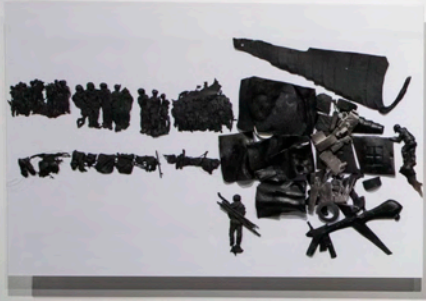
My special enhancement /prosthetic is activated when I am pouring over the eighty plus e-mails I must answer in any given day at the office. It all begins with a sharp pain in my upper abdomen as my spleen suddenly takes on a life of its own. Soon it bursts out of the back of my body, grabs a sable paint brush and begins to draw pictures while I continue to slave over the computer. Only now I am happy to be drawing despite the intense pain my spleen/arm brings with it...











Small, illegible text labels or captions are visible on the right side of the image, likely providing information about the sculptures.



Holy Wars (photomontage 12 X 12" 1984)

INSTALLATIONS



Our Barricades: Barricade in a Valise with DIY library, 2014

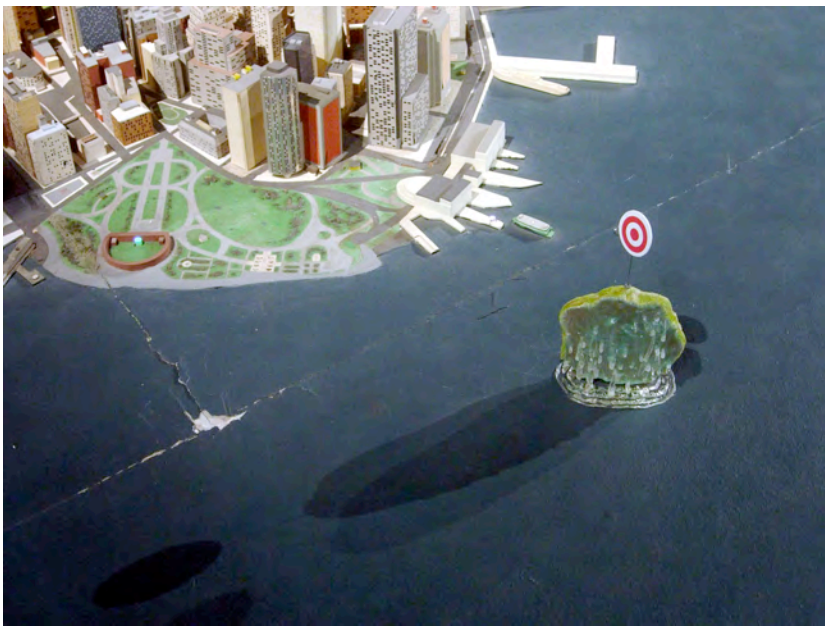


"Mole Light" (2012) installation was created for Plato's Cave in Brooklyn and consists of an "inside-out" model of Plato's Cave fabricated out of fluorescent light fixtures, cardboard, rubber, and a film still from Bertolucci's 1970 film about Italian Fascism, *Il Conformista*.

Fungi Fone/ Strike Art Assemblage, 2020



**15 ISLANDS FOR
ROBERT MOSES**
Queens Museum, 2012



Dunkn' Island (above) + Snuggle Island (right)



A site specific infiltration into the *Panorama of the City of New York*, which was built for the 1964 World's Fair by urban planner Robert Moses.



11Million Person Tower Island imagined by Brett Bloom, interpreted + realized by Greg Sholette, Queens

“Greg Sholette made and placed new islands about the Panorama’s waterways, where they exist as silent, post-9/11 observers of the city’s past, present and future. Modeled in the same style as the Panorama, each island represents Sholette’s interpretation of a question he posed to a group of other artists and art theorists: “If you could add an island to New York City, what would that new landmass be like?” NYC Panorama Queens Museum of Art Feb 4-May 20, 2012.

11 Million Person Tower Island Brett Bloom



Greg,

Thanks for the invitation. Can you make a tower for the 11 million people of NY to be moved to so all the land can be given back to the native folks who used to live there? This would have to be a very large tower, and maybe won't work. Let me know what you think of the idea.

- Brett

Brett Bloom is an artist, activist, writers, and co-founder of the Chicago-based art group Temporary Services and the Copenhagen-based group Learning Site.



Island of Light/Island of Illusion Aaron Gach/Center for Tactical Magic



Orig.

When I first thought about creating an island, I vacillated between isolated utopias, secret bars, fantasy escapes, and mysterious training grounds. In the end, my island is an amalgam of all of the above: a cross between Francis Bacon's New Atlantis and Robert Antea Wilson's Disordia, with a gloss of the Sephiroth, and a pinch of H.P. Lovecraft, for good measure. I envision it as an invisible island wandering through the sea. It lies just below the surface, extending into the etheric realm in the form of a grid, inverted ziggurat. Some may happen upon it by accident or fate, others seek it out intentionally. To enter, one is literally sucked into it by an ethereal whirlpool that threatens madness (or worse). Once inside, the visitors encounter a vast confederation of independent lodges representing all sorts of opinions, often hostile to one another, and posturing each its own "tier" or constellation. Philosophy, magic and occultism alike find a shelter in it. Each Tier of the inverted ziggurat is characterized by a quote from a particular magical text, rite, or ritual as follows:

Tier 1 - Sun-ruled Lucifer: With Love and Knowledge drove out innocence; The Key of Joy is disobedience.

Tier 2 - Magicians guard an empty safe.

Tier 3 - Reaction is inevitable. In their abuse of analysis they had too persistently sacrificed sentiment to reason. Here and now, they become intoxicated on imagination.

Tier 4 - Make conditions to suit yourself. But make it dead certain of not hiding you.

Tier 5 - The orators of the Mysteries speak again, bidding all welcome to the House of Light. The great institution of materiality has failed.

Tier 6 - One technique is as effective as another. You cannot know which one will best serve your needs until you know what those needs are. Choose the one that you can handle most deceptively. In many cases you can present the same basic illusion as either battery or ally.

Tier 7 - A lamp is lit on a dark and stormy night. A candidate is introduced and has to run round the interior three times on all fours. In the morning, all have disappeared, returning to their daily labour, whilst the candles and incense sat on fire in the night and their kind flames up to the sky.

Tier 8 - knock often and banish often. What I tell you three times is true.

Tier 9 - *There is a great work to be done.*

Tier 10 - The Great Work performed.

-Juno-

Aaron Gach/Center for Tactical Magic uses the forces of the artist, the magician, the ninja, and the private investigator in order to amplify latent energies focused on positive social transformation.



“Island of Illusion, Island of Illusion” in progress above and finished below
created for 15 Islands For Robert Moses, Queens Museum of Art



Graphic posters surrounding 15 Islands and panorama 2012

Touching on issues from environmental and economic justice to the overflowing archives of human memory and immigrant's rights, the new fantasy islands interrupt the familiar geography of the Panorama, subtly haunting a favorite destination for students, tourists, and urban planners. Surrounding the Panorama is a series of posters about the project's participating collaborators: Hana Shams Ahmed, Brett Bloom, Larry Bogad, Marc Fischer, Libertad Guerra, Dara Greenwald, Marisa Jahn, Karl Lorac/Themml!, Ann Messner, Ted Purves, Rasha Salti, Dread Scott and Jenny Polak, Jeffrey Skoller, Nato Thompson, and Aaron Gach/Center for Tactical Magic.



The Other Saadiyat Island on the Panorama.

Saadiyat Island, NYC

Hana Shams Ahmed



Dear Greg,



Saadiyat is a desert island directly off the coast of Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). It is also where the Louvre and Guggenheim are developing new museums using the labor of thousands of "guest workers" from nearby South-Asian countries such as Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India. The May 2009 Human Rights Watch report documented cases of "severe exploitation and abuse, in some cases amounting to forced labor."

Some important improvements have been made since then, though working conditions are still below human rights standards in developed countries. Now imagine a previously uncharted island materializing off Pier 13 in the East River near to where the Guggenheim once planned to construct another new museum. This small, sandy island is also filled with precarious construction workers who labor in a special, extra-judicial cultural empowerment zone established in response to the art market crash of 2012. Based on my experience in the Middle East and South Asia, I imagine the inner-dialogue of one such displaced worker housed on Other Saadiyat Island:

"My son had not left my side in the first six years of his life. It had been difficult to think of a life without him. But that's how it has been for the last two years. Working as a construction worker was not exactly a 9 to 5 air-conditioned affair. I remember with a smile the conversations back in Bangladesh about going to the gym, trekking in the mountains of Nepal, cycling to work. All to stretch the limits of one's body. I have muscles now, but no mirror to look at it with. No interest to look at it either. After the twelve-hour ordeal and the food that I wouldn't even feed the crows back home, all I could look forward to was the bug-infested bunker. My mind keeps going back to thoughts about bringing my son here. The island is huge, so space is not a problem. He would love it. We would spend the next six months building things for us. Those buildings that we built for other people, we would finally build for us. Those buildings that we got kicked out of after the last tile was set would be ours. With thoughts of my son and big glass buildings I went to sleep."

- Hana Shams Ahmed

Hana Shams Ahmed is a journalist and human rights activist. She lives in her native country of Bangladesh.





IMAGINARY ARCHIVE

A traveling, mixed media participatory project

- Friedrichshafen, DK – Oct. 2015
- Philadelphia, Pa – Feb. 2015
- Kyiv, Ukraine – April 2014
- Graz, Austria – Sept. 2013
- Galway, Ireland – Nov. 2011
- Wellington, New Zealand – 2010

Imagine yourself uncovering a cache of materials and documents that record a past whose future never arrived? Imaginary Archive Galway (IAG) is just such a repository: printed materials, objects, and narratives that imagine an alternative history, which nevertheless sheds a surprisingly strong light on concrete realities. New York based artist Gregory Sholette invited participants from Galway, New Zealand, Europe and the United States to produce this “what if” collection of archival materials addressing topics from forgotten Irish inventors and fantastic nation-branding campaigns, to uncharted offshore islands and mysterious pirate radio broadcasts. On display at 126 Gallery, IAG consists of under-represented, unknown, invisible, or merely hoped-for “historical” materials that point to multiple ways of interpreting the past, the present, and the future.





Imaginary Archive Kyiv Ukraine 2014



Работа Александра
Володарского не может
быть представлена на
этой выставке. По
решению художника
Аадя Тер-Оганьяна
"автору запрещено
заниматься левым
искусством"



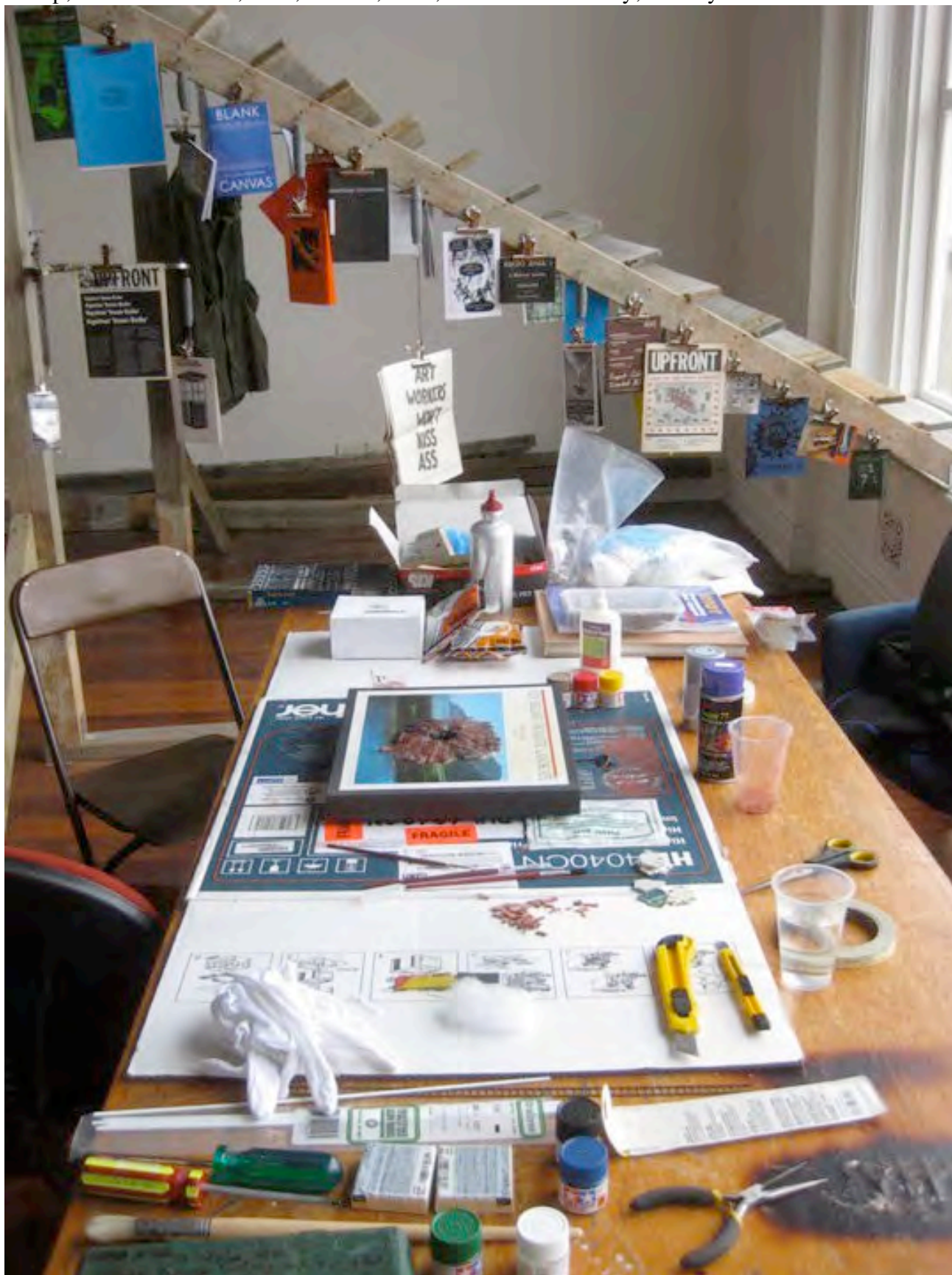
Imaginary Archive, Germany. White Box gallery at Zeppelin University, Friedrichshafen, 2015.



Imaginary Archive, Philadelphia. Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Penn, 2014.



Top, Rotor Art Center, Graz, Austria, 2013, Bottom 123 Gallery, Galway Ireland 2011





iDrone, 2012. A virtual sculpture showing a slow-moving predator robot that is “skinned” with an archive of the artist’s own past activities created for the site:
<http://exhibition.cyberartspace.net/2012/?gregory-sholette>



“Our Barricades” mixed media installation for Station Independent Projects, NYC, 2014.

Exposed Pipe, Byblos Bank Art Gallery, Beirut Lebanon, 2013.



AUB Art Galleries and Collections
celebrates the opening of the new AUB Byblos Bank Art Gallery with the exhibition:

ART IN LABOR

SKILL / DESKILLING / RESKILLING

May 20–July 27, 2013

http://www.pan.ci.seattle.wa.us/seattle/spd/WTO/wto_suspects.htm

WTO ACTION COLLECTIBLE

with removable
direct action arm



The WTO Task Force
is looking for tips
about this suspect
from Seattle:12-2-99



Counter-WTO Action Figure:

With interchangeable street-action arms.

A miniature figurine modeled on a 1999 Seattle demonstrator originally posted on a police surveillance website soon after the event. 10 X 5 X 5 mixed-media. 2004.

PUBLIC COLLECTIVE ART

Week 7 . Matt Greco & Greg Sholette . Saadiyat Island Worker...

<http://gulflabor.org/2013/week-7-matt-greco-greg-sholette-saadi...>

Who's Building the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi?

Week 7 . Matt Greco & Greg Sholette . Saadiyat Island Workers Quarters Collectable, 2013



Matt Greco & Greg Sholette

Solomon R Guggenheim

Saadiyat Island Workers Quarters Collectable, 2013

"Shop-Dropped" 3-D Prints, printed label, plastic boxes: unlimited edition.

This week's contribution to Gulf Labor's 52 Weeks is by **Matt Greco & Greg Sholette**

To view more [images](#) and a [video](#) from this week's contribution please click on the links via "images" and "video"

Repayment of recruitment fees by foreign workers on Saadiyat Island often takes months or years and is "the single greatest factor in creating conditions of forced labor." – Human Rights Watch Report

Despite being one of the wealthiest nations in the world Abu Dhabi has yet to agree on measures to assure fair labor conditions even as they seek to legitimize their cultural endeavors by purchasing the choicest of Western brands: The Guggenheim, Louvre, New York University. The Workers Quarters Collectable was "shop-dropped" at the Guggenheim Museum gift shop in New York as part of a larger campaign by Gulf Labor Coalition called "52 Weeks."







Precarious Workers Pageant, Venice Italy, performed August 7, 2015 with NYC construction workers and Social Practice Queens students “deconstructing” the deconstructivist architecture of Frank Gehry’s proposed Guggenheim Abu Dhabi Museum, UAE. Clockwise: One of my sketches for the project, constructing props in Venice, pageant heading to the Peggy Guggenheim Collection for a performance of “our commons.”





Adhesive postcard distributed around NYC for REPOhistory's CIRCULATION project.



The Other J.P. Morgan for REPOhistory street sign project, 1992, New York City

CITY

Signs of Olden Times Bring History to the Streets

By MERVYN ROTHSTEIN

IN these days of billion-dollar bankruptcies and trillion-dollar debts, the sign that went up this week on a lamppost outside the Municipal Building in lower Manhattan makes compelling reading.

"Guilt until the accused proved their innocence," the sign reads. "Indefinite incarceration at the hands of creditors. That was debtors' prison. (You're standing where it once was.) Between 1775 and 1831, thousands were jailed for debt — sometimes for as little as \$1."

The two-sided, illustrated metal sign is one of 39 being installed at 36 sites in lower Manhattan this week by Repohistory — the name means repossessing history — a collective of 65 visual artists, performers, writers, historians, teachers and film makers who got together three years ago with the goal of creating public art about history and providing a view of history not always found in textbooks.

Among the signs is one by Tess Timoney and Mark O'Brien, at the corner of Wall and Water Streets, the site of the city's Meal and Slave Market between 1709 and 1762.

"Merchants sold corn, meal and other provisions," the sign reads. "But the principal trade was in slaves." In fact, the sign points out, "by 1746, one out of every five New Yorkers was black and, with rare exceptions, enslaved. New York ranked second, behind Charleston, S.C., as an urban slave center."

At Liberty and Greenwich Streets, a sign by Lisa Maya Knauer and Janet Koenig focuses on the nearby home of Ann Lohman, alias Madame Restell, "19th-century New York's best-known and most successful abortionist until her entrapment and arrest by morals vigilante Anthony Comstock in 1878. On the eve of her trial, facing a long prison term at age 67, she committed suicide."

Ms. Knauer said the group's members felt their work should be shown on the streets rather than in museums because the debates about history, multiculturalism and school curriculums are very public ones. "We wanted to take the issues in the debate and put them where everybody who walks through the streets of New York City can be confronted or provoked or challenged by the information," Ms. Knauer said.

The viewer's personal relation to the signs is also stressed. Each sign



Fred R. Conrad/The New York Times

An alternative view of history is being presented by the Repohistory group. Tom Klem installed one of the group's historical markers at the former site of debtors' prison, in front of the Municipal Building.

asks two questions, among them "Are you part of this history?" and "Whose history is remembered?"

The Repohistory installations, known as the Lower Manhattan Sign Project, are sponsored by the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council. The signs are going up this week, and an opening parade is scheduled for Saturday at 3 P.M. beginning at Castle Clinton in Battery Park. The signs will stay up until Dec. 27.

Maps giving sign locations are available at the World Trade Center information booth and the downtown branch of the Whitney Museum, 33

Maiden Lane.

The project has cost between \$8,000 and \$10,000, said Greg Sholette, another Repohistorian. "Things sort of snowballed," Mr. Sholette said. "First we got the Municipal Art Society to go along. From that we got the New York Historical Society, and from that we got City Council President Andrew Stein. So by the time we went to the local community board and the Department of Transportation, we had a very professional-looking package."

Contemporary issues are very much a part of the project. At Stone



The New York Times

and Whitehall Streets, a sign by Tom Klem records in English and Spanish that "on the fourth day of the month of March in the year 1991, three homeless Americans passed a very cold and bitter night on this spot."

Other subjects for the signs include Potter's Field, the Ellis Island Immigration station; the Great Negro Plot of 1741, an alleged slave cabal to burn down the city; the Whitehall Street military induction center; J. P. Morgan's buying his way out of Civil War service; the first Chinese community in New York City; epidemics in the city, and the story of the waterfront.

History should record that the first passer-by to stop, stare up at and discuss the debtors-prison sign — which was created by Laurie Ourlight and Jim Clement — was Paul Sladkus, a marketing consultant.

The sign notes that among those jailed were sailing crews, sent there by captains who wanted to avoid paying the sailors' wages, and prostitutes, imprisoned by pimps when the women became old, diseased or pregnant. And the other side of the sign shows the masthead of a newspaper called the Forlorn Hope, written and edited from the debtors' jail in the 1800's by one William Keteltas, who was an early Abolitionist and, not surprisingly, a prison reformer.

"This project is one of the good things about the city," Mr. Sladkus said. "It's important to make history more accessible."

Mr. Klem, high on a ladder installing the sign, said that another good thing about the city was the crucial help provided by the Department of Transportation. "The D.O.T. gave us brackets with special bolts," he said. "The bolts make it very difficult for vandals to steal the signs."



