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The Confusion of Tongues!
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I LOVE TO LOOK AT LANGUAGE IN THE GREATER SOUTH COAST REGION, it almost feels like a case study to me; I feel it has a weight and importance that relates to one's upward mobility. The language used establishes one's sociolinguistic position in relation to where one might reside within class structures in the present day United States. This leads me to examine the use of language within civic structures and the social relations that are susceptible to structural violence. Within bureaucratic structures, language that was once living and ephemeral turns from undulating patterns and waves of frequency into physical declarations that simultaneously attempt to solve social ills while imposing structural violence on those who may be marginalized. The marginalized individuals and groups are potentially ones who might not have the same relationship to the vocabularies used by those in positions of power. If we start to dissect any singular institution's formation we find a living breathing individual pushing air out of their throat as temporarily as the delusion of time itself. We can look at any institution today and see they were initially sparked by a single individual's words. Over time I feel we watch those words ossify, turn from a necessary connective tissue that works like elastic cartilage, slowly churn solid into the bones and skeletons of the Institution. In this solidification, ephemeral language transitions from sound waves via airways into documents then into imposing physical structures and into imposing categorical distinctions turning into what I believe inevitably becomes the precipice of hierarchical thinking. Once this type of rigid, codified bureaucratic language is implemented, it becomes one of the pathologies of society-wide structural violence.

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THE SCULPTURES IN THE INSTALLATION were constructed from foraged wood, found objects and cast white bronze. The wood comes from a few different places: some of the wood used within the installation include *Quercus Alba* (white oak) from Prudence Island and *Juglans Nigra* (black walnut) foraged from the grounds of the Newport Mansions. The black walnut limbs that I mill into board then mill into finish stock, are limbs of old growth trees damaged by hurricanes and other storms. The white oak comes from a stand of trees that became inundated by the gypsy moth. The white oak is a slow growing ecological wonder and superfood that supports globally rare, isolated ecosystems. White oak supports a staggering 537 species of native butterfly and native moth caterpillars. These native caterpillars are critical baby food for 95% of all our young native songbirds, providing food for the first month or two of their lives. Their sweet acorns mature in one year and are eaten by over 90 species of wildlife in the greater south coast region including: wild turkeys, quail, grouse, wood ducks, jays, deer, opossums, fisher cat, raccoons, squirrels – which in turn are eaten by larger predators such as bear and coy-wolf, keeping the ecosystem in check. With the introduction of the destructive eurasian variant invasive species in 1868, by 1990 the gypsy moth established populations throughout the northeast US as well as the Canadian provinces of Ontario and Quebec. The insect is working its way westward with populations decimating ancient tree stands found in West Virginia. As it inches westward it uniquely adapted to move up to two miles in high winds. The gypsy moth can kill a mature native hardwood tree within a matter of 2 years.

Aside from the foraged woods utilized in these works, the other materials carry a particular historical provenance that connects the utilized found objects directly to the ruling class. In the installation I use architectural salvage, supporting structures, corbels, ecclesiastical kneelers, alters and frames. These structures made of wood once lived as native trees that were then cut down and cleared from old growth forests in the beginning of industrialization of the United States. This architectural salvage was then carved by anonymous laborers in a neo-gothic fashion into corbels and architectural support for The Gilded Age mansion, Belcourt. These anonymous laborers were instructed to do so by architect Richard Morris Hunt. Hunt, at the time, was simultaneously working on the designs for the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty. Belcourt is the location in which these indexes of anonymous labor and found architectural components were mined. Hunt was hired to design and oversee the construction of Belcourt for Oliver Belmont. Banker to the Rothschilds, Belmont was a businessman and US Congressman. The son of financier August Belmont Sr., he was born into a family of wealth and privilege. He attended the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland, graduating in 1880. He served a year as a midshipman before resigning his commission in 1881. When his father died in 1890, he inherited much of his wealth, throwing some of it into the construction of Belcourt Castle, his summer home in Newport, Rhode Island. In 1896 he married Alva Erskine Smith Vanderbilt, who had once been married to business magnate William Kissam Vanderbilt. Belmont worked for his father's banking operation, and parlayed that to a run for Congress in 1900. He was elected as a Democrat to represent New York's 13th Congressional District in the United States House of Representatives. Belmont's role in Congress, implementing their learned bureaucratic language, solidifies his attempts to preserve the wealth of his family and friends at the time.

THE CONTROLLED BURN, as an ecological tool, is a technique of forest management that originates in pre-history and has been utilized by an array of cultures almost universally as a technique for managing ecosystems. Prescribed burns help reduce the catastrophic damage of wildfire on our lands and surrounding communities by safely reducing excessive amounts of brush, shrubs and trees. It encourages new growth of native vegetation and eradicates invasive ornamental species and insects, while maintaining the many plant and animal species whose habitats depend on periodic fire. I like to think about utilizing this ecological technique on the surface of foraged and found materials. By stripping, charring, and burning the previous layers and history, I unearth the root structure and formal silhouette of the objects; taking control of the imposing gothic structures, reconfiguring and inventing. The charred surface is not unlike a region or section of forest that has completed a successful prescribed burn. The light refracts off the surface in a way that is simultaneously both void and reflective. In contrast to the ephemeral nature of wooden objects, I've been working with a bronze alloy containing high concentrations of zinc to make white bronze brackets. These brackets serve as physical support structures: mending, holding, and supporting the salvaged, charred wood together in a new sculptural history. The cast bronze components of these installations are brackets constructed in the lost wax method. As I reach into different histories, some oral, some physical, I ponder artifacts of prehistory. The trees, the wood, the carved salvage: in the bigger picture appear as temporary as living language, yet cast alloys have fared different narratives in terms of shelf life. For example, bronze hoards from 4000 years ago are still argued about amongst anthropologists regarding the origin and purpose of these artifacts.

I like to think about what would survive in the event that all organic materials withered to time, rot, fungus or fire. The remnants may be a single hoard of bronze speculated about for thousand years in attempt to discern their purpose in supporting these structures. I think it is most important to illuminate the weight of the anonymous worker's Labor, the seen and unseen Labor, the spiritual and physical. To say thank you and attempt to pay homage to the life lost, the layers of chemical exposure, and the psychological artifacts related to handling noxious materials for the adornments of the ruling class.

SOME EVENTS WITHIN THE SECOND EMPIRE TIMELINE AND AFTER:

1800 - Present: The Effects of Lead

Lead paint and leaded fuels reached their height of use during the 19th century. This period of mass human consumption of heavy metals occurs due to environmental toxicology which results in a societally wide biosocial disaster. The lead-crime hypothesis is the proposed link between elevated blood lead levels in children and increased rates of crime, delinquency, and recidivism later in life. Lead is widely understood to be highly toxic to multiple organs of the body, particularly the brain. Individuals exposed to lead at young ages are more vulnerable to learning disabilities, decreased I.Q., attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and problems with impulse control, all of which may negatively impact decision making and lead to the commission of crimes as these children reach adulthood, especially violent crimes. No safe level of lead in the human bloodstream exists given that any amount can contribute to deleterious health issues.

1880 - 1884: Richard Morris Hunt

Architect for the gilded age and the industrious elite simultaneously completes two commissions: designing the structures of Belcourt (the 50,000 square foot mansion of Oliver Hazard Perry Belmont, victorian playboy, American socialite and banking agent to the Rothschild family) and the pedestal structure for the Statue of Liberty. The statue when completed is erected with the following language cast into a bronze plaque: "Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

1840 - 1890: Incoming Invasive Ornamental Species

The Introduction of ornamental invasive species occurs. Wealthy American elites import flora and fauna, exotic and domestic, in a vain attempt to "beautify" their surroundings, quell their nostalgic longing for their home countries and adorn their burial grounds with Asiatic varieties. Consequences of these actions were unintentionally massive. In a vain attempt to replicate a Shakespearean environment, one sole individual introduced European starlings to North America. Today, there are more than 200 million European starlings in North America. Considered noxious and destructive, they compete with native species and destroy crops such as grains and pitted fruits. They swarm agricultural feeding troughs contaminating food and water, and are linked with diseases like histoplasmosis, a lung ailment affecting agricultural workers.

2021 - We Are Here

RECENT PSYCHO-SOCIAL ARTIFACTS OF INDUSTRIALIZATION: MASS HYSTERIA. ECOLOGICAL DESTRUCTION. GLOBAL UNREST. ENDLESS WARFARE. VIRAL PANDEMIC. STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE. PRISONS - A SOCIAL CRIME AND FAILURE. THE OPIOID CRISIS. CLASS DISPARITY. THE LOSS OF LIBERTY. SOCIETAL WIDE PATHOLOGIES. THE CONSTANT SURVEILLANCE AND CONTROL OF ALL DOCILE BODIES. PARASITIC INSTITUTIONS SIPHONING RESOURCES FROM THEIR HOST COMMUNITIES. THE SIMULTANEOUS DESTRUCTION AND REORGANIZATION OF INSANE ASYLUMS INTO PRISONS.