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Proposals for Open Call for Group Exhibitions in NYC 2018-19

Tracing Obsolescence

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The widespread automation and decline of sites of heavy industry accompanies an increasing disconnect between such sites and most people's everyday experiences, yet traces of the processes and products generated by factories, mines, refineries and the like continue to seep into the wider environmental fabric and haunt the post-industrial subconscious. The artists in this exhibition intervene in this process, using the material and psychic traces left by industrial-scale manufacturing and extraction as a starting point for their explorations of contemporary environmental, socio-economic, and geo-political crises.

Tahir Karmali's mixed-media installations and performances critically explore the problematic histories and processes of material extraction in Africa. Karmali ritually deconstructs discarded technologies such as old mobile phones to obtain raw materials like cobalt, which he then combines with other source matter--in this case, raffia--to create large installations. In doing so, Karmali disrupts these objects' typical path toward the trash heap, while also drawing attention to the geo-political origin and context of their component parts.

Selasi Awusi Sosu's practice uses video, sound, and installation to create ghostly holographic re-stagings of the glass manufacturing process. In a series entitled "Glass Factory," she investigates the closure and subsequent abandonment of the "Tropical Glass Company" in Ghana, originally called "Abosso Glass Company" and set up by the country's first President, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. After an active period supplying bottles for the beverage industry, the factory underwent divestiture and now lies deserted, its machinery rapidly deteriorating, while the bottles it produced continue to circulate in Ghana and beyond. Sosu's videos recreate the movement of glass objects in the assembly line, their shifting configurations bringing illusory life to the factory once more.

Sto Len's work draws attention to environmental problems of urban post-industrial wastelands by repurposing their effluence in-situ as artistic material. He makes monoprints directly from the polluted waterways of the Newtown Creek, which stretches for 3.8 miles between Brooklyn and Queens in New York City. Major oil refineries have been present in the area since the 19th century, and have leaked an underground oil spill of up to 30 million gallons into the soil and water. Len explores the creek by boat, pulling paper across the water's surface to create imprints of lingering, toxic delicacy.

Together, these artists' works propose non-linear, critical, and context-embedded ways of tracing obsolescence in the post-industrial landscape, revealing material circuits and trajectories which may be challenged, redirected, or presented in a new light to create unexpected beauty.

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