



Forage Gather



Claire Chambless

Chenhung Chen

Gina Herrera

Carolyn Mason

Victoria May

Forage | Gather

Curated by Carolyn Mason

October 21–December 2, 2023

Fellows of Contemporary Art
970 N. Broadway, Suite 208
Los Angeles, CA 90012



forage/gather

magnetic teeth in amalgamated mouths meet

mourning creatures busy being born

silicon snakes eating their crown of thorn

savoring the milk of rubber trees

gluttons for gasoline

pirates sucking saline at the oyster bar

with index fingers falling

into a ragged parenchymal prayer

and if there is a beacon at all

there are eyes on the water and grief is a bubble

a flickering binary of nothing

a morse code in dew

—Canyon Steinzig





Carolyn Mason
A Personal Landscape,
2023
Mixed media
including
expandable foam,
machine buffers,
felted wool
65" x 24" x 22"





FORAGE / GATE

CLARE Chambers
CRENSHAW Coo
GUY Heron
CAROLYN Mann
VICTORIA May
CAROLYN Mann







Opposite left:
Victoria May
Studies in Convulsion
#2-4, 2014
Car tire inner
tubes, thread,
handmade silk/
polyester cording
Dimensions
variable

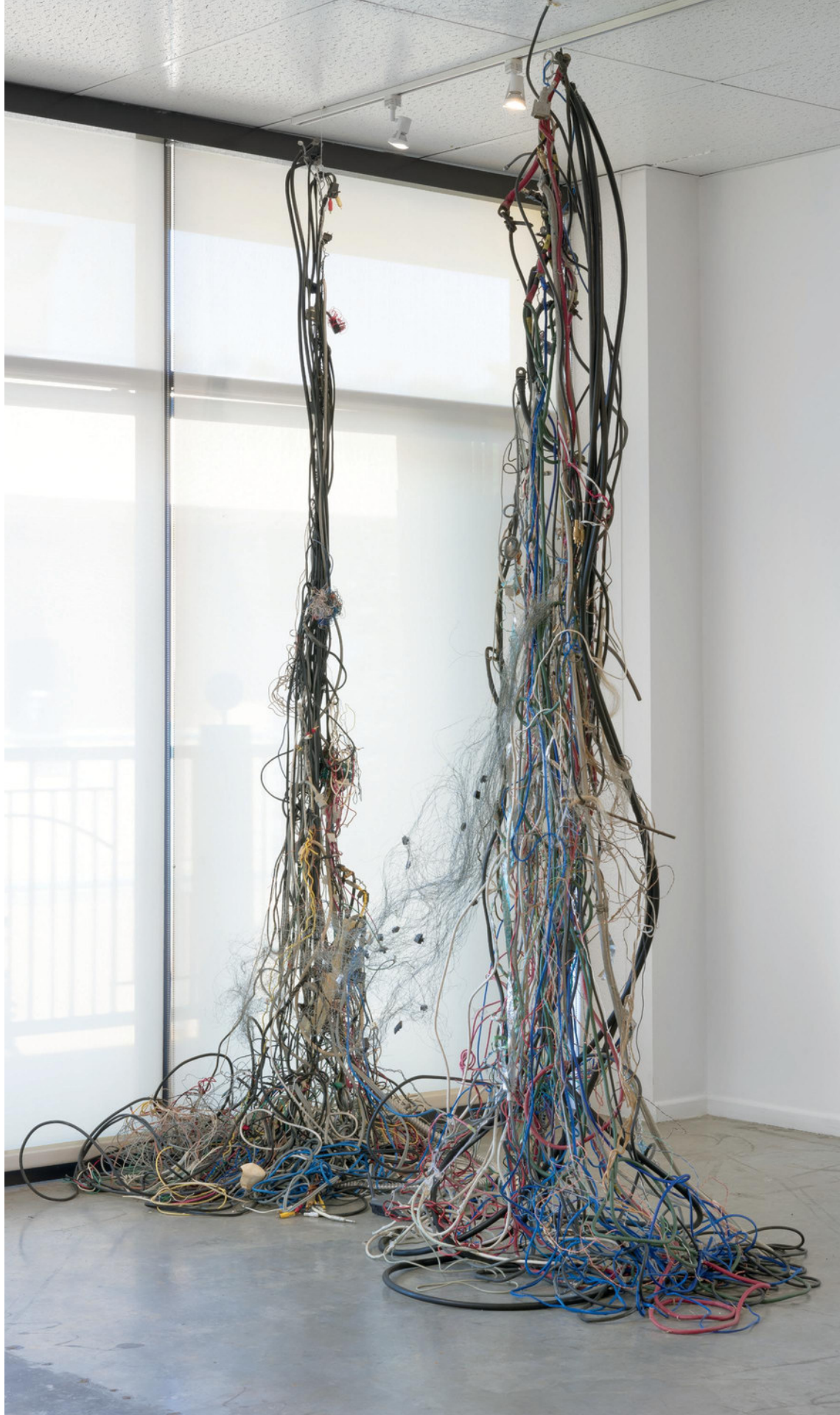
Opposite right:
Claire Chambliss
Oculus, 2021
Mixed media
including imitation
pearls
32" x 28" x 21"
(without base)





Gina Herrera
The Empress is Waiting,
2022
Assorted found
materials and steel
67" x 33" x 25"

Chenhung Chen
Dialogue #1, 2023
Electrical wire and
components
Dimensions
variable









Forage/Gather: The Second Life of Salvaged Things

Scarlet Cheng

Assemblage art is generally sourced from everyday materials—whether trash day finds on the sidewalk, purchases at the local hardware or craft store, or even personal memorabilia. They could be old or new, flat or contoured, metal, rubber or synthetic. The artists in *Forage/Gather* have used a combination of methods and materials—all except for memorabilia—to create their work.

The irony is that we humans do place associations with things, and things have particular associations, even memories, in this exhibition, even without personal memorabilia. I find the artist statement by Carolyn Mason, both the exhibition curator and an exhibition artist, especially revealing, “I see my studio practice as a laboratory where I experiment with materials that have personal history and are significant to me because of their origins.” In her work she likes to use textiles, especially wool. Here the associations are direct—her mother and her grandmother grew up on a Colorado sheep ranch, and made woolen items like sweaters and weavings which were used throughout the household. Also, her father ran a textile factory.

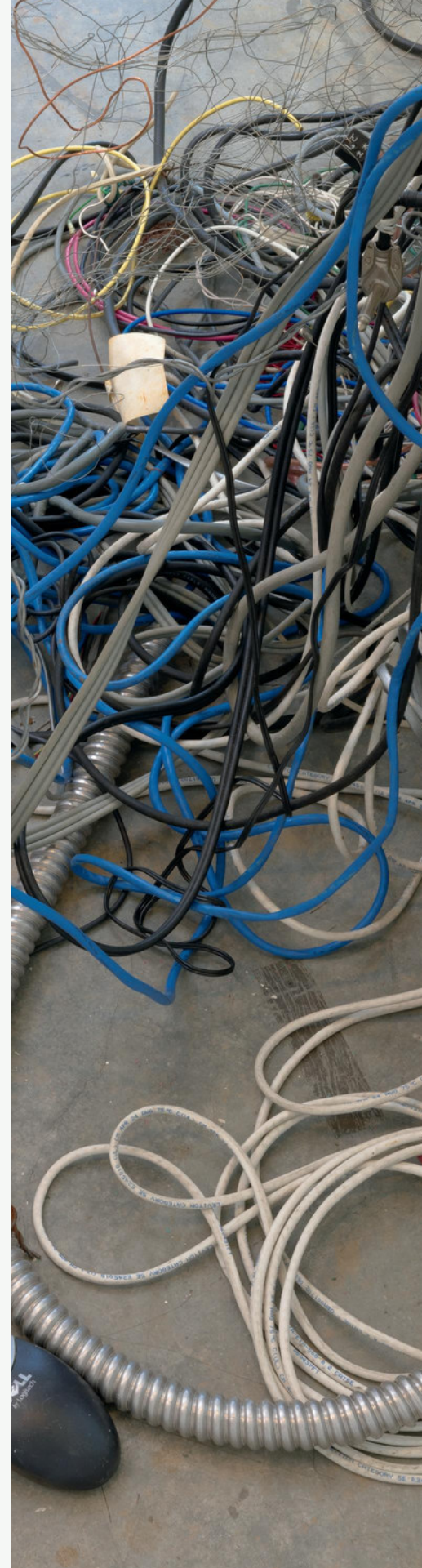
Other artists may call on associations that are culturally shared. Claire Chambliss sought out and purchased fake pearls for her sculpture *Oculus*, deliberately choosing a material marked by elevated social status. Pearls are naturally occurring, prized throughout history for their rarity and beauty. Here they are imitation and plentiful, but the artist has so meticulously applied them to encrust a twisting armature, and placed it all on a pedestal.

Chenhung Chen has imbued meaning into materials, using them to express Daoist philosophy. In Daoism the universe exists in polarities—dry/wet, light/dark, male/female, and so on. The true path to harmony is coexistence, with one balanced against the other. Chen uses wire and electrical conduits to symbolize *Qi*, the life force. In *Dialogue #1* they “flow” through her work, dangling from ceiling to floor.

A certain serendipity may be gleaned in works by Victoria May and Gina Herrera. In *Studies in Convulsion* May reuses an inner tube she found by the road, and stuffs it with handmade silk/polyester cording. It's draped over a pedestal, like an exhausted body. In the act of scavenging, Gina Herrera seems acutely aware of salvaging, clearing the environment of unnecessary detritus. "Like a scavenger, I play an active role in removing garbage from the landscape, preventing further damage," she says. "My artistic process is intuitive, letting the forms reveal themselves." Her work, *The Empress is Waiting*, is made from a variety of found objects.

It's staggering how much we throw out and throw away in our affluent, Post-industrial society. Having been brought up in Taiwan, where so much was recycled and reused, I find it breathtaking how much is binned here. Consider the millions and millions of food containers that were so ubiquitous during the Covid Era, from people ordering take-out whilst staying at home. Now take-out has become a national habit, and one can only hope recycling the containers has, too.

In a way these works are a form of recycling, and there's a certain subversiveness in using "detritus" for art—art which has generally been valorized through the ages as an elevated form of human expression. Here the discarded has been rediscovered, the humble has become honored.





Curatorial Statement

Carolyn Mason

For the five sculptors in this exhibition, foraging is an act of connecting to their surroundings, whether it be the trash can, hardware store, craft store, or side of the road.

Sometimes the artists are treasure hunters, actively seeking out a material with strong cultural associations; other times a material may unexpectedly appear right on the doorstep inviting one to succumb to serendipity. Integral to the practice of all these artists is the ability to respond and create work based on the found material's potential. This process requires a resourcefulness and openness to the unknown. The artists in the exhibition cut, sew, paint, glue and wrap in order to explore a material's possibilities. It may be no accident that the sculptors all tend to reference biological forms, which reflects the organic and random nature of finding and experimenting.

Victoria May once found a partial inner tube by the side of the road. She was inspired by this object's journey from rawness to refinement and back to decay. Also working with detritus—from fabric scraps to toy parts—Gina Herrera turns scavenged trash into tree-like forms as a practice of lessening her environmental impact. Chenhung Chen also re-uses materials: she collects old electrical cords and transforms them into massive and surprisingly colorful, tangles as if the various wires and computer elements were joining forces to create something beyond human invention.

Carolyn Mason collects machine buffers, fascinated by how a functional tool for polishing and resurfacing can look like a pompom in its smaller sizes and as a lace-like doily when its larger sizes are deconstructed. Claire Chambliss actively searches for materials that carry strong social meaning. After happening upon (imitation) pearls she began using them to create organic forms, thereby twisting the traditional narrative of pearls as “proper” and challenging expectations.

For the artists in the exhibition, interacting with their foraged materials are expressions of curiosity and connection as well as opportunities to explore both a material's cultural narrative and personal meaning.





Carolyn Mason received a BA degree from Smith College and an MFA degree from Mills College. She has exhibited at Torrance Art Museum, Tufenkian Fine Arts, Mt. St. Mary's University, and Loyola Marymount University as well as in a solo exhibition at Winslow Garage (all Los Angeles, CA). Mason has been awarded residencies at the Vermont Studio Center and at Nocefresca in Italy. Prior to receiving the Fellows for Contemporary Arts (FOCA) Curator's Lab, she curated an exhibition at the Torrance Art Museum. Mason is a member of the Los Angeles artist collective Durden and Ray.

Claire Chambliss received a BA from Davidson College and an MFA from the California Institute of the Arts. Recent exhibitions include: Sargent's Daughters (Los Angeles); MAK Center for Art & Architecture Mackey Apartments (Los Angeles); Oolong Gallery (San Diego); Office Space Gallery (Los Angeles); The End (Atlanta); Flux Factory (New York); La MaMa Gallery (New York); the New Wight Biennial at UCLA (Los Angeles) and the Museum of Contemporary Art of Georgia (Atlanta). She has been supported by the City of Atlanta, Fulton County Arts and Culture Council, Walthall Fellowship, and the Lillian Disney Scholarship.

Chenhung Chen, born in Taiwan, received a BA from the Chinese Cultural University, Taipei, and an MFA from the School of Visual Arts in New York City. She has had solo exhibitions at the Lancaster Museum of Art and History and at LAX Terminal 7. Her work has also been exhibited at PS I, Hwa Kang Museum (Taipei), UVU Woodbury Art Museum, Marin Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego Art Institute, Kellogg University Art Gallery, Grafiska Sallskapet Galleri (Stockholm), Childrens' Museum of Arts (New York), Walter Maciel, Roberts Projects, and Galleria Rankka (Helsinki), among others.

Gina Herrera received a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and an MFA from the University of the Arts in Philadelphia. Herrera has exhibited at the Lancaster Art Museum, the Oceanside Art Museum, the Marin Art Museum and the Chicago Cultural Center. In addition, she has received fellowships, grants and residencies including from The Harpo Foundation/Vermont Studio Center, Virginia Center for the Arts, Hambidge Center, Ox-Bow, Ruth and Harold Chenven Foundation, Puffin Foundation, and The Demil Art Fund. In 2023, she was a National Endowment for the Humanities Veteran Fellow.

Victoria May received a BA from UCLA and an MFA from San Jose State University. May has exhibited nationally and internationally including at the Monterey Museum of Art, the Minnesota Street Project, the Headlands Center for the Arts, the San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art, the Maloof Foundation, Craft Contemporary, and Quotidian. She has been awarded residencies at Kala in Berkeley, the Lucid Art Foundation in Inverness, the Camera Obscura Art Lab in Santa Monica as well as Jentel Arts in Wyoming. She received a Santa Cruz County Rydell Fellowship and was named a Silicon Valley Artist Laureate.



I'd like to extend a heartfelt thank you to the Fellows of Contemporary Art for the Curators Lab Award. I'd also like to express appreciation to Cara Megan Lewis, Tressa Miller, and Alli Conrad for their hands-on support.

—Carolyn Mason

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Material images by the artists

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