

AMANDA ROSS-HO: USUAL OBJECTS



East Providence, Rhode Island Police Department seizure of multiple guns, drugs, 260K, 2019

In 2004, I produced a body of work in which I sourced and archived online public domain police seizure photographs. These images were mined during a less regulated, pre social media era of the internet, when access to public databases was more limber.

Within these images, seized contraband such as weapons, drugs, and cash are carefully arranged into taxonomies, using compositional economy, symmetry, and disturbingly, a perverse element of artistry. Presumably art directed by law enforcement, the photographs serve the function of forensic evidentiary records, but are also grotesque trophies boasting acquisition of the felonious bounties (like a hunter proudly posing with a fresh kill).

Most interesting to me, the photographs also commemorate a moment of transition in which the assets of illegal commerce changes hands. At the precise instant of photographic capture, the seized objects shift in status and are removed from their intended circulation to enter a new chain of custody. Their value is permanently altered as they are deaccessioned as economic instruments. The objects are thus evacuated of their function, to become hollow placeholders, props, zombies.

Recently, I have negotiated other complex archives. Last summer, I helped both of my parents move. (They have been divorced and have lived in separate homes since I was 14). The timing was not the only coincidence. My father's move involved sorting the copious belongings in his Chicago apartment and putting most of it in storage. My mother's move involved helping her furnish a brand new apartment, just a few blocks away. Inevitably, the geographic proximity and simultaneous subtractive and additive efforts became entwined, and some items from my father's archive ended up migrating over to my mother's to solve gaps in her furnishings. Some were banal items, like stacks of post-it notes and pens, which I quietly merged with her existing office supplies. Others were more significant. The transaction tore several holes in the space time continuum and reunited objects from our formerly undivided family household separated by a gap of more than thirty years. In one case, a simple wooden dresser that had been a fixture in my childhood home, was brought to my mother's new domestic space and united with a hand-made wooden toybox that had once sat next to it in a past life.



The **Untitled Seizure** works (all 2021) are comprised of artifacts from installation and assemblage works of mine dating from 2004-to the present.

The elements are arranged into three floor-bound taxonomies, strictly ordered within the compositional frame of a well-used moving blanket from my studio. The arrangements are self-conscious of the impending gaze of both viewer and camera. They are photogenic. Like the police seizure images, they hover with the provisionality of temporary staging. Like an assortment of art objects awaiting installation by a gallery preparator, or a forensic archive of supporting evidence, the arrangements act as ceremony of transition for the objects.

The origin and provenance of these objects is diverse. To perform their initial function, the elements were collected and recruited from source environments with which I had intimacy, including my studio, domestic spaces, galleries, institutions, or the street--taken out of their existing circulation and reassigned as art material. Others were sourced as new store-bought readymades, or are fabricated props that I produced for specific presentations.

Throughout their period of service, these objects have experienced premium, white glove art handling by teams of preparators and registrars, and they have also been wrangled by my own hands through numerous DIY, hastily assembled fed ex shipments. They have been packed, unpacked, and repacked in archival materials, cardboard boxes, and crates and shipped to and from locations all over the world. They have travelled by ship, plane, and ground transport. Some have absurdly shipped back and forth between the same city more than once. They have served as support elements and visual props in exhibition presentations and installational tableaux in galleries, museums, art fairs, artist-run spaces, and university galleries. Eventually, once expired as fresh currency and deemed inert, they are circulated back to my studio in periodic shipments, mummified with palimpsests of shipping company stickers, waybills, packing slips and scrawled sharpie **ROSS-HO**'s. Once returned, they are reclassified, either directly into deep storage or exhumed to return to the active material world. Some are cannibalized into new works, and some anonymously become pedestrian objects again. Recently, I produced a traveling exhibition that was enacted at three different European museums. In each iteration, I was onsite for an extended period and produced a new site sensitive element of the installation directly in the space. During each install, I drank coffee from a cup borrowed from the museum's kitchen, which I had access to and used during the onsite period.

These cups became elements in the installation as well as souvenirs of my labor, consumption, and intimacy with the institution. After the close of the exhibition, the cups were archived as artworks and returned to me. Upon return, I unpacked them and unceremoniously slipped them into my own kitchen cabinet, allowing them to join a mismatched cadre of other cups and glasses.



Detail of Amanda Ross-Ho Artwork Storage

Through traversing the extended circuitry of this digestive process, and long since transgressing the expiration date of being classified as 'new work', the objects in the **Untitled Seizure** pieces have crystallized into artifacts with layered and cumulative provenance. They are accumulations of metadata generated by over 15 years of my own artistic production, reconsolidated into new works. While they have travelled the trade routes and performed the choreography of commerce, without an active role to play they are null or evacuated instruments of commodity—props—both fungible and non-fungible, frozen in a nether-universe in which they no longer serve a true function as either art or quotidian objects. Instead, they form an archive of hard evidence, indexing moments in the lifecycle of the transitory.

AMANDA ROSS-HO 2021

Post Script: The **Untitled Seizure** works are not for sale, with the exception of a full institutional commitment to acquire all three works irrevocably into a permanent public collection. This will release the fragments from purgatory, and literally give them a proper resting place. This stewardship will ensure that the objects no longer exist subordinate to their uncertain future as speculative profit instruments or devaluation as expired material. Prices are determined by calculating the compounded and relative fractional value of each original installation (plus interest), and adding arbitrary and quantifiable monetary equivalents in sentiment, time, and labor.

Untitled Opening (NOIR AND BLANC), 2015



For many years, I have studied the residue of activity, (in particular parties, social events, public spaces, the studio) watching how inanimate objects act as aggregated indexes of social interaction or human activity. **Untitled Opening (NOIR AND BLANC), 2015** is a group of miniature wine glasses, both red and white, originally made to occupy marginal spaces throughout a gallery space--windowsills, ledges, even along the floorboards--to be discovered by careful viewers. The arrangement and groupings attempt to recreate familiar vignettes produced through the communal activity of art openings and social gatherings in which wine glasses accumulate in random corners of architectural spaces and convenient resting spots--creating inadvertent still lives.

The glasses were commissioned by an Italian miniatures artisan who produced them by hand at 1:12 scale out of glass and resin, and was instructed to vary the level of wine in each glass from partially full to completely consumed.

Originally made in 2015, long before the specter of Covid or social deprivation was in sight, the piece now resonates with an amplified sense of stillness and loss, as well as an increased sense of estrangement from the once familiar and ubiquitous 'day after' scene. Installed within the grandeur of a contemporary luxury kitchen, the exaggerated scale of the massive countertop functions as a contrasting support to the miniscule glasses, further dislocating a viewer from inclusion in the suggested social transaction that they have narrowly missed.



Untitled Timepieces

For many years, I have been interested in using Time as a material, manifesting it in a variety of ways: studying and forensically recreating authentic gestures that happen in the space of immediacy or chance and expanding them into sustained or elaborate translations, mining the recent or distant past for artifacts that resonate with the present moment, and other temporal acrobatics. In my research along the way, which involves a lot of outward looking and rifling through cultural artifacts, I started unearthing and archiving a deluge of timepiece parts on Ebay. Vintage, antique, and inoperable clock parts litter the marketplace, being sold as parts to be reconstituted by other clock makers or amateur tinkerers, or collectors of curiosities. Broken down into anatomical taxonomies, (face, hands, movement) I was immediately attracted to both the poetic potential of these parts as the disabled raw material of time (and the parallels to the body), and the redundancy and time signature of these ruins of an aging technological metric. I purchased a large selection of blank clock dials from a liquidating clock maker's surplus, all printed on heavy paper. Separated from their mechanisms, the blank faces designated a charged surface—any activity that would take place on their complexions supplanted the indexical metrics of the original timepiece. I decided to use these surfaces as a place to record and aggregate the relentless conscious and subconscious mark making and stenography that consistently takes place within my immediate and intimate personal tabletop spaces—doodles, notes, lists, coffee and wine rings, food stains, and studio residue. They record time self-consciously.

For an exhibition at Mitchell-Innes and Nash, New York (MY PEN IS HUGE, 2017), I imported a workspace into the gallery and forensically translated a selection of 12 of these paper clocks made over a period of a year into large 400 percent scale canvases, made entirely onsite in real time. By fast tracking the recreation of artifacts that evolved in a slow, non linear, and geological pace, I created an accelerated history and wove an elastic meta narrative between past and present time signatures.

The paintings in **Usual Objects** are distinct from the first **Untitled Timepiece** works in the series, in that they are not recreations of paper originals. Instead, the mark making on these pieces is direct, and has not been translated from former gestures. This means the handwriting and mark making is proportionate to my body, as opposed to being scaled to the clock face. Whereas the original exhibition compressed a long time period into a short, dramatically re-enacted one, these works were made slowly (2019-2021) and horizontally like the original paper ones, accumulating gestures and residue cumulatively in relation to gravity. The paintings are recordings of table top activity, time spent, and traces of my hand and objects upon their surfaces. The result is a still life presented in the form of a brain map, psychic frequency, and the trace elements of memory.