



# FUTURE FOSSILS

EXHIBITION TEXT

MassArt  
Art Museum

# FUTURE FOSSILS

**JANUARY 23–APRIL 13, 2025**

If life as we know it were to come to a sudden stop, what would archeologists find decades from now? *Future Fossils* presents a possible view into that frozen moment in time and culture. The assemblage of work here—conjured relics—is created by artists based in North America, Latin America, and Europe. Though each artist is following their own trajectory and exploring diverse issues, when viewed together as the remains from some kind of apocalypse, we get a glimpse into our current way of living. In this sense, the works in this exhibition together form a kind of contemporary Pompeii.

Actual fossils come in different forms, depending on the object or creature preserved and the site conditions where this transformation occurred. The works in this exhibition recall these forms remarkably closely. Some are casts from the original; some are skeletal remains; some are captured within viscous, hardening material; and some are depicted in negative space, as a cavity. While many are based on the human body, others spring from material culture, such as electronic devices. They all offer a retrospective view of the present, a perspective that can be read as either critical or laudatory, depending on one's system of values.

*Future Fossils* was organized by the MassArt Art Museum, Boston, MA and curated by c<sup>2</sup> – curatorsquared, a curatorial partnership between Ginger Gregg Duggan and Judith Hoos Fox. c<sup>2</sup> develops exhibitions of international, cross-media contemporary art and design that explore current issues in culture.

**AI WEIWEI | SANFORD BIGGERS | IZAAK BRANDT | JEDEDIAH CAESAR |  
JULIAN CHARRIÈRE | TANIA PÉREZ CÓRDOVA | LIZ GLYNN |  
MAUREEN GRUBEN | MATTHEW ANGELO HARRISON | WILLIAM LAMSON |  
JAMES LEWIS | JEAN-LUC MOULÈNE | REYNIER LEYVA NOVO |  
STUDIO DRIFT | DO HO SUH | CLARISSA TOSSIN | MARION VERBOOM |  
NARI WARD | RACHEL WHITEREAD**

The works gathered here in the *Future Fossils* exhibition can be organized around four themes. Not necessarily distinct, nor mutually exclusive, they offer an approach to think about the works on view.

## **BODY BASED**

Many works are based on the human body—through casting and remaking or the clothing we wear.

**IZAAK BRANDT | LIZ GLYNN | JEAN-LUC MOULÈNE |  
CLARISSA TOSSIN | AI WEIWEI**

## **DIGITAL DEVICES**

Other objects spring from the world around us and the tools we rely on such as cell phones, apps, and computer chips.

**JULIAN CHARRIÈRE | CLARISSA TOSSIN**

## **HOUSE & HOME**

Our dwellings and their furnishings and appliances are sources for some artworks.

**JEDEDIAH CAESAR | TANIA PÉREZ CÓRDOVA | WILLIAM LAMSON |  
JAMES LEWIS | DO HO SUH | NARI WARD | RACHEL WHITEREAD**

## **MYTH MAKERS**

Iconic emblems of our culture become fossils that reveal what will be history.

**SANFORD BIGGERS | STUDIO DRIFT | MAUREEN GRUBEN |  
MATTHEW ANGELO HARRISON | REYNIER LEYVA NOVO | MARION VERBOOM**

## **AI WEIWEI**

Born in 1957 in Beijing, China; lives in Montemor-o-Novo, Portugal

*Study of Perspective in Glass*, 2018

Glass; Edition of 100

Courtesy Lisson Gallery London, New York, Los Angeles, Shanghai, Beijing

Ai Weiwei, a Chinese-born activist artist, uses the middle finger, a symbol of extreme disrespect, as a key element of his work. Since 1995, he has taken photos of himself in front of famous landmarks worldwide, always with his middle finger raised in the picture. These glass sculptures of his signature pose were made with expert glassblowers on the island of Burano in Venice, Italy. Through these works, Ai encourages us to challenge authority, fight for free speech, and support the power of the people and democracy.

## **SANFORD BIGGERS**

Born in 1970 in Los Angeles, California; lives in New York, New York

*BAM (for Walter)*, 2016

Bronze with black patina and HD video (00:59)

Courtesy of the artist and Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York, Aspen

*BAM (for Michael)*, 2016

Bronze with black patina and HD video (01:22)

Collection Dr. Daniel S. Berger

Moved by the constant reports of police violence against African Americans, Sanford Biggers started his *BAM* series. He took African sculptures from his personal collection, coated them in wax, and then took them to a shooting range. There, the artist shot at them, a process he calls “sculpting ballistically.” Afterwards, Biggers cast the disfigured sculptures in bronze. Through this process, the artist honored the victims, whose names appear in the titles of the works. Nearby videos, displayed in adjacent spaces, show the loud, jarring sounds and disturbing images of the shooting.

## **ISAAK BRANDT**

Born in 1995 in Bristol, United Kingdom; lives in London, United Kingdom

*Deadstock Archive: The Classics*, 2021

Hand-drawn PLA, white laces, sneaker display case, wall mountable white powder-coated steel frame

Collection Sarabande Foundation, London

For Izaak Brandt, the sneaker is an emblem of a culture that values icons. Six well-known sneakers—Air Jordan 1s, BAPESTAs, Adidas Superstars, Nike Air Force 1s, Converse Chuck Taylors, and Reebok Classics—are shown here as ghostly forms. As sneaker collectors move away from actually wearing shoes, this display shows a culture that reveres brands. Brandt, a breakdancer, sees his dance performances as a form of silent communication among hip-hop artists. His skeletal shoes resemble the remains of prized trophies in today's materialistic world.

## **JEDEDIAH CAESAR**

Born in 1973 in Oakland, California; lives in London, United Kingdom, and Berlin, Germany

Untitled, 2007

Mixed organic materials, polyester resin

Courtesy of the artist

The decaying plant matter in Jedediah Caesar's work, much like prehistoric animals in the La Brea Tar Pits, seems either partly buried in or emerging from the solid resin cube at the base. This mix of being trapped or coming out creates a feeling of tension. The work combines both natural and unnatural materials, which adds to this contrast. The smooth, hard resin block—shiny and jewel-like—stands out against the rougher, organic bits inside: eggshells, cork, wood pieces, seeds. This setup resembles a core sample taken from the Earth, raising questions about the traces we leave behind and what they say about how we treat the planet.

## **JULIAN CHARRIÈRE**

Born in 1987 in Morges, Switzerland; lives in Berlin, Germany

*Metamorphism XX*, 2016

Artificial lava, molten computer waste, Corian plinth, steel, and white glass

Courtesy of the artist and Sean Kelly, New York, Los Angeles

Julian Charrière's *Metamorphism* series focuses on the cycles and contrasts between nature and the making of electronic devices. Using heat, pressure, and mixing metals with rocks, the artist creates artificial lava. The internal pieces of laptops and smartphones—motherboards, hard drives, CPUs, and RAM—are transformed. Charrière is, in a way, returning these man-made parts to their natural beginnings. He shows the circular connection between the natural world and what we manufacture, reminding us how they are linked.

## **TANIA PÉREZ CÓRDOVA**

Born in 1979 in Mexico City, Mexico; lives in Mexico City, Mexico

*A Chandelier Into a Chandelier (Un candelabro en un candelabro)*, 2023

Bronze

Courtesy of the artist and Tina Kim Gallery, New York

When Tania Pérez Córdoba moved into her home, she found a chandelier left behind by the previous tenant. Intrigued by its grandeur, Córdoba made a cast of the brass chandelier, then melted down the original and recast it in its own mold in bronze. Through these actions, we see the passage of time as the chandelier loses both its function and defined form. It becomes a shadow of what it once was, a fossil of its original purpose, which was to light up a space and reflect a sense of elegance.

## **LIZ GLYNN**

Born in 1981 in Boston, Massachusetts; lives in Los Angeles, California

*Unfinished Business*, 2019

T-shirts, resin, steel armature

Courtesy Rennie Collection, Vancouver, Canada

In this work, Liz Glynn has conjured a garment made from T-shirts coated in resin, some printed with political slogans and logos, shaped over a steel frame. In doing so, the artist has transformed the common clothing of today into a statuesque effigy. The headless woman portrayed may suggest the current state of women's rights in the United States and the direction they have been heading.

## **MAUREEN GRUBEN**

Born in 1963 in Tuktoyaktuk, Northwest Territories, Canada; lives in Tuktoyaktuk, Northwest Territories, Canada

*Fresh Artifacts*, 2017

Cast resin, steel, copper nails, reflective tape, wax

Courtesy of the artist

Maureen Gruben shares the story of her father, a legendary Inuvialuk hunter and trapper in western Canada, through resin casts of his fox stretcher, a tool used to dry animal skins. These tall shapes stand in for this man, who was orphaned as a child and sent to a residential school, where his culture and identity were stripped from him. There, his name was taken away and replaced with the Roman numerals "IV," which show up in Gruben's art. Gruben made these heroic forms as a way to honor the father she deeply admired.

## **MATTHEW ANGELO HARRISON**

Born in 1989 in Detroit, Michigan; lives in Detroit, Michigan

*Seer: Peering through Aurora, 2020*

Headlight, tinted polyurethane resin, anodized aluminum, acrylic  
Collection MSU Broad Art Museum

*Helmet, 2021*

Polyurethane resin, plastic hardhat, acrylic, aluminum stand  
Courtesy Alan Hergott and Curt Shepard

After graduating from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Matthew Angelo Harrison worked for the Ford Motor Company. There, he made clay models of cars and auto parts as part of his job. In his art, he now encases elements from cars and manufacturing tools in resin, freezing them in place. These artifacts speak to the histories of industry and their resulting environmental effects.

## **WILLIAM LAMSON**

Born in 1977 in Arlington, Virginia; lives in Brooklyn, New York

*Thermal Fountain, 2020–2021/2024*

Refrigerator air compressor, copper lines, supercooled metal plate  
Courtesy of the artist

William Lamson's *Thermal Fountain* uses the cooling and condensation parts of a refrigerator in a new way. Without its usual panels and shelves, the fridge is rebuilt to look like a sci-fi fountain. Open to the air, its inner workings create a cycle of freezing and melting. As coolant flows through copper tubes, moisture from the air gathers on the cold metal, forming frost. When the compressor stops, the frost melts into drops that flow down to granite slabs below, forming a slow, steady fountain. This cycle shows the connection between machines and natural forces, asking us to think about the hidden systems shaping our world.



## **JAMES LEWIS**

Born in 1986 in London, United Kingdom; lives in Vienna, Austria, and London, United Kingdom

*Slow thinking*, 2025

Repurposed aluminum stud partition walls taken from the previous exhibition at MAAM containing two artworks by James Lewis: *An evening began (III)*, 2024 and *Slow thinking*, 2024

Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Hubert Winter, Vienna

*Slow thinking*, 2024

HD video (14:15); Edition of 3, 1 AP

Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Hubert Winter, Vienna

*An evening began (III)*, 2024

Wood, plaster bandage, concrete, ceramic, steel, electric cable, light fitting

Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Hubert Winter, Vienna

In James Lewis's installation *Slow thinking*, something is not quite right. The drywall is gone, exposing metal studs to give multiple views of the manufactured space. We see an IKEA nightstand that is calcified with organic growths. A TV plays footage that the artist filmed while "fossil-hunting" at a local shopping center, showing ancient forms in the mall's stone flooring. This mix of real and fake, old and new, leaves more questions than answers and reminds us that what we leave behind will be equally enigmatic.

## **JEAN-LUC MOULÈNE**

Born in 1955 in Reims, France; lives in Normandy, France

*Iron Mask (Mexico City)*, 2017

Synthetic concrete (Rokam)

Courtesy of the artist and Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York

Jean-Luc Moulène's disconcerting humanoid objects result from his filling silicone Halloween masks with concrete until, so laden, they break and fail to retain their exact shape. The artist casts the distorted masks, creating forms that remind us of death masks. Or are they post-human, futuristic robot faces?

## **REYNIER LEYVA NOVO**

Born in 1983 in Havana, Cuba; lives in Houston, Texas

*The Desire to Die for Others (El deseo de morir por otros)*, 2012

Cast in polyester resin from original objects

Courtesy of the artist and Lisa Sette Gallery, Phoenix

Reynier Leyva Novo blends myth and history in *The Desire to Die for Others*. He casts weapons used by Cuban leaders in their long military and political struggles in clear resin. Pistols and machetes are tools that were used to shape and define the history of Cuba.

Each revolutionary leader included here has achieved heroic status. Their choice of weapon is also historic.

## **MACHETE ANTONIO MACEO**

Fernando Esser No. 87-A, 19th century

This machete belonged to Antonio Maceo Grajales. On the upper side of the handle we read: "Invasion by Maceo 1895."

## **MACHETE MÁXIMO GÓMEZ**

Cuba, 19th century

Gift presented by José Martí to Major General Máximo Gómez. Used by the latter during the 1895–1898 war.

## **MACHETE MANUEL SANGUILY**

Collins & Legitimus Hartford No. 14, 19th century

This machete belonged to Colonel Manuel Sanguily.

## **FROM LEFT TO RIGHT**

### **MACHETE QUINTÍN BANDERA**

Collins No. 87, 19th century

This machete belonged to Division General José Quintin Bandera Betancourt (Quintín Bandera).

### **REVOLVER CARLOS MANUEL DE CÉSPEDES**

Le fa Cheux, 19th century

This revolver belonged to the President of the Republic of Cuba in Arms, Carlos Manuel de Céspedes. With this revolver he fired three times when he encountered the Spanish troops at Yara, the day after the start of the Ten Years' War in Cuba, 1868.

### **REVOLVER CALIXTO GARCÍA IÑIGUEZ**

Smith & Wesson, 19th century

This revolver belonged to Major General Calixto García Iñiguez.

### **REVOLVER JOSÉ MARTÍ**

Colt Frontier, 19th century

This revolver was a gift from Panchito Gómez Toro to José Martí in the United States. It is known as the Colt "Frontier" or "Peacemaker."

### **BULLET FRANCISCO (PANCHITO) GÓMEZ TORO**

Cuba, 19th century

This bullet hit Panchito Gómez Toro in the chest. It was found during the disinterment of his corpse.

## **STUDIO DRIFT (FOUNDED IN 2007)**

### **Lonneke Gordijn**

Born in 1980 in Netherlands; lives in Amsterdam, Netherlands

### **Ralph Nauta**

Born in 1978 in United Kingdom; lives in Amsterdam, Netherlands

*Materialism M16 + bullet*, 2019

Aluminum, glass fiber, steel, stainless steel, carbon steel, anodize coating, phosphate coating, chrome bullet, smokeless powder, brass, lead, tracer compounds, cupronickel, nickel, lead styphnate, paper; Edition of 5

Courtesy of the artists and Pace Gallery, New York, London, Hong Kong, Seoul, Geneva, Los Angeles, Tokyo

*Materialism AK-47 + bullet*, 2019

Birch wood, steel, paint, Bakelite, carbon steel, oil, chrome, bullet steel, smokeless powder, tracer compound, lacquer, lead, brass, lead styphnate, copper, paper foil; Edition of 5

Courtesy of the artists and Pace Gallery, New York, London, Hong Kong, Seoul, Geneva, Los Angeles, Tokyo

In their *Materialism* series, Studio Drift breaks down everyday objects into the raw materials from which they were made. The size of each cube represents the percentage of material used in the original object. This prompts viewers to think about the basic “building blocks” of our culture. Studio Drift doesn’t stop at everyday objects; they also deconstruct symbols of violence, like firearms. The pared-down cubes representing assault weapons look nothing like their original forms, yet we are all too familiar with them given the role they play in mass shootings.

## **DO HO SUH**

Born in 1962 in Seoul, Korea; lives in London, United Kingdom

*Specimen Series: Refrigerator, Apartment A, 348 West 22nd Street, New York, NY 10011, USA*, 2013

Polyester fabric, stainless steel wire, glass display case with LED lighting; Edition of 3  
Courtesy Gazelli Art House, LTD

For this series, Do Ho Suh has recreated the homes he has lived in—in Korea, Rhode Island, Berlin, London, and New York—using sheer fabric hung on delicate frames. The artist continuously explores how spaces can hold and evoke memories. In this piece, the artist conjures a refrigerator, fittingly, as its purpose is to preserve.

## **CLARISSA TOSSIN**

Born in 1973 in Porto Alegre, Brazil; lives in Los Angeles, California

*Nova gramática de formas #4 (New Grammar of Forms #4), 2020–2021*

Terracotta, baskets woven from used Amazon.com delivery boxes, thread, fishnet  
Private collection

For centuries, clay has been used in many cultures to build tools and containers. Clarissa Tossin makes terracotta copies of everyday items used in our industrialized existence: iPhones, bottles, printers, ink cartridges, CDs, a computer mouse. Using old Amazonian techniques, the artist also weaves strips of cardboard Amazon.com boxes into baskets. Logos from the online retail giant show up in the patterns. In this artwork, Tossin folds history back onto itself, a present echoing and rewriting the past.

## **CLARISSA TOSSIN**

Born in 1973 in Porto Alegre, Brazil; lives in Los Angeles, California

*Vulneravelmente humano (Vulnerably Human) no. 2, 2022*

Silicone, meteorite powder, pigment  
Courtesy of the artist and Luisa Strina

Clarissa Tossin made a cast of a spacesuit by mixing together natural and man-made materials. With this combination of materials, Tossin connects life on Earth with our continued space exploration. Sprawled out on the floor, this strange, human-like form makes us think about the fragility of our species and our destruction of outer space.

## **MARION VERBOOM**

Born in 1983 in Nantes, France; lives in Paris, France

*Achronie No. 37, 2022*

Jesmonite, plaster, concrete

Courtesy Galerie Lelong & Co., New York, Paris

When artifacts are found at an archaeological site, they can be from different eras, with unknown uses and mixed-up parts. Likewise, Marion Verboom's colorful columns are inspired by many sources: religious symbols, architecture, musical instruments, and art. Her columns represent history itself. Cast and resized to fit together neatly, the artist is blending multiple histories into one. The artist chose the word "achronie" for the title, which means a sense of time outside of normal time—something that goes on without a clear beginning or end.

## **NARI WARD**

Born in 1963 in St. Andrew, Jamaica; lives in New York, New York

*Swing Low, 2015*

Bronze, rope

Courtesy of the artist and Lehmann Maupin, New York, Seoul, and London, and Galleria Continua, San Gimignano, Beijing, Moulins, Havana, Rome, São Paulo, Paris

Many of the works in this exhibition hold within them dichotomies of ruin and preservation, extinction and existence, past and future. Nari Ward's *Swing Low* is no exception. Here the car tire suspended by its coiled noose-like rope speaks more of lynchings than of child's play. The parts of shoes that peek out from the tire offer a counterpart to the sneakers that get slung over wires in urban neighborhoods. Instead of the mobility and freedom usually associated with cars, shoes, and walking, here the messages are more complex and darker in tone. In 2010 Ward made this work using an actual car tire and shoe parts. He then made this editioned cast version in 2015. The melancholy melody of the spiritual for which it was named metaphorically continues to echo.

## **RACHEL WHITEREAD**

Born in 1963 in Ilford, Essex, United Kingdom; lives in London,  
United Kingdom

*Black Box*, 2005

Hand-painted bronze, cast; Edition of 3

Private collection

Rachel Whiteread casts everyday objects to reveal an unexpected perspective. What was a negative space is transformed into a positive form. By casting the box's interior, the artist reveals clues to what may have been carried within. A sealed container can be mysterious, holding the potential for secrets or treasure.