

victoria helena
studio

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the artist

b. Sweden

[Polish/Croatian from US]

she/they

victoria helena is a multinational artist based in London and working internationally. Raised in a Polish Catholic working class tradition while living as an undocumented immigrant for most of their childhood, victoria helena quickly learned the profound importance of diasporic assimilation and ‘passing privilege’. This unique lived experience, further complicated by neurodivergence, queerness, and the entanglements of abuse and complex trauma, indelibly informs their multidisciplinary work as they’ve traversed varying states of powerlessness, unbelonging, and transmutation through adversity.

In addition to commissioned public artworks, victoria helena’s pieces reside in private collections across the United States, the UK, and Europe. They are an alumnus of the Royal College of Art, having earned a Masters in Sculpture with distinction in 2019. victoria helena has also participated in the 58th International Venice Biennale, been shortlisted for the prestigious Mark Tanner Sculpture Prize, and attended the coveted Benson-Sedgwick Residency. They currently work out of their studio in Haggerston.



Untitled (concrete landscape), 2022
concrete, bitumen, and charcoal on canvas
122 x 91 cm

the work

The work wrestles with the human condition at the brink of ecological, technological, and psychological event horizons. victoria helena coined the term Apocalyptic Expressionism to encapsulate their artistic practice. This involves a multi-disciplinary investigation into how we confront our own powerlessness in the face of cataclysmic events.

Discarded materials of human engineering, embedded with hollow accomplishment are reworked until they become a form a ritualistic atonement. victoria helena often works with a myriad of textures twisted and woven, metal heated and curved, alongside various found objects, transforming them into large scale installations. The patterns created by a multitude of protruding elements evoke a sense of organic unity, as if each individual component contributes to the overall formation of these living, breathing structures.

Drawings are instinctively and organically created through meditative repetitive dot work with varying densities of stippling to create a dynamic interplay between positive and negative spaces as the accumulation of countless dots coalesce into visually striking and enigmatic compositions. Inviting the viewer's eye and demanding bodily engagement to navigate the intricate pathways and voids, the viewer becomes a witness to material memory, interdependence and interconnectedness.

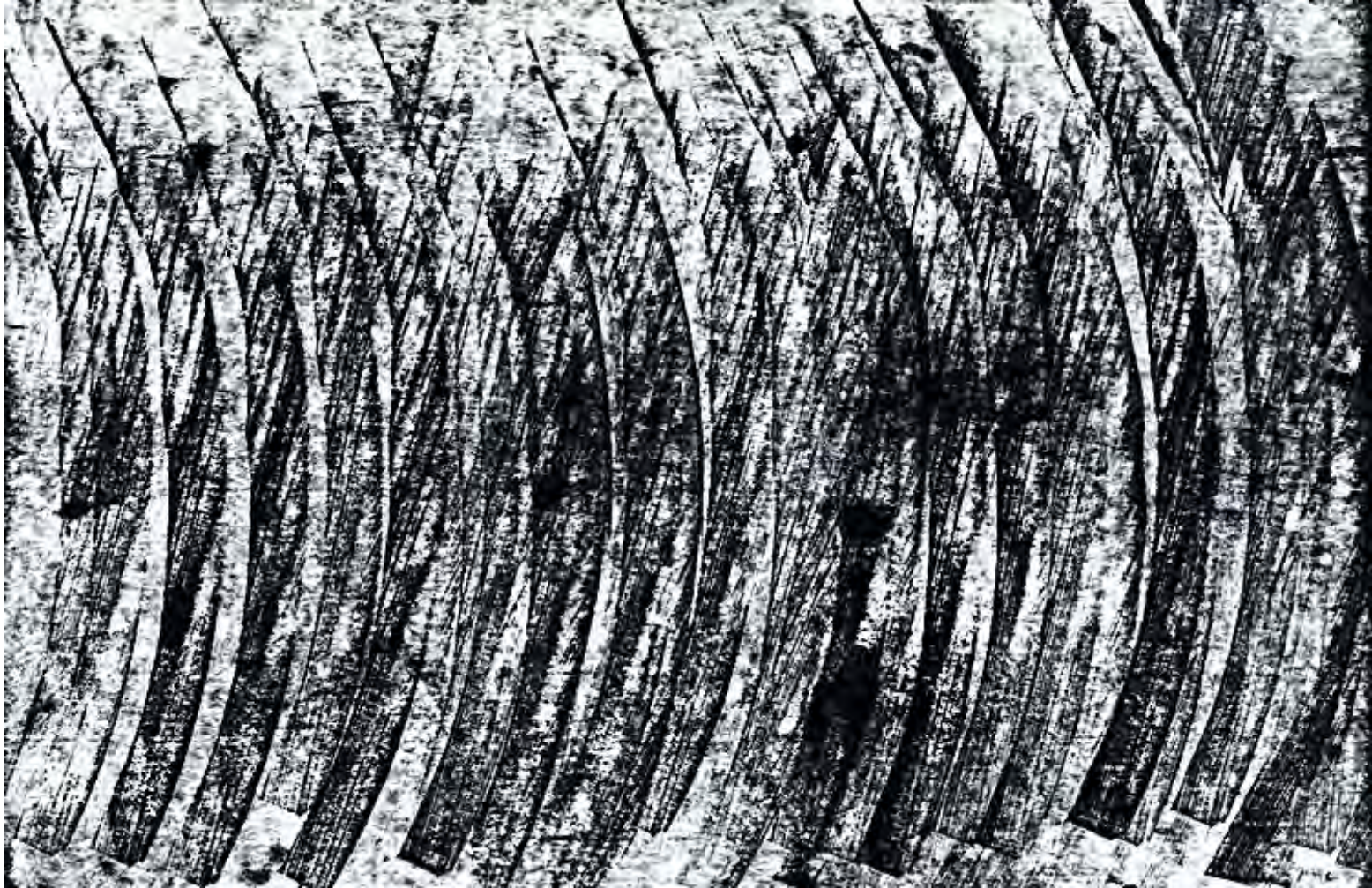
The work invites contemplation on the relationship between the microscopic and the macroscopic, the individual and the collective – as above, so below – and reminds us of this transitory truth as we grapple with these modern day event horizons. victoria helena delves into our hidden ideologies and indoctrinations, exploring how personal histories and collective futures are inextricably bound with the knowledge that our existence is only defined through our relationship to something else – where the personal meets the political and shifting states of being are inevitable.

MonoPrints

The following print series began during victoria helena's time at the Benson-Sedgwick residency. There they repurposed a discarded bumper from a street sweeper and proceeded to slice the rubber in cross-sections with a horizontal bandsaw. This created the following textures when covered in ink and pressed onto paper, creating handmade monoprints. These monoprints are then digitised to experience these textures at scale.



Intimately Mad, 2018
archival giclee print on Japanese bamboo paper
55 x 40 cm
edition of 3 and 2 APs



Rush, 2018
archival giclee print on Japanese bamboo paper
154 x 100 cm
edition of 3 and 1 AP



Rolling [triptych], 2024
archival giclee print on Japanese bamboo paper
150 x 50 cm
edition of 3 and 1 AP

Rhizomatic Amoeboids

Rhizomatic Amoeboids came about in 2023, when victoria helena suffered immense health challenges. Bedridden for months and unable to actively be in the studio, these new creatures were born out of limitation. The large scale drawing *ASASSN – 14li* measures almost 2.5 metres high and is the parent of the *Rhizomatic Amoeboid* creatures. Rendered through thousands of painstaking dots, these intricately stippled forms manifest the fundamental patterns underlying all of nature's savagely complex systems - from the births of galaxies, planets, and to life itself. Only to dissipate back into the inevitable entropic unravelling of it all - an existential metaphor for nature's constant cycling between order and chaos.



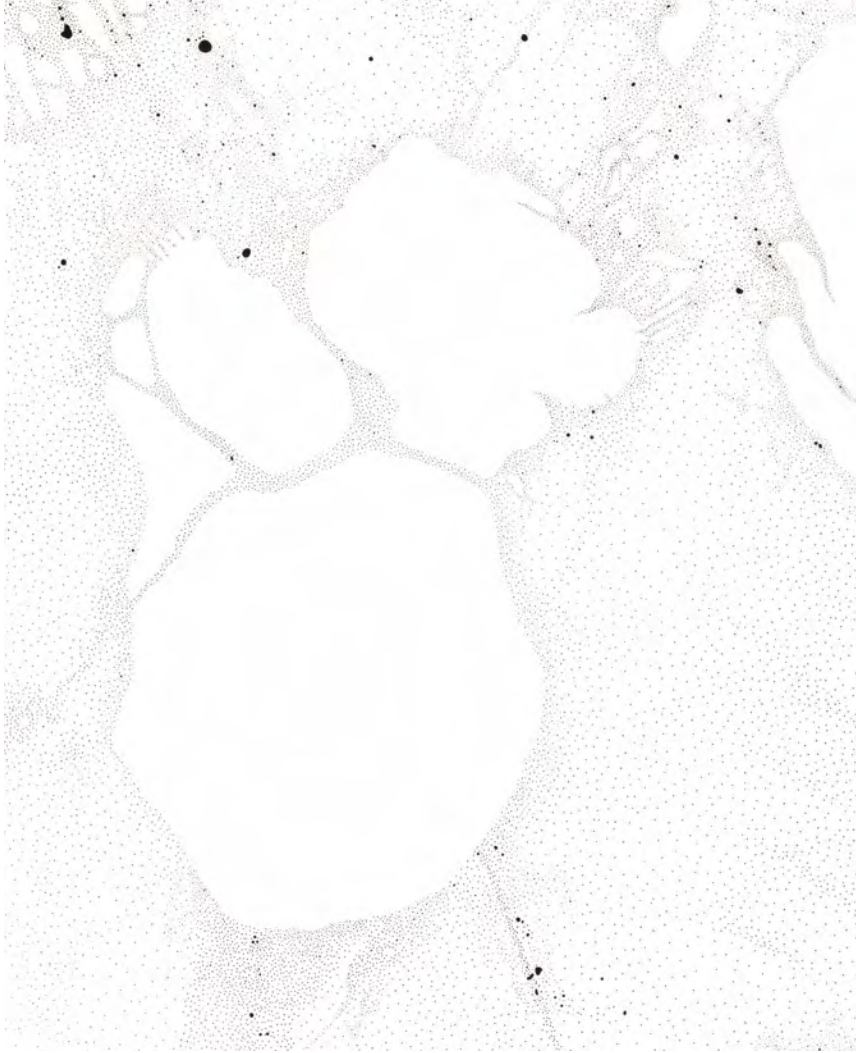
ASASSN-14li (Total Disruption Event), 2023-2024

micron pen on 200gsm Fabriano paper
230 x 150 cm

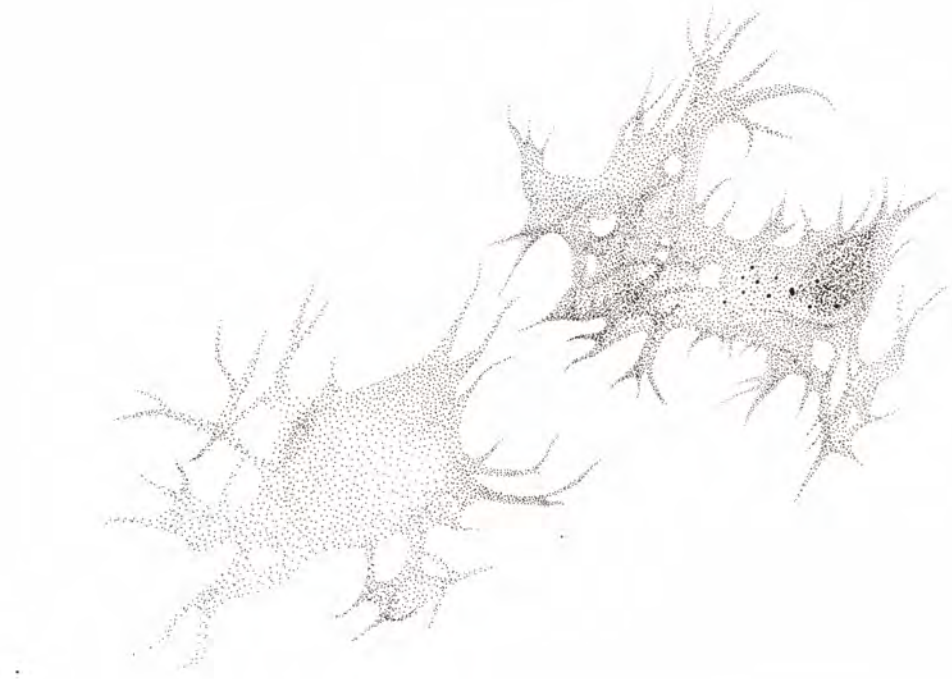
This large scale drawing takes its name from a Total Disruption Event. A TDE is when a star becomes torn apart by traveling too close to a black hole. ASASSN-14li, at the time of its discovery, was the closest and largest TDE to Earth that was ever recorded. This larger than human size drawing, made of thousands of stippled dots, evokes the fragmented chaos of an apocalyptic event horizon - where the star's individual atoms fully unbind, become swallowed up by gravity and its remaining debris is flung out across the universe, encoding the seeds of future cosmic architectures and future *Rhizomatic Amoeboids* here on Earth.



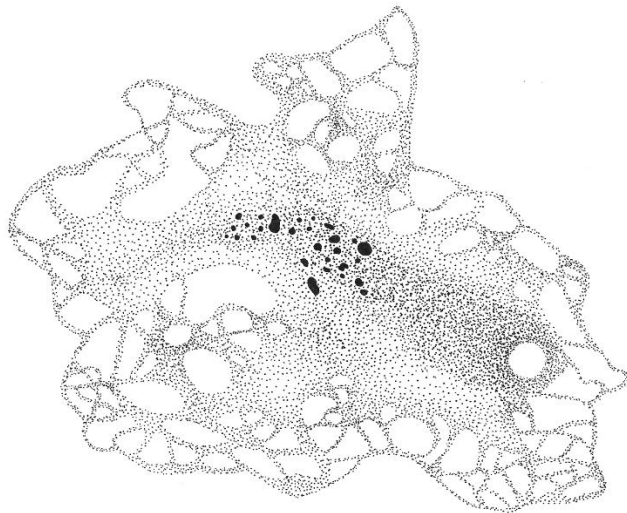
Asasn RA - 1a
archival giclee print on Japanese bamboo paper
50 x 60 cm
edition of 3 and 1 AP



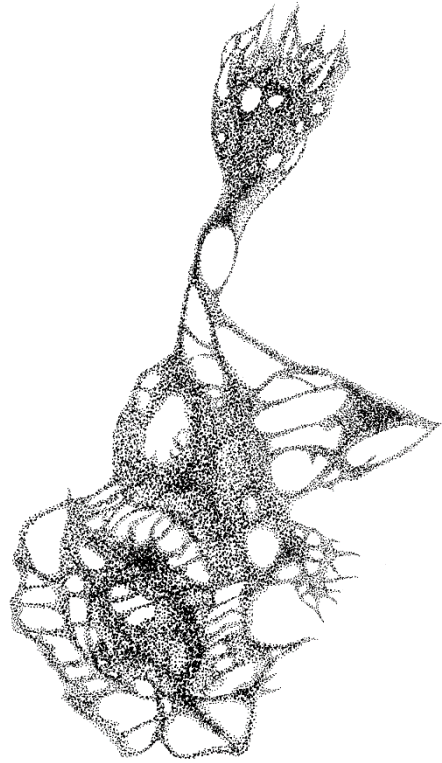
Asassn RA - 1b
archival giclee print on Japanese bamboo paper
50 x 60 cm
edition of 3 and 1 AP



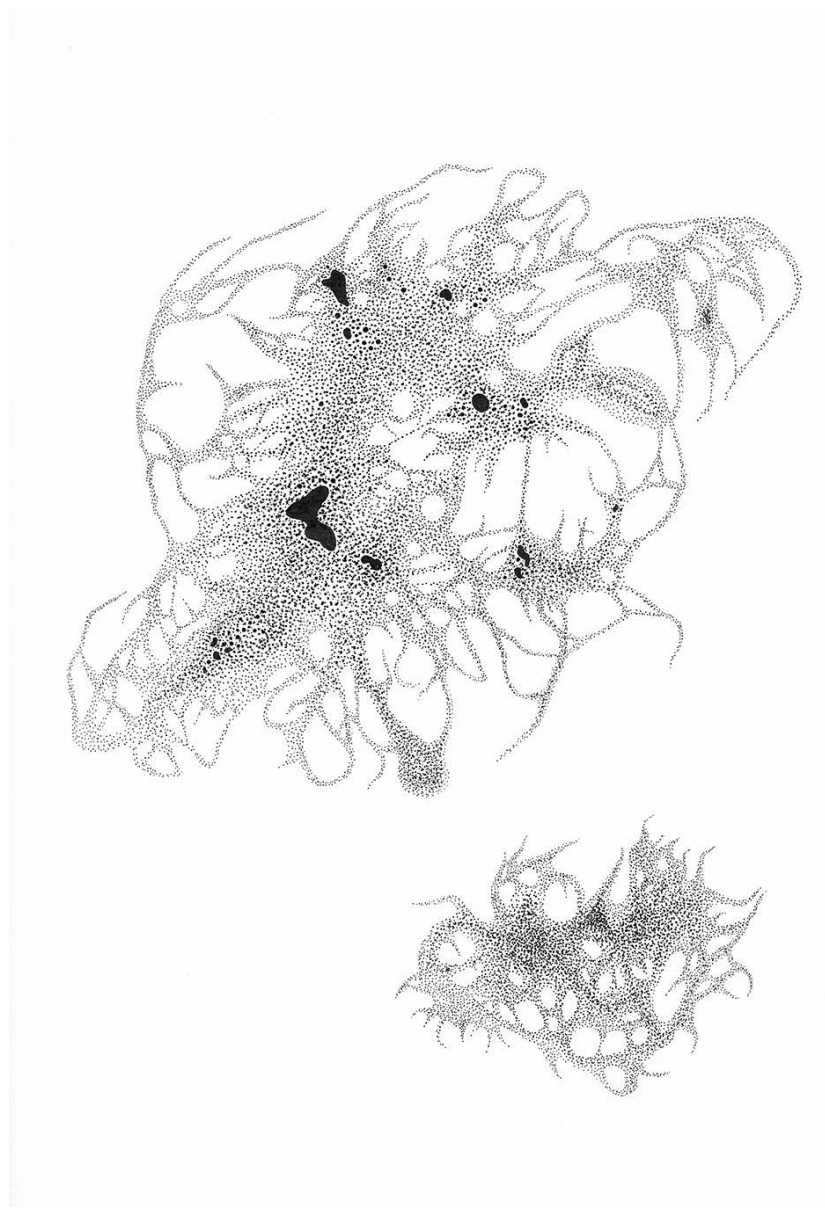
Asasn RA - 1c
archival giclee print on Japanese bamboo paper
50 x 60 cm
edition of 3 and 1 AP



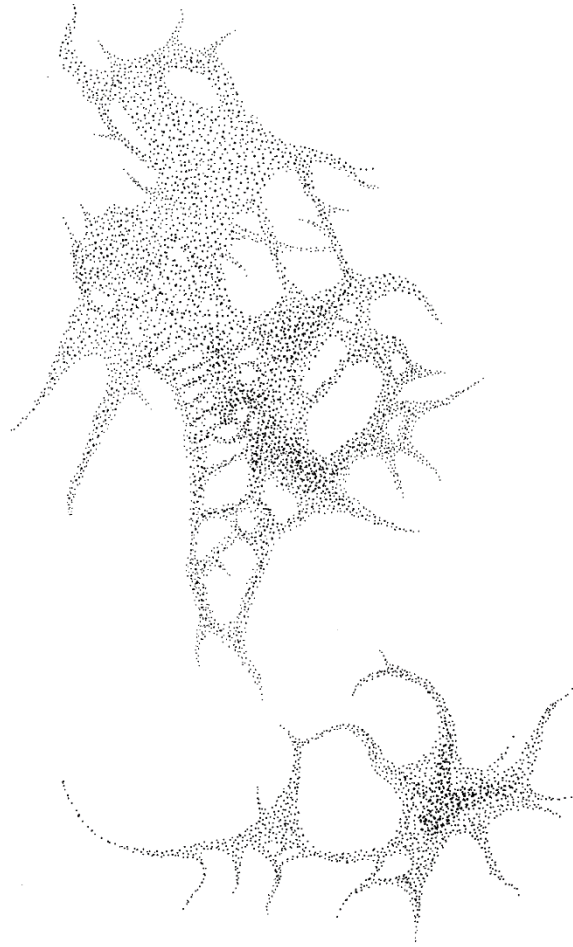
Rhizomatic Amoeboid III, 2023
archival giclee print on Japanese bamboo paper
42 x 30 cm
edition of 11 and 1 AP



Rhizomatic Amoeboid 224, 2024
archival giclee print on Japanese bamboo paper
30 x 42 cm
edition of 11 and 1 AP



Rhizomatic Amoeboid 113, 2023
archival giclee print on Japanese bamboo paper
42 x 30 cm
edition of 11 and 1 AP



Rhizomatic Amoeboid 115, 2024
archival giclee print on Japanese
bamboo paper
30 x 42 cm
edition of 11 and 1 AP

Apocalyptic Expressionism

In 2017, victoria helena relocated to London from California. Apocalyptic Expressionism is the phrase coined by victoria helena to describe the following body of work that culminated after two years in a new city and during their academic research into the study of affect and the Gothic sublime. This body of work focused on repurposing industrial materials to create pieces evoking suspense, uncertainty, and forms unseen.



an experience in perception led by the rigor of the hand, 2019
repurposed polishing rags, concrete, bitumen, wood
140 x 140 x 15 cm



an experience in perception led by the rigor of the hand
[detail]

Title is borrowed from the essay 'Revolution in the Making'
by Jenni Sorkin for Hauser & Wirth, Los Angeles



No Title, 2020

site specific installation of repurposed materials
(industrial waste bags, stage curtains, office blinds,
hemp rope, horsehair) bitumen tar, feathers, sisal,
vauxhall bridge asphalt, rubber, leather, mixed media
4m x 5m / dimensions variable

Title in homage to one of the last works made by Eva
Hesse before her untimely death.



8, 2018
rags, bitumen, steel
105 x 25 x 15 cm



Penance, 2019
repurposed textile
remnants, bitumen,
steel, rope, sticks, sisal,
mixed media
280 x 45 x 160 cm



conversatio morum, 2019

repurposed stage curtains and industrial
waste bags, bitumen tar, sisal, jesmonite,
mild steel, india ink, black iron oxide,
mixed media
210 x 160 x 70 cm

conversatio morum is one
of three monastic vows taken
by Benedictine monks and
can be loosely translated to
mean the conversion of life or
the conversion of morals.



Bird on a Wire, 2019
repurposed rubber,
copper coated steel
40 x 20 x 40 cm
Title taken from the Leonard
Cohen song of the same name

Origins

Origins was a body of work centering the refugee crisis as it increased from thousands to millions In 2015. This series involved pulling the roots of wild grasses and flowers out of the soil by hand and combining other materials to create an array of sculptures. The work culminated in a solo show where victoria helena collected mud from this field where the roots once grew, creating bricks, kiln drying and sifting the remaining soil to create a large scale three room installation spanning 2000 square feet (185 sm).



Origins 63, 2015
concrete, roots,
mixed media
109 x 109 x 107 cm

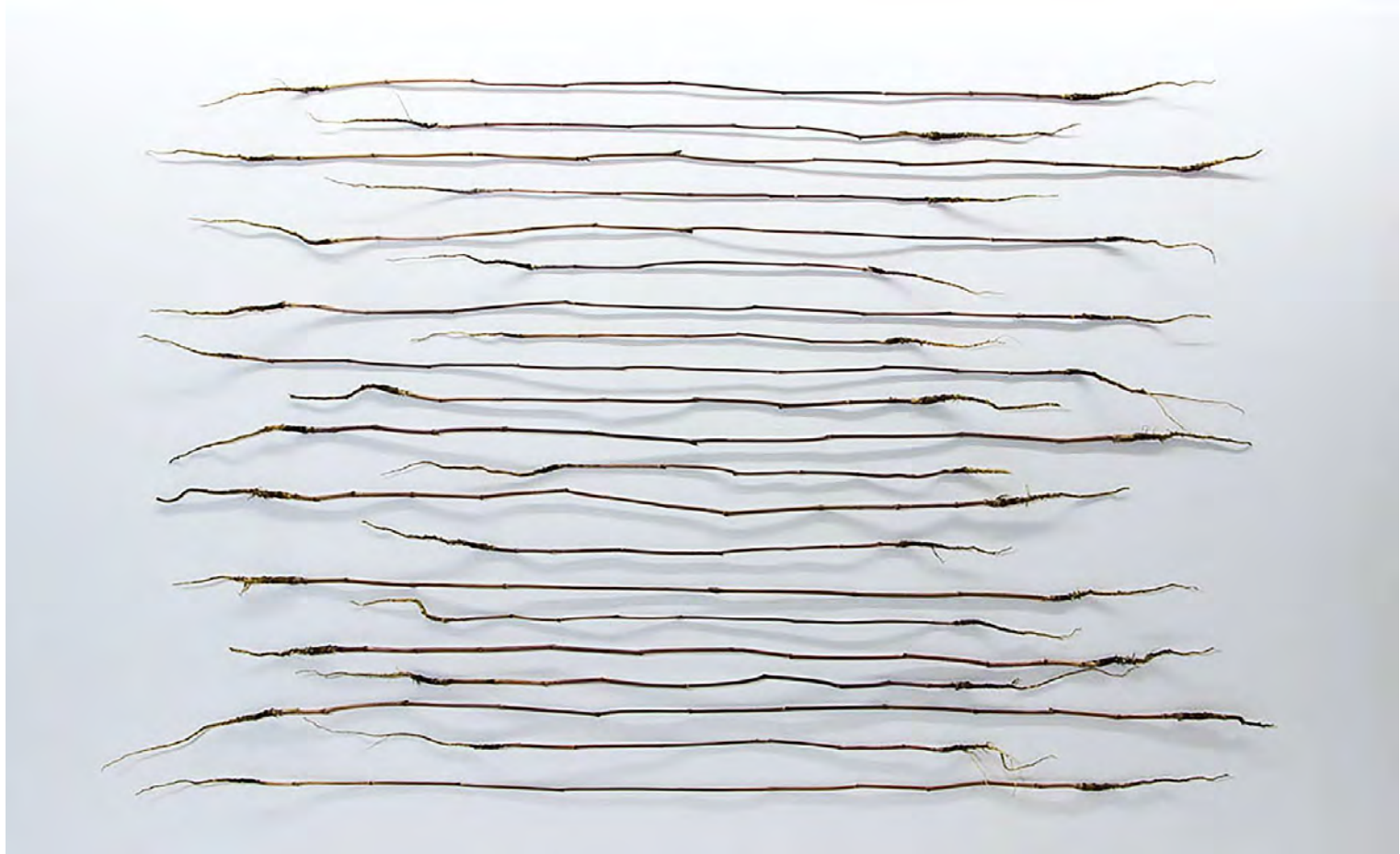


Origins 63 [detail]



Origins
[installation]





Origins 21, 2015
wildflower roots and mixed media
150 x 112 x 0.6 cm

Metal

An artist is often defined by their way of working and their chosen materials. victoria helena's first sculpture was an aluminum sand casting of a bodice that they wove out of discarded packing material. Forming, welding, and casting metal was the beginning and will always be the foundation of their artistic practice.

Monolith 16.9.3

At the time of the fabrication of *Monolith 16.9.3*, 1 in every 108 U.S. Americans was in prison. It cost the state of California over \$70,000 a year to keep an inmate in what are known as SuperMax prisons. Meanwhile, the California University system had as little as \$6500 per student in funding. *Monolith 16.9.3* was a site specific public work placed on a California University campus bringing awareness to this failure of the social contract. Fashioned after a prison cell door, at 6 feet wide and 9 feet high, the monolith imposes itself upon the viewer without sanction. Rather than a completely solid form, victoria helena created two apertures of 3.5 feet by 4 inches to encourage the viewer to ponder on the lack of light and isolation faced by the thousands incarcerated in the United States. The work was placed East to West to create a shadow of 8 feet twice a day to outline the floor size of a prison cell. The sculpture was placed so that the California flag down field would be seen through the vertical aperture.

At the end of 2023, the United States had the highest number of incarcerated individuals worldwide, with almost 1.8 million people in prison. Rehabilitation services in prisons were drastically cut in the 1980s, while Special Housing Units, referred to as SuperMax prisons for solitary confinement increased. Some prisoners have been in solitary confinement for over a decade and others up to 25 years without human contact. Juveniles are also being placed in solitary, many that have disabilities, both physical and/or mental. Prisoners suffer severe mental trauma and are given no rehabilitation or transition services in these for profit establishments.



Monolith 16.9.3, 2015
mild steel
290 x 125 x 10 cm



Monolith 16.9.3 [in situ 2024]



Monolith 16.9.3 [flag detail]



Spark 9.12.15

On September 12, 2015, a small spark started in a garden shed. Within a few hours, this spark turned into flames that spread to 60 miles overnight. These flames soon engulfed much of the landscape and became the third most damaging wildfire in California history. With injured firefighters, four casualties and thousands left homeless, the Valley Fire impacted many friends, family and residents in the surrounding cities and counties. Hearts and homes opened up to those in need in vast numbers.

Municipalities banded together to help ease as much devastation as possible. Those who were able to help in any way did so.

Spark 9.12.15, commemorates those who volunteered their time, goods, and services to so many in the most dire time of their lives. It was with a single spark that such a tragedy occurred. Conversely, it is the spark of humanity that we all share that encourages us to band together and help those in times of crises.

Spark 9.12.15, 2015-2017
reclaimed corten steel
297 x 137 x 137 cm



Braid is a work that references the *Grande Odalisque* by Ingres, critiquing the ubiquity of the female nude across the Eurocentric canon of art history, as well as biblical and Graeco-Roman attempts to curtail women's adornment and subjugate their status by forbidding braids. Today the cutting of one's hair and wearing braids is often used as a right of passage, identity, a rebellion, or a fresh start.



Braid, 2016
cast bronze on slate
20 x 25 x 25 cm



When Worlds Collide, 2018
polished stainless steel and
bronze
20 x 20 x 25 cm



Maternity Wear, 2012
cast aluminum
71 x 48 x 23 cm

Education

Master of Fine Art, Sculpture, Royal College of Art, 2019 (distinction)
Bachelor of Studio Art, Sculpture, minor in Women's and
Gender Studies, Sonoma State University, 2016

Public Art

2017
Spark 9.12.15 Lagunitas Brewing Company. Petaluma, California
2016
COMMENCE: Monolith 16.9.3 (now in private collection) Rohnert
Park, California

Exhibitions

2024
Every Breath We Take, Subterania, London
2023
Losing Your Ears, WappArt, London
Connected and Protected, SKT Spaces, London
2021
PlusOne, Penthouse PopUp Angel, London
2020
The Co19 Project, creator, online
Mars & Beyond, OXO Tower Bargehouse, London
2019
Nasty Women Team Femke, De Balie, Amsterdam
Wording Concluding Seminar, Exhibition Laboratory,
Helsinki
Wording, Research Pavilion 58th International Venice Biennale,
Sala del Camino, Giudecca, Venice
The Muse Summer Group Show 2019, The Muse
Gallery, London
Love Stories, ArtNumber23 Gallery, London
Teaser, Courtyard Gallery, London
Cross My Heart, ECA Sculpture Court, Edinburgh

Critical Matter, Dyson Gallery, London
Petting Zoo, Hockney Gallery, London
Riposte London Launch, Riposte Gallery, London
2018
In Plane Site, Hockney Gallery, London Darwinism, Royal College
of Art, London
Sleep and the Unconscious, Savoir Beds, London SuperCult,
Hockney Gallery, London
2017
The New Darkroom, Dyson Gallery, London
theNeuwPolitic: Artists Explore A Juried Regional Competition,
Petaluma Arts Center, California
Nasty Women Amsterdam, Josilda da Conceição Gallery,
Amsterdam, The Netherlands
SNAP!, Arc Gallery, San Francisco, California
2016
Origins (solo show), Sonoma State University Art Gallery, Rohnert
Park, California
Vision: An Artist's Perspective. Kaleid Gallery, San Jose, California
Sonoma State University Juried Student Exhibition. Sonoma State
University Art Gallery, Rohnert Park, California
What's Right, What's Left: Democracy in America. Phoenix Gallery,
Chelsea, New York
2015
Sonoma State University Juried Student Exhibition. Sonoma State
University Art Gallery, Rohnert Park, California
Figuratively Speaking. Sonoma State University Library Gallery,
Rohnert Park, California

Relevant Experience

2024-2019

Finance Director, Random International, London, Berlin, Stockholm

2019

Visiting Lecturer, Edinburgh College of Art, Edinburgh, Scotland

2018

Visiting Lecturer, University of Westminster, London, England

2011

Market Street Blooms, Black Rock Arts Foundation and San Francisco Arts Commission, Union Square, San Francisco, California

Awards and Residencies

Mark Tanner Sculpture Award Short List

Benson-Sedgwick Engineering AiR programme, London

theNeuwPolitic Best In Show Prize

Steve Norwick Memorial Research Grant

Press

The Collective 2020. New Faces. Decision Makers. Trailblazers,

WorkInFashion Magazine. Dec 2019

Contemporary Visual Art Zine,

2nd Issue (cover). October 2017

Gauss, Daniel, "Democracy in America?"

Group Show Curated by

Gutfreund Cornett Art, New York, USA" *Wall*

Street International

Magazine, February 3, 2016

Meg McConahey, "Public art display at Sonoma State University",

The Press Democrat, May 4, 2015

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