

2024 VISITING FACULTY LECTURE, June 28, 2024

Ruth Estévez: [with white screen behind her] The silence of the grave. [switches slide] The liquid death of a secret [WORD UNCLEAR]. [switches slide] The sounds raise its lonely embrace [WORD UNCLEAR]. [switches slide] Touching what is not credited for your hands. [switches slide] Realizing that footprints are movements that overlap with many other movements. [switches slide] Being able to work over what has been worked. [switches slide] The opportunity to experience a glimpse of what has been seen by other eyes. [switches slide] The art of interpreting a mythical image. [switches slide] The satisfaction of verifying the unknown. [switches slide] The absolute joy of finding. [switches slide] Giving life to a language that no one knows how to speak anymore. [switches slide] Recreating a moment that was not meant to happen more than once. [switches slide] Greeting your bones for deeply understand who you really are. [switches slide] The hard work of creating a useful template. [switches slide] The pleasure of exhibiting. [switches slide] The recognition that comes with knowing. [switches slide] The power of rewriting history. [switches slide] The peacefulness of keeping things in a safe place. [switches slide] The silence of a museum storage. [screen goes dark]

So, it is with great pleasure and immense joy that I would like to welcome amazing artist, but even better friend, Gala Porras-Kim. [applause, cheering] [CV slide appears]

Gala Porras-Kim Whoa, I am stunned. [laughter] Thank you. Wait, [WORD UNCLEAR]. [laughter]

Well, I am very grateful for all of you to come and hear me share some of my projects, and so I am also very excited to be here to see Ruth's first cohort, and relive some of the moments myself, when I was a resident, but from the other side.

I wanted to, I rearranged the presentation kind of to show works that happened around the time I was here, just to kind of see where some of the roots of the current projects come from. There's like a trajectory, because I remember when I was here, I came right after grad school, and I had no idea what I was gonna do, or even if I knew how to make art, and so I did a lot of sketches.

[switches slide] I made this drawing here, it's called *What the sun looks like with your eyes closed*. And I remember it was after seeing Paul Pfeiffer lecture, and there was a lot of sunset theme in the class, the year, and so I made this, and kind of, you know, its those kinds of works that you never think that they're actual works, they're just kind of in the studio, in the corner, so this actually was in my house for a very long time as like a postcard of the time I was here, and only recently did it actually, in my mind, become an actual work that was exhibited. But I'll show that part when we get to more contemporary time. [laughs]

[switches slide] Then, this is the first project I made after I finished Skowhegan. So when I came here, I was about to start another MA program right after, because I wanted to set up a structure in which to make these, like, very long research projects, but I wasn't able

to do it without some sort of external infrastructure, so I thought that I needed to go back to school to have the container of time in order to, like, make me accountable to both finish this project.

And so the, the project is, essentially, that I worked for an architect at the time that I came to Skowhegan, and I worked with a lot of people from Oaxaca, in LA it's a very large Oaxacan population, and I had a lot of friends, and that spoke in Zapotec to each other, and I was really jealous, because they sometimes used to whistle to each other when we were at work, and I thought that they were just potentially talking shit, so [laughter] I was like, how do I whistle? How would I be able to get in on it, and get in on the joke? Which, I fact checked, it was not a joke, but [laughter] – and so I thought, okay, to be able to do that, I need to learn Zapotec, and then learn how to whistle, and then would be able to do that. And so I actually applied to the Latin American Studies department at UCLA, because it said it was very interdisciplinary, and so I actually applied with my artworks, and I say, I'm an artist, how interdisciplinary are you? [laughter] Because I want to make this whistle translation of spoken Zapotec.

And so I spent two years making this LP that is a translated version of spoken Zapotec into its whistled form. And you can [audio plays 00:06:12 – 00:06:40] During that time, I actually, you know, Zapotec is a tonal language that has just recently been written, and so I actually worked with this amazing teacher, who the Mexican government charged to figure out how to spell all the words of his variant, and so just to be able to watch how a person can decide how the shape, the formal shape of language actually takes place in a paper, it felt like such a drawing process to me, because, you know, the, the source was like a mouth and ear transaction, but now it was turning into like a paper, hand, and eyeball type of relationship, and so it really was actually changing the entirety of the personality of the specific thing, so that's what kind of the, the side, besides the artworks that ended up come, resulting in this thing, the, the actual academic paper and research was about how to represent a tonal language in its written form as well. And so, for example, there was the question, why use the Latin alphabet? Or why not use some sort of no, notation, musical notation? Or, what is the difference between like a [make guttural sound] and a [make stronger guttural sound] in spelling? And so these were challenges that was very interesting, and I still don't know how he decided, because the tests were very complicated. But, that's kind of the, the, the way that I have continued to make work since then.

And so I've always tried to maintain a sort of parallel work practice, in which I make the studio works that result from some sort of, like, really long academic project. My parents are both academics, so I feel like it's, you know, I've been in the archive since I was born, and so, but, thinking about other issues through how contemporary interpretations of history actually might sometimes actually come into conflict with an original version that we might not even be able to access anymore. No?

The next project – I'm not sure if it's this – it's a weird timeline, so it's not the literal next project, but the next project I'm gonna talk about. [switches slide] And so then I was looking at the last time that some of these texts were written, and so these an undeciphered stela, this is an undeciphered stela that was found at the bottom of the Papaloapan River,

and I really loved this stone, because one of my, like, sources, I mean, I call them sources, but they're like people that I, academics that I have made, that I have asked to fact check a lot of the things that I don't know, and so this, he's, Matthew Robb, he's an expert in Teotihuacán, but he's always like looking out for weird stuff that, cause he was like, do you know about the Mojarra stela, and then I fell in a hole for about a couple of years, looking at the stone.

And so the way that the stone was actually found was really amazing: it was a fisherman that was in Papaloapan, and he just felt like a really soft, smooth stone in the bottom of the river, and then they pulled out like the most amazing rock [switches slide] ever. (00:10:11) That has like one of these like texts that are undeciphered now, and so there has been, like, a, in the past, maybe forty years, different people who have been very, very certain about the, that they have found the meaning of the stone, and so I really liked how the, the sort of reassured version that's conflicted with each of their own versions, no? And so, when, it was in the like *Science* magazine, and if you read the like follow-ups, they like, how academics fight politely [laughter] is actually very interesting. You're like, well, I'm so sure that I know, and then the other one will be like, the question about it, and so it, you know, because when, when you see a lot of these texts, it feels like really factual, like there's only one version, and to see it actually not be stable in terms of, like, right or wrong was very interesting to me.

[switches slide] And so I made this project, which was three different ways of accessing the text of this Mojarra. Number one is – I also make mostly very large drawings, cause I like making drawings. [laughs] And also drawing as a medium is not like, it, it has existed in multiple, like, fields, not only in capital A art, but it's also thinking about, like, a draft, or, you know, architectural drawings, or sketches, or even like hand writing notes in a notebook, and so, so this is a to scale drawing, and the box in front – I wish I had a laser pointer. Do you have a laser pointer? No.

This box in front of it, like, that thing, is these like sheets of plexiglass that have the, the text of the stone all subdivided by shapes, and so if you pull one out, you can actually align it, and see all of the circles in the rock, or all of the squares, or all of the faces, or all of the, I can't remember the other one, but, five different of them.

The second, the central one was one that was based on obsidian mirrors, and so obsidian mirrors were used for divination, to learn something about that one might not be able to access anymore, and so I made this fully graphite mirror, because, I mean the, it doesn't photograph, but if you stand in front of it, it's actually reflective. That, and then the shape in front of it is the shape of the Mojarra with all of the damaged parts carved out, and so I was thinking about, like, we are looking at it looking at this mirror, trying to find the missing parts.

And then the third one is this one that is made with glass bead, and so it actually, when you see it in person, you can't actually see any of the text in the backdrop, and so it only depends on how, how it's lit, that the text illuminates. And the structure part in front of it is this, like, I went to the dentist office, and you know those like oil things that you have

in the waiting room? And so I made one that has all of the characters inside, and their, the disc rotates, and so it's making all these incidental conjugations that you can see through the, in relationship to the text, and so it has a light, and they reflect. Actually, somebody told me that they, the moment that they saw it, that some of the characters had aligned with the background, and so I was hoping that that might have happened for some things, for someone. But I also thought that it was, the, the randomness of gravity could also make this, you know like, what is that when you make the writing that is – automatic writing. So that's that work.

[switches slide] This is the Papaloapan, where [switches slide] this was found.
[switches slide]

[switches slide] So then I got stuck in like thinking about rivers a lot, and I made this proposal to make a [switches slide] underwater video of this to, because I was thinking about, you know, the Papaloapan is kind of a very polluted river, and I was thinking about the flat stone, and the text is so [switches slide] etched so lightly here [switches slide] that the acid of the river would slowly be etching the surface of the rock, and at some point, it was kind of like natural reclaiming the stone material from human intervention back to being just a regular rock. And I wondered what other rocks might have been a potential amazing Mojarra, but they're just like a straight-up rock. And so that's kind of thinking about how, you know, when, when the site of contemporary life, and like, ancient life collide, it just so happened that this fisherman found that one, and not another one. And how maybe in the bottom there's still rocks being etched all the time.

[video plays 00:15:22 – 00:16:09] There's no sound, but. I don't really know how to make videos, so they're kinda like just this for a long time. [laughter] That's so funny. This was just the, a test, so the way that this was director's cut made was that I filled the bathtub in my house with all of these stones from the specific location of this Mojarra, and then did it with a GoPro.

[switches slide] And so, I wanted to show this type of projects that I have been making, that are these letters to different institutions. This was one of the first ones that I made, and it was again thinking about the conflict between what, what I wanted to look for were objects in antiqui, in the past, where it's supposed to do a function forever. And so like, forever includes today, and so what happens when the presentation of the site doesn't actually account for the ongoing function of these objects that are still doing their thing, no? And so, with Matthew, cause he made a show of new finds of Teotihuacan in 2017, cause they scanned the pyr, the pyramid of the site, with LiDAR. And so LiDAR is this thing where you don't even have to open things, cause it's, it shoots a laser and bounces back all the chemical compositions of things. And so, in 20, in the early 2000s, they found the Pyramid of the Sun, the top had a chamber that nobody had found, and it had to be scanned to be found. And it was compacted with dirt, and they found these two stones at the top, and then they, they took them out, and I saw them in this exhibition for the first time. And I wondered whether, what could happen if, you know, this pyramid, which is a ritual site, somebody back in the day took a lot of energy to put these stones at the top of the pyramid, and packed it all in with no door or window, it had to be found by LiDAR. And what might

be the disturbance that happens by taking it out? And so the, the objects that you see is a, it's a replica of the stones, and so I actually made a proposal to the, the Mexican government, to, that I would donate the stones for them to refill the cavities that the original ones left. Because they had reconstruc, reconstructed the outside of the pyramid for, like, tourism – actually Teotihuacan is amazing because they have, like, some parts of it were reconstructed by like a French architect, and so there's like these French style steps in one side, and so I was thinking that – and the letter also explains what I'm saying, essentially that, you know, they, the, the stones are made to refill the cavity for the, because the tourism part is, the people tourists are well accounted for, and maybe we should think about a potential non-human audience that also might be wanting to experience the site, or close to it. And I want you to think about these types of disturbances.

And at, around this time I actually started making these, this full graphite, again, not necessarily like based on obsidian mirror anymore, but I was thinking about sites that were not made for human perception, like the, like the inside chamber of the top of the pyramid, and so the, I don't remember the actual name of this thing, but it was like the ludicrous [?] pyramid top, something something, the actual name that the museum had given the site, and then it's just not – so I think of them as photorealistic drawings, just not made for us to actually perceive.

And so this letter was made for the audience to be able to sort of understand, because I'm like, I don't want to show, like, one hundred emails that I had with Ina [?] to try to coordinate the whole project, so I have to make a, some version that people who, once these objects become front of the house artwork, might be able to understand the entire thing, cause I, like, if you see the stelas by itself, you have no idea what it is, you know? (00:20:21) And so I wanted to have more tool to be able to show audience. Which I continue to do, so now I think that there's five or six of them that, if you read them, back to back, they're essentially the same letter, with a different site and a different issue and a different resolution. Not resolution, but proposal. Potential resolution.

[switches slide] [coughs] Then I was thinking about, in collections, what is like a really simple way of understanding this conflict between an original function and its sort of representation today, and I really like reading a lot about the law, and, and I was reading about different countries, I think I ordered another [WORD UNCLEAR], but the question was how old does a cadaver have to be to become an artifact, because it changes in every country. And so, it was interesting to see how policy changes the taxonomy of the same object, and then you can be someone's recently dead family member, and then one year later, be an owned artifact of antiquity in a museum. And so, this was major in COVID, the Gwangju National Museum, they had this display of a shipwreck that had these pottery vessels with, that were grave sites, and so I just asked the, the curator if the body was still in the display, in the ceramic, and they said that they took it out and put it in this box. And so, they sent me [video plays 00:22:10 – 00:22:32] this video during COVID – maybe it's too slow. No, it's okay. Oh, no! [laughter] Okay, well, privacy. [laughter] But [switches slide] but the, [switches slide] the way that it was stored was by size, and so it was not a skeletal person shape, but it was organized by limb, bone size. It was beautiful, but, formally beautiful, but it was like leg bone next to arm bone, by size.

And so our [switches slide] the, the project that we did was to try and figure out where this dead person would rather be, other than in the collection. And so, of course, I don't know how to contact the afterlife, and so we tried, we were, you know, workshopping whether it would be like a shaman who might know how to do that, and then we came to the resolution that this person was around probably before any of the cultures that we know today, and so, at that point, it became something about, like, okay, so I know how to make art, and it, and so I would like to find a process in the production of making a work in which I can't control the entirety of the image, and so there, so to open a gap in the decision making process, in which something else can decide the outcome.

And so, I started looking at these paper marbling process where we made a giant pool in my studio, and then it's basically, you know inside of books, like they, you, they, the ink, oily ink is suspended on the surface, and then we just left it there for a minute, and then we made a print, at any undetermined time. And so, the, so there, it, it's sort of a collaboration between choices that I made of dimension and, like, color, and probably time that it left, that it was left there, but the pattern itself, I don't know how that happened. And so I was thinking more like winter home, summer home. Who knows, no? And so, at the time, the, the version of this that didn't end up making it was that I at the time was doing this fellowship at Harvard at the Radcliffe Institute, and I had access to figure out, you know, like, they can scan all of the locations on earth, and you can, and I was like, oh, maybe we can actually find where this pattern exists, but then, I scrapped that version, because we actually don't need to know, and it could be in someplace in outer space, or in another dimension in which we are not aware of, no? And [switches slide] – oh, there it is, so it's by size.

[switches slide] So we installed it during COVID, and it's kind of like a screen, and the, the rest of the display behind it is tools that are used to communicate with the afterlife. [switches slide]

[switches slide] Here's the letter. Very similar. It's more like the en, to, to encourage, or to think about the people in her collection, to plan for future dead people, who is all of us, and how we might not want to be that catalogued.

[switches slide] So, at the same time, basically, I was stuck in like a same zone, so I wanted to show, I show these back to back because they happened in the very same time, and so they're a similar conceptual framework, but different manifestation. And so, somebody sent me this newspaper article, cause of course the National Museum of Brazil caught on fire in 2018, and they held the, like, most amazing collection of [clears throat] objects from all over Latin America, including Luzia, the oldest mummified person of the Americas. But the newspaper article was essentially that twenty percent of her body caught on fire, but they had recovered eighty percent, and they were trying to put her back together. And so, I [switches slide] oh this is part of the, like, parts that they recovered.

[switches slide] And I made this work called *Leaving the Institution Through Cremation is Easier than as a Result of Deaccession Policy*. Which is a napkin that has ash

collected after the fire, and it comes with a letter essentially explaining that this is the closest to a cinerary urn that this person has. The, the reason of the fire is still undetermined, and so I was actually thinking about, like, escaping the museum through the fire, and that potentially they could burn the other eighty percent to join the twenty percent that left.

[switches slide] Yes, that would be – then I would like to propose incinerating the rest of her remains, because when you let go of the shape you think she should be as an object, she will return to her life as a corpse once again. And so, it follows the same sort of three paragraph structure [laughs] - [switches slide] and, of course, the letters get sent. And then, I actually, I'm making an addition to these works because it, I'm trying to figure out how they get automatically resent once the director changes, because it's not about the particular person, but the new person will be a new letter, or something, you know, so I don't know how to set that up, but, tech questions.

[switches slide] So, during my time at the Radcliffe, I went to do this project with the, about the sacred cenote Chichén Itzá. Because the cenote was actually dredged in the early 1900s by this man Edward Thompson, who was funded by Harvard to be a, a, part of the gov – I think he was a consul or something there? And he kind of was the prototype for Indiana Jones, and he spent a lot of time in Chichén Itzá, and he dredged this sacred cenote, and so the way that I got interested in this project was because I was looking at the law and policy again, and because Edward Thomps – ugh, not Edward, Thompson bought the land where Chichén Itzá is located, and there were manmade temples, and naturally occurring sacred sites. And the temple, the manmade structures were actually protected, and they couldn't be opened, but the naturally occurring features were able to be excavated because they were not manmade. And so this sacred cenote, which was the, the sacred donation pit for the Mayan rain god, Chaac had a lot of objects that were taken out, which wound up at the Peabody, at Harvard. (00:30:06)

And so [switches slide] this is a picture of, one of the many type of structures that they used to, to dredge. [switches slide] [switches slide] And so, I was interested in also just following the policy of all of the legal steps that went into moving this material from this site into this other site. But also, as we were reading, it was like, there were a lot of letters in the archive, and just reading for like water references, any sort of rain reference, so it's, it's kind of, trying to find the other stakeholders of this event, and site, and kind of understanding what the history and story would be from each of the independent perspectives. So Chaac, the Mayan rain god, who is legally, technically, the last owner of those, because there was an ancient Mayan who donated it to him, and – to it, I guess – and it never was supposed to transfer ownership after that, so what happens when this person takes it out, and then moves it there. Can there be a legal case on behalf of the rain?

[switches slide] And so many of the projects that I make, I begin by drawing the literal catalogue of the collection, because through the, because I need some sort of, like, time – this takes a very long time to make, and so while I'm drawing them, it gives me time to think and read through the other parts of the projects. And so this is a literal representation of the objects from the catalogue of the Peabody, [switches slide] so for

example [switches slide] – and you can see so many, you can learn so much just from the drawing of it, cause [switches slide] for example, that, that, I wouldn't say that they're typos, but somehow, like, oversights, where people, when someone in the institution says, oh, but obviously everybody knows that this is not the case, so we don't have to document it, then generations later, that sort of real obvious information gets lost and becomes incorporated into the actual policy, no? And so for example, these – ugh, there's no laser pointer. There's like a Peruvian Moche ceramic, but the tiger giving monkey a hickey, that got photographed next to these Chichén Itzá objects, and so it somehow became part of the collection by being photographed together. Same with this black one. And so, also, you can see that, like, the big copal blobs – like copal is a tree sap resin – if it went from inches to centimeter, and there's a tiny change in the dimension, then it blows up. And so, [switches slide] what – oh here's a, sorry, I'm like pointing as there's a close-up. [laughs] [switches slide] [switches slide] So I was interested in, like, how, because of conservation, you know, they, someone has glued all of these little fragments together, and so now they're existing in a new singular shape that contains all of these bead, or jade particles. Not particles, fragments.

[switches slide] Oh yes. [switches slide] Tons, tons of them. So these are like kind of these groupings that someone has made, I think, formally, but I was thinking, I like to think in the point of view of the object would be like, just because I look like you, bead, why are we stuck now together in the same object shape? And so it's making a conjoined body out of this multiple individual stories, no?

[switches slide] Also, what I like about this one is that the, the gold discs – so, while I was at the Getty, I worked, I was at the Getty Research Institute for two years during COVID, and Mary Miller, who's a Mayan scholar, told me when she saw this that the gold, these gold discs have these very delicate etchings on them, and they were crumpled up and then thrown into the cenote, but, when they got dredged, conservators flattened them out so that people could see the actual etching, so they don't exist as the actual even object that they were supposed to be. And so I, and so I really like reading all the labels on how it's presented, because it's saying that it, this is an object that was donated to, in the sacred cenote, but is not, because now it exists as an object that teaches people about the etching part of the process to make a ritual object that then was thrown into the cenote, no, so it's kind of just parsing out all of the steps.

This one has three different ceramic generations, and so all of these shards existed as broken pieces at the same time, but the three pots over there were conserved at different generations, so the first pot was put together, back together, when conservation, conservators used to fill in and try to mimic the original pattern. And the second one, they were like, well, now we don't do that anymore, so we just hold the fragments together, but we can differentiate between, so people can tell which part is new, and which part is old. And then the third version is like the, one, two, three from the side where they're like, we're gonna give a general shape, but we do not intervene into the object, no, so I was like thinking that, again, it's just because when we see them, they're just flat, the timeline of how they exist has been sort of flattened out and we see them from sort of the end, end, end result of that process.

This is 1,000 – 2,576 offerings, so these were all beads that probably arrived to a registrar's office in a box or some? Probably a box, I don't know, making it up, but I'm assuming in some container. And for practicality, they strung them together, so they wouldn't get lost, and so now they exist as a single necklace that was not an original necklace, probably. And so I was wondering, like, in the mind of a person who's stringing them, like, when do you decide how long it is, or these like, you know, does it, formal decisions that someone is actually making that will, that are a side effect of the conservation process, no?

[switches slide] Here are some bowls that, these are bowls, all held copal, which is the tree sap I was talking about. [switches slide] And so after growing so much copal, I was, it's a tree sap, and so [switches slide] [switches slide] - before I get to the copal part – then I, [switches slide], twenty-seven little offerings, because twenty-seven little bells went to the Field Museum in Chicago, and so it kind of became like this provenance project as well, where I mapped where the ones they got dredged, how they begin moving, and how people decide what goes over there, and what stays [switches slide] in a particular thing. These are two that I made, later, when I got [clears throat], it's the, during the, later, Mexico sued the Peabody to return some of the objects, and they made an exchange in which the, the Peabody returned these objects to Mexico, and then, once they arrived, the, it was only gold and jade objects, and then the jade ones got sent to Museo Palacio Canton, and the gold ones stayed in Mexico City. And so somehow, someone is making material decisions that are now, if you go see the exhibition about Chichén Itzá in Palacio Canton, you will, could think that they only offered jade objects into the cenote, no?

[switches slide] This is a, what a picture of that photograph looks like, and the kind of letters. [switches slide] And so [switches through slide] part of, so I finished making those things, and because I was asking so many questions of the registrar, the catalogue actually updated their, all of the drawings are made from the public web information of the collection, but my assistant actually refreshed the browser, [switches slide] and there was all of these fabric fragments that were uploaded all of a sudden, and so we made all of the fabric fragments as well. And so while I was thinking [switches through slides] – this is a picture of this original fabric. And so, people were actually lit on fire, and then thrown into the cenote, and so, what was interesting to me was that this was not fabric anymore, it's, it's technically burnt, billions particles of ash being held together. (00:39:56) And through reading these conservation reports, you know, Thompson is kind of freaking out in the letters, because as soon as these fabrics get taken out, they start falling apart, and so he's like what do I do, they keep falling apart, and so the, because, you know, obviously there, they had been held together in that form as a fabric because they had been submerged for so long, and not disturbed. And so as soon as they start drying out and touching air, they start falling apart, and so what I thought about as a parallel was that actually being so wet, and submerged, is what's keeping them together, and now the, in the letters, there's like light conservation that they're, that he's being taught, so some of those fabrics were actually being stored in water for a long time, because he's, they're saying that in the future maybe conservation will catch up, and then there'll be a solution on how to preserve it in

the future, and in other ways there was like, they, they glued, this conservation glue that is holding the particles together.

[switches slide] And so this actual object is, you know, billion particles of ash being held together by conservation glue, in a shape of a fabric that is not a fabric anymore. And so, [switches slide] these were the drawings, [switches slide] and so I was thinking, like, what is the smallest fragment, [switches slide] you know? Because these are a billion particles, and if it breaks, does it become two objects? Or how does that, how, can we have a billion cataloguing numbers for each one of the parts of this work? [switches slide] Questions.

See, they actually started putting them in those sets, like, when they start falling apart. [switches slide] [switches slide] So this is the set, which then, there was a new layer that got added, because I realized that this is actually a sculpture in the shape of a drawing, because the MOMA bought this works, and they have a very specific conservation questionnaire about what I wanted to, how I wanted to be conserved if it ever gets damaged, no? And so then I realized that the, the drawings are actually billion particles of carbon and graphite on top of the surface of paper, in the shape of these fabrics. And so the conservation notes is that a future conservator, if this ever gets damaged, will have to re-draw the fabrics, the shape of a fabric, because then there will be like a parallel between the original conservator, who put those fabric, those particles in the shape of the fragment, of the fabric, and then a future conservator who will also put the particles of carbon in the shape of a fabric, and I was like, that will happen, hopefully. So I'm waiting for it to get damaged. [laughter]

[switches slide] [switches slide] And so, the copal. [switches slide] During COVID, I asked them, and now, keeping in mind that this, like, tiny fragment particle idea, I asked them to, if I could have the dust from the storage of the, where the collection is being held, because then I thought that that was a way in which things could leave the museum. I essentially have the entire patina of the Peabody storage in this bag, that just got shipped to my – because they did spring cleaning during COVID, and so they, you know, I got the whole collection. So I feel like I have the entire museum in particle shape.

This bag is from the Field Museum storage, as well, and so [switches slide] I made this work mixing it with copal. [switches slide] Copal is also a binder, and so I thought that the particles in the, the object that the museum has is these particles of ash being held together by conservation glue, and this object could be particles of ash being held together by a ritual glue that now, every time that it gets shown, an institution has to figure out how to get rainwater onto it, and so, it's a directions work, and it looks different every iteration, because the, the institution essentially is the one that is keeping those particles separated from the water, because they have to be stored in a very, very dry storage, but now, they have to be rehydrated somehow, no?

And so this a version, first version was this, at the São Paulo Biennial, because they made a Hans Haacke condensation cube, and they're like, we can remake that, and then put your work inside of it. And so I was like, can I get that back afterwards? So then I can have

like a pretend Hans Haacke [laughter] – I didn't, because it was a mystery why. Why! [laughs]

This second version, Ruth picked the size, [laughs] and so, and so the way that it was shown in New York was that the, the copal was made into this thing, it was mixed with the dust from the storage, and then they put a hole – not a hole, they made a structure that looked like this brand-new building in New York was leaking, because it was like the second show in this building, and it's like super fancy, and it was leaking, and I remember during the opening that there was like someone who was like, oh my god, the work is getting damaged, because the new building is, something, the water's falling on the work.

[switches slide] This is the, another version that was shown at the Radcliffe Institute at Harvard, which was one of my favorites, because they, the way that they did was like audience participation, and so they made a, a event where they took the, the institutional bonnet, is what what it's called? Like a vitrine, and then collected rainwater outside, and then people would sprinkle it, and I heard from the curator that the conservators from the Peabody came, and that they are actually the people that are in charge of keeping those other rest of the particles dry. And so there was a very interesting conversation between them and the students from the divinity school, who are also thinking about contemporary rituals with copal. This one was in the, in Mexico, at the MUAC, and so it was shown with the works about provenance. And so I've shown these works kind of in different contexts, like, the, the one in Mexico had the, a lot of information about [switches through slides] – I'm getting ahead.

This is at the Fowler, and then this one is in Korea, where they put it in a dehumidifier, or humidifier? Humidifier environment.

[switches slide] And so this is the letter that goes with that work, that is mediating with the rain. Because I thought that I was gonna make an actual lawsuit on behalf of the rain, because I was reading all of these articles about how rivers in Canada were getting rights, and how of course corporations in the US have rights, and so it is a matter of time before we can find a legal case on, for property rights for Chaac. And so, to be able to do that, I was thinking that, who knows what the rain, who can, how do we know what the rain wants? And so I was like, maybe we can have a public program with a meteorologist, or the, the people who are in charge of the site now, because now the site is part of the, it went back to being a private to now it's public.

And so it's never been, the, the projects never have a full solution, it's more like to present an idea that we collectively can massage, no? Cause I think a lot of the times people are like, thinking that I, that it should be my job to resolve it, I'm like, this is so much work already. Like, I, I'm unemployed. [laughter]

[switches slide] And so with every iteration of the, I really like to show it along with the, like, different research that, that, cause I like to have a long viewing of something, and so when, when I present, people can have the choice to have the immediate real fast version, or spend the entire time reading all of the soap opera-style letters of, like, a

hundred years of history that happened, and this was made by Ruth, as our edit together. And she made an amazing soap opera with all the characters. Very theatric, theater shape. You can see here that there's like all of the characters, and their bio, and then like what they wrote on top, and then like, one hundred years, and then there are some articles about, like, policy and, or, you know, books, and, etcetera.

[switches slide] This was at the, the version at the Radcliffe. (00:49:59) And this was more about the internal Harvard policy on the Thompson's, and the Peabody side, and so they actually made this, these chairs are the chairs that probably were used when they were sitting and making those decisions at the time.

[switches slide] Yes, this is a commercial break. And so this is, since I was in a dust moment, I was doing a site visit at the Met, and they had, they are remodeling that Rockefeller wing, and I went to, I got invited to do like a audio guide, or something, for the, the collection, and, but they were like, do you want to see, cause this room has never been deinstalled since the '80s, since it was installed in the '80s, and so I collected the first vacuum cleaner bag, after the deinstallation of it, and made this cube with some of the remain – and I was thinking about it as a fragment of time from the 1982 to 2021, and so it's an object that holds all of the particles that might have fallen from the object mixed with the audience that has been there to see those works during that timeframe. Yeah.

[switches slide] So, this is a work that I also made at the Radcliffe, called *Asymptote Towards an Ambiguous Horizon*. [switches slide] It's a series, ugh, [switches slide] you know, I was just like reading articles and you're like, well, they found this site in Turkey called Göbekli Tepe which is the, one of the oldest temples in the world, and what I liked about the article, again, was that [switches slide] the headline or the tagline was, like, we found this site that moved the Ice Age 1,000 years, because before we found this site, the Ice Age ended 11,000 years ago, but now we found this site, and it's impossible that it could have been, so nice Ice Age is 12,000 years ago. And so what I liked was how a single site could move an entire timeframe of Ice Age 1,000 years.

[switches slide] And so I made these drawings that are pictures that, that are – let me explain. [switches slide] So, it's two halves. The top half, it's a drawing series that is Göbekli Tepe site every two hours. And, because one of the interpretations of the site was that it was built to mark the time that Sirius the dog star popped out of the horizon for the first time, and I was like, I had a colleague astronomer who could fact check what the star formation was 12,000 years ago, and so we went to an observatory, and I took pictures of the star formation every two hours in the direction where Sirius is, and, what is, location? Time, and, something else. Cause, you know, the earth – he was trying to explain it to me, but science is kind of complicated with the axis of the earth, so it's changing, and then the bottom half is the site today.

And so these, I imagined the exhibition of this as like real hospital lobby, you know, like, you can't really tell what these, like, landscape drawings are, but they're like really complex once you know what it is. And so, what [switches through slides] so you can see the, the stars kind of going down as it goes, and the asymptote, I really like titles, and this,

since I made this work during COVID, the curator and I came up with this title together, or more like, he helped me figure out this title. We spent about two years talking about it. And decided that, you know, asymptote is like that math equation that, like, gets closer and closer to X axis, but never touches it, just gets closer and closer and so I imagined that the horizon, that it would, the, the sky type, part, and the bottom part, would asymptote toward this horizon, but never actually touch, because they, even though they share direction, they never share the same picture plane in the fourth dimension, cause they're in different time. Yes. [switches slide]

[switches slide] And so, I recently revisited this moment of the dredging of the cenote, because I wanted to make these, like, war drawings, I was looking at a lot of war paintings of battles, and I was imagining how the contemporary timeline could be kind of like a battle scene with the ancient timeline, and so I was, because when I found out about this dredging, this was one of the images that was so striking to me, because it was the first time that contemporary life was extracted, intervening into like an ancient timeline that was going all along at the bottom of, undisturbed at the bottom of the cenote, no? [switches slide] And so I made these sort of drawings of the moment in which the contemporary world sucks up old world into its new time. Work in progress, but, thought I would share.

[switches slide] So now, again, I was thinking a lot again about moisture, and dryness and wetness in museums and institutions, because conservators have to really keep everything very dry. And I made this work called *Forecasting signal*, it's a, this is the test first iteration of it, that was, it's essentially a work that makes another work, because I was thinking, I need to make easier work, cause these drawings take forever to make, and so I want to collaborate with something and, like, make a tool that will make a work. And so forecasting is a collaborating with the atmosphere of a room. The work is made with a dehumidifier that is collecting all of the moisture from a space, and releasing it in a tube from the ceiling that drops into this supersaturated fabric that is, supersaturated with liquid graphite, and so when the moisture, if it's more moisture, it will drop more water, and then the image at the bottom will be darker. It just depends on the atmosphere.

[switches slide] This has been made in different institutions, and so it's always been a really interesting conversation with museums, because if it's a collecting museum, you can't introduce new water into the gallery, and so, but this is existing water, and so there's like a loophole, [laughter] because the moisture is always there, whether we want to recognize it or not, not? And so – yes.

[switches slide] And I recently, this is up now, I made the, the exhibition of the signals that each one of those moisture pane, moisture kind of timeframes. So the image gets made during the run of the show. [switches slide]

[switches slide] Okay, so, thinking again about atmosphere, and [switches slide] [switches slide] this is a work that's currently on view at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Denver. As I was walking through the gallery space, they have this picture window that cracked, and I made it into a work. Which is called *Currents Through the Fissure From Controlling Nature*. And so, in Denver, the climate changes dramatically outside, like super

hot, super cold, but the museum tries to regulate the climate inside of the building all the time, and so the conflict between the temperatures made this window crack. And so [switches slide] [switches slide] so the work is actually the air that is coming through the crack, and messing with the temperature inside, and so it can't actually be controlled. So what I liked about it was, like, the, you know, the museum trying to really control nature, but the air is still coming through this crack.

[switches slide] And then, one other work that I made recently was, you know, I've been looking at a lot of, like, natural archives too. This is a site visit I did to the Ice Core Facility in Denver, where they store all of the Antarctica cores [video plays 00:59:41 – 09:53] in this government freezer. And so, I thought about this ice as a collection of, I was thinking like that's a storage, how do you catalogue all – because they're researching all of the climates, so each one of those bands is like a, a timeframe. (01:00:10) Like, younger ice and older ice through a lot of time. And, and I actually got some ice, because they deaccessioned it, and [switches slide] made this work, *Waiting for An Atmospheric Reunion, – 8,000 BC to 2024*. And so it is ice, I, I cut up one of the cores and put it in a, what is that bag called, I'm gonna forget – the kitchen, sous vide bag.

So I sous vide [switches slide] the ice, and because the work is not about the ice. That was something that I actually had to learn, cause I'm like, oh my god, this ice has not been melted in 10,000 years, I can't melt it. But, it's not about the ice, it's the air that is important, because the ice is storing the air bubbles, and that's what is actually the collection, cause I'm like, the ice is just the shelf for bubbles to land on. And so the bubbles are still here, and so there's like this like air thing that's still there. It's just a timeline.

And so, you know, the, the asymptote work actually helped me figure out how to think through this piece, because it's just a, you know, the, the, the kind of joining of an old time and a new time together, and so *Waiting for an Atmospheric Reunion* is the, the bag itself is like an institution that is keeping this old air from coming out and touching actual air today, no?

[switches slide] And so we made a performance, the, a couple of the ice get melted during the run of the show, and so, it's the actual atmospheric reunion, and so it's a public program where we watch the old bubbles of air join new, new atmosphere. It's really exciting. Looks kinda boring, but it's amazing. [laughter]

[switches slide] [switches slide] Ah. And so, parallel to that, cause I was like, I'm becoming too, like, nature something, I was making this drawing, which is a, a [switches slide] this is the first version that I made of it, *National Treasures*, in 2015. It's the North and South Korean *National Treasures*, collated. Because I wanted to learn more about Korean history, and so I thought, if I make a project in which I have to draw all of the national treasures, I will really learn a lot about Korea. And so they're collated, so it's like national treasure, South Korea national treasure #1, North Korea national treasure #1. South Korea national treasure #2, 3, 3, and so, [switches slide] what is it? Seven – I'm not good at math – eight years later I actually had the studio space and time to make the actual version that resulted from this [switches slide], [switches slide] which is this. [switches

slide] And here you can see on the first panel, like, North Korea, South Korea national treasure #1, 1, 2, 2, 3, 3, 4, 4 – so it goes all the way across [switches slide] the entire thing, because I thought that it would be like a room that goes like in a spiral, but then it just happened that we had a horizontal wall to put it, and what I, this work is essentially about generations of prac, of collecting practices, and how the, the set of this, a set gets made, because, for example, the top, the first sixty objects are all buildings because it was the set that started during the Japanese occupation, and the person assigned to make the national treasures was an architect, and so he picked all these buildings, that was the top, and then like two lines down, they probably changed generation, and then the state itself changed, because now the South Korea and North Korea, and they have different types of collecting practices that slowly, through generations and generations – wow - become further and further apart, and even the documentation as well, no? So you can begin to see the changes in collecting practice.

[switches slide] Also, some of them get demoted, and so there's the gap, because the set doesn't reset, no, so at some point, someone was like, that was not a national treasure, so [laughter] not it's just a regular treasure. [laughter] Oh! This one is great. This one has this one drawing, work of this, like, portrait of a lady. During the run of the show, the owner of it came up to me and said that that got demoted. And so [laughter] this set is already out of date.

And so the, at the bottom is every other one, because South Korea has way more national treasures.

[switches slide] And so this was shown, actually, at Leeum Museum, which owns some of these national treasures, and, oddly enough, oddly enough, the ones that they own are all in sequence, so the ones over here are kind of the ones that they have. And so, also you can begin to see that the North Korean ones are like, field of grass, with something in there. Like, I love this one that's just a hole, and you're like, what is it? Mystery.

And so at the bottom they got into, like, documents, and so, scholarly document generation. And so we spent probably three people, four people, eleven months, making this work, and my, one of my assistants, who is Italian, thinks that he can write in Chinese now, because all of these tax documents [switches slide] are in Chinese. [laughter] And we, what is that app that you like can take a picture and it Google translated it.

[switches slide] [switches slide] That's – and so we installed it in the trad, you know, the Leeum has a contemporary room, and a traditional room, and so we installed it in the side with the eleven national treasures that they had, they pulled them out.

[switches slide] I like triptychs, and so I made this work that is called *The weight of a patina of time*. And it's three different views of a dolmen. [switches slide] While I was making this work, I [switches slide] was fortunate to go be able to research in Korea, and so I went, Korea has the most dolmens in the world, and so I'm like, I want to go see these rocks. And I went, and they were used as grave markers at one point, and so the, the first panel is the dead person point of view, and then the second one is the '70s, during the '70s,

I think it's the '70s, don't fact check. Something around the '70s, UNESCO came and made it a UNESCO site, and so they stopped being categorized in, in, as graves, and they became UNESCO numbered. And so if you look closely there's like a number for each one of these stones, and so it now is a historical site, not just a grave, no? So that was more like the catalogue-y panel, and this is the, a close-up of the moss growing on it, because as I was saying, I wasn't allowed to touch it, but the moss is allowed to touch it, and grow and live in it, so it's moss city.

[switches slide] And finally, I wanted to show this last letter work, which, now I live half-time in England, so I'm working a lot with the collection of the British Museum. This is a work that is [[switches through slides] – no, I didn't put it. So it's based off of, it's about Nenkheftka, the reincarnated Egyptian person at the British Museum. I, by default, work with Egyptian, with Nenkheftka, because they left such amazing conservation notes, and so even in the labels it says what they wanted to happen now, and so I was, you know, I've been in conversation with a lot of the curators and conservators to be like, do we, do we follow actual conservation notes, no? And so this a wrap – Nenkheftka is a, you know, he, when he was living as we know, live, to be, made twelve, twelve statues of himself to make sure that he had one to come back to. And so, just in case one of them broke, he had eleven other ones, and so he had eleven insurance ones [laughter] to come back to, and so now he's working at the British Museum, teaching people about ancient Egypt every day, and so the first draft of this work, that now is actually getting realized as we speak, is that we were gonna make a lawsuit on behalf of Nenkheftka for, we found, well, I wanted it to be a labor case, but we only found a human trafficking lawyer who would write the case, and so this is a picture of, the red lines are his vitrine, and so this is a wrap for his vitrine. (01:10:10) It is an image of a museum that was around during the time that he was alive, and so, for some privacy.

[switches slide] This is also some potential conservation notes that Egyptians left, is a stela that has directions of it, and so we commissioned – directions for the afterlife. And we commissioned an Egyptologist, who makes ancient Egyptian instruments, to interpret the sound of it, and so she made this. [audio plays 01:10:48 – 01:11:37] And so there's also some, like, silent moments because the stone itself is not, it's got damage, so there's like empty sections.

[switches slide] Oh, out of order – this is Nenkheftka, and his vitrine. And so the questions was also, how come his foot didn't get conserved. And, because he, this particular limestone sculpture broke at one point, but they decided to not fix his foot, and his hand is also missing. And so, there, and in that adjacent room, there is literal directions of how he wanted to live today.

[switches slide] Another, so the letter work has to do with the, you know, as a conservation letter about potentially following this very straightforward conservation notes that they left, which, one of them was to, you know, wanted to, they built a sarcophagus that has these windows on it, and the windows are always supposed to face east. East, west, sunrise is in the east, yes. Sunrise, so they can see the sunrise from these windows.

And so the proposal is to rotate the existing sarcophagus that they have on display now. I believe it's like two hundred – I don't remember exactly the precise degrees, so the windows are actually facing east. [switches slide] That's where *What the sun looks like with your eyes closed* got installed as the sun, for the window.

[switches slide] And then, finally, I wanted to show this work that, it's Brit, it's a collaboration, again, with nature. It's, I collected spores from the storage of the British Museum, because the spores are eating the collection, so their bodies is constituted of the collection. And so, in this piece, the, called *Out of an instance of expiration comes a perennial showing*, I'm thinking about plants, so I'm trying to manifest a plant project. We see the spore, the spores grow. So, essentially, [switches slide] this is the actual British Museum collection growing in a new shape. And it's kind of like what is gonna happen anyway, it's just kind of a sped-up version of that decay. And [switches slide] this is the version that we made – so it's a [switches slide] you know, I can't control whether the spores will show up or not, they will show up, cause we made a all-you-can-eat buffet for them to come, [laughter] [switches slide] and, but, this is the Liverpool version. [switches slide] And this is beginning of the show in Seoul, and then [switches slide] towards the end.

And so the mold dies after every showing, and so that's why I thought about it like a perennial showing, like every time we see it, we see this new iteration of the collection growing.

[switches slide] Ah! The end. [applause, cheering]

Audience member Hi. Thank you so much, for your talk. So exciting to learn about it, and this last piece with the spores is really incredible. I have a question about something you said earlier in the talk. I really appreciated how much, I, I was curious about how you mention that when you send a letter to the museum, and then the head of the, the admin changes in the museum, you send another letter. So I'm curious about that choice, and I guess I'd love to hear you talk a little bit more about how you see your letters as objects in the museum, in relationship to the administration, do you know what I mean? And like –

Porras-Kim Yes.

Audience member -- do you use, like, do they have the same kind of agency, knowledge, wisdom as the histories, objects, and texts that you're working with?

Porras-Kim Um, well, they've never been re-sent yet, because most of those people are still working there, and I haven't figured out how to automate, cause I'm planning to not be around, for the works to still be able to function, without me having to do the admin of resending it. And, but I know from feedback of, you know, none of the people that I send the letter to is a surprise, because we've already had these conversations. And so the letters is just a way in which the audience can actually understand that all the, like, year process that we already had, cause I was like, I don't wanna show my Gmail, and so, a concise version will do, and so I sent the letter, and I was actually thinking, like, this is an artwork, but for

this one singular person, that letter is an actual letter. You know, because they are the receiver of the, the double time, like, it's moonlighting as an artwork for them, but it is a legit. And so, actually, the, the one from the, with Jane, the director of the Peabody, it, it's meant to continue, and have on, because she actually wrote me back, and so it's gonna continue growing, because I have to reply to her letter yet, but I don't know how to reply yet. Because she said that there was no dust in the storage. And I'm like, uh, yes! [laughter] I did, I, I – so, I don't know how to reply yet, but the work will continue to grow. That specific one, because that one is mediating with the rain, so a mediation is always like a two-parted conversation that goes back and forth, no?

Yes, I think – oh, and, what else was it? Yes, so I haven't actually done that, resent one yet, I'm just trying to say so it happens. [laughs]

Audience member Thank you for the amazing talk. It's really fascinating to see, like, how these like super rich research became like artwork in the end. I guess my question is like, how, like, as the creator, like, how important it is, or, to you, for the audience to know the background information in order to appreciate your work? If it is important, how do you usually incorporate that kind of information in the display?

Porras-Kim I think that with the work, well, since you can't really anticipate the interest level of someone, I like to have multiple readings of it available, and so that's why the drawings look really nice, because I was like, if my mom brings her friends, and I show them this documentation room, they will not care at all. And so, I'm trying to - but the drawings look like artworks, and so what she thinks artwork is, and so she will pay attention, and be like, ohhh, I want to look closely because it looks like it took a really long time to make, or something, no?

But, many of the times I've shown the project has been in schools, or educational places, so people bring their class, and they have full readings of the whole thing, and so they, I think it's more like, the audience will get the amount of information and, that they put time to receive, and so you can get a five-minute version, or like a three-hour version, or like Ruth got the two-year version. (01:20:15) [laughter] Cause she literally read everything. [laughs]

Audience member Hi, I, I really appreciate the, the talk. You know, the, the breadth and range of your practice is, is really, really lovely. I was wondering about how you use drawing as a way to set up this, almost institutional critique, and, you know, and the trust it takes to, to work with the collections, and it seems like always sort of rooted in this simple sort of participatory act, this collective act of, like, drawing.

Porras-Kim I think that drawing is, like, takes such a patient viewing, at least the, the type I'm making, that I really, again, I think I mentioned that I'm not a very patient person, and so I think that picking a medium that will force me to look really closely helps me kind of pay, like, make a boundary for my own self, and so even when I began making the *National Treasures*, and I saw the, you know, the first version, I actually couldn't anticipate how much time it would take. And I'm like, oh, cool, I'm gonna do this project, and then I begun

making the first one, and I'm like, this is never gonna be done, actually, like, never gonna be done. And so I actually think that the drawings also document, like, my research process, too, because sometimes I'm like really lazy that day, and so the drawing is kind of fuzzy. [laughs] And so like, that day, sorry, but it's kind of like the sketch part, because I'm impatient, but sometimes, it's like – and it also maps my own interest with the specific site, or photograph, because I can tell which types of pictures I like better, so they're more rendered, cause I spend more time.

And so I think that we share, that is, there's no, you know, in the same, in the same way that the, the idea is that interpretations and interventions into historical materials alter the way that you see it, I'm also a new layer that is there. So I was thinking about *The weight of a patina of time* as like the literal layer of new interpretations that an object has, and how they, they, that actually doesn't cancel previous versions, but somehow, they can toggle between the contemporary version and infinite amounts of ways to understand it as well, no?

Audience member Hi. I, I'm sorry that I watch so much Scandinavian – whoops, Scandinavian noir thriller type shows, so that informs my question. The ice cores –

Porras-Kim I can't hear, can –

Audience member Oh, sorry. I'm sorry for my Scandinavian noir thriller-informed question, but the ice cores, they're always like obsessed with like climate change, and the, and, and like where the natural world and climate change kind of impact each other. Was anyone worried about the ice cores, like, releasing, you know, like, you know, ancient diseases –

Porras-Kim Anthrax?

Audience member -- in the museum?

Porras-Kim Yes. We talked about anthrax, and all of the potential things, but then we res, we agreed that contemporary air is probably way more awful than anything [laughter] pre-industry.

Audience member Hi. I was curious, like, so, moisture is a very consistent theme in your work, and you've kinda engaged with it in very interesting – moisture. [laughs] Sorry.

Porras-Kim What? Oh, moisture.

Audience Moisture!

Audience member Yeah. And you've engaged with it in a lot of different ways, and so I'm curious, like, why you, you keep going back to it, and maybe if you learned anything, kind of.

Porras-Kim I actually, you know, not that I thought I was gonna make moisture work, or dust work, or any of that, but I think that the subject comes from talking to so many conservators, and so that's what actually they're scared of, like, moisture, they're always worried about moisture, always worried about must, always worried about mold, and I think that the question was about the border of practicality, because there's mold everywhere, and there's dust everywhere, and there's moisture everywhere, but at some point, the institution has just such a particular border of how little the practical things that they can do is. It's like, okay, well, what about one particle of mold? You can't. But ten particles? Maybe. And so there's actually a border, but I don't necessarily know how to quantify that, but what I like about those kinds of things is that the, the, the met, the infrastructure of the, the conservation and even registration, you can't register a billion particles of mold, etcetera, comes to a, a, it feels so factual, and like Excel type, but in the end, it's just really arbitrary. And so through looking at the, I'm like, think in practically first, and then figure out how someone, how the – and I was thinking, like, oh, maybe with technology, they might be able to actually account for all the things, but I'm like, that's such a big hard drive that there's no actual space to do that, or who would want to do that, is there a function for it? I don't know yet, but it's not, but the moisture came because I heard conservators freaking out about moisture all the time. And I'm like, if we have a, two people in this room, the moisture just went up. [laughter]

Audience member Hello, thanks so much for your amazing talk. I have a, a question about one of the pieces called *Proposal for the reconstruction of ritual elements*, of the Sun Pyramid in Teotihuacán. Those two vertical objects that were there were on pedestals?

Porras-Kim They're –

Audience member On white pedestals.

Porras-Kim Yes.

Audience member Like a, right, like –

Porras-Kim They have a sound, actually, and so - sidenote, forgot to say, cause there was no picture. There's a sound, because I made a mix of one year of solar flare sounds, mixed with the sound of the inside of the pyramid. Because when they opened it, there was a sound, and so I put those two together, and the pedestal was just one way to, it can sit directly on the floor, or with the pedestal, but in that particular instance, the ceiling was really high, and so we made a pedestal where the sound is actually, the speaker is inside, and so if you walk by it, you hear this, you can't really hear it, it's like a pulse, kind of.

Audience member Thanks.

Porras-Kim So people miss it, and I even missed it. But, thank you for reminding me.

Audience member Thank you.

Audience member This is perhaps a very tricky question. [laughs] Like, I think in many of your works, you, I don't know if the word is criticizing, but, like, for instance with all the works about the cenote in Chichén Itzá, basically the idea is like, these objects should stay in the cenote, in the water, because they were put in there for Chaac, the rain god, because of the rain, sorry. But, this has been traveled all over, like, from Mexico to United States, and the idea is not sending them back to another museum in Mexico, it's basically, like, they should stay where they, where put it there, for, for the purpose they were there. So, with your work, which is like another layer, another layer, are you not somehow perpetuating that? Like, the idea of, like, keep, keep, keeping these projects or these objects alive with exhibitions kind of disappear. Mmhmm?

Porrás-Kim I think you just, I think, I remem, I just remembered our first conversation draft about this project, cause I worked with, it, one of the first times with you, and –

Audience member Mmhmm.

Porrás-Kim -- one of the proposals was to try and get the objects on loan –

Audience member Yeah.

Porrás-Kim -- for the São Paulo Biennial, and on the way, on the airplane, drop them [laughter] by mistake, and it would be an insurance claim project. [laughter] You know, it's like, can we do that? [laughter] And so, and so, but, I actually think that, through thinking about all of these collections works, I am potent, I'm making a new work that is actually a catalogue work, it only will exist in the, in the TMS of the insti – not TMS, whatever, the, the cataloguing system of the institution is. (01:30:03) In which it, you know, because now, those objects are seen as a singular historical work, in a singular way, but the, the project is to have additional cataloguing fields, and so, for example, how would Chaac catalogue his own inventory? And then there would be an option in the, in the registrar computer.

And not only that, but like all of the stakeholders that have intervened with that material will also have their own, you know, taxonomy for it, or conservation ways, or registration ways, but if, if right now the museum, in the, if the catalogue is the brain of the museum, and that information doesn't exist, then nobody can actually, you know, know how to even treat it. And so the, not necessarily that the, the project I'm making will fill the information, but it will create the box to have the information period. And so then the, the, the types will toggle, because yes, of course, it's a historical object, but it's a temporary position, no? And it doesn't have to conflict with all the other versions.

But, I don't know how to do tech, so that's a work in progress. Very long. [laughs]

Audience member Hi. I want to ask you what's your relationship with Chaac, or with the Sun Pyramid, and what do you think the –

Porras-Kim With what?

Audience member With Chaac, or with the Sun Pyramid. And what do you think about, what's the right distance of an artist to, to talk or use objects that are not related to your culture?

Porras-Kim Yes, and so I actually approach all of the projects from the institutional perspective, because that's the, the, you know, the, the pyramid and many of the works are actually very similar, like the, I think in the workshop I was talking about the tool [?], like the conceptual framework is very similar, where there's an original culture and an original function that now has been uplifted and now, in our contemporary life, as a, now it's catalogued as a museum and historical object. And so I know the contemporary version only, and so I can understand the way that something that I don't know has been modified to become something I know.

And so, in that way, I'm interested in how that process actually conflicts with aboriginal, or my supported [?], etcetera, and so it's essentially thinking about how we can account for those infinite other versions, because in a museum, all of the historical objects have their own individual histories that get flattened out, represented as just balls, or something. And so, I can only approach it from the audience side, and work kind of backwards. [pause; applause, cheering]

END OF RECORDING