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## **INTERFACE**

*Sheilah ReStack: Hold Hold Spill*, July 17 - August 23, 2020, Oakland, California

## HOLD HOLD SPILL AT INTERFACE GALLERY

I WANT TO UNFOLD.  
LET NO PLACE IN ME HOLD ITSELF CLOSED,  
FOR WHERE I AM CLOSED, I AM FALSE.

— RANIER MARIA RILKE

Sheilah ReStack's work is layered and unfolding. When I first encountered it, I was immediately drawn to its strong sculptural presence and evocative combination of images and materials. Intimate photographic records are collaged with and pressed into materials from daily life. They are stitched together, compressed under plexi-glass and bound by rubber bands, viscerally and poetically signifying the ways we piece together an identity and construct a life.

The works include tender photograms that ReStack makes by holding loved ones and pressing their bodies against photographic paper as they embrace under the light of an enlarger. They also include ReStack's "walking prints," which she makes by attaching photo paper to her feet, recording the contact of her body with the ground as she moves within and between social roles and the physical spaces of daily life. The walking prints seem to locate who we are in the shifting spaces between roles and social identities. They seem to ask, "What if all we are is a series of steps, moments, contact?"

Spending time with this work over the course of her exhibition at Interface, I became increasingly touched by its openness—the way it doesn't attempt to assert a fixed identity, it includes the mundane, the in between and the precarious. A number of the works invite us to peek in from behind to discover a private notation, a personal photograph or a folded up letter.

I also deeply appreciate the way motherhood is included in this work. Photographs of Sheilah's mother, her partner Dani's grandmother, and of their daughter, Rose, evoke lineage, care, memory and loss.

The central sculpture in the exhibition, *Hold House*, contains a tapestry of the walking prints, notes from the artist's studio, and a string



of flowers made by Rose. These are all pressed between plexiglas and precariously balanced against a steel brace and a sagging bag of water filled with decaying flowers.

We are all alive and dying like this. Sitting with this work leaves me grateful for the poignant reminder of my longing to unfold: to let it all spill and to hold it all.

— Suzanne L'Heureux  
Director, Interface Gallery

*HOLD, HOLD, SPILL* was an exhibition held at Interface Gallery in the summer of 2020.

The writings collected here were written in response to the work and released over the course of the exhibition.



*Hold House*

Walking prints on fiber photo paper, plexi, water, dill weed harvested from Headlands, yellow acetate, plant material, angle iron, rock from Suzanne, rubber bands, plexi, thread. 2020

## THE WALKING PRINTS

In spite of city and state ordinance announcing a prolonged and indefinite “shelter-in-place,” walking has been one of the only constant and routine activities I have engaged in for months. Walking once typically meant “going to” or “coming from,” and, usually, to or from work. Now it feels nearly entirely without purpose: part exercise, part means-to-an-end, part directive from my therapist in an effort to manage my anxiety.

Though these days walking is largely a solitary act, I am now distinctly more aware of the distance between my own steps and the steps of those in front of or behind me, careful not to overlap. As we walk, I imagine invisible strings tethering us together, six-feet-apart, at the torso or at the hands, like a chain of paper dolls.

A few weeks ago (maybe months ago, now), I came across a viral graphic about contact tracing floating around social media that proposed: “If you were to get a call tomorrow telling you that you tested positive [...] and you were asked to list all the people you’ve had contact with in the past 14 days, would you be proud of yourself or embarrassed by your actions?”

Of course, I believe this graphic is more of a warning about the dangers of social gatherings in public places like bars, or restaurants, or shopping malls, than about crossing paths with a stranger while on a walk around your neighborhood. However, its broader implication for public life is resolute: we are all responsible for another. And not (only) in an abstract sense of ethics or morals but in an urgent physical and material way.

Beyond mere meditation on the pleasures (and, I suppose, dangers) of walking, the walking prints in Sheilah ReStack’s *Hold Hold Spill* resonated with my deep sense of anxiety and paranoia around the body as a social object within a socially-distant world. Light-sensitive paper is enacted upon by both the body and the space around it to produce a ghostlike document of the artist’s footsteps. Though the result produces no identifiable image of either place or of body.





It merely exists as data, evidence of where a body has been as seen through a record of what it has come in contact with.

If I were to test positive for the virus tomorrow, I wonder what my walking prints would reveal about these past 14 days. About all the places I've been, real or imagined. All the people I've been with, knowingly or not. An index of either triumph or shame, of either caution and safety, or hubris and risk. Would I feel proud of myself or embarrassed by my actions?

What *Hold Hold Spill* works to show us, I think, is how limiting these finite readings and definitions can be. How unreliable the image as so-called proof. How connected and contingent each piece and each material is to its own making, to the sum of its parts, and to the space around it. Far from assuaging my latent anxiety, walking in quarantine has re-informed my relationship with my body and how dependent and mutually constituted it is. And how the distance between myself and the rest of the world—in physical proximity and in social obligation—is both closer and far more wide-reaching than I could have ever imagined.

— Elena Gross, July 2020



## WHAT HOLDS, WHAT SPILLS:

(A RUNNING LIST)

A rubber band wrapped around a glass jar that holds quarters for laundry, now turned brittle, put there for reasons I cannot remember.

I once watched a girl fall off a bucking horse. She flew overhead, arms spread wide but heavy. A dust cloud rose as if the ground was a beaten rug. Her sternum dragged across dirt so dry it looked like sand, sending her forward, followed by her long braids. She stood up quickly to everyone's relief. The horse was still and had watched the whole thing, occasionally lifting their hoof to stomp the ground.

My new neighbor leaves comfrey and water in plastic bags in the garden by our building. They'll ferment and turn into a brown sludge to fertilize the plants. My other neighbor yelled at her the other day, saying they were bringing fruit flies into his apartment.

At eleven years old, I took a two-day bus ride to a camp in Oklahoma for "at risk" youth. There, I learned: heavy cream, sugar, vanilla, a pinch of salt in a zip lock bag; close it slowly, making sure to hear each snap. The bag goes into a metal can. The metal can goes into a bigger metal can and is surrounded by ice. We all stood at the top of a rocky hill, let our cans go and chased after them as they careened off rocks. They rolled to a stop, battered and misshapen. Out of breath and a little dizzy, I sat on a hot rock and ate the best ice cream ever.

I could have done the zip line too, but I cried after climbing the fifty-foot rock wall and was unconvinced that a simple cord would be able to hold my seventy-pound body in the air while flying over treetops.

10 p.m. on a Wednesday, sharing difficult words with an old friend. A build up I could not ignore. Words that could have, and probably should have, been said long ago.

I held a thermometer up to a hot iron to watch the mercury rise. As it passed 110 degrees, the tip burst, a delicate and high pitched shat-



ter of glass, and little silver balls fell and rolled, pinging to different ends of the kitchen floor.

The last time I made a photogram, my paper got brushed with some light and a diagonal shadow lived permanently on the image. Now, all the darkrooms are closed and some days, I'll stand in my bathroom, thinking of ways I can turn the room into a lab: I can cover the window, hang a curtain over the door (that doesn't close all the way), hope one of the cats doesn't try to push it open, get a door stopper and move the litter box, my partner will have to hold his pee. But then, I get tired of the planning and inconvenience, when light gets in everywhere and leaves shadows anyway.

A ceramic colander made by a friend, nested in between bubble wrap and sweaters, cracked during the move to our new apartment, two exits away on the freeway. Weeks later, I picked it up and the handle broke in my hand, cutting my thumb, blood dripping into my other hand as I made my way to the box of Band-Aids in the bathroom at the end of the hall.

— Dionne Lee, July 2020



*Rabbit*

Felt blanket, fiber walking prints, acetate, note on FGT paper, chalk line, cement wedge, thread. 32 x 52 x 6,5", 2020

## TWO RABBITS OR A COILED SNAKE

I hear 'mommy issues' a lot less than 'daddy issues.' Right now, as I think about it, this seems weird to me. Is it because I have been surrounded by people with vaginas most of my life, many of whom suffer some dull, well-worn lack of father? But then no. When I run a quick list of the men I do have in my life and I think about their fathers I think, yes, daddy issues. But it is precisely the ready-made, greasy handle-ness of the idea that I'm finding stale at the moment. Mommy issues are real and I think it might be bigger, more pervasive and definitely more complicated than daddy issues. Not surprisingly the language is harder to access. It has to do with the womb and what it feels like in there when you are perfect and your possibilities are limitless. You are seen/held/felt. Every amazing thing you will invent is ahead of you and already within you. The womb knows this even if the mother does not. The mother is a space and a way with your body in that space.

I love the W and the O and the M in woman but there have been a lot of important people in my life for whom that word has been oppressive and I don't want to say women & trans people, and/or female-bodied, and or GNC, or queers with vaginas, or to refer only to white women.

So, here, I will say I always preferred womxn. Womxn feel like home, they refer to the eternal home. I have sought adoration from many, starting with my mom and my sister and moving on up the line I could make a list of the womxn who I have admired and desired and sought out for love.

When I first saw *Rabbit* I thought the shoulder was Sheliah's. I've seen her in towels and swimsuits and thought I recognized it. Maybe it's just seeing the rest of her family a couple of summers ago in Canada and realizing that they are fair, and therefore I imagined her shoulder as one covered with freckles. *Rabbit* presents itself to me as an image of Sheilah hugging herself, which no matter how much I know it is Dani's shoulder, I can only see *Rabbit* as a self portrait. *Rabbit* is Sheliah's zodiac sign, and so okay, it is a portrait of Dani





with Sheilah's arm reaching out to hold her, but because I see one body more fully than the other the idea *rabbit* and the image of Dani merge and the artist—in picturing her lover—curves forward and points back towards herself.

Basically Sheilah is a lightning rod. She is a moving image on a screen. You're like weeeeeeeerrp, and your head is turning to look and your body moves on its own toward her without asking you first. Add Dani and they are a place and I am pulled to it. It is a familiar type of attraction but it is so much more serpentine and Delphic then the one that routinely seeks male approval like a floppy wooden puppet (i.e. daddy issues). In the photo printed on blanket material, we can see Sheilah's ulnar artery pumping blood and beyond that in my mind's eye I can see all the veins in her spidery, busy hands. I can see her with her hands in the dirt. I can see her fisting Dani and I can see her braiding Rose's hair, gripping the steering wheel, sewing, throwing things, taping photo paper to Dani's shoes, writing French in cursive, clicking at the keyboard a million words a minute. All those endless potentialities are bared in the work. To be a home, and to ache for a home—mommy issues.

Because I have lived in Sheilah's house and worked in her studio and watched her work, this piece feels inevitable. I have studied the studio's polished concrete floors, seen her sewing machine, slept in her bed and imagined these two tan freckled bodies under the covers. In *Rabbit*, I feel the type of inevitability that comes with recognition, a Levinassian encounter. Care could be a word that is used here to describe a feeling in the work but we'd have to claw it back from its tiresome, citational use as a stand-in for feminine. Yes, care is all those things we think womxn do, but it is also a responsibility to each other that I'm going to call instantaneous magic, and it is heavy. It is not the surprise of a mirror but something preordained, a triangle with a hole in the middle. In *Rabbit* there is Dani, Sheilah and Rose (even when she is absent) and (being suctioned toward some invisible center with dream-like gravity) there is me, or you the reader, or you the viewer.

— Em Rooney, July 2020



*Hold Rose*

Photogram on RC paper, 4 x 5 glassplate negatives of historical events (snowflake letter from Jeffry inside the negatives), rein, angle iron, plexi and metal clips, 40 x 24 x 4", 2019

## HOLD ROSE

ANGLE IRON TO HOLD THE NEGATIVES UP – METAL  
CLIPS TO HOLD THE REINS TO HOLD THE GLASS  
PLATE NEGATIVES.

— SHEILAH RESTACK

Even if it passes through me, the virus, I could possibly be strong. My truck shuddered violently when I pulled up here. I'll hold your work to help me keep getting out. The strong cross bar. We were watching "Spook Who Sat by The Door" (Ivan Dixon, 1973) the other night in Marfa, about a black FBI agent turned revolutionary and then in the office of the white FBI director there on the wall right behind his desk was Mondrian. I thought is that like a post 60s modernist joke. Sheilah's piece gives me peace. Hold Rose. She's holding somebody. She leans in. I pasted this line of hers above to be my cross bar somehow. Each element is sent off to work in a recipe. Liz keeps adding one more thing to fix my experience. Eggs, almond milk, soft cotton for the inside of my mask. She's a terrific host and so cautious. The mask enables the upper part of her face to join in the action differently. I see her daughter, Caitlin, my friend, more in her because of this. The virus is reshaping all of our expressions. Trump thinks he looks good in his mask and in his case it's true. There's less of him. I'd probably like some watery red paint that produces rose, I'd like to put a wash of color on one little area of her painting which is not what this is but the sentence keeps pushing and framing. The horse thing the broken rein makes me think of my truck and the horses I left behind: Cowboy, Disco, Thunder and Dusty but we leave nothing things are already changing before the going gets happening. Who Sheilah reaches to here is insignificant. The tension of the work is the two (or the three) and I think the nakedness of the conflict provides energy and everyone is in on this: Hold Rose. What you say to someone (possibly Dani) when you are doing something. The bell just rang, it's UPS—hope it's that plexi. I'll get it. Hold Rose. The cicadas roll. Such an invisible part of nature that humming every day. I surround you with my journal. There's the lake. Erin's got horses ("Somerset", "Pumpkin") on the other side of my journey AND she just realized when we quarantine



there probably it will mean she can't ride. Let me go she said I've just got to think about this. Reaching, turning, muscular. Where's the color. Here. Passion. In the making. In the moment. That turning. Reach. There's a hole in the angle a radiant ray, like a funnel, a tundish, at the bottom of the photo the spirits are leaving. That's smart.

— Eileen Myles, July 15, 2020



*Hold Dani Hold Roz*

Photogram on RC paper, angle iron, wig, photo, plexi, metal clip. 23 x 20 x 4", 2019

## PORTAL PRESSED FLAT

One of the most famous photographs in art history is a story. It goes like this: the French literary theorist and critic, Roland Barthes, lived with his mother his entire life. He was devastated by her death. As he went through her things, he found a photo of her as a little girl in which she looked more particularly like herself than in any other photograph he had ever seen. Whether or not this is true is not for any of us to say, so he doesn't show us the image.

"I had discovered this photograph by moving back through Time," he writes in *Camera Lucida*.<sup>1</sup>

"I worked back through a life, not my own, but the life of someone I love," he explains.<sup>2</sup>

It is a moment that moves him to introduce the term punctum:

"A photograph's punctum is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)," he theorizes.<sup>3</sup>

This metaphorical prick has opened a discursive space for photography to meet affect—a space shaped like a gyre.

But at the moment, I'm more interested in the screw that cut through the photogram before winding its way into the wall. It flattens the angle iron against the sheet of plexi, strands of Sheilah's jet black wig, and a photo of Little Dani with her grandmother on the beach. It seals them, like amber, to a photogram where Sheilah and Dani pressed themselves together in a dark room, against a paper that registered their bodies as a two-headed, variegated form.

The woman on the beach's name is Roz, which sounds a lot like Rose. She wears a blue swimsuit and a tan eye patch; that much we can see. Her homophobia is a memory held by her granddaughter, Dani, and shared by Sheilah, who never had the chance to meet her. The double whammy of trying to endear ourselves to someone long gone, for whom we never existed.





Dani says the beach was in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. How does she remember her grandmother, I wonder? Beyond the pair of hands that she held while she barreled ahead, belly first. Little Dani faces out. Proxy Sheila faces in. Photograms allow live subjects to define their own forms through proximity, duration, and the less familiar shapes of love: motion, pressure, the desire to let light in or out.

— Anna Lee, July 2020

<sup>1</sup> Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 71.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.



*For Rita before her garden (Headlands Fall 2015)*

Fiber walking prints, cement wedge, plexi, thread, rubber band, acetate. 21 x 32 x 9" 2020. \*WIP currently figuring out dimensions of blue on back

**JO-EY TANG ALONGSIDE  
FOR RITA BEFORE HER GARDEN**

**JULY 14**

Just as I am talking to you, I finally glean the advantages of double pane windows. It's not to keep the weather out or whatever on this side intact. Intact is nefarious. Floating candles, reflected, doubled and compressed, lodge into that taut space between energy stars. The acceptance, of double pane windows, of your work, in your work, is that they mesmerize their own condition-making, loiter where and when it had nowhere else to go, cut through to keep closer. A clarity so uncomplicated in its encompassing. Like sheets of ice. Neither hypnagogic nor hypnopompic.

**JULY 27**

thinking about Oakland of 1990 when I arrived I'm thinking about whether it's possible to describe this object with or without thinking about arriving in Oakland in 1990 I'm thinking about weather weather whether sculptural forms are memes pneumatic magnetic magnetic am I am mimetic it could be that where temporality recite recite recite reside it's not a place that I would encounter because we are not in 1990 the concrete pops up prop up I kind of agility fragility fragility that also prop it's over itself it's self for the for the peaks the fur that peeks It's how it's how I lived in the 1990s what is the space the space behind thing this thing asking to two asking to how to build a foundation out of charite prokaryotic precarities how to hold it together and together I hear it falling cladding send thudding to feel something the vastness that lives behind I figured levitate figure levitating in the space of joy will be possible a space of joy literates of time limit of time obliterate It can only be watched it's to be watched matter imitate but to could exist in the space of seeing unless and as I repeat the words I'm reminded of how we I repeated the words going into the bus repeating to myself how to say hi and bye the other day I saw a meme about that

**JULY 28**

Hold is

The opposite of non-hold

A stopgap

A container

Desire acquiesced

For

Close to

In place

Spill rushes to and over a limit

Overage

It hangs off just

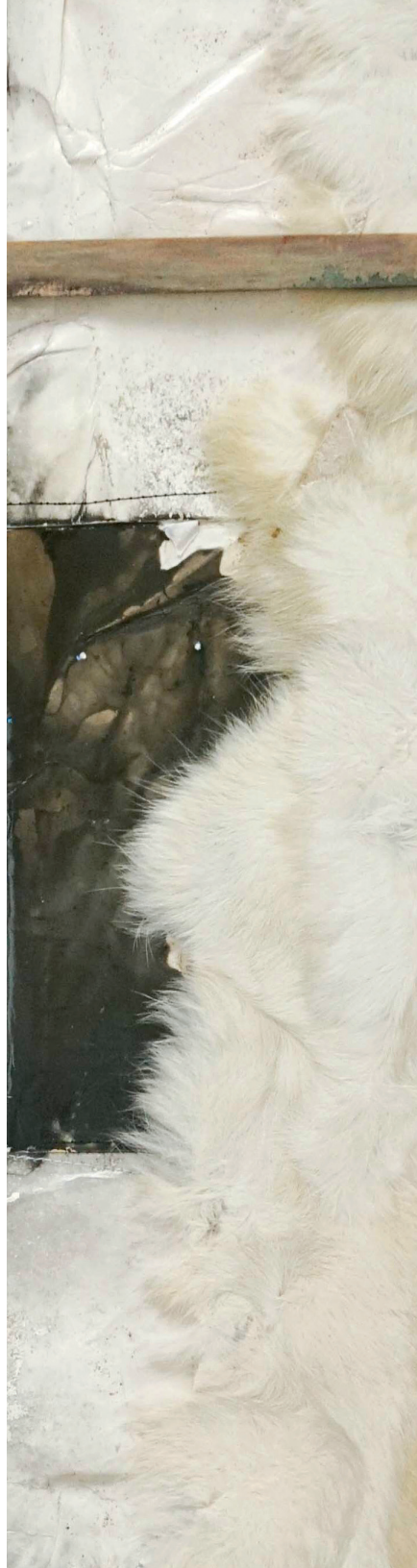
Makes a flame in a confined space and holds it

Falls from a horse

Trickles

I I want want to be be there

hold and spill





#### AUGUST 4

Rita's Garden corrals time. It is a hissing machine that puts what happened into what happens. Not a snapshot. A stretchshoot.

Thhhhlup (with an upward motion)

ssssshuuuzzzzzzshhhhh (gliding rectilinear infinite)

saaaaa [through the puncture in velocity as if the only thing moving]

suuuuuuuuu

)(traceless)(

(spilling every which way, off the ground) tza tza tza

ppffffff

(falling

like

liquid

if

liquid

was

solid,

time

is

not

a

quantifier) fffffffp



### AUGUST 13

It clads on the wall where the double door is. Does it swing inward or outward? Let me guess. South swings East and North swings West. Let in. Let out.

It is where it is.  
Destiny maquette.

The concrete wedge is the concrete floor.  
The plexi sandwich are the two skylights.



The two rubber bands are the vertical and horizontal wooden beams.  
The holes in the walking print are the holes in the white brick wall.  
The blue film is the sky.  
The fur is your heartbeat.  
Your mom Rita is there with you, always.  
If I am there I too will see myself.  
2020 is 1990.

— Jo-ey Tang, July 2020







## CONVERSATION BETWEEN SHEILAH RESTACK & LEEZA MEKSIN

It's the precariousness in these works that strikes me first. The plexi is balancing on the edge of a concrete plinth that is mounted to the wall and hung 5 feet up, ready to shatter. 18 gallons of water and yellow flower petals are held in a plastic bag, full like an udder, ready to leak all over the floor. There's mud in the photograph because the paper walked for 2 miles while Sheilah took the dog and her daughter Rose for a walk, dropped Rose off at school and then went home. Shells, fur, dried flowers are hewn together, neatly folded, or tightly bound, brimming with archiving sensually. The works occupy an in-between objecthood that is hard to classify yet it's hauntingly memorable (are they sculptures? photographs? maps? icons? talismans?). During the installation of this show, it was discovered that one of the concrete plinths had developed a small crack in shipping. Sheilah wrote to me about this stressful event, explaining that the parts that are perfect are meant to be just that—how the precision of the concrete wedge lives in tension with the torn photo paper, found rock and imperfect sewing. After a couple days, Sheilah wrote that it has become, "*The crack I've learned to live with.*" This phrase struck me as an epithet for Sheilah's art, and also for her mode of being in the world.

**LM:** The works imply a messy and rich place which embodies all your roles simultaneously. Do you think these sculptures are self-portraits? Or still lives of your lived experience with Dani and Rose?

**SR:** It is funny that you say that, I do think of them like portraits, but more like a portrait of an energetic exchange, a way of being or feeling, and very much in relation. They are a contemplation of the different roles I embody in my life, but also, and most importantly, they are about the specificity of connection with another. I was thinking about those moments of connection with Rose, with Dani and also, thinking a lot about my connection with Anna, a horse that I ride. How the connection falls in and out. The distinctness of the feeling when it is there -- it is a palpable thing -- and how everything around me is the same when it passes, but there is an intensity with another that is gone. I wanted to call forth the feeling by

accessing a radical precarity that speaks to this feeling in relation... Maybe they are a spell of memory or maybe they are a wish.

**LM:** Can you say more about radical precarity? What does this phrase mean to you and how do you think your life reflects this precarity?

**SR:** I am thinking about radical precarity in relationship to a queer existence, and also, to that of being a mother. These are both ways of being which are ignored or vilified for different reasons--because both exist outside the command center of heteropatriarchy. I celebrate all the work that theorists and artists of color, queers, and otherwise marginalized groups do that is so important in re-thinking, re-claiming and making less sturdy the white patriarchy. To me, this is a necessary invocation of precarity. My work is my own way of making precarious, through material translation. These objects are a self-created precarity, and this is empowering to me, and possibly beautiful, and also, possibly fleeting. Perhaps this is part of the joy of pulling together and holding--over these materials I can have power, for this moment, while also recognizing the continuous state of being (the hold) is impermanent.

**LM:** The idea that the hold is impermanent implies both our individual mortality but also the livelihood of our planet. Precarity as the condition in which we find our world today, due to climate change, extinction, pollution, just to name a few threatening forces (many of which man made). When I look at the works in this show, I wonder if you're eulogizing our world.

**SR:** Certainly, in the video work that Dani and I have made together, the environmental crisis plays a major role in driving the experimental narrative. I like your read that the precarity of my hold on Rose is also a gesture of the precarity of the planet. I want the work to get at larger issues, and I believe the personal is an effective way to get there.

It is interesting to think about the works as a eulogy--you are right in that the work may start with me wanting to make a monument to the precarity of the construction of a day, the brevity of the connection with someone I love, or a desire to chronicle myself in relation

to the world. But, in the process of making with archival documents in space (monument / eulogy) it becomes another thing. It resists being of the past entirely, because its physical presence, like you say, is about to spill or fall and so it feels almost hyper present. Maybe its very existence is a precarious map to the past and, simultaneously, a heightened present...a wavering proposal pulling from multiple tenses.

**LM:** It's as if the works explore the ruin we've inflicted upon our home (not the domestic, but our global abode). The hand-made contraptions speak to survivalist tactics, the objects allude to shelters and folding furniture, while evoking disturbance-based ecologies. It makes me think of Tarkovsky's *Stalker*. Have you seen this film?

**SR:** Yes, I have seen that film...it had a big impact on me...I still have visions of that water glass vibrating on the table, about to fall, and the dreamy/terrifying sequences walking in the post apocalyptic landscape... In *Stalker* I think it was all men who were the explorers, in search of the Room. If I am channeling *Stalker*, I hope I am doing so from the perspective of the child, the pet, and the wife/woman character who (in my version) go out and look for, or actually create, their own Room.

I think it is interesting to consider the works as survivalist strategies—I wasn't thinking of this while making them, but honestly, these structures are just as useful or absurd as the 60 cans of Chunky stew and other stockpiled materials I just helped my dad move to his new home. It is fascinating to see how value for the future changes, based on the current moment. For instance, I started using plexi years ago to sandwich and hold the images, and now it has a whole new meaning around safety (survival) in relation to the pandemic.

I am also thinking about how I relate to the word survival in terms of how the works survive in space. They are not really future oriented objects (like cans of Chunky stew); they are too much made by touch and feel, bound together with rubber bands—intent upon balance, and fragile in a way that surviving into the future doesn't equate with. But I like this idea in that in order to survive in the future, maybe we need a psychic shift into capacity for an extreme present.

Maybe we can't really learn how to respond to the future unless we allow ourselves to physically inhabit and be in relation to now.

**LM:** The concept of the extreme present reminds me that the works in this show all present actions: binding, stacking, walking, collecting, annotating. Various handmade and found objects are made into a whole with heterogeneous composites. Could you speak about the way in which you rig these sculptures together?

**SR:** I think of the works as a balance of gestures. Ideally I want it to be a coming together of materials that respects the energy of the components, while also creating a new space that allows a new thing—like montage, the 3rd meaning, generated by contingent relationships upon one another.

In terms of making in the studio—I come at it from two minds. I am often sharing with students the importance of child mind and critic mind. For instance, I often begin with letting myself experiment and pick things up and try putting them together. This intuitive self-lives with the critic self. The critic self-steps in after a day, an hour, and says no—that doesn't work, what a terrible idea...or, perhaps, that it does work...in which case there is the visceral feeling of achieving connection with the work itself. At this point, I leave it alone and come back to it later—to make sure that is how I (still) feel.

I remember you (Leeza) talking about how the works feel like the way you construct a day—there is something haphazard about how it is constructed, but at the end of the day there it is, the day. It happened, pulsing there, after all its exertions. I really resonated with this idea of the construction of the work being like the construction of a day. There are so many components that get put together as we go from making a meal to teaching to getting to the studio to the emails we need to attend to...and that ability to hold those things together is so improbable, but it happens.

**LM:** Your sculptures speak in contrasts: hard/soft, liquid/solid, animate/inanimate, public/private, handmade/mass produced. Do you purposely set out to create binary relationships? Why?

**SR:** I know that binaries are how we have constructed our flawed

making of hierarchical sense, through these kinds of establishments of difference: butch/femme, black/white, good/bad etc. I want to destroy this easiness of understanding. I use materials like rigid plexi and heavy concrete in relation to torn photo paper, delicate thread, and powdered chalk line. Perhaps they can be hybridized into a tender tension that reveals each one to have qualities of the other. Or perhaps together they create something that moves towards that state that Jose Esteban Munoz talks of as the idea of queerness being ‘not yet here’. I like this way of employing futurity as a way to imagine—through material confusion. I think the binaries can get confused when they get all tangled up in each other, and so I am hoping that the work allows that kind of refusal of stasis, and what I see as a productive inability to place something.

**LM:** I’m interested in your idea of the embodied photograph? Are the sculptures themselves embodied photographs, or are you referring more to the action of wearing photosensitive paper on your feet, and then collaging these photographs into the larger narrative of the sculpture?

**SR:** I think it goes back to your earlier question, about binaries, and why I am drawn to pulling things together from opposing registers. I want the photograph because of its truth and power as a document and its legibility, and I want the idea of embodiment because that is a lived and truthful experience as well—even though the body is typically understood as gendered and less trustworthy as a documentary or reporting source. I want both of these things pulled together to see how they can exist in tension, and create a new credibility.

Maybe there is no real definition for what an embodied photograph is, you have to feel it. For me it functions as an idea that continues to yield questions, and allows me to have a relationship with photography, and teaching photography, in a way that puts a crack in the dominant system, and provides an idea for making and thinking and teaching *towards*.

**LM:** The walking with photo paper on your feet is both poetic and precise. Poetic because the action leaves an abstracted trace of your body in everyday experiences, and precise because it’s a mea-

sure of time. How do you think of this action and the subsequent assembling of it into larger materially-diverse sculptures?

**SR:** I think of it like labor, and I love that these documents of labor are tattered abstractions. Mierle Laderman Ukeles talks about the labor of maintenance, and how invisible it is, and how necessary. She has a great manifesto from 1969 about giving yourself freedom to name value. It is this naming of value that I think is so much a part of our capitalist model—and I have my own struggle in confronting, and trying to overcome, the patriarchal model of worthiness.

I think these works are my own way out of that destructive game. They don't really care about what part of them has more value—they just balance there as a multi sided entity. They can be a minimalist form and they can be a handwritten note and they can be a prayer for my daughter. They hold inside themselves all these histories (of motherhood, of place, of queer desire and mundane life) that persist. The accumulation of gestures is held in this precarious balance as an evidentiary aftermath, and tender construction for the future.

**LM:** I love that phrasing, Sheilah. It makes me wonder how your feelings about the work transformed after you installed it at Interface gallery? Did the movement from your Columbus studio to a West-coast gallery change how you feel or think about these works?

**SR:** It is exciting to see the work in a new context, a new place. It allows consideration of a new relation. I get used to seeing the works in a particular way in the studio—they become familiar. I love that a show is an opportunity to be surprised by what the work can/does say. I want to acknowledge that Suzanne was really instrumental in selecting works for this show, and knowing what the space could hold. I think that sort of input is also part of the generative quality of sharing work in new spaces. Certain things about how the works are together had never happened before in the studio, just because they couldn't fit together. So, seeing the reiteration of certain shapes (the half house shape, the angle iron, the concrete wedges), colors, and spatial relations is exciting. I am still thinking about what kind of a sentence or drawing they make together.

It's interesting too, in that there is a certain kind of doubling back in time having the show in this area of California—so close to where Dani and I and Rose and Rita were at the Headlands together about 5 years ago. Pieces of the walking prints in *Hold House* are from that residency. So, inside this present sculptural balance there are documents and ephemera (dust, mud, sand, plants) that go back to this landscape. It feels right to have it be offering itself back, to this place, in a material structure. I like the idea that our past actions can be a material component for fragile balance in the present.

Conversation on the occasion of Sheilah ReStack's solo show *HOLD HOLD SPILL* at Interface Gallery, Oakland, California, July 17 – August 23, 2020.



## WORKS

### *Hold House*

Walking prints on fiber photo paper, plexi, water, dill weed harvested from Headlands, yellow acetate, plant material, angle iron, rock from Suzanne, rubber bands, plexi, thread. 2020

### *Rabbit*

Felt blanket, fiber walking prints, acetate, note on FGT paper, chalk line, cement wedge, thread. 32 x 52 x 6,5"m 2020

### *Hold Rose*

Photogram on RC paper, 4 x 5 glassplate negatives of historical events (snowflake letter from Jeffry inside the negatives), rein, angle iron, plexi and metal clips, 40 x 24 x 4", 2019

### *Hold Dani Hold Roz*

Photogram on RC paper, angle iron, wig, photo, plexi, metal clip. 23 x 20 x 4", 2019

### *For Rita before her garden (Headlands Fall 2015)*

Fiber walking prints, cement wedge, plexi, thread, rubber band, acetate. 21 x 32 x 9" 2020. \*WIP currently figuring out dimensions of blue on back

