

## **THE EARTH LEAKED RED OCHRE**

Lara Atallah

Simon Benjamin

Sara Jimenez

Corinne Jones

Levan Mindiashvili (Levani)

Miriam Gallery

319 Bedford, Brooklyn, NY

Thursday, April 14, 2022

Sunday, June 12, 2022

Examining landscape as a site of memory, imagination, and untranslatable histories, *The earth leaked red ochre* considers the poetic and political dimensions of ecological encounters. With a particular focus on borders, movement, navigation, and language, the artists featured in this exhibition—Lara Atallah, Simon Benjamin, Sara Jimenez, Corinne Jones, and Levani (Levan Mindiashvili)—are connected by their explorations of living through diaspora. Mining spaces of colonial occupation and disrupted ecosystems, each artist takes a unique approach to recalling forgotten memories embedded within the landscape, while articulating their respective and collective connections to space.

The exhibition takes its title from a text by Chilean artist Cecilia Vicuña. “The rock recalls a people that buried its dead with red ochre powder,” Vicuña writes. “The earth leaked red ocher, and a civilization six thousand years old was discovered.” In these lines, the literal and the figural intertwine; the earth “leaks,” evoking a shift within a landscape—a moment of disruption or disconnection, which reveals the potential for reckoning with forgotten histories. In contextualizing the history of their roots, the artists in this exhibition find a new means of articulating their connections to landscape, exploring metaphysical relationships between identity and the environment.

Sara Jimenez delves into transcultural memories and identity, both personal and collective. Her series *Ossuary* comprises sculptures and wall works made from rusted steel, plaster, and inkjet prints of American colonial photography of the Philippines. The metal containers are filled with water and naturally corrode over time, recalling manmade vessels drifting in oceanic space. Through this work, Jimenez reclaims cultural artifacts and familial objects that have been lost to both earth and sea, symbolically excavating them and transforming them into art objects worthy of worship. By creating an ossuary—a resting place—that continuously transforms and reacts to its environment, she establishes, in the artist’s words, a connection “between migrating bodies, absent bodies, displaced bodies, and spaces of home that are physically separated.”

Levani often references disparate sites of memory throughout their work: a family photograph of the artist at age three playing on the shore of the Black Sea; the pages of an alphabet book used to teach children Georgian scripts; a black neon sign evocative of nightlife culture; palm tree buds; and a lacy baby blanket given to the artist by their mother. Each signals a specific moment in the artist’s life, moments that continuously impact their sense of identity, ecological belonging, and home. With *what color is the Black Sea?*, the artist recalls a childhood memory of being teased by their family that spending too much time in the Black Sea—which borders the artist’s native country Georgia—would turn their skin black. For the artist, the sea became a site of identity construction, of recognizing difference between their body and another. In *Patterns of My Consciousness*, Levani similarly draws upon their childhood with an alphabet book used to teach children Georgian scripts. The artist creates their own writings by manipulating the scripts, which are silkscreened onto latex, recalling a “skin.” The grid that separates each script becomes more fluid in Levani’s appropriation, disrupting the rigid structures we impose on language.

Through an exploration of movement and migration, Lara Atallah questions both the futility and fluidity of borders as political constructs. Her ongoing series *34.5531° N, 18.0480° E* comprises snapshots taken off the coastline of the Mediterranean Sea. Drawn to the spontaneity of the technology, Atallah manipulates the Polaroids by hand in their developing stages by exposing them to light and marking them with fingerprints, distorting their legibility, or “traumatizing” the images. For Atallah, who was

born in Lebanon and has settled in New York, the sea can be a site of both freedom and violence as a passageway of escape, but also a fluid borderland. The border, though imaginary, bears incredible amounts of power on the individual body and its ability to move freely, to immigrate, to wander, to take refuge. In embracing an aesthetic approach of boundlessness, entropy, and unpredictability, Atallah refuses colonial binary perceptions of chaos and control. Her works unfold as visual odes to the sea, as the artist's hand disrupts the truth value of the photographic object, and by extension reveals the subjectivity of a borderland.

Corinne Jones's ongoing body of work *The Lost Sea* likewise evokes hidden or subjective histories. The title refers to an immense underground lake in East Tennessee's Craighead Caverns, located in the foothills of the Smoky Mountains, but little is known about the history of the lake or the caverns that contain it. Nestled in an interwoven network of caves at the foothills of the Smoky Mountains, the caverns were transformed by colonizers over the past two centuries into a space for commerce and tourism. For Jones, it represents "a metaphorical repository for the hidden histories with which our country has yet to reckon." The site-specific iteration of the installation at Miriam consists of a cascade of moving blankets arranged by the artist, which can be used as seating by visitors and moved throughout the gallery as needed. This action gestures toward processes of migration and displacement while offering a site of repose and reciprocity within the exhibition environment. The blankets themselves share a one-to-one relationship to the scale of the human body, becoming a spatial intervention that welcomes potential connection.

Simon Benjamin's three-channel film *Errantry* examines the concurrent harmony and dissonance between the human body and the sea, a site of both traumatic memory and livelihood for people of the African diaspora. The film draws its title from a concept by Édouard Glissant (French: *errance*, "wondering"), and was shot in Treasure Beach, Jamaica. A chance encounter led Benjamin, a Kingston native, to local fisherman Tommy Wong, who acts as both the narrator and subject of the film. As the "Fisherman" character moves seamlessly through his work, slow shots of crashing waves, sea life along the shoreline, and detritus become a rhythmic backdrop. As he relates stories of sabotage by amateur fishermen, climate change as seen from the frontlines, and labor at sea, Tommy's words weave in and out of clear articulation while moving through the tidal soundscape, bringing our attention to moments of synchronicity and disconnect between image, sound, and text. The film captures the ineffable of the postcolonial experience and its continuously unfolding aftermaths, while also immersing us into the poetics of oral tradition and chance encounters at sea.

A publication accompanies the exhibition and acts as an extension of each artist's work within the show. It is edited with an introduction by Re'al Christian and features new writing by Lara Atallah, an experimental interview with Sara Jimenez, a poetic collaboration between Levani and poet Danilo Machado, a typographic intervention by Corinne Jones, and a transcript by Simon Benjamin. With shared themes of land, water, sparseness, and language, the publication is rooted in collaborative work and intergenerational conversation, pushing against notions of finality, authority, and objectivity. In conjunction with the publication, Miriam hosts a reading event, *Unraveling Words*, on Saturday, May 14, 2022, featuring Danilo Machado, artist Le'Andra LeSeur, and historian TK Smith.

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

**Lara Atallah** is a New York-based artist and writer. Her practice is informed by her interest in the political nature of landscape, and the power it holds to reshape our perception of borders. Her work has been exhibited in the United States and internationally, and is part of the Onassis Cultural Foundation's collection in Athens, as well as the NYU Langone Art Collection. Recent exhibitions include the American University Museum, Trestle Gallery, ON CANAL. Her first book, *Edge of Elysium, Vol. 1* was published by Open Projects Press in September 2019. Her writing has appeared in *Artforum*, *Camera Austria*, *Flash Art Italia*, and *The Brooklyn Rail*, among others.

**Simon Benjamin** is a Jamaican artist and filmmaker, whose research-based practice encompasses multi-sensory installations, sculptures, video, photographs, and printmaking. His work will be included in documenta fifteen, Kassel, Germany (2022) and the Kingston Biennial, National Gallery of Jamaica, Kingston, Jamaica (2022), and has been featured in the trinidad+tobago film festival, Trinidad and Tobago (2021); NYU Gallatin at Governors Island, New York (2021); The 92nd St. Y, New York (2020); Brooklyn Public Library, New York (2019); Hunter East Harlem Gallery, New York (2019); the Ghetto Biennial, Port Au Prince, Haiti (2018); Jamaica Biennial, National Gallery of Jamaica, Kingston, Jamaica (2017); Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia (2019); New Local Space, Kingston (2016); and Columbia University, New York (2016). Benjamin will be an Artist-in-Residence at Light Work as well as Baxter St. CCNY in 2022, and has participated in residencies at Shandaken Projects and the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, both on Governors Island in New York. Benjamin received his MFA from Hunter College in New York.

**Sara Jimenez** explores the material embodiment of deep transcultural memories. As a Filipinx-Canadian artist, she is interested in materializing narratives around concepts of origins and home, loss and absence. She works in installation, sculpture, collage, textiles, and performance, to create visual metaphors that allude to mythical environments and reimagined artifacts. Jimenez received her MFA from Parsons the New School for Design. Selected exhibitions include the Pinto Art Museum, El Museo del Barrio, Rush Arts Gallery, BRIC Gallery, BronxArtSpace, The Brooklyn Museum, The Bronx Museum, and Smack Mellon, among others. Selected artist residencies include Wave Hill's Winter Workspace, the Bronx Museum's AIM program, Yaddo, BRICworkspace, Art Omi, Project for Empty Space, LMCC's Workspace and Bemis (upcoming). Her work is part of the permanent collection of the Ford Foundation Center for Social Justice. Selected grants include NYFA's Canadian Women's Artist Award, as well a grant from Canada Council for the Arts.

**Corinne Jones** lives and works in New York. She earned her MFA from Columbia University in 2007 and a BFA from the School of Visual Arts in 1996. Jones has realized public art projects at Situations Gallery, New York; Elizabeth Street Garden, New York; Madison Park, Memphis, Tennessee; and Huling Street, Memphis, Tennessee. She has exhibited solo shows at Situations Gallery, New York; Jackie Klempay, Brooklyn, New York; Museum of America books, Brooklyn, New York; Tops Gallery, Memphis, Tennessee, and has participated in various group shows including galleries and museums in Miami, Florida; London, United Kingdom; and Warsaw, Poland. Her work is held in private and public institutions including the New York Presbyterian Hospital. Her artwork has received critical praise from *The New Yorker*, *ARTnews*, *ARTslant*, and *artcore journal*.

**Levani** (b. Tbilisi, Georgia), lives and works in New York. They hold an MFA from Buenos Aires University of Arts and a BFA from Tbilisi State Academy of Arts. They had solo exhibitions at Marisa Newman Projects NY; NARS Foundation, Brooklyn; Georgian National Museum, Mestia; among others. Their work has been shown at the 5th AIM Biennial, The Bronx Museum of the Arts; Socrates Sculpture Park, Queens; 7th Beijing Biennial, National Art Museum of China; BRIC Biennial, Vol 3., and others. They are recipient of the Artist Alliance Inc. LES Studio Residency Program, Socrates Sculpture Park Fellowship, Peter S. Reed Foundation Grant, NYFA Immigrant Artists Mentoring Program, AIM Fellowship of the Bronx Museum of the Arts, and Creative Times X Summit Grant. Their work has been reviewed in *Frieze*, *Art in America*, *Hyperallergic*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, *ArtAsiaPacific*, *The Art Newspaper*, *Pin-UP Magazine*, *OSMOS*, *Observer*, *Art Margins*, among others.

# INSTALLATION

Installation views of *The earth leaked red ochre* at Miriam Gallery, 2022. Photos by Zach Hyman, courtesy Miriam Gallery.























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KOLLEKTOR  
JESSE









going to see





what color is the Black Sea?

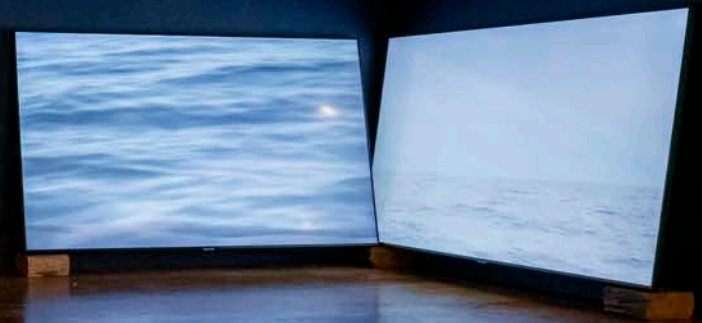
















# CHECKLIST





Lara Atallah  
*Untitled (Barcelona #3)*, 2017  
From  $34.5531^{\circ}$  N,  $18.0480^{\circ}$  E  
Polaroid  
4.233 x 3.483 in (10.8 x 8.8 cm)



Lara Atallah  
*Untitled (Molyvos #1)*, 2017  
From  $34.5531^{\circ}$  N,  $18.0480^{\circ}$  E  
Polaroid  
4.233 x 3.483 in (10.8 x 8.8 cm)



Lara Atallah  
*Untitled (Beirut #3)*, 2016  
From  $34.5531^{\circ}$  N,  $18.0480^{\circ}$  E  
Polaroid  
4.233 x 3.483 in (10.8 x 8.8 cm)





Lara Atallah  
*Untitled (Palermo #3)*, 2017  
From  $34.5531^{\circ}$  N,  $18.0480^{\circ}$  E  
Polaroid  
4.233 x 3.483 in (10.8 x 8.8 cm)



Lara Atallah  
*Untitled (Athens #3)*, 2017  
From  $34.5531^{\circ}$  N,  $18.0480^{\circ}$  E  
Polaroid  
4.233 x 3.483 in (10.8 x 8.8 cm)



Simon Benjamin  
*Errantry*, 2021  
9 minutes  
Three-channel video installation



Simon Benjamin  
*Diamond Wedding No. 1*, 2021  
Edition 7 of 15  
Risograph  
14 x 11 in (35.6 x 27.9 cm)



Simon Benjamin  
*Diamond Wedding No. 2*, 2021  
Edition 7 of 15  
Risograph  
14 x 11 in (35.6 x 27.9 cm)



Sara Jimenez  
*Shore*, 2016  
Steel, water, plaster  
60 x 24 x 10.5 in (152.4 x 61 x 26.7 cm)



Sara Jimenez  
*Shore II*, 2016 Steel  
48 x 23.5 x 4.5 in (121.9 x 59.7 x 11.4 cm)



Sara Jimenez  
*Ossuary II*, 2016  
Plaster, photo transfer  
17.25 x 16.25 x 1 in (43.8 x 41.3 x 2.5 cm)



Sara Jimenez  
*Ossuary I*, 2016  
Plaster, photo transfer  
17.25 x 16.25 x 1 in (43.8 x 41.3 x 2.5 cm)



Sara Jimenez  
*Ossuary III*, 2016  
Plaster, photo transfer  
22.5 x 16.5 x 1.5 in (57.2 x 41.9 x 3.8 cm)



Corinne Jones  
*Islands of the Lost Sea*, 2022  
Moving blankets  
Dimensions variable



Levani (Levan Mindaashvili)  
*Book of Patterns (where I used to nest)*, 2021  
Oil on latex in double sided brass frame  
13 x 11 in (33 x 27.9 cm)



Levani (Levan Mindaashvili)  
*where the Palms nest*, 2022  
Cast silicon and resin palm tree bud with laboratory hardware,  
green latex with stainless steel laboratory hardware, palm tree branch  
5 x 31 x 25 in (12.7 x 78.7 x 63.5 cm)



Levani (Levan Mindiashvili)  
*Patterns of My Consciousness No. 2 (Georgian Alphabet)*, 2021  
Oil silkscreened on latex in artist's steel frame  
13 x 11 in (33 x 27.9 cm)



Levani (Levan Mindiashvili)  
*what color is the Black Sea?*, 2021  
Blacked-out white neon  
6 x 63 in (15.2 x 160 cm)



Levani (Levan Mindiashvili)  
*Test No. 1 (what color is the Black Sea?)*, 2021  
Negative and positive of the Artist's photograph at the age of three on the Black Sea shore silkscreened with oil on latex, two stainless steel trays, black plexiglass, glass, plant in lab glass beaker, stone from the black seashore, two brass rings on brass chain  
17 x 20.5 x 7 in (43.2 x 52.1 x 17.8 cm)