SmackMellon

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Remains to be seen

Emerging Artist Summer Group Exhibition

June 14-July 27, 2025
Opening Reception: Sat. June 14, 6-8PM

Smack Mellon presents *Remains to be seen*, the 2025 Emerging Artist Summer Group Exhibition, guest curated by Pallavi Surana, featuring artists: Maia Chao & Fred Schmidt-Arenales, Yusuf Demirors, S. Emsaki, Sujin Lim, Jessica Maffia, Lucas Odahara, Yunfei Ren, Julia Standovar and Merry Sun.

Remains to be seen brings together nine artists whose practices probe the afterlives of waste in relation to memory, ecology, consumerism, and identity. Through sound, sculpture, video, and ritual, the artists ask how we might engage waste not only as residue, but as witness. The exhibition unfolds across three thematic zones—absurdity and system failure, material and ecological memory, and ritual materiality—guiding visitors through overlapping constellations of rupture, residue, and renewal.

Trash is an omnipresent fixture of contemporary life, generated by systems of overproduction, accelerated consumption, and planned obsolescence. It is the byproduct of both capitalist desire and infrastructure—material evidence of dreams of the *good life* as they are pursued and discarded. As the world faces renewed trade wars and nationalist efforts to reindustrialize, *Remains to be seen* turns to the margins: to what we throw away, overlook, or forget. The exhibition asks: what stories and systems emerge from that which has been cast off?

Beyond the material, the artists also grapple with a more intimate form of abandonment: the fragmentation and reassembly of the self. In their works, remnants, ruins, and salvaged materials become stand-ins for psychological states—fractured identities, lost memories, and unresolved histories. By gathering what has been discarded and transforming it into new forms, the artists propose the possibility of healing composite selves: not by erasing the fractures, but by acknowledging and reconfiguring them. Waste then also becomes a metaphor for the psychic debris we carry as evidence of survival, transformation, and the ongoing negotiation of identity in the world.

Maia Chao & Fred Schmidt-Arenales, Merry Sun, and Lucas Odahara's works fall in the zone of absurdity and system failure where machines sing, language fails, and garbage performs. Within post-industrial landscapes and ecological memory, Sujin Lin, Yusuf Demirrors, and Jessica Maffia's works ground identity in a place that is marked by loss, change, and decay. Finally, concerning ritual materiality, artists S. Emsaki, Yunfei Ren and Julia Standovar's works transform refuse into relics, engaging directly with waste and value.The resultant works transport the viewer, offering portals—not of escape, but of imagination. Some works mine familial and migratory memory; others confront ecological collapse or critique capitalist excess. Their gestures are playful, mournful, and speculative. Together, they challenge linear narratives of progress and decay, proposing alternate modes of value, care, and connection.

CURATOR BIO

Pallavi Surana is an arts writer and curator based in New York. She is currently working on projects with Kiran Nadar Museum of Art and with curator Cecilia Alemani. Previously, she has held positions at SculptureCenter and Hessel Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Art and Photography (MAP), Flint, and St+India Foundation in India; as well as the Cookhouse Gallery and the Camden Arts Centre in London. Her writing has appeared in publications like Eflux Criticism, ARTnews, The Art Newspaper and Ocula, among others. Pallavi has been a visiting critic at various residencies around New York City such as Pioneer Works, EFA Studios and NARS foundation, among others.

ARTIST BIOS

Maia Chao is a Philadelphia-based artist whose collaborative work spans social practice, performance, and video. She has made commissioned works for The Shed, MoMA Education, and Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden. Her projects have been presented at the RISD Museum, Bronx Museum, Oregon Contemporary, Mural Arts Philadelphia, Tufts University Art Galleries, and Boston Center for the Arts. Maia has participated in residencies at Pioneer Works, Fine Arts Work Center, and Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture. She was a 2022-23 Pew Fellow, and is currently Public Artist in Residence at Times Square Arts. She teaches at the Maryland Institute College of Art.

Yusuf Demirors is a lens-based artist based in Brooklyn. He was born in Turkey and moved to New York in 2019. He works with analog time-based mediums, such as 16mm film, still photography and experimental processes in the darkroom, tapes, and collages. He is interested in mythology, numbers, letters, and industrialization. His most recent experiments involve building video synthesizers using digital and analog technologies to transform VHS tapes, super 8 surf films, translating John Cage using a typewriter, and sculptural and audial interventions in photographic processes. He is currently working on a film about a dispossessed tenant who turns into a mythological monster from Central Asia as a part of his fellowship at Third World Newsreel. Yusuf was educated as an anthropologist at Oxford University and as a scholar of the Middle East at the CUNY Graduate Centre.

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S. Emsaki is an interdisciplinary artist from Isfahan, Iran, who lives and works bicoastally in the United States. Emsaki's practice ranges from video to printing processes, in-situ drawings, and archival interventions to address the material, historical, and ecological narratives of human and non-human petro-subjects. Emsaki is the 2024–25 recipient of the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation Residency at the International Studio & Curatorial Program and a recent alum of the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program in New York. They earned an MFA from Yale University and a BA from UC Berkeley, where they were selected for the Wendy Sussman Award and the Eisner Prize. Emsaki's work has been exhibited and screened at Ashkal Alwan's aashra Programming, Beirut, Lebanon; the San Francisco Arts Commission Galleries, CA; Provincetown Art Association and Museum, MA; Westbeth Gallery, NY; and Gallatin Galleries, New York University. They've attended fellowships and residencies at Yaddo Corporation, NY; the Fine Arts Work Center, MA; The Atlantic Center for the Arts, FL; the ICA, and the Paul Mellon Center in London, UK.

Sujin Lim is a Brooklyn based artist born in Seoul, Korea. Her practice explores the emotional and ecological dimensions of place. Through site specific installations and sculptures, she reimagines landscapes as surreal, metaphorical spaces, offering alternative realities for sites shaped by memory, loss, and transformation. Her work has been presented in six solo exhibitions in New York and Seoul, and featured in institutions including the Brooklyn Museum, Seoul Museum of Art, Bauhaus Museum, MARCO Museum (BIENALSUR), and the Museum of Moscow (Moscow International Biennale for Young Art). She is a recipient of the François Schneider Foundation Contemporary Talents award and has participated in residencies at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, ISCP, the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, and the MMCA Changdong Studio in Seoul. Lim has also completed public sculpture commissions across the United States and Canada, integrating her poetic sculptural language into civic spaces.

Jessica Maffia is a multidisciplinary artist born and raised in New York City. In reverence and mourning, she honors the natural world of the city and its surroundings through repetitive, meditative processes. Her work has been exhibited throughout the US and is currently in the Flat Files of Pierogi Gallery. Maffia is the recipient of numerous artist residency fellowships including at the Albee Foundation and the Helene Wurlitzer Foundation, as well as two grants from the Hells Kitchen Foundation. She created a permanent mural installation for the National Audubon Society's Audubon Mural Project, her soil installation is on long-term exhibition at SUNY Purchase College, and she recently installed a NYC Percent for Art permanent installation in a new public school.

Lucas Odahara (b. 1989 São Paulo) is an artist working with a variety of media including ceramic glaze painting, public installation, collage and writing. His work addresses the impulse of self-recognition within structures that are ultimately restrictive, while proposing a notion of a manifold self composed from multiple histories and geographies. Nationality, language, history, race and gender are some of the places he encounters this friction between identification and disidentification. In 2022, he was awarded with the Berlin Art Prize and in 2024 he was a resident at the Jan van Eyck Academy in the Netherlands. His work has been seen at many exhibi-

tions, including: Neue Berliner Kunsverein (n.b.k.), Berlin (2024); David Peter Francis gallery, New York (2024); Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin (2023); TaxisPalais Kunsthalle Tirol, Austria (2023); Kleinplastik Triennial Fellbach (2022); OPENART Biennial, Sweden (2022); Cultural Center of Belgrade (2022); Berlinische Galerie (2021); Bärenzwinger, Berlin (2021); Kunstverein Grafschaft Bentheim (2020); Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture, Karachi, Pakistan (2019); Schwules Museum, Berlin (2017); Kunsthal Charlottenborg, Copenhagen (2016); Weserburg Bremen (2015) and Künstlerhaus Bremen (2015). Lucas Odahara lives and works between Berlin and São Paulo.

Yunfei Ren works across painting, installation, and photography, constructing temporal portals that collapse the boundaries between past and present. His practice engages with history, language, and global migration, mapping cycles of movement, regeneration, and recurrence. Through the interplay of images and materials, Ren's work explores the reverberations of memory and the circulation of histories across time. His work has been exhibited at The Guardhouse at Fort Mason (2024), de Young Museum (2023, 2020), Stanford University (2022), and the Chinese Historical Society Museum (2021), and has been featured in The Washington Post.

Fred Schmidt-Arenales is an artist and filmmaker. His projects attempt to bring awareness to unconscious processes on the individual and group level. He has presented films, installations, and performances internationally at venues including SculptureCenter and Abrons Arts Center, (New York), Links Hall (Chicago), The Darling Foundry (Montreal), LightBox and The Institute of Contemporary Art (Philadelphia), Artspace (New Haven), The Museum of Fine Arts and FotoFest (Houston), Künstlerhaus Halle für Kunst und Medien (Graz), and Kunsthalle Wien (Vienna). His recent film Committee of Six is an official selection of the 2022-23 Architecture and Design Film Festival and was awarded a jury prize for best film at the 2023 Onion City Experimental Film Festival.

Júlia Standovár is a visual artist born in Budapest, Hungary, she has been living in Brooklyn since 2013. She graduated at the Moholy-Nagy University of Arts and Design in BA Photography (2013) and at the School of Visual Arts in MA Photo- Video and Related Media in New York (2015). She received the József Pécsi Scholarship in 2018 and 2019. She participated at several group exhibitions locally and internationally, for example at the Ludwig Museum and the Robert Capa Contemporary Photography Centre in Budapest, Hungarian House of Photography and also at Paris Photo and Photo Basel International Art Fair. Standovár has been represented by TOBE Gallery since 2021, and has had two solo shows with them. Júlia's work explores topics such as Hungarian politics, womanhood, sexuality, human relationships, and inner space. She creates a diverse yet coherent visual language through photography—her first love—and sculptural works. Text plays an important role in her practice, tying the works together and adding another layer of meaning.

Merry Sun is a sound artist and sculptor in Kansas City, Missouri. Sun was born in Shenyang, China, in 1996 and immigrated to the States at the age of three. Much of her practice addresses her fractured past and oscillating patterns of migration. Sun constructs compositional infrastruc-

tures that utilize feedback to facilitate audience exploration and experimentation. Wielding the porosity of sound, her work searches for coincidence and dissolves the boundary between space and place. In 2019, Sun received her BFA from Sam Fox School of Art and Design at Washington University in St. Louis with a double major in sculpture and philosophy. She received her MFA in Sound Art from the Visual Arts department at Columbia University in New York City in 2023. Sun is a 2025 Charlotte Street Visual Artist Award Fellow and resident artist at Charlotte Street Foundation.

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