

ALTMAN SIEGEL

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Zarouhie Abdalian

To History

November 3 – December 16, 2017

Opening reception: November 3, 6 – 8pm

Altman Siegel is pleased to announce *To History*, Zarouhie Abdalian's second solo exhibition at Altman Siegel. Abdalian's new body of work includes sculpture, works on fabric, and sound, all of which advance her investigation into the fundamental nature of human work, its preconditions and its artifacts. Throughout the exhibition, rock and stone stand emblematically for the subject of labor—the raw material to which work is applied. Registered in blows, gouges, and strikes, each artwork concerns the transient moment in which labor transforms its subject from the given to the made. Similarly, several of the works teeter at the edge of the transition along which the readymade maintains its delicate balance between the abstract and the concrete. Abdalian's objects, however, are distinguished by their use-wear; focusing on the gouges, she highlights the very features that tell their singular and unrepeatable histories. With these objects the tension between the abstract and the concrete does not derive from the opposition of the readymade's exchange value to its value in use but from the opposition of art's image to that which it depicts; Abdalian casts this opposition as history written to history made.

The reliefs in the series *from chalk mine hollow* are made from molds of the interior walls of a chalk mine located in Tishomingo County, MS. The now graffitied walls of the mine preserve handmade chisel and pick marks made by workers. Though the Mississippi mine is long abandoned (it was last worked in 1912), the form of extractive labor evidenced at the site is still widely practiced across the globe. In Abdalian's reliefs, the individual strokes of the miners are recorded meticulously, indicating the precise forces born by the bodies of the laborers.

The objects that comprise the *brunt* series originate as tools and tool heads. In each of the sculptures in the series, the top of the pedestal is met with the object's working edge, the surface along which motive force is concentrated.

The sound work *threnody for the millions killed by silicosis* is a collaboration between Abdalian and Joseph Rosenzweig. The sounds heard throughout *threnody* depict the act of knapping, a process by which lithic tools are formed through controlled fracturing. The artists have altered the source recording so that the percussions that are specific to this work process excite a host of reverberant spaces—a mine, a cathedral, a factory floor, a dungeon—each space described by an impulse and its successive decay. The artists' use of ambisonics enables the reproduction of the acoustic properties of these varied spaces within the gallery room in which the work is installed.

to history is a group of rubbings rendered in red colored pencil on fabric. To make the rubbings, Abdalian traced the surface of a six-ton cylindrical wrecking ball. Abdalian's delicate frottage reveals decades' worth of use-wear at demolition sites across the Southeast US, the crisscrossed gouges indicating the forged steel ball's history of violent impacts. Each rubbing hangs like a banner.

Zarouhie Abdalian (b.1982, New Orleans) lives and works in New Orleans, LA. Solo exhibitions include LAXART, Los Angeles; Clifton Benevento, New York and the Berkeley Art Museum. She will have a solo exhibition at the Contemporary Arts Center, New Orleans in 2018. Abdalian has exhibited her work in numerous international contexts including the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco; Museum of Contemporary Art, Cleveland; Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, San Francisco; MOSTYN, Wales; Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, North Adams; Lulu, Mexico City; 2017 Whitney Biennial, New York; Prospect.3 Biennial, New Orleans; the 8th Berlin Biennale; 9th Shanghai Biennale; CAFAM Biennale, Beijing; and the 12th Istanbul Biennial. Select publications include *Artforum*, *Art in America*, *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Los Angeles Times*, and *Art Review*.

Image: Study for *from chalk mine hollow*, 2017