

The

Hoarder

of

Things

Acknowledgements

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A

Smattering,

A

Hoard

Calvin Wang

In Italo Calvino's novel *Invisible Cities*, an elderly and disenchanted Kublai Khan listens intently as Marco Polo describes the many imagined cities he has visited in Kublai's vast empire. In one city, Euphemia, merchants travel there not only to exchange wares during the day, but also to trade tales and memories over fires at night. Another, Thekla, is perpetually being built so that its dismantling cannot begin. Only after the working day is over does the model for its construction appear, when the stars fill the sky after nightfall.

Calvino

In between Polo's stories, Kublai remarks on his vivid descriptions—how is he traveling to all these cities when he never seems to leave the palace gardens? Polo responds: *Perhaps this dialogue of ours is taking place between two beggars nicknamed Kublai Khan and Marco Polo; as they sift through a rubbish heap, piling up rusted flotsam, scraps of cloth, wastepaper, while drunk on the few sips of bad wine, they see all the treasure of the East shine around them.*¹

*The city of Leonia refashions itself every day: every morning the people wake between fresh sheets, wash with just unwrapped cakes of soap, wear brand-new clothing, take from the latest model refrigerator still unopened tins.*²

The can of corn has long expired. Nobutaka Aozaki first purchased it in March of 2012 and has since re-purchased this same can over 150 times at various stores. The well-worn label traces its round ridges, where the once-vibrant green, yellow,

and red has faded to lines of white. Below, a stack of receipts mark each life of the can as it continues to evade the cycle of consumption and disposal—instead, it is reborn by the scan of a barcode, reanimated by each new transaction.

How does one break a can of corn? A can opener might crack it open. Throw it against a wall, smash it into the ground? What if, instead, you shattered the meaning that object might hold? What if you took it to a grocery store and bought it again, and then to another store and bought it again. And another, again.

We begin to confront the thingness of objects when they stop working for us: when the drill breaks, when the car stalls, when the window gets filthy, when their flow within the circuits of production and distribution, consumption and exhibition, has been arrested, however momentarily.³ When objects no longer serve their conventional purpose, they are often thrown away. Landfills, dumpsters, and streets are filled with things abandoned and discarded. Untethered from their previous status as objects, the cigarette butt, lost earring, pigeon feather, and chicken bone become one and the same—detritus, trash, mere things.

Brown

On the sidewalks, encased in spotless plastic bags, the remains of yesterday's Leonia await the garbage truck. Not only squeezed tubes of toothpaste, blown-out light bulbs, newspapers, containers, wrapping, but also boilers, encyclopedias, pianos, porcelain dinner services.⁴

Calvino

A Q-tip stands erect, its yellowed head pokes above a dark teal swatch of fabric. A lone, narrow leaf, still green, leans to the right. Before the leaf, a single pinch of white fluff, a dried floret, and beside them, a once-white feather emerges from the ruffle of hard-to-identify material. Together, these things are housed in a clear cellophane sleeve—the kind that encases the yellow packets of Yuji Agematsu's preferred American Spirit cigarettes—which sits among other wrappers also filled with assortments of

Agematsu detritus he finds on the streets during his daily walk. Thirty-one of these packets are displayed in the form of a calendar, each made from things picked up on a single day during the month of October 2018. Marking the 10th is a moldy white Wrigley's gum wrapper; the 18th, a green fragment—the mouth of a Sprite bottle; the 31st, fishbones. Through these assemblages, Yuji develops an intimate understanding of the city's discarded material: *Each district has a character*, he remarks, *Wall Street people chew Dentyne Ice*.⁵

Calvino *In Chloe, a great city, the people who move through the streets are all strangers. At each encounter, they imagine a thousand things about one another; meetings which would take place between them, conversations, surprises, caresses, bites. But no one greets anyone; eyes lock for a second, then dart away, seeking other eyes, never stopping*.⁶

On the northeast corner of Prince and Greene, Nobu stands holding a shopping bag from the now defunct department store Century 21. He's wearing a bright blue baseball cap with "New York" emblazoned on the front in capital letters, and patiently hovers while a stranger draws something on the notepad he has just handed them. The result is a rudimentary map, scrawls of cross streets overlaid by lines and arrows, which Nobu then follows. Sometimes he arrives at a recommended restaurant or café, other times the destination is merely an address. Nonetheless, he continues to approach people on the street, at times dressed like a tourist, asking them to draw directions to a nearby location. With the hand-drawn fragments he collects during these interactions, Nobu begins to build his own map of the city—connecting lines of ink across wrinkled slips of paper, creased by every gesture and footstep, each wandering glance and chance encounter.

Calvino *Newly arrived and totally ignorant of the Levantine languages, Marco Polo could express himself only with gestures, leaps, cries of wonder and of horror, animal barkings or hootings, or with*

*objects he took from his knapsacks—ostrich plumes, pea-shooters, quartzes—which he arranged in front of him like chessmen.*⁷

An ordered surface of tools and materials is laid out on the floor. Binder clips, a soldering iron, rocks collected or bought at flea markets—arranged together, they arc and tail off into stardust. From here, Mimi Park mends and maintains the world she has constructed. Seeds germinate and sprout from a moist paper pulp, vibrations spread colored powder and rattle pewter bells, motions sensors and microphones capture sounds and motion, triggering new ones. In fact, much of her installation buzzes with life. She has rigged a circuit with electrical wires and standing branches coated in solder. Motors tremble on the backs of everyday objects, the heads of toothbrushes buzz like insects. Things move without purpose—chance encounters, sounds, collisions are captured and transmitted—occasionally they break, crushed by an inadvertent step, or perhaps short-circuited by a splash of water. Yet, Mimi is unfazed by the things that go wrong. Her tools and materials are always nearby and she's diligent in maintaining this constantly changing world she has built, which, like Thekla, only reveals its template in the clear night sky.

*The impasse is a stretch of time in which one moves around with a sense that the world is at once intensely present and enigmatic, such that the activity of living demands both a wandering absorptive awareness and a hypervigilance that collects material that might help clarify things.*⁸ Often, the impasse occurs after a significant event—a loss of a loved one, a catastrophe—something that has fundamentally altered the situation such that one no longer knows how to move forward, but must adjust nonetheless. More uncertain and harder to recognize is the impasse found embedded in the ordinary: when, amidst the breaks and swells of daily life, one comes to the realization that they are adrift and unmoored, stuck without even an event *to have given the situation a name and*

Berlant

*procedures for managing it—coasting through life, as it were, until one discovers a loss of traction.*⁹

A child's sweatshirt has shrunk in the wash. It floats, suspended between two panes of glass, with one arm folded in and the other reaching out. Smears of blue ink from a broken pen dries above, both in traces of motion and dark pools of stillness. In the adjacent piece, a smattering of breadcrumbs scatter from a black plate, amber and fuchsia strings adorn its edges. The plastic tab from a packet of tissues and a metallic candy wrapper loiter on the scene. Tania Pérez Córdova has embalmed these subtle moments she encounters in her home—as if making a wet-mounted microscope slide—creating a frozen tableau of the everyday to be looked at and sat with. Stray hair, torn packaging, dust bunnies. Suspended between the two panes, the least remarkable of things take on a different tone—pockets of air coalesce around orange peels, mold spores sprout from breadcrumbs.

We choose to hold on to the most peculiar and mundane of things. Sometimes, the translucent green mouth of a plastic bottle simply catches the light—a glare that blinds momentarily, but leaves, in its wake, a new light shining upon once-overlooked things. Elsewhere, we might have the time or reason to look, really look, at something that has always been there—a child's sweater now too small for him, a can of corn whose label has faded. Finally, there are the things that were always also something else. A slip of paper with the scrawl of a stranger's hand, a soldered branch humming with electricity: signs of life, remnants of the people who've passed by, strangers and friends both. Still, we carry on, going about our day arranging, maintaining, and clinging to the world as it moves past.

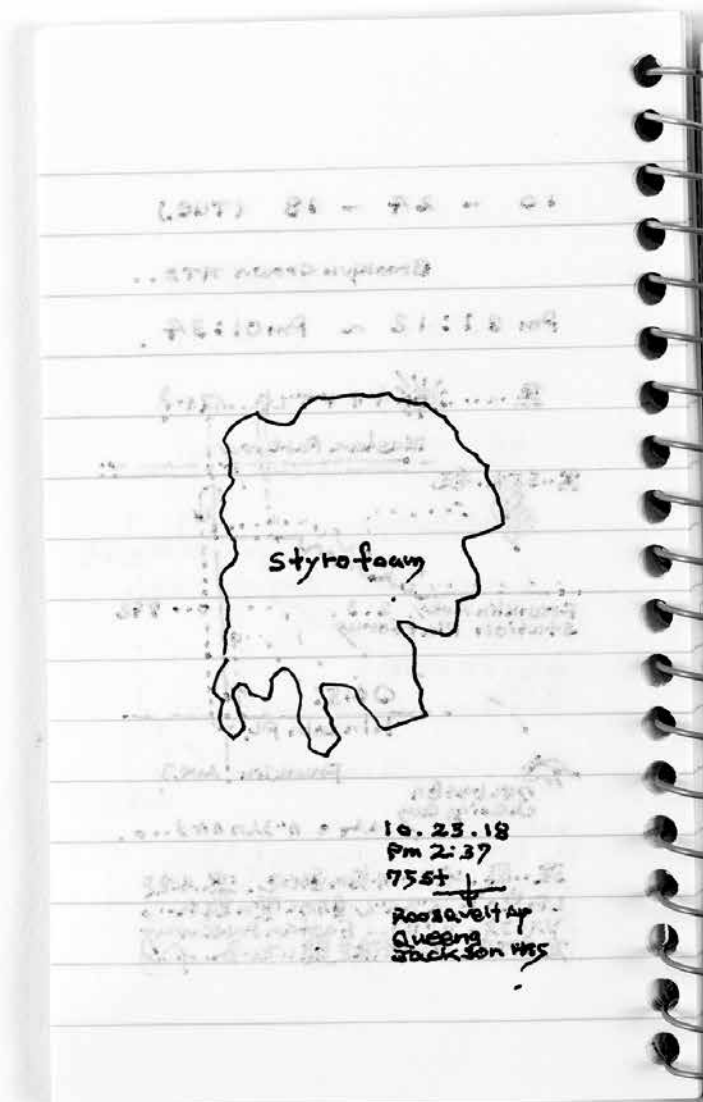
As Kublai Kahn continues to listen to Marco Polo describe the many cities in his vast empire, he grows weary. *It is all useless, if the last landing place can only be the infernal city.*¹⁰

To which Polo responds: *The inferno of the living is not something that will be; if there is one, it is what is already here, the inferno where we live every day, that we form by being together. There are two ways to escape suffering it. The first is easy for many: accept the inferno and become such a part of it that you can no longer see it. The second is risky and demands constant vigilance and apprehension: seek and learn to recognize who and what, in the midst of the inferno, are not inferno, then make them endure, give them space.*¹¹

- 1 Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities* (Boston, MA: Mariner Books, 1978), 104.
- 2 Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, 114.
- 3 Bill Brown, "Thing Theory," *Critical Inquiry* 28, no. 1 (2001): pp. 1-22, 4.
- 4 Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, 114.
- 5 Yuji Agematsu, quoted in Ruba Katrib and Josephine Graf, *Greater New York* (Long Island City, NY: MoMA PS1, 2022), 41.
- 6 Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, 51.
- 7 Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, 21.
- 8 Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 4.
- 9 Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, 4.
- 10 Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, 165.
- 11 Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, 165.

Yuji Agematsu

Excerpts from the artist's notebook from October 2018



10 - 25 - 18 (THU.)

Queens, Jackson Hts.

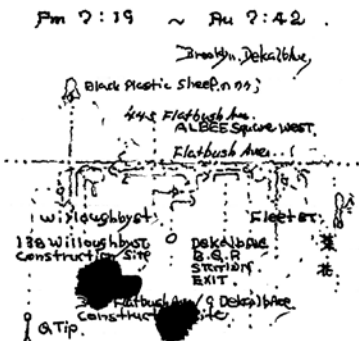
Pm 12:12 ~ Pm 12:41



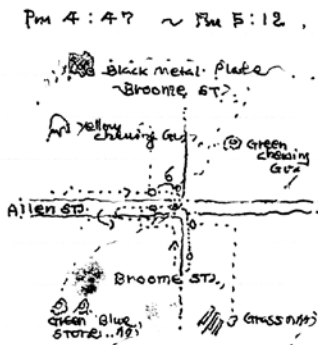
LA GATA Golosa Bakery
JUN.....

B... ..

10 - 01 - 18 (mon.)



10 - 02 - 18 (TUE.)



10 - 03 - 18 (wed.)



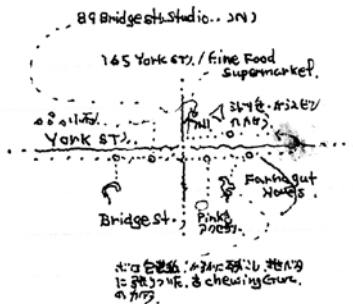
10 - 04 - 18 (Thurs.)



10 - 05 - 18 (Fri)

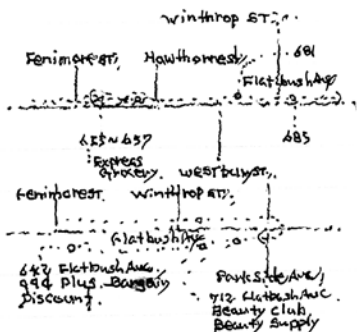
Brooklyn Dumbo

Pm 4:37 ~ Pm 4:58



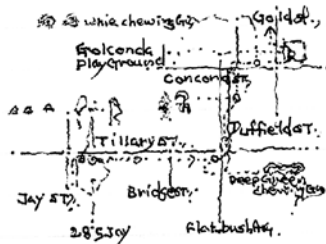
10 - 06 - 18 (Sat.)

Pm 12:36 ~ Pm 1:09



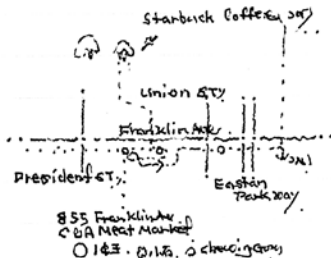
10 - 07 - 18 (Sun)

Pm 2:36 ~ Pm 3:07



10 - 08 - 18 (Mon.)

Pm 4:00 ~ Pm 4:19

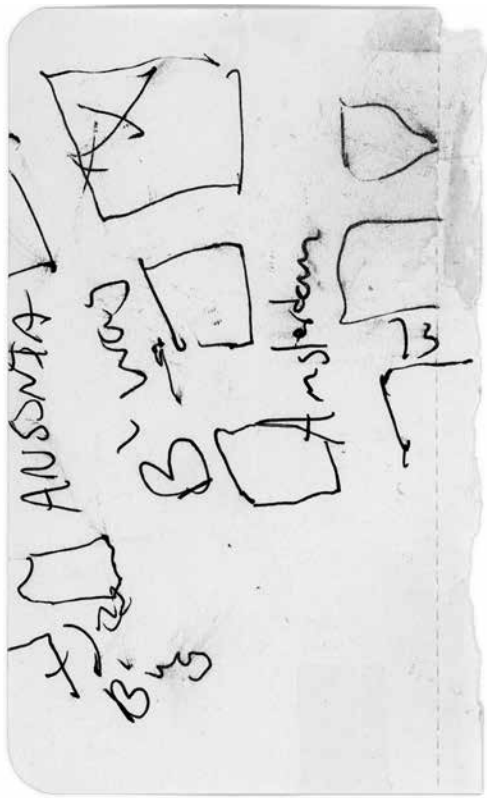


Nobutaka Aozaki

Receipt marking the first purchase of *Value Added #240950*
(*Del Monte whole kernel corn no salt added*)



Map fragment included in *From Here to There (Manhattan)*



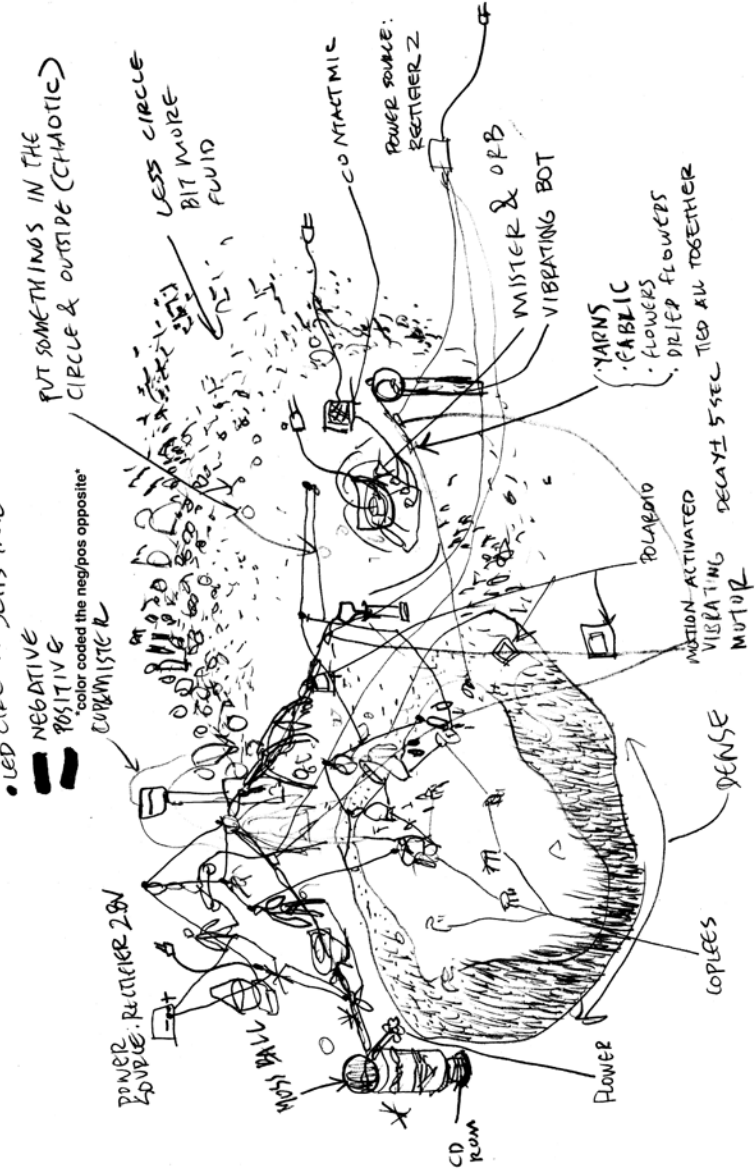
Mimi Park

Photo of the artist's birthday party



Sketch of Playing dead in a jiggling world

schematic for hessel
 * SOUND ELEMENT EXIST IN BOTH CLUSTERS *
 * SOUND ELEMENT SLIPS INTO CENTER NEXTBIT



- LED CIRCUIT SLIPS INTO CENTER NEXTBIT
- NEGATIVE
- POSITIVE
- color coded the neg/pos opposite
- CURMISTIC

PUT SOMETHINGS IN THE CIRCLE & OUTSIDE (CHAOTIC)

LESS CIRCLE BIT MORE FLUID

Tania Pérez Córdova

List of materials written by artist when creating the *Empty Days* series

Días vacíos

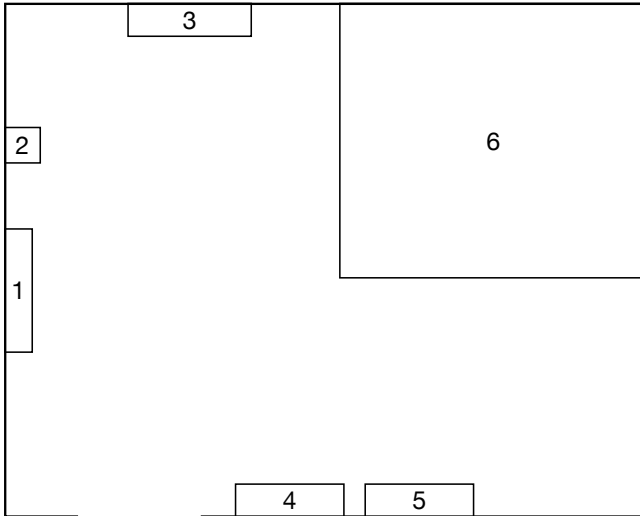
- ✓ hejas arbolito
- papelito borra/
calle
- hilos de ropa
- Fragmentos - mascilla
coloring book
niños
stickar.
- ✓ - Insectos
- ~~proactamol~~
- cigarrillos?
- tarzoz rota.
- ✓ pan
- plastilina
- lipstick.*
- ink
- bolsa de
plastico
- libro de Elms

- contorno telefono
- deds grass / pint.
- make up rojo aplatado
- plata, vaso
- contorno lego.
- ropa.
- olivos
- ilob

Par
insectos

dibujos eli
revista casa
lipstick rojo *
finta pluma azul *
traer bote mermelada para lodo
traer hojas para cartolinas
mascarilla.
hilos
bolsa plastico
blush *

Exhibition Guide



- 1 Yuji Agematsu
(b. 1956, Kanagawa, Japan)
Zip: (10.01.18) – (10.31.18), 2018
Mixed media in cigarette pack
cellophane wrappers
Collection of Laurie and David Wolfert
- 2 Nobutaka Aozaki
(b. 1977, Kagoshima, Japan)
Value_Added #240950 (Del Monte whole kernel corn no salt added), 2012-23
Canned corn and receipts
Courtesy of the artist
- 3 Nobutaka Aozaki
(b. 1977, Kagoshima, Japan)
From Here to There (Manhattan), 2012-23
Various pens and paper, map pins
Courtesy of the artist
- 4 Tania Pérez Córdova
(b. 1979, Mexico City, Mexico)
Empty days: Bread crumbs falling from a plate, the phone has run out of battery, our last candy, 2021
Tempered glass with polarized filter of different densities
Courtesy of the artist and Tina Kim Gallery
- 5 Tania Pérez Córdova
(b. 1979, Mexico City, Mexico)
Empty Days: broken rollerball pen, the sweater has shrank, air bubbles and dust, 2022
Tempered glass with polarized filter of different densities
Courtesy of the artist and Tina Kim Gallery
- 6 Mimi Park
(b. 1996, Seoul, Korea)
Playing dead in a jiggling world, 2023
Recycled paper, magnetic stirrers, plaster, ceramic, aluminum foil, yarns, fabric, rectifier, rainbow radish microgreens, dried moss, collected dust, wire, humidifier, mica pigment, cotton thread, conductive thread, aerated soil, amplifier, vibrating motor, subwoofer, electrical wire, resin, cd, cd case, found object, and artist tools
Courtesy of the artist