



UNLOAD: Guns in the Hands of Artists -
Ephemera

UNLOAD: Guns in the Hands of Artists

Summer 2018

#UNLOAD: Guns in the Hands of Artists Wall Labels

Fairfield University Art Museum

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CLUB S + S [New Orleans, LA and Cologne, Germany, Stephen Paul Day, b. 1954, Sibylle Peretti, b. 1964, Club S + S, b. 2000]

SMAC - Distillation, 2018

Custom formed glass, decommissioned gun parts, gel

Artist's Statement:

SMAC = second mitochondria-derived activator of caspases.

We suggest here the identification of a novel work of art.

SMAC embodies the idea of activating a programmed cellular death by promoting apoptosis stimuli. The resulting process gains importance through the elimination of unwanted organisms or guns.

MARGARET EVANGELINE [New York, NY, b. 1943]

***Disintegrating Relic*, 2014**

Oil on linen

Artist's Statement:

My thoughts upon receiving a gun from the streets of New Orleans is how to make it disappear, thus the ghostly image on linen. I covered the pistol with wet white paint and pressed it into linen. There is a slick of stand oil spilling over the pistol's imprint, leaving a kind of stigmata. It looks liturgical, like a Vera Icon (true image) or a relic. Could our enthrallment with guns ever be satisfied with the contemplation of a relic?

DEBORAH LUSTER [New Orleans, LA, b. 1951]

Forms of Correspondence, I. (YES, NO, GOOD BYE), 2014
Winchester 1200 shotgun, cypress, ink, acrylic, and crystal

Artist's Statement:

Straight from my heart, fucker! You know what a love letter is? It's a bullet from a fucking gun, fucker! You receive a love letter from me, and you're fucked forever!

Frank Booth – Blue Velvet

Dear Reader,

The chain of guns and violence that precedes and produces our current cultural climate is loose but definite within the “chain of causality.” It translates mundane whim into morbid outcome and limits the range of our society, invisibly, even when it is not actively being used to create fear or corpses.

This Talking Board is a chained oracle, an illusion machine, a desperate promise. It is a technology designed for corresponding with those who have gone (perhaps you have lost a loved one to gun violence?). It is a machine of self-fulfilling prophecy.

Please mind the oracle machine.

RICO GATSON [New York, NY, b. 1966]

***Gun Drop Echo*, 2014**

Video

Running time: 8 min 10 sec

Edition of 3 with 2 APs

Courtesy of Ronald Feldman Fine Art

Artist's Statement:

When I first saw an image of the guns after they were torched I was struck by how ironic it was that they resembled mangled corpses. The power of actually handling the guns presented issues for me as they by themselves possess great power. What came intuitively was to strip them down and to simply film them being dropped in a corner. Each gun has been stripped, and all its parts were dropped. In postproduction I slowed the footage down and played with layering and sequencing. The resulting audio sounds as if the guns are at times being cocked and fired. The echo heightens the effect and/or impact.

PAUL VILLINSKI [New York, NY, b. 1960]

Epitaph, 2014

Shotgun, aluminum (found can) soot, steel
Collection of Jessica Bride and Nick Mayor

Artist's Statement:

Americans are obsessed with their guns, all 300 million of them. Guns fundamentally do one thing: destroy life – take something away. Art does the opposite. Imagine if everyone with a gun in their hand held a tool or a brush instead....

PAUL VILLINSKI [New York, NY, b. 1960]

Calvary, 2018

Bullet casings

Artist's Statement:

Calvary refers to the conundrum of Christian gun ownership and gun violence. The vast majority of mass murders in the US are committed by white Christian males. In my own experience, I have a personal acquaintance who is a devout Evangelical Christian and also a committed gun collector and hunter. Some years ago, in a moment of depression, his beloved teenage son took one of his father's guns, went into his father's closet, and killed himself. Although profoundly heartbroken, the father cannot connect the presence of guns in his home with the loss of his son – he continues to collect even more firearms. He is unable to see or admit that if guns had not been readily available in his home, his son's moment of depression might have resulted in a conversation instead of ending his life – perfectly illustrating the intractable nature of the problem of guns in America.

PAUL VILLINSKI [New York, NY, b. 1960]

Never, 2018

Decommissioned guns

Artist's Statement:

Never is a kind of Rorschach, and relies on – or perhaps reveals – the viewer's frame of reference or bias regarding issues of gun ownership and violence: "Never again?" "Never gonna change?" "You will never take my guns away?" "The victims of gun violence will never see another sunset?" "The Second Amendment is sacrosanct and will never be diluted?" "The Second Amendment was never intended to refer to semi-automatic weapons and should be interpreted as such?" "The 300,000,000 guns in circulation in the US will never leave the public domain?"

PAUL VILLINSKI [New York, NY, b. 1960]

Pistil, 2018

Aluminum (found cans), wire, palladium leaf, wood, bullet casings
Installation variable

Artist's Statement:

Littered aluminum cans collected by homeless “canners” from the streets of New York become butterflies, hovering near spent bullet shells, as if approaching flowers to feed on nectar. The title plays on the similarity of the words “pistil” – the female reproductive parts of a flower – with “pistol” – a word known by every six-year-old boy in America.

PAUL VILLINSKI [New York, NY, b. 1960]

Celtic, 2018

Decommissioned guns

Artist's Statement:

From Wikipedia: The Celtic cross is essentially a Latin cross with a nimbus surrounding the intersection of the arms and stem. The form gained new popularity during the Celtic Revival of the 19th century; the name "Celtic cross" is a convention dating from that time. The shape became popular for funerary monuments and other uses, and has remained so, spreading well beyond Ireland." But this cross has assumed darker associations in recent years: "A square cross interlocking with or surrounded by a circle is one of the most popular symbols used by individuals and organizations to represent white nationalism, white supremacy, neo-Nazism, and white pride; it is used as the logo for white nationalist website Stormfront.org. This stems from the use of the Celtic cross by Norwegian Nazis during World War II." Celtic conflates this usage of this Christian symbol with American mass-shootings, most often perpetrated by white Christian males often under the sway of the twisted ideas of white supremacy.

Generic Art Solutions [Matt Vis, b. 1965 and Tony Campbell, b. 1965, Generic Art Solutions, New Orleans, LA, b. 2000]

Target: Audience (9mm), 2016

Vintage gumball machine, plastic casings, 9 mm bullets

Artist's Statement:

Generic Art Solutions is the collaborative efforts of Matt Vis and Tony Campbell. This New Orleans-based art duo utilizes nearly every art medium as they examine the recurring themes of human drama and the (dis)functions of contemporary society. Always rooted in the performative, they play every character in their work. In their more distilled "duets" we see something of a yin and yang (a balance between individuals that aren't quite interchangeable), but in their more elaborate stagings, the resultant effect is as epic as the subject matter itself. By combining Classical, Romantic, and Baroque compositional elements with contemporary pictorial techniques, they manage to illuminate the common thread that connects past histories with current events. This strategy creates something of a "Déjà Vu effect" that is driven by drama and surrealism with traces of levity. In this dialogue between the past and present the viewer realizes several things: 1) that the history of art is inextricably political, 2) that human behavior repeats itself no matter how tragic or brutal, and 3) that this cycle of repetition must be broken so personal and societal progress can be made. Despite all this, their work contains a glimmer of hope—a hope that through thoughtful examination (and armed with a commitment to change) we can indeed forge a better future.

ADAM MYSOCK [Cincinnati, OH, b. 1983]

Looking Down the Barrel of a Gun (Last Judgment) After: Hans Memling's "The Last Judgment" Triptych (ca. late 1460s), Bambi's mother from Disney's "Bambi"(1942), 2014

Acrylic on panel, mounted on a J.P. Sauer Sohn shotgun

Artist's Statement:

Anytime a gun is fired, a last judgment is generated; a shooter is making an irreversible assessment about their target's worth and virtue. Anyone pulling a trigger assumes the God-like responsibility of ruling over another entity's fate.

Unfortunately, too often that actuality is far more apparent to the target than it is to the marksman.

For this piece, I'm offering viewers the chance to voluntarily put themselves in the position of target in order to observe the last judgments inherent within a firearm.

Looking down the left barrel of the gun, one can see the good rising to enter the Gates of Heaven. Looking down the right, the evil being cast into Hell.

Through the lower channel, the viewer is supplied with a visual reminder of my earliest awareness of a gun's finality – a vision of Bambi's mother just before she's shot.

NEIL ALEXANDER [New Bedford, MA and New Orleans, LA,
b. 1954]

***Growing up in a Gun Culture, My Son*, 1996-2014**

Sublimated prints on aluminum

Edition 1 of 3

Artist's Statement:

I've been making portraits of my son Calder since the very moment he came into this world. Lifted from his mother's womb and placed on the scale, his pediatric nurse took a measuring tape to him. Click went the shutter. The two images in this exhibition, taken eighteen years apart, are the only formal images I've ever made of him naked and the only two of him holding a gun.

Though Louisiana is proudly known as the Sportsman's Paradise, I am not a hunter. Despite raising a son and daughter in New Orleans, which to some is known as much for its violence as its vibrant culture, my wife Nancy and I never felt the need to own a firearm for protection, although we have close friends who do. A break-in robbery, two stolen cars, and friends who had similar experiences, never compelled me to change my mind and purchase a gun. Our kids were raised in a home where their dad shot photographs of the city and its people.

In 1996, as a response to numerous, senseless and violent murders by young men in New Orleans, Brian Borrello put out a call for artists to participate in an exhibit he conceived called "Guns in the Hands of Artists." My challenge was to create an image that was both disturbing and provocative, an image that challenged our culture's values. I decided to make a portrait of Calder, naked, innocent, and holding a gun.

Has anything changed? In the eighteen years since I made that portrait I've attended three funerals for victims of gun violence in New Orleans. Two deaths were acquaintances of our family, young black men who were in the wrong place at the wrong time. The third was a friend, a talented artist and craftsman, who was shot in the back of the head after he dismissed a 14 year old boy who demanded that he "Give it up" in broad daylight only blocks from the 2004 Jazz & Heritage Festival in New Orleans.

Over the last two decades our nation has experienced unfathomable acts of gun violence perpetrated by young men in schools, movie theaters, homes, shopping malls... the list goes on. Just one of these events should have been enough to generate a sea change of public opinion that would send a clear message to our legislators to write new sensible gun laws. Instead, the opposite seems to be true; guns are big business in our democracy. Our public discourse today is about protecting students by arming teachers. "Open Carry" laws mean you can go into a bar, restaurant, super market, or house of worship 'armed and protected.'

We live in a world saturated by guns and violence. Graphic content, unspeakable 18 years ago, is everywhere through a seamless delivery of news, video games and media. As a photographer, artist, and father I never imagined I would be creating this diptych. Now, my son and I present here, in this forum, a public declaration. Enough is enough!

R. LUKE DUBOIS [New York, NY, b. 1975]

***Take a Bullet for this City*, 2014**

Walther PPK 9mm, steel plate, mechanism, minicomputer

Courtesy of Bitforms Gallery

Artist's Statement:

In the middle ages, townspeople relied on the town crier to provide them with official pronouncements. "Three o'clock and all is well" was the original form of open data available to city-dwellers, marking time and, in the night, assuring them of safety in their streets.

In New Orleans, there have been, as of this time of writing, 2,262 calls to 911 reporting a "discharging firearm" since January 1st, 2014. The bulk of these shootings occur at night, on weekends, and in the wee hours of the morning. In much of this city, this data tells us, though it may be three o'clock, all is not well, and hasn't been for a very long time.

"Take a Bullet for this City" is a proof of concept for a piece that could serve New Orleans, or any community plagued by gun violence. A simple computer-triggered mechanism pulls the trigger of a gun loaded with blanks in response to a shooting in the city, ejecting a spent cartridge into a vitrine that accumulates empty bullets. The noise and flash of the gun provides an alarm that is itself meant to alarm; the vitrine resembles a wishing well, only it represents wishes taken away, not granted. This piece is hard data in both senses of the word: it is based on facts; facts that are, by their very nature, intended to hurt us.

In this iteration, a Walther PPK fires on a schedule based on the shootings reported by the public to the NOPD a week and twelve hours ago in time, commemorating, a week later, violence that is so common as to be quickly forgotten as individual occurrences. A visitor to the gallery at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday is hearing the shootings of 10:00 p.m. the Saturday before. These time-shifted events are intended to alarm, marking time by sudden bursts of violent noise followed by the ever-rising tide of spent cartridges at the sculpture's base. This piece could listen to any city, and it could run for years, and it belongs, perhaps, out-of-doors. The new town crier, but in reverse; all will be well only when this gun finally falls silent.

Generic Art Solutions [Matt Vis, b. 1965 and Tony Campbell, b. 1965, Generic Art Solutions, New Orleans, LA, b. 2000]

One Hot Month, 2002-2014

Silkscreen on photogram

2 APs

Artist's Statement:

As the temperature climbs throughout the sweltering summer months in New Orleans, tempers flare, causing street crime and homicide numbers to jump dramatically. As the days go on and the temperature rises, it becomes common for citizens to read about death by gunshot almost daily. Many of us find ourselves frantically looking for familiar faces in the obituaries, if only to confirm the senseless tragedy of a loved one or neighbor who has fallen victim to gun violence. It is a bitter reality that when young men grow up in a culture flooded with guns, hotheaded youths settle their grievances with lead, not fists.

But gang violence and drug deals gone bad don't account for all of these killings—there are many innocent victims as well. Babies are born innocent, but all too often they are born into dangerous and volatile environments. How, then, can these children be protected from their surroundings? Family? Religion? More guns?

The genesis of One Hot Month was initially an attempt to simply chronicle our environment by clipping the obituaries of "death by gunshot" victims during August 2002, when there was nearly one homicide per day. Their photographs, often outdated and blurry, immediately took the appearance of faded memories. They were hastily catalogued victims of an impulsive action; they were shot and killed in a heated moment—done and gone forever. But we felt these events shouldn't be swept under the rug so easily. To us, these images represent the need for an examination of the roots of this terminal societal dysfunction.

For this exhibition, each victim's picture was silk-screened in gloss black on a unique photogram of a broken handgun recovered from a citywide buyback program. This combines a shadowy effect on something of an x-ray, resulting in 27 haunting memorials laid out as days of the tragic calendar month in which they died. Here, the victims' likenesses refuse to fade from a broken society threatened to be held captive by the increasingly impulsive actions of heavily armed and troubled youths.

BRADLEY McCALLUM [New York, NY, b. 1966]

Smelting: A Gun Legacy, 1996-2014, 2014

Smelted decommissioned guns

Artist's Statement:

In this live pour, I intend to link performance and object, and to bridge my 1996 work The Manhole Cover Project which cast 228 utility covers from 11,194 guns that were confiscated by Connecticut law enforcement to New Orleans's current effort in transforming weapons into art. During the performance, I smelted guns taken from the streets of New Orleans, along with gun shell casings, and pour the iron-infused brass into a sand-cast impression lifted from the pattern that was used in The Manhole Cover Project. Part alchemy, part historical reference, this transformation and symbolic tracing of a past work aims to remind us that the national conversation around gun violence and ownership has not changed. The object fabricated in this performance fused the present with the past — the metal disc made from the impression of the manhole-cover pattern was penetrated with firearms taken from the streets of New Orleans, to create a touchstone that aims to contribute to the civic discourse concerning gun ownership that is active in this local community.

The epidemic of gun violence that shaped the urban cities in the 1990s and was a focus of my work for a decade is still active. The mothers who have lost children to gun violence twenty years ago are joined each year in small and large cities alike. Our national policies have not changed, and even the most reasonable efforts to enact gun legislation face huge obstacles. Our national attention focuses only momentarily when major tragic acts of violence are in the headlines, but for the thousands of families who have lost loved ones to gun violence and incarceration each year, the impact of this public health crisis continues to be felt. As artists we can contribute to this essential discourse and to contribute to long-overdue change.

JOHN SCHUERMAN [Minneapolis, MN, b. 1961]

***Plaything*, 2017**

.45 caliber gun, children's table and chair set, teddy bear, ink drawing on paper

Artist's Statement:

I don't consider myself a gun violence survivor but I've been proximate to it much more often than I'd like. When I was in college my brother threatened my parents at gunpoint over a night, fortunately no one was physically harmed. About 20 years go my neighbor's 5 year-old son found a loaded handgun in the laundry basket and shot himself dead. His mother's screams were the loudest things I've ever heard come from a human. Two weeks later I watched the police kill a man on the lawn across the street. He'd been threatening them with two steak knives. In my current neighborhood a man was shot in the alley right behind our house. He survived and knew who shot him but refused to tell the police. In 2012, my former place of employment was the scene of a mass murder. The gunman killed 7 people including himself, and critically injured 1 more. I knew most of the people that were murdered, and helped rebuild the company after the tragedy. The shooter had 12000 rounds of ammunition and had been planning the mass murder for over a year. Then a man was shot and killed in his car half a block away from my house, and another man was murdered in his home a few blocks over. About a year ago, someone in our neighborhood reported his car stolen – he'd left it running outside his house unlocked. He told the police to be careful because there were several loaded rifles in the back seat. Unfortunately, I don't think my stories are that unusual.

The national statistics are astounding, over 30,000 people are killed by guns in this country every year and it has been that way for decades. What is it about our culture, our society, the country, and we the people that results in this situation? It has all been talked about before but clearly we have not yet understood in the way needed for positive change. There is ample evidence to show that deaths dramatically decline when common sense gun laws are in place, such as background checks for ALL gun sales. But Americans have not voted for candidates that will do this –we've chosen to live with this level of violence instead.

Silence is complicity and I'm not willing to be part of that. I hope my art will wake a few more people into action on this issue.

ANDREI CODRESCU [New York, NY, b. 1946]

***A Southern American Story*, 2014**

Poem

Vinyl lettering

Andrei Codrescu is a poet and provocateur. He was born in Romania, as Andrei Perlmutter, and published his first poems in Romanian under the pen name Andrei Steiu. He now resides in the Arkansas Ozarks, Paris, and New Orleans.

BRADLEY McCALLUM [New York, NY, b. 1966]

Smelting: A Gun Legacy, 1996-2014, 2014

Smelted decommissioned guns

Collection of Beth Rudin DeWoody

LUIS CRUZ AZACETA [New Orleans, LA, b. 1942]

Carry On, Drugs, Gun & Teddy Bear, 2014

Mixed media with suitcase

Artist's Statement:

Urban violence has been a central theme in my work throughout the years. I've always lived in urban centers and have witnessed acts of violence. In Havana, my city of birth, I experienced at a young age daily violence on the streets both pre and post revolution. In 1960 I left in exile to New York where I became an artist. Art gave me a voice and weapon to address the human condition.

I am delighted to be part of GUNS IN THE HANDS OF ARTISTS as it is a very important and most needed exhibition that draws upon the rampant crime and guns in the city.

What sustains me as an artist is the belief that art has the power to awaken compassion and hope.

RON BECHET [New Orleans, LA, b. 1956]

***Swords to Ploughshares*, 2014**

Palm fronds, gun parts, paint on wood panel

Artist's Statement:

The basic structure uses palm fronds – a symbol of peace – like a root structure, returning the gun parts to what they were before they were made to be weapons. Things are cyclical, and are transformed to another form. I remember these words from the song, “Down by the Riverside,” singing it at family gatherings, in the streets and in churches. The biblical passage Isaiah 2:4 says... “and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they study war any more.” Truly, the weapons themselves must be laid down and transformed into a useful tool. Lao Tzu said “We should blunt our sharp points, and unravel the complications of things; we should attemper our brightness, and bring ourselves into agreement with the obscurity of others.” Our pride obscures our ability to see each other as human beings with deep faults that need to be solved together for the long cycle rather than what seems to be simple quick solutions. A Bondei proverb says “Sticks in a bundle are unbreakable.” We need more mediators than weapons, more skill development and teaching the skill to work together rather than against one another. Less weapons of many kinds used against each other to hurt, and more skills developed to make more bundles.

CLUB S + S [New Orleans, LA and Cologne, Germany, Stephen Paul Day, b. 1954, Sibylle Peretti, b. 1964, Club S + S, b. 2000]

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MARGARET EVANGELINE [Baton Rouge, LA, b. 1943]

***Disintegrating Relic*, 2014**

Oil on linen

Artist's Statement:

My thoughts upon receiving a gun from the streets of New Orleans is how to make it disappear, thus the ghostly image on linen. I covered the pistol with wet white paint and pressed it into linen. There is a slick of stand oil spilling over the pistol's imprint, leaving a kind of stigmata. It looks liturgical, like a Vera Icon (true image) or a relic. Could our enthrallment with guns ever be satisfied with the contemplation of a relic?

JONATHAN FERRARA [New Orleans, LA, b. 1967]

Excalibur No More, 2014

Mossberg 12 gauge shotgun, Colorado river rock

Artist's Statement:

I have never owned a gun and wasn't sure how to go about "acquiring" one for this piece I envisioned...I thought it would be a difficult and cumbersome process. It actually took about five minutes to buy it...After finding the gun online, the seller brought it to the gallery and I gave him the money and he gave me the gun... that was it ...no paperwork, no receipt, no record...totally legal....it blew my mind. Of course, I had to engage in a fifteen minute conversation about the 2nd Amendment with the seller... after that, his son gave me a bandolier of 40 shells and I was armed and ready....

Before inserting the shotgun into the rock, I knew I had to go shoot the shotgun... otherwise it would not be an authentic experience. I went to a range with a friend who had guns since age 7. After a brief "lesson", I started shooting and I must say it was a total rush...adrenaline flowing, heart pumping, sweat rolling down my face. The sheer power of the gun scared me and excited something within me at the same time.

The title of this piece and concept is drawn from the proverbial sword in the stone from Arthurian legend, but in this case the gun cannot be removed from the stone as if to say... "Aren't we done?"

MK GUTH [Portland, OR, b. 1963]

Bang, 2014

Steel

Artist's Statement:

I traded in the box of random revolver parts I received from the gallery for their equal value in steel from a scrap yard that melts down gun parts for the city of Portland, Oregon. The steel I received in return contains the remnants of old guns but is devoid of its original content. BANG is a steel plaque reminiscent of old signs, jewelry or address plaques. Melting down the gun parts renders the materials neutral. The text "BANG" references the material's previous form and points to the prior violence of the original object.

DEBORAH LU [New Orleans, LA, b. 1951]

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Winchester 1200 shotgun, cypress, ink, acrylic, and crystal

Artist's Statement:

Straight from my heart, fucker! You know what a love letter is? It's a bullet from a fucking gun, fucker! You receive a love letter from me, and you're fucked forever!

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ADAM MYSOCK [Cincinnati, OH, b. 1983]

The Last Six, Under Six, Murdered by a Gun in the Sixth, 2014
Acrylic on copper, mounted in wall

Artist's Statement:

Late last year, a local news station was reporting on the shooting death of a seven-month old child. As part of their reporting, the anchor described that – since 2010 – 6 children had been “gunned-down” in New Orleans. I recognized some of the murder scenes she mentioned as locations within the Central City neighborhood, where I had witnessed the murder of an unarmed sixteen-year-old a decade ago.

It turns out that four of those six children were killed in, or near, Central City – within the city's Sixth Police District. In fact, one child had been gunned-down per year starting in 2010, but three were killed in 2013 alone. Looking into the statistics further, I discovered that I had to go back to 1994 – one of the most violent years in our city's history – to even find another child who had been killed as the result of gunfire.

The sixteen-year lull seemed huge compared to the short regularity with which kids are being killed now.

In order to draw attention to the children and the frightening timeline of their murders, I'll be creating bullet holes in the gallery wall at measured intervals to serve as a timeline of sorts.

A portrait will be inserted in each as a reminder of a bullet holes' effects – the last six children, under six years old, killed in New Orleans's Sixth Police District.

NICHOLAS VARNEY [New York, NY, b. 1971]

Onegin, 2014

Decommissioned gun, and bullet comprised of 18-karat yellow gold, D/E/F IF/VVS colorless diamonds weighing 1.64 carats

Artist's Statement:

Onegin is named after the Alexander Pushkin book "Eugene Onegin," which tells of a man whose life was led in the great glamour of the time in palace parties and languid to torrid love affairs. Onegin killed his best friend in an incident over a woman. The gun transformed his life and gave birth to Tchaikovsky's greatest opera.

Juxtaposition is the key element to punctuating any precious stone. Set a diamond in wood and watch it become more striking as a result of the wood serving as its foil. The stone seems brighter and gains importance, and a new dialogue begins. We have taken the same premise that the jewelry has always had and applied it to the debate for this show. The bullet is comprised of 18K gold and colorless diamonds. Hopefully, the brightness of the bullet sheds light on the gun and all of its significance within New Orleans; a city known for its singular splendor and its foil. It is a gem after all.

WILLIAM VILLALONGO [New York, NY, b. 1975]

***Sleeping on Reason*, 2014**

Gun, ceramic head, velvet flock, velvet pillow in PlexiGlass box

Artist's Statement:

"Sleeping on Reason" is constructed from a small revolver and the head of a black glazed ceramic child. The gun is coated with velvet fibers and rests on a small red velvet pillow. The black ceramic head replaces the revolver's bullet chamber. The piece is meant to be somewhat perversely symbolic: collapsing the gun and the many young victims of gun violence. The title refers to Francisco de Goya's The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters; a quintessentially dark vision of humanity that, whether intended or not, takes the Enlightenment period to task as its awakening of sensitivity to the arts, math and science coincides with some of the most brutal acts of humanity. I am reminded that we live in a society of many contradictions. The notion that we have achieved an egalitarian society tempered by laws becomes brittle when one contemplates that in the United States it is easier to buy a gun than it is to vote. Perhaps this is what Goya meant by the caption accompanying the print: "Imagination abandoned by reason produces impossible monsters; united with her, she is the mother of the arts and source of their wonders."

SIDONIE VILLERE [New Orleans, LA, b. 1976]

Residual, 2014

Plywood, acrylic, gun cylinders, muslin and plaster

Artist's Statement:

My work has always explored the contradictions of self-preservation. With "Residual," I am using the physical relationship between the rusted cylinders and the muslin to illustrate the emotionally conflicted relationship that we have with guns. They are a survival strategy that both help us and harm us. I am commenting on the toxic results of this relationship.

PAUL VILLINSKI [New York, NY, b. 1971]

Epitaph, 2014

Shotgun, aluminum (found can) soot, steel

Collection of Jessica Bride and Nick Mayor

Artist's Statement:

We are obsessed with our guns, all 300 million of them. Guns fundamentally do one thing: destroy life, take something away. Art does the opposite. Imagine if everyone with a gun in their hand held a tool or a brush instead.

RICO GATSON [New York, NY, b. 1966]

***Gun Drop Echo*, 2014**

Video

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When I first saw an image of the guns after they were torched I was struck by how ironic it was that they resembled mangled corpses. The power of actually handling the guns presented issues for me as they by themselves possess great power. What came intuitively was to strip them down and to simply film them being dropped in a corner. Each gun has been stripped, and all its parts were dropped. In postproduction I slowed the footage down and played with layering and sequencing. The resulting audio sounds as if the guns are at times being cocked and fired. The echo heightens the effect and/or impact.

Gun Buyback: Pay it Forward

#UNLOAD partnered on a gun buyback with Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center, the Connecticut Children's Medical Center, and the Hartford Police Department in Hartford in December 2017. The guns collected were exchanged for Stop & Shop gift cards and then decommissioned by the Hartford Police Department. These are the sawed up remnants of 68 guns that were collected, including 3 assault rifles and a machine gun. These gun parts will be offered up to a select group of Connecticut artists who will create new art for an exhibit to be presented in partnership with ArtSpace, New Haven. Thus we recreate the model provided by the Guns in the Hands of Artists Foundation and pay it forward here in Connecticut.

#UNLOAD: Guns in the Hands of Artists

Presented by

City of New Orleans

New Orleans Police Department

Guns In The Hands of Artists Foundation

Jonathan Ferrara Gallery, New Orleans

UNLOAD Foundation Inc.

Jahmane West (American, b. 1975)

#UNLOAD, 2018

Acrylic on canvas

#UNLOAD uses the arts to bring together diverse people for conversations that drive consensus and help find solutions to one of America's most divisive issues: gun violence.

*For more information or to get involved, please visit: **www.unloadusa.org***