



oddment[s], 2014

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- i. 2 rocks, Mitsumata paper, glue; Chicago, 5/2013
- ii. 1 rock, Mitsumata paper, glue; Chicago, 5/2013
- iii. 3 rocks, Sekishu paper, glue; Chicago, 6/2012
- iv. 32 unfired clay cups, 23.75K Rosenoble gold leaf; Varanasi, 1/2012
- v. 4 rocks, Tengucho paper, glue; Chicago, 5/2013
- vi. toy, rock, nail polish; Chicago, 8/2011
- vii. metal, silver plate; Chicago, 4/2011
- viii. 9 concrete fragments, tile, Mitsumata paper, bronze; Chicago, 4/2013
- ix. buffers, wool; New York City, 10/2011
- x. buffers, wool; New York City, 10/2011
- xi. buffer, wool; New York City, 10/2011
- xii. buffer, wool; New York City, 10/2011
- xiii. 50 felted wool rectangles, silk embroidered texts; Chicago, 9/2011-11/2014
- xiv. 15 concrete and clay fragments, glaze, .999 pure silver leaf; Kanjirapally, 2/2012
- xv. soccer ball; Chicago, 3/2014
- xvi. 7 artificial crows, abaca pulp; Chicago 5/2012
- xvii. metal grill, abaca pulp; Chicago, 9/2011
- xviii. ball, silk embroidered text; Chicago, 12/2011
- xix. thread; Varanasi, 1/2011
- xx. thread, 18K gold beads and head pins; Chicago, 12/2014
- xxi. 5 leis, plastic, pressed; Kauai, 3/2012
- xxii. metal elbow, acrylic paint; Chicago, 8/2012
- xxiii. plastic plant, abaca pulp; Chicago, 4/2012
- xxiv. *dailies, vol I*; newspaper on abaca, flax, cotton hand-made paper, 342 pages; Chicago, 4-8/2011
- xxv. *dailies, vol II*; newspaper on abaca, flax, cotton hand-made paper, 288 pages; Chicago 9-12/2011
- xxvi. bronze container for gunpowder; Chicago, 7/2013
- xxvii. 3 rocks, Tengucho paper, glue; Chicago, 3/2014
- xxviii. metal, 2 balls, zinc plate; Chicago, 4/2011
- xxix. brush, 23.75K Rosenoble gold leaf; Kanjirapally, 2/2012
- xxx. metal, gold plate; Chicago, 4/2011
- xxxi. metal, zinc plate; Chicago 4/2011
- xxxii. metal, aluminum plate; Chicago, 4/2011
- xxxiii. *the cup of tea is real*, sahyadri organic tea on Fabriano paper, 180
- xxxiv. *before/after*, newspaper on Fabriano paper, 92 pages; Kanjirapally, 2/2012
- xxxv. 4 concrete fragments, Mitsumata paper, glue; Chicago, 6/2014



xviii, xix, xx, xxi



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viii

While Joan Livingstone and I were talking about her work, she referenced a quote that she attributed to Walter Benjamin but for which she didn't remember the citation, or the exact wording. It was something along the lines of, when an old thing meets a new thing, they do not necessarily have anything to say to (or maybe about) one another. Rather, they say a third thing. Standing there in front of her work, the quote made an embodied kind of sense. This is literally what happens when, for example, Livingstone applies a layer of soft, lustrous gold leaf to a rough clay vessel, or when she envelopes a stone in a paper cocoon. She takes the material of a specific place, most often the neighborhood around her home and studio, adds time, touch, and attention, and produces something new. Livingstone has filled the gallery here with these third things, which she calls oddments and marvels.

I have little context for this Benjamin-attributed quote outside of my conversation with Livingstone and I prefer not to source it, but to position the quote itself in the realm of third things, and to work from there. I don't know what Benjamin actually said, just like I don't know the neighborhood where Livingstone lives and works and walks, but through Livingstone I have an idea of what this text and this place mean. Consider Livingstone quoting to me a text from her memory, think of me passing it to you now in writing, the chain of first to second to third hand. The quote is no longer itself, no longer even about itself - it's Joan, talking to Joel about her work; Joel sitting in his office, writing this, thinking about her work, and thinking about you, the imagined reader; and you remembering it,

or not, or looking it up and seeing, perhaps, that Joel got it all wrong, or didn't (please, don't tell me). In Livingstone's hands the gallery is a place to think about these permutations of text. I think of the marvels, in particular, as a system of language, the lingua franca of her neighborhood's buildings and roads. Made of chunks of broken material from a construction site near her home and studio, the resulting pieces are reminiscent of letter forms, at once abstract and concrete, standing upright on a page that is also a pavement. Seen as words in a paragraph, buildings in a neighborhood, or characters in a crowd, they are utterances as inscrutable as they are physical, a third-hand text.

I think great texts often point us somehow toward touch. It's not hard to move in that direction here. Think again of that quote passing from first to second to third hand; think of those hands, think of yours holding this text. It's easy to see Joan's hands at work in the objects they produce, and in the way they're arranged in relation to one another. Touch is also emphasized in the careful attention to these object's skins, the thin membranes that partition them from the rest of the world, both concealing and revealing, separating and enticing. Joan has spoken of her frustration with some galleries, or maybe their frustration with her (again, here we are on the third hand) in that her objects beg to be touched. We long to handle them, to feel their skin against our own. I thought this, standing in Livingstone's studio in Chicago, drinking cool water from a ceramic cup, her dog lying nearby. I thought about her neighbors seeing her collecting fragments on their sidewalks, or passing by the open garage door of

her studio and seeing her working there. I thought about Livingstone and her neighborhood, and she and I, and also about the conversation that would happen between Livingstone and a student here in Memphis, or an artist who meets her at the opening of her show. This feels important too, the dynamic relationship between Livingstone and her neighborhood mapped onto the relationship between the work and a public. Whether we are permitted to touch it, we feel it; the work touches us as we meet each other, and third things happen.

This text slips along the edges of the work, I know; I'm taking cues. The photographs of clouds are slippery as well. I say clouds because Livingstone told me that's what they are. She led me to the place where she took the pictures and I dumbly looked up into the sky as if I would see those images projected there. You may decide that the images depict sands, or water, or microscopic disturbances, or cosmic flutterings, and be just as correct and just as dumb as I am. I think you will decide that they depict some kind of place, as there is a kind of specificity about them; that configuration of molecules organized itself in that location in exactly that way for only one instant. But they are also non-places, nowheres. They're high-contrast, elevated realities, touched by the artist (re-skinned, perhaps) in a way that ensures that they never actually happened, never took place, just as much as they did, and continue to do. They occupy the space where icon meets particularity, where specificity meets synecdoche; they, like text and touch, like us, produce third things.

Joel Parsons
Director, Clough-Hanson Gallery



oddment[s], xiii, 2014



June 13, 2011, #1-12 2012.
digital inkjet on Ilford Pearl, acrylic laminate mount
oddment[s], xv, xvi, 2014



Rhodes College
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Clough-Hanson Gallery | 2000 North Parkway, Memphis, TN | 901.843.3442 | rhodes.edu/gallery

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