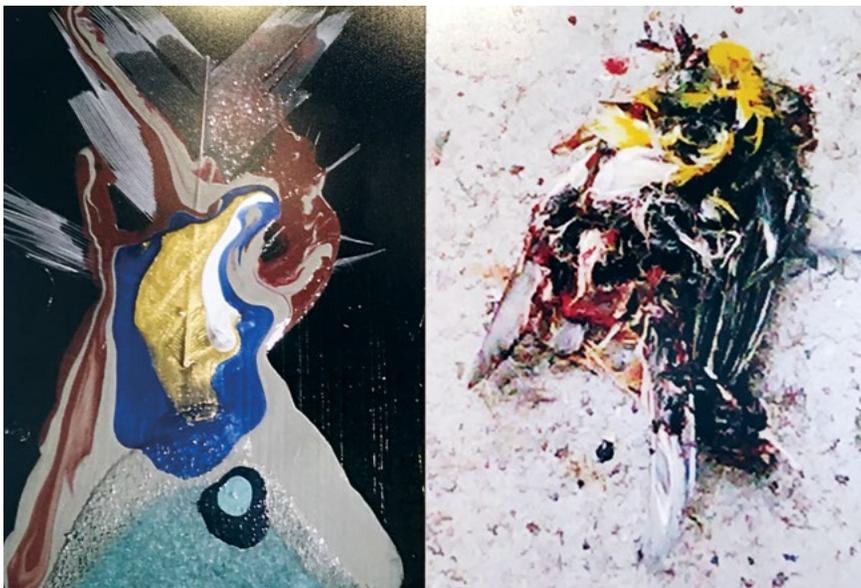


Nicole Awai

Material Re-Pose





Re-Materialize (detail), 2016
series of C-prints
14 x 11 in (each)



Attempt, 2016
ink, graphite, nail polish and collaged image on paper
14 x 11 in

From and Back to a Crack in the Earth

On Nicole Awai's *Material Re-Pose*



Re-Materialize (detail), 2016

series of C-prints

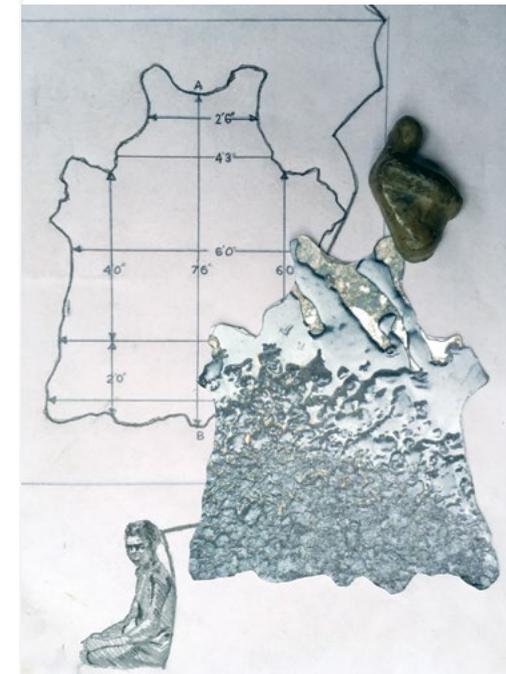
14 x 11 in (each)

Rippled, gassy, viscous black substance, roadkill in various states of decomposition squashed into the asphalt of a road, a pattern for a bearskin rug, appropriations of the graphic illustrations of “local types”—these are just some of the seemingly incongruous elements that overlap, blend, merge, and multiply in Nicole Awai’s body of work. The two- and three-dimensional, the representational and non-representational violently collapse into and seep out of one another. The boundaries between natural and man-made, human and nonhuman, familiar and alien blur. A naked body, disintegrating animal carcass, paved sidewalk, bubbling surface of a tar pitch and heap of paint take on intimate resemblances even as a cutout form seeks to separate and distill them into distinct entities. The repeated shape of an animal hide brings into focus their relentless materiality, at once always different and always, at the core, the same.

In her expansive painting practice, Awai examines what she identifies as “the inextricable union of narrative and matter.” She investigates this union through “varying material states of being in immediate time and perpetual history,” encapsulated in the transformative moments of earth, things, and bodies—from and into one another. As the 2012 Art Matters grantee, the artist explored the La Brea Pitch Lake in her native Trinidad as both a physical and psychological locus through which to grasp the complexities and uniqueness of her identity as a contemporary artist from the Caribbean. At the Lake, the perceptual site, imagination, memory, and received narratives intersect. From their nexus, Awai considers the mutually intertwined histories of material exchanges and human dislocations: a global circulation of the highest-grade asphaltum on the planet, African and Asian peoples violently brought to the Caribbean to produce export commodities, and their diasporic descendants. Their material traces and graphic signifiers coalesce in her work with a dual aim. One is to recalibrate our perceptions into “an acute awareness of *here*—our present/presence.” Another is to suggest that our presentness is always embedded in the incessant, cyclical flows of matter and time.

Dorota Biczal is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Art and Art History at The University of Texas at Austin. In 2015–16 she served as the Visual Art Center’s Curatorial Fellow. Dorota specializes in modern and contemporary Latin American art in the global context. Her dissertation examines artistic and architectural interventions as the means of construction of new publics in Lima during the tumultuous period of the urban demographic explosion, transition to democracy, and onset of the Internal Conflict in the late 1970s and 1980s.

Awai creates image-object-facts willfully extracted and fabricated from the uninterrupted movement of asphalt and magma; from the constant propagation, composition, and decomposition of bodies. Hers is the matter in *re-pose*—captured in a momentary, dual, dialectical state. On the one hand, in Awai’s work, materiality crystallizes itself as a *pose* when brought to our attention like the liquid asphaltum rendered a perceptible, concrete form by the imposed shape of a bearskin rug. On the other hand, it is simultaneously the matter in *repose*—that is, the matter that appears at rest, still, concealed, or dormant while it awaits the next material transformation. At their generative junction, invisible stories ooze out and temporarily jell, speaking to our persistent desires to control and transform the matter to our own ends and its enduring command over our lives.



Materialize Re-Pose (A Sketch), 2016

C-print

14 x 11 in



Subway Skin, 2016

C-print

14 x 11 in

Nicole Awai

Material Re-Pose

February 16 – April 29, 2017

OPENING RECEPTION

Thursday, February 16 • 5–7 p.m.

In her medium-non-specific paintings, Nicole Awai moves fluidly between two and three dimensions and employs popular commercial materials such as nail polish to explore notions of identity and history. Born in Trinidad, Awai received her M.F.A. in Multimedia Art from the University of South Florida in 1996 and attended the Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture in 1997. Her work has been included in several seminal exhibitions, including the first *Greater New York: New Art in New York Now* at MoMA PS1 (2000); *Open House: Working in Brooklyn* (2004) and *Infinite Island: Contemporary Caribbean Art* (2007), both at the Brooklyn Museum; the 2008 Busan Biennale in Korea; and *Global Caribbean: Focus on the Contemporary Caribbean Visual Art Landscape* at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Puerto Rico (2011).

The Courtyard Gallery is located inside the AT&T Executive Education and Conference Center at The University of Texas at Austin and presents work by faculty and alumni of the Department of Art and Art History in the College of Fine Arts. The exhibitions are curated by Jade Walker, director of the department's Visual Arts Center.

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College of Fine Arts