

ΚΕΝΤΡΙΟ

Micah Schippa-Wildfong

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Such is the inexact profession of the gargoyle proceeding toward the point of its own erasure.

In *all fish in the night become birds*, Micah Schippa-Wildfong puts forward the proposition of “an exhibition as a score for a film.” Here, what is supposed to enhance the emotion of a narrative comes into focus as a set of material conditions by which a series of sculptures and ambient changes to the gallery unfold.

Most recently turning their attention to live performance, Schippa-Wildfong has conceived of these objects, surfaces, and architectural elements as an open system in which they can short-circuit, liquefy, and dissipate the “rational” ways we expect inorganic objects and human beings to behave.

Throughout the show, different forms of registering and recording what seems evanescent—such as instructions for a performance based on slow, simple movements of “frozen intimacy” (like embracing while sleeping or hand-holding) and gallery windows fogged with industrially produced imitation snow interacting with air and moisture—annotate the occurrence of change without arrest. Or even, hasten it, as in Hans Haacke’s *Condensation Cube* (1963-78), a resonant sculpture comprised of an acrylic cube filled with water as a study of interacting systems via surrounding temperature, analogous to the conditions by which we move in the world and by which the world’s structures move us.

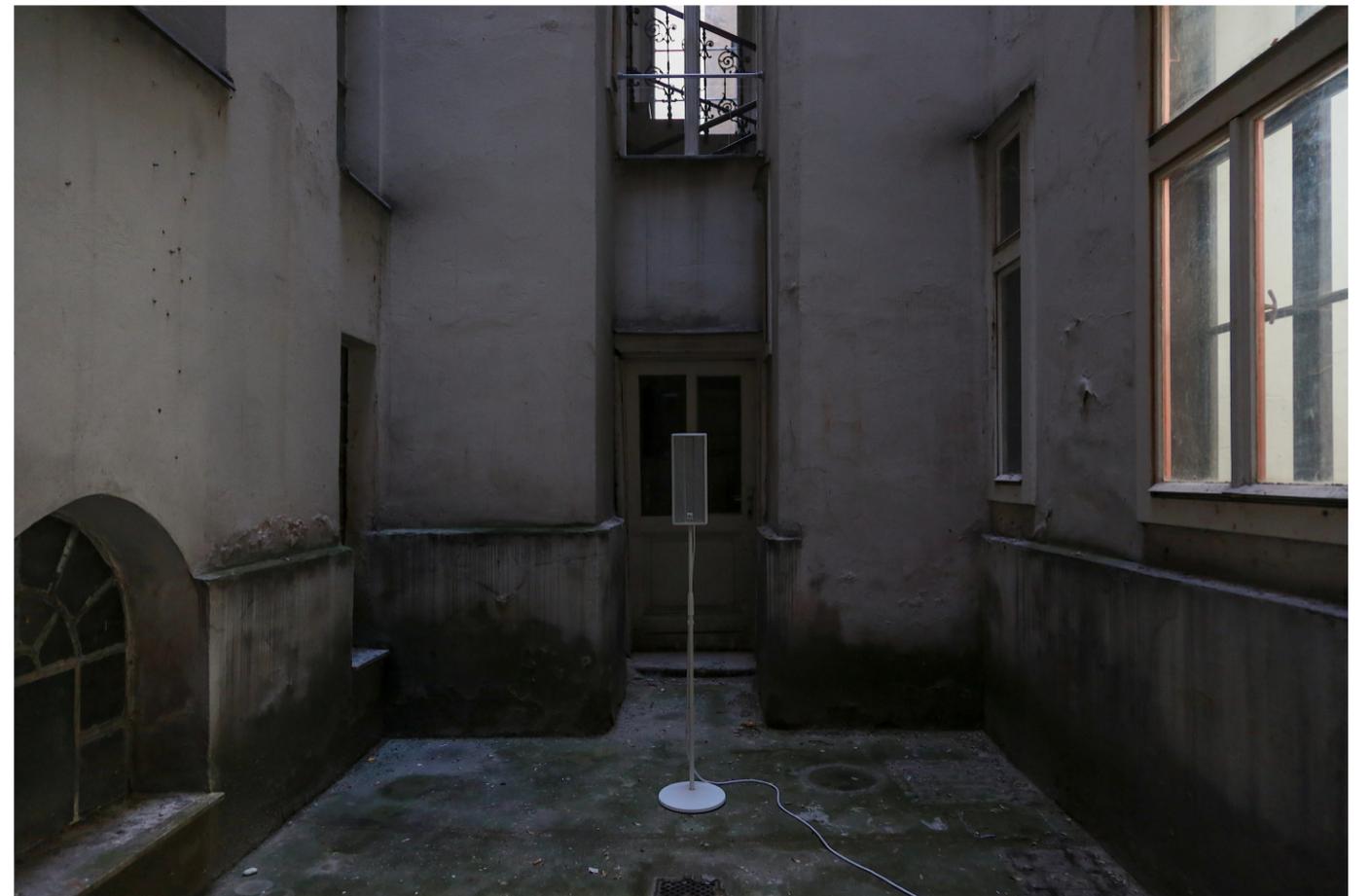
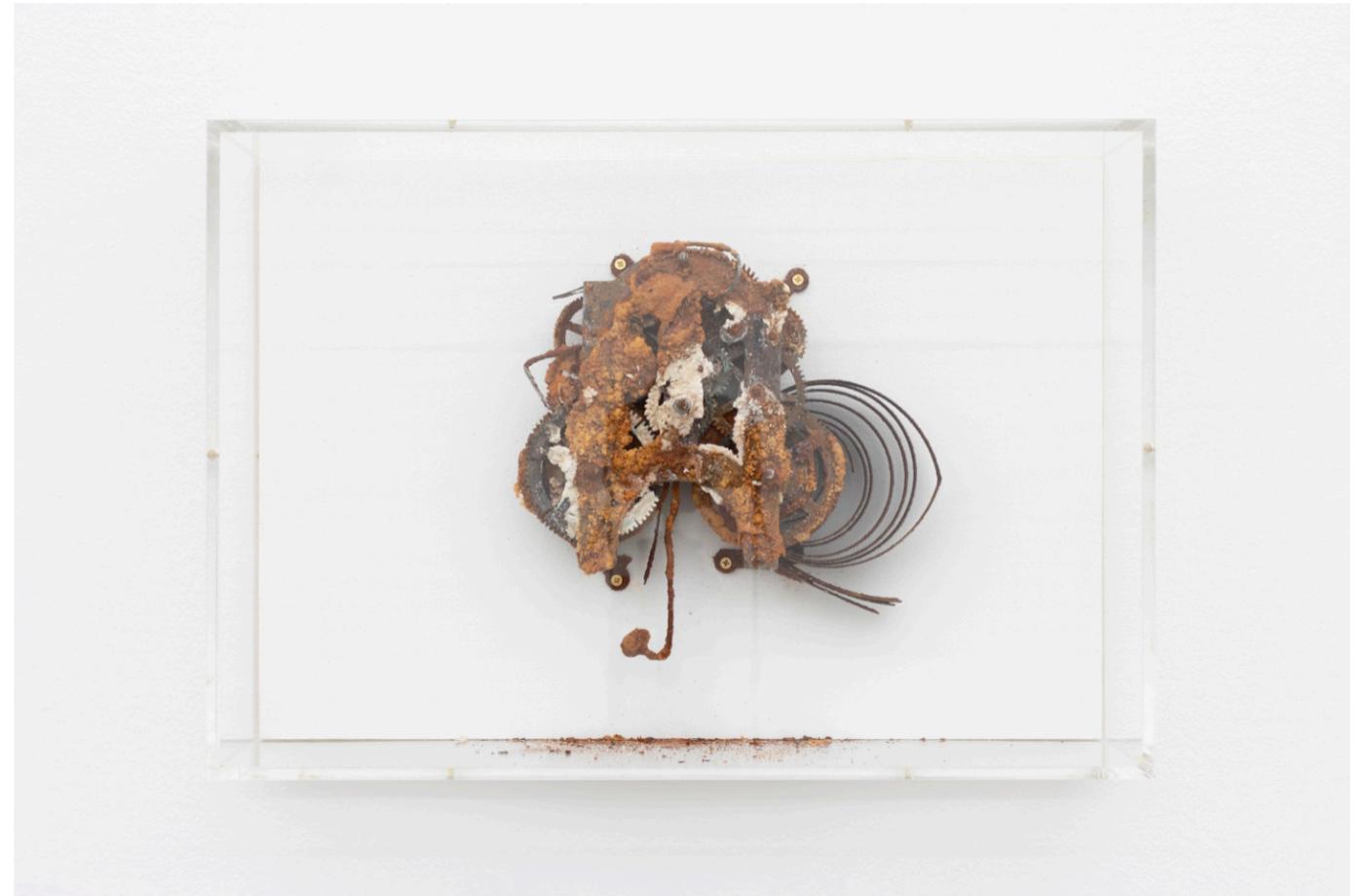
But Schippa-Wildfong’s decomposing forms and poetics—such as a corpse-like motorcycle engine resting in a vessel of chemicals approximating human tears, or a flute the artist’s mother played at their age, dissolved in a mixture akin to stomach acid—are less about physiological and institutional phenomena, or even a kind of supernatural animism, than about the way human meaning both cracks and accumulates in the presence of inevitable disorder over time. Beige and rusted, yellowing with the moisture of emotional and psychological transmission between bodies and the things we create to extend ourselves (or each other) beyond our limits, these works embody the persistence of entropy.

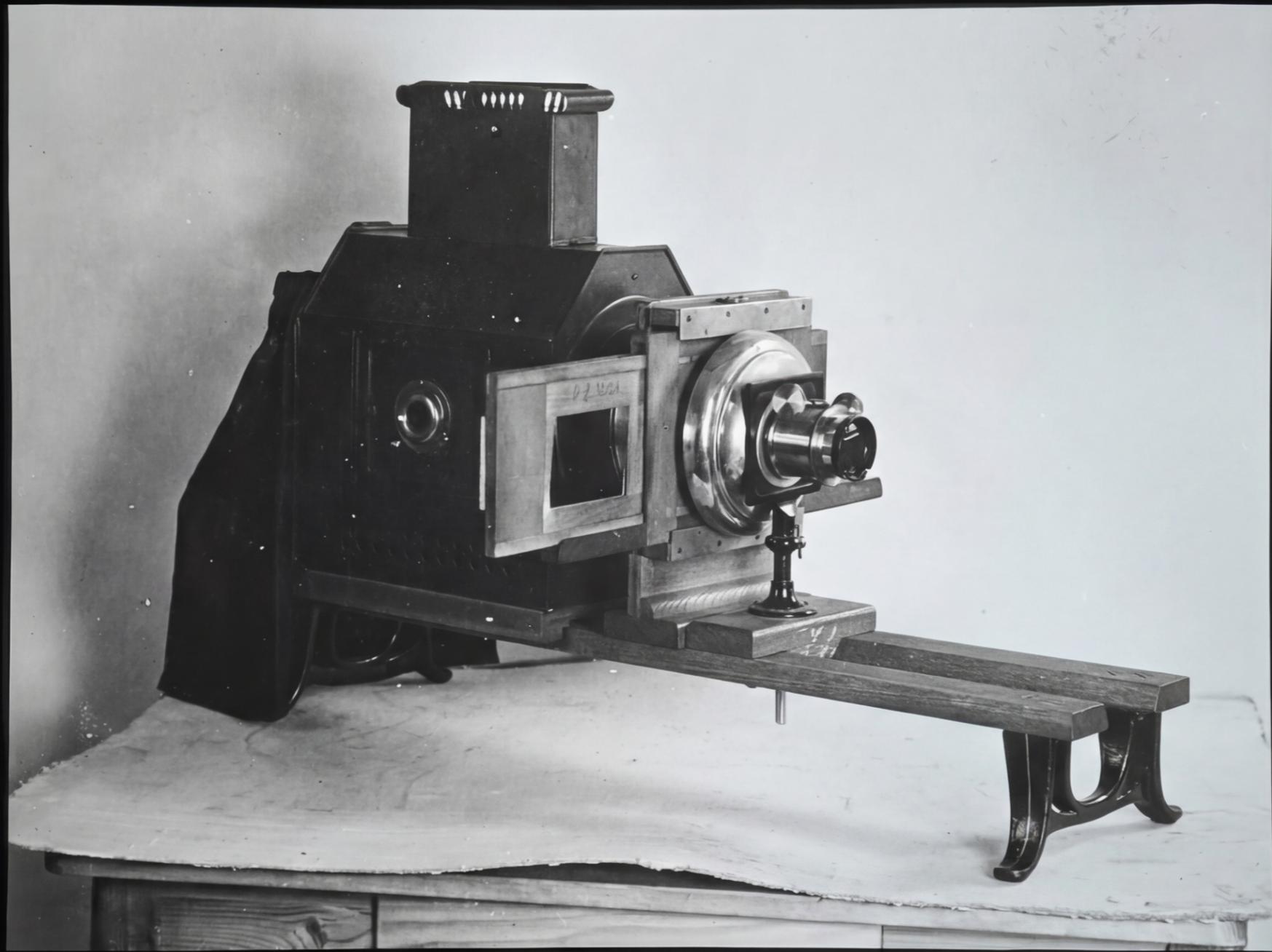
Usurped from the context of utility and stripped of their ability to function, Schippa-Wildfong’s skeletal apparatuses and attenuated choreography enact feelings of “absence or weakness of agency.” As Zygmunt Bauman writes in *Liquid Modernity* (1999), “under conditions of ‘liquidity’ everything could happen yet nothing can be done with confidence and certainty.” Or, as the artist describes: “What, in the end, stays written, whether by notes or by word, of our presence, if not dust and vapor? In the floating decay of metal and acid there is so much more than just our minds or their breaking down.”

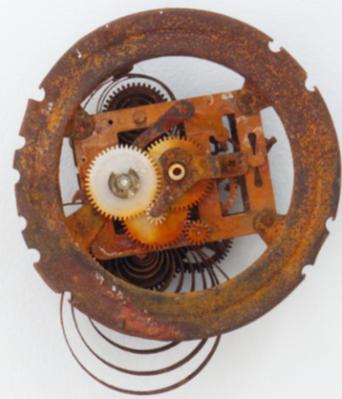
From the wider sickness of bodies treated as containers, machines, or motors for productive activity to the compulsions of the artist’s grandfather to amass a collection of technological mechanisms as a manifestation of his mental illness, Schippa-Wildfong asks: What would it look like if decay and loss weren’t something to romanticize or fear, but to simply coexist with—not to suppress the reality of it, but to sit with it, feel through it, and thus process it more thoroughly?

Maybe they would be dancers, or a kind of spectral metronome—fluorescent tube lights flickering in sync to a timer without the legibility of a clock, melting between “real” and theatrical and imperceptible measures. As the artist puts it: “Only from THE incomprehensible do I feel affinity, or love, or the possibility of either—only in that constellation of indeterminacies.”

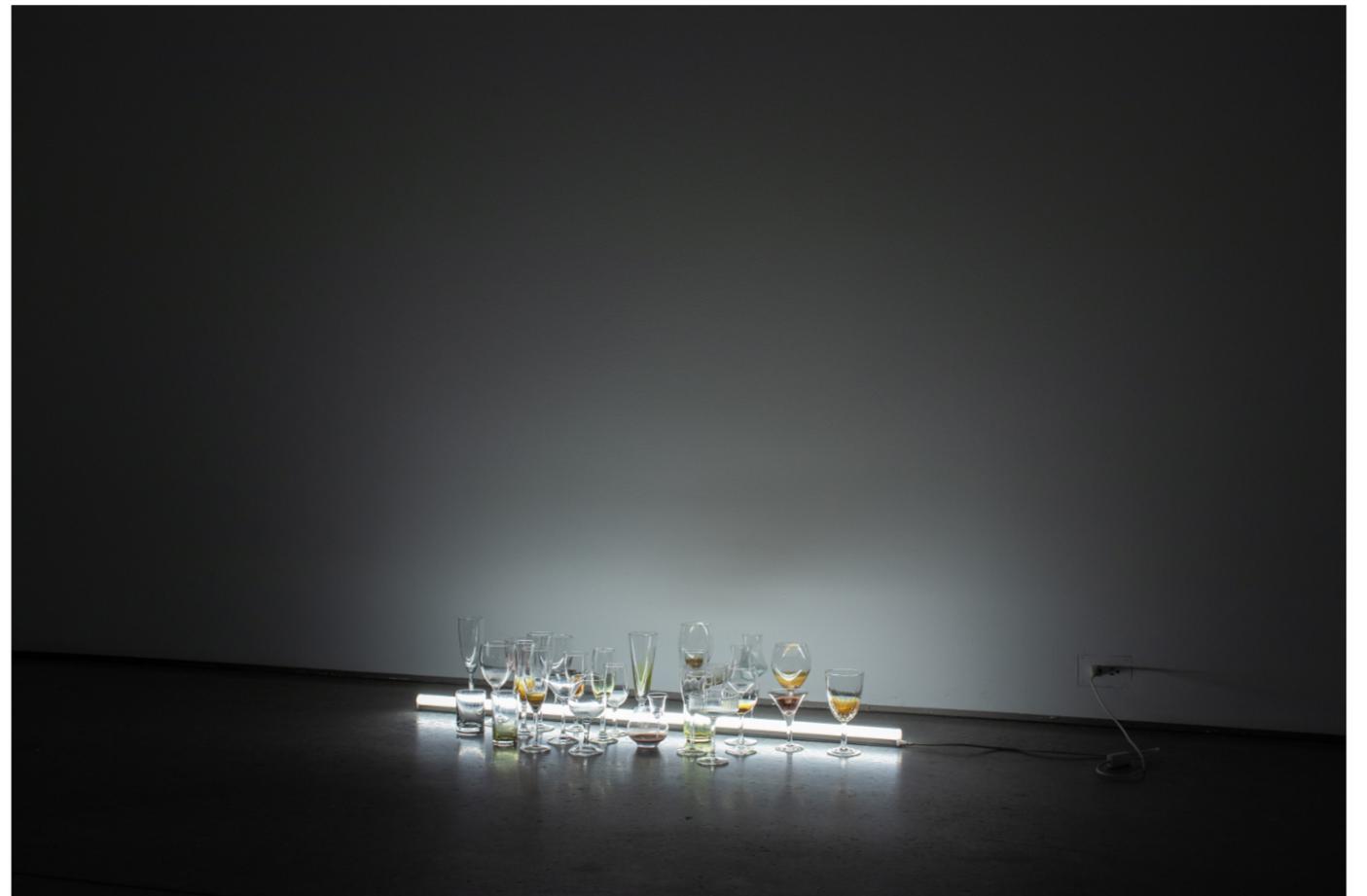
CIVILIZATION OF HAPPINESS
PEOPLE ARE GLORIOUS
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R É A L I T É
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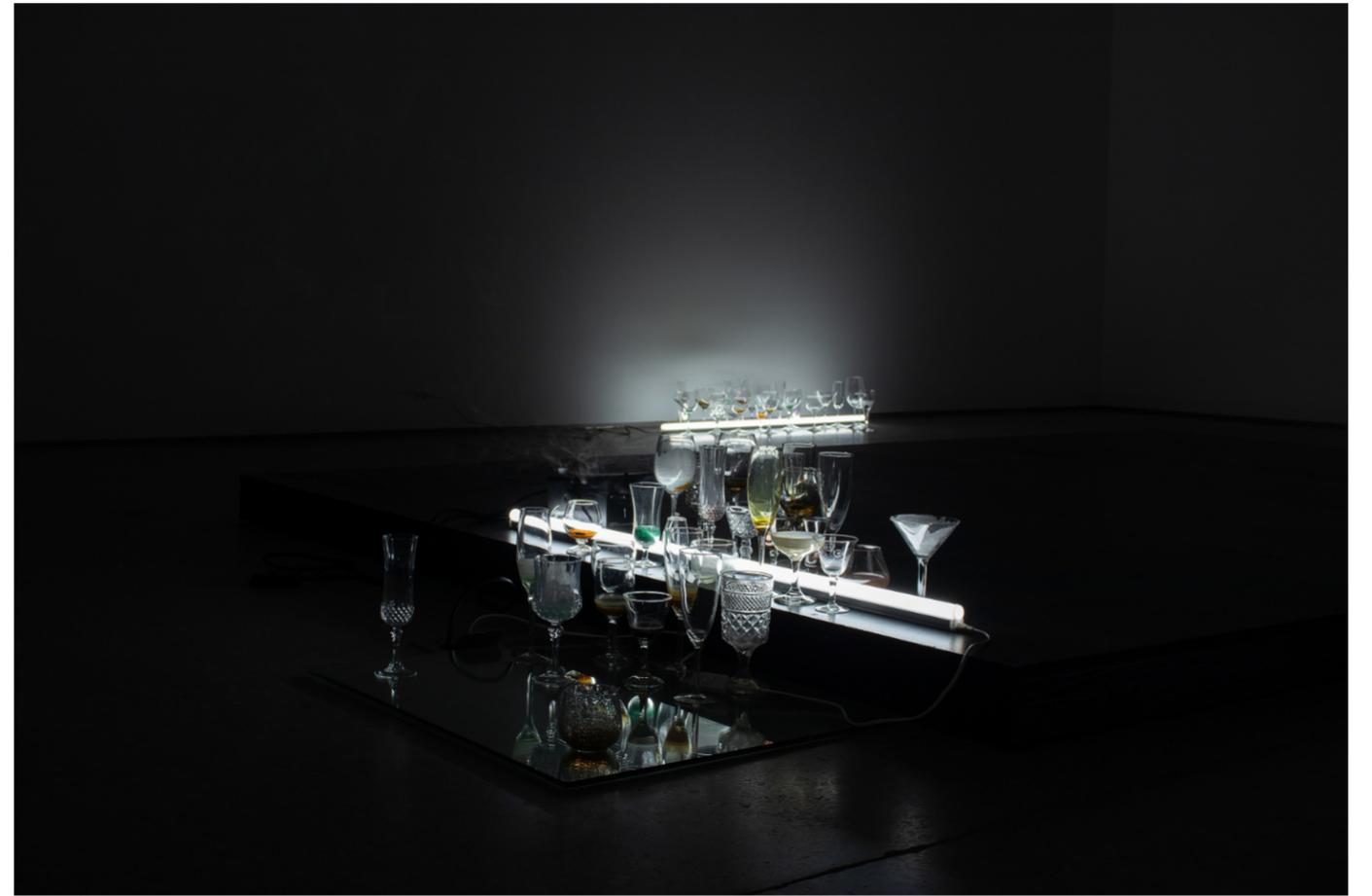




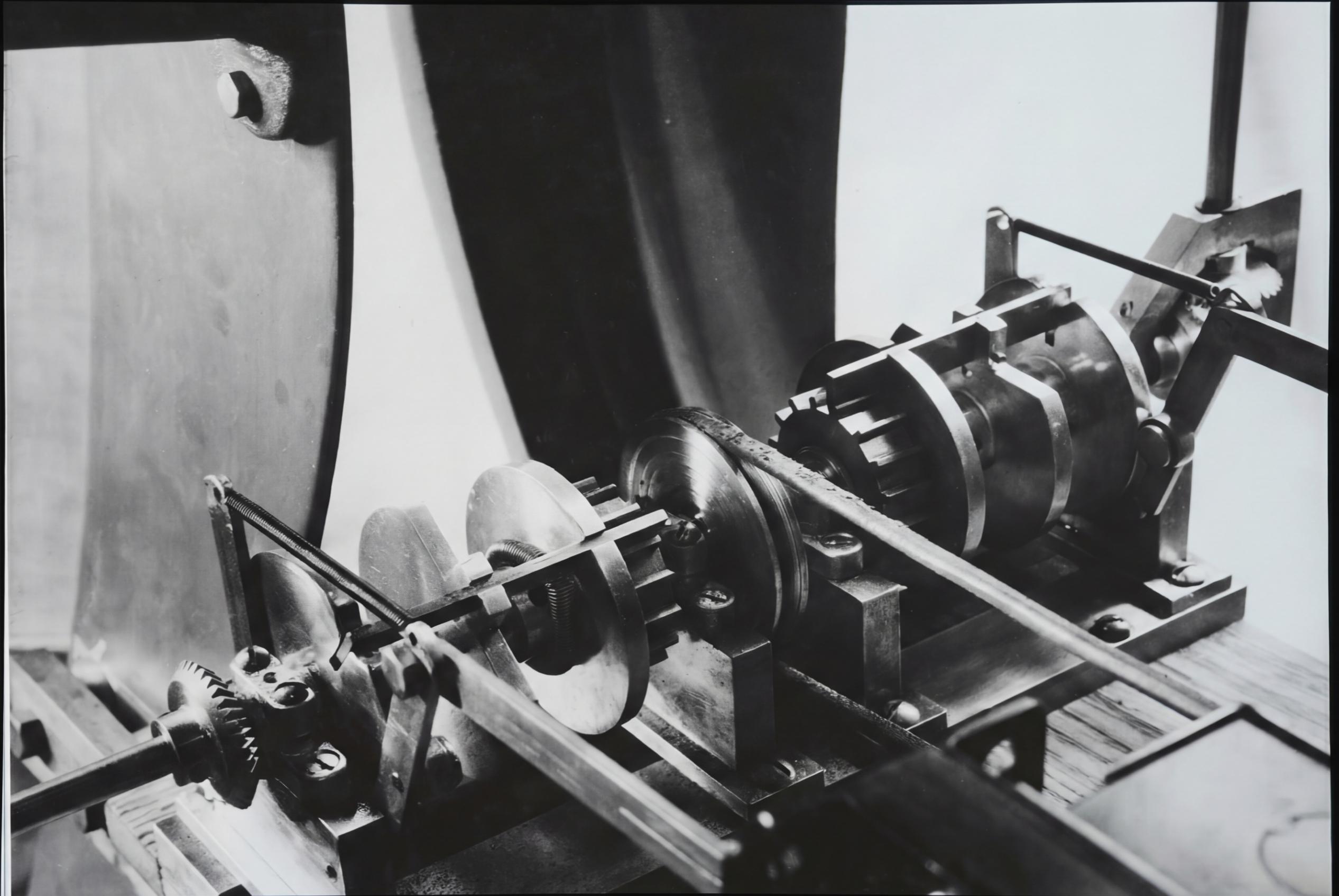


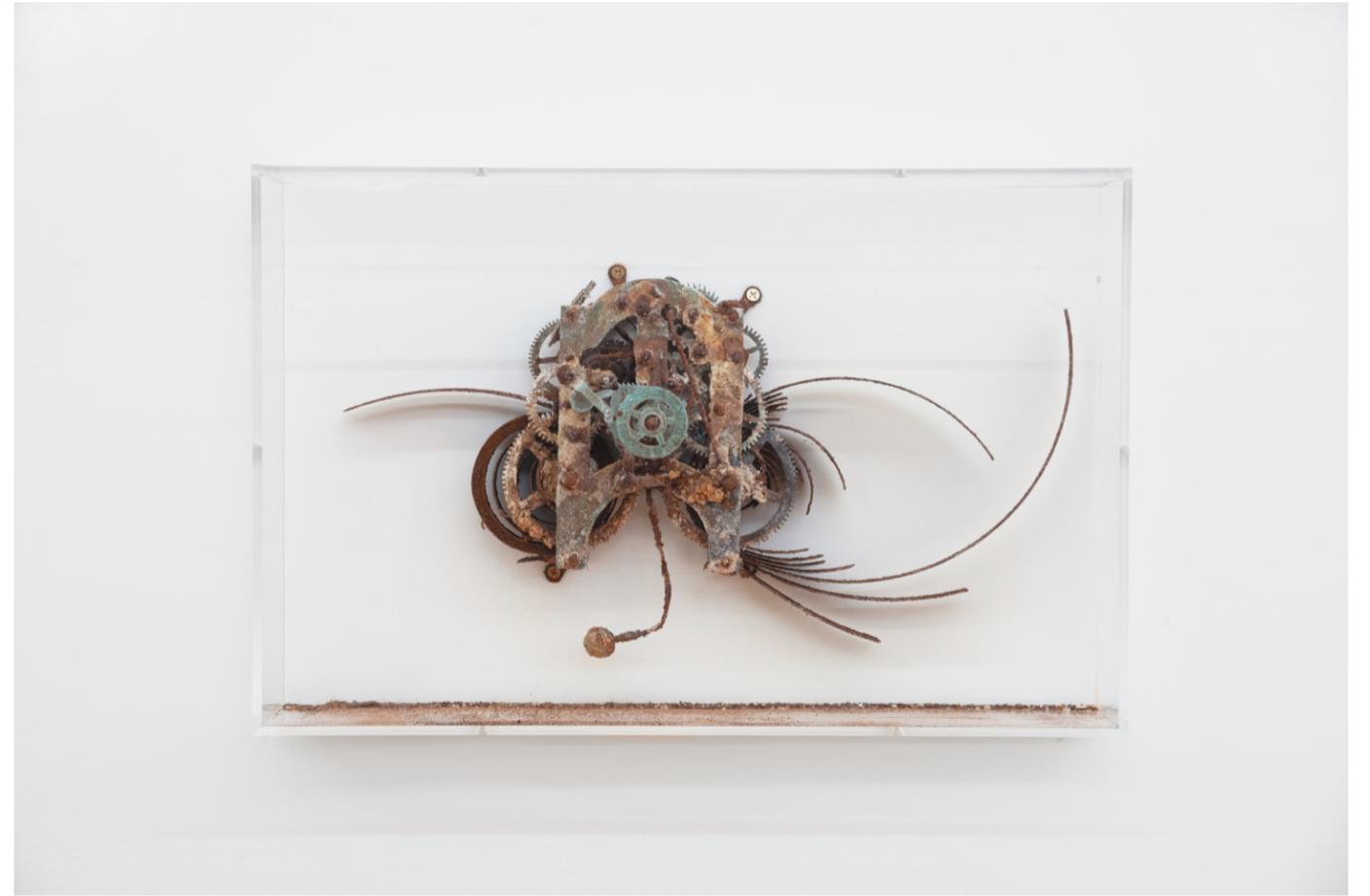




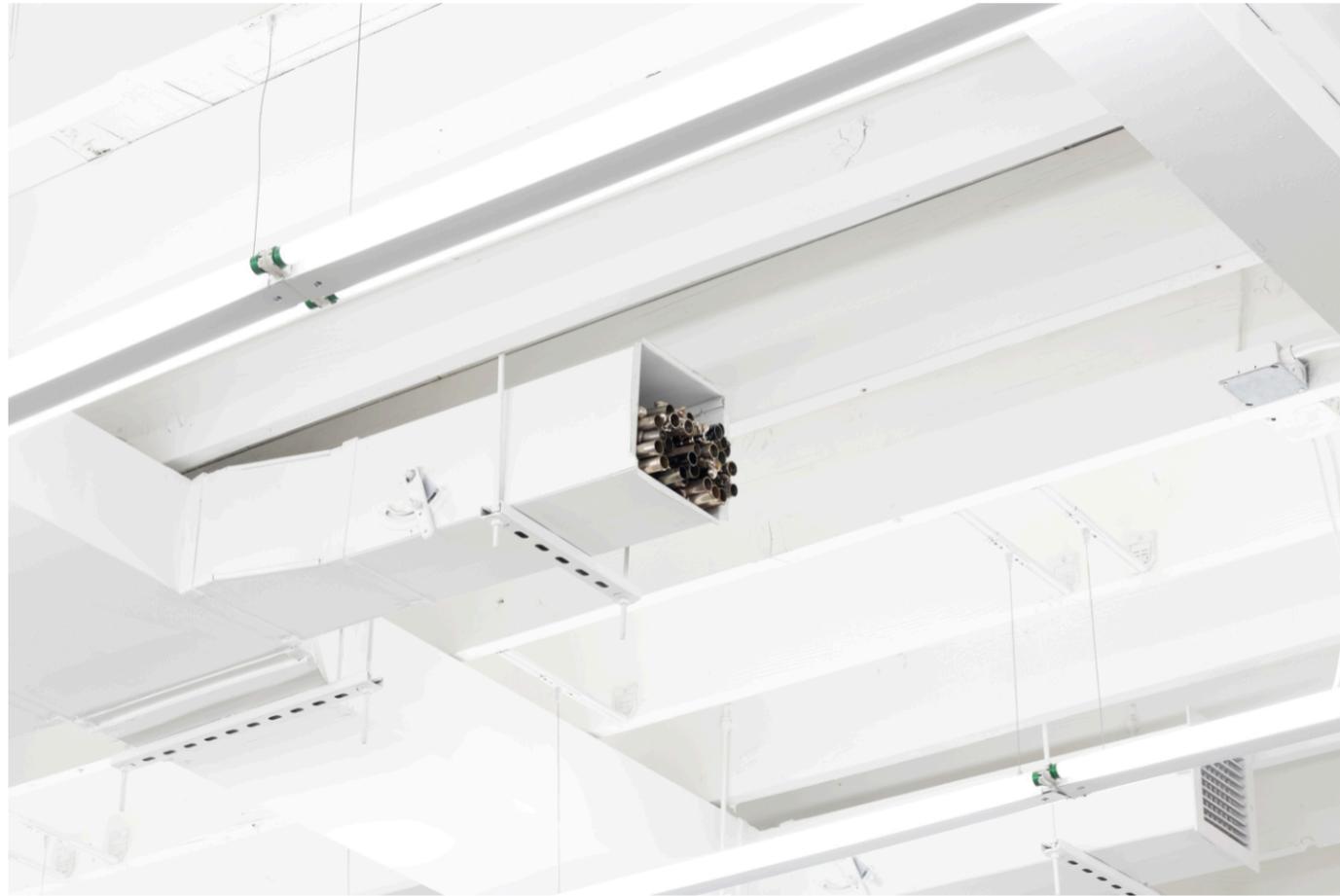


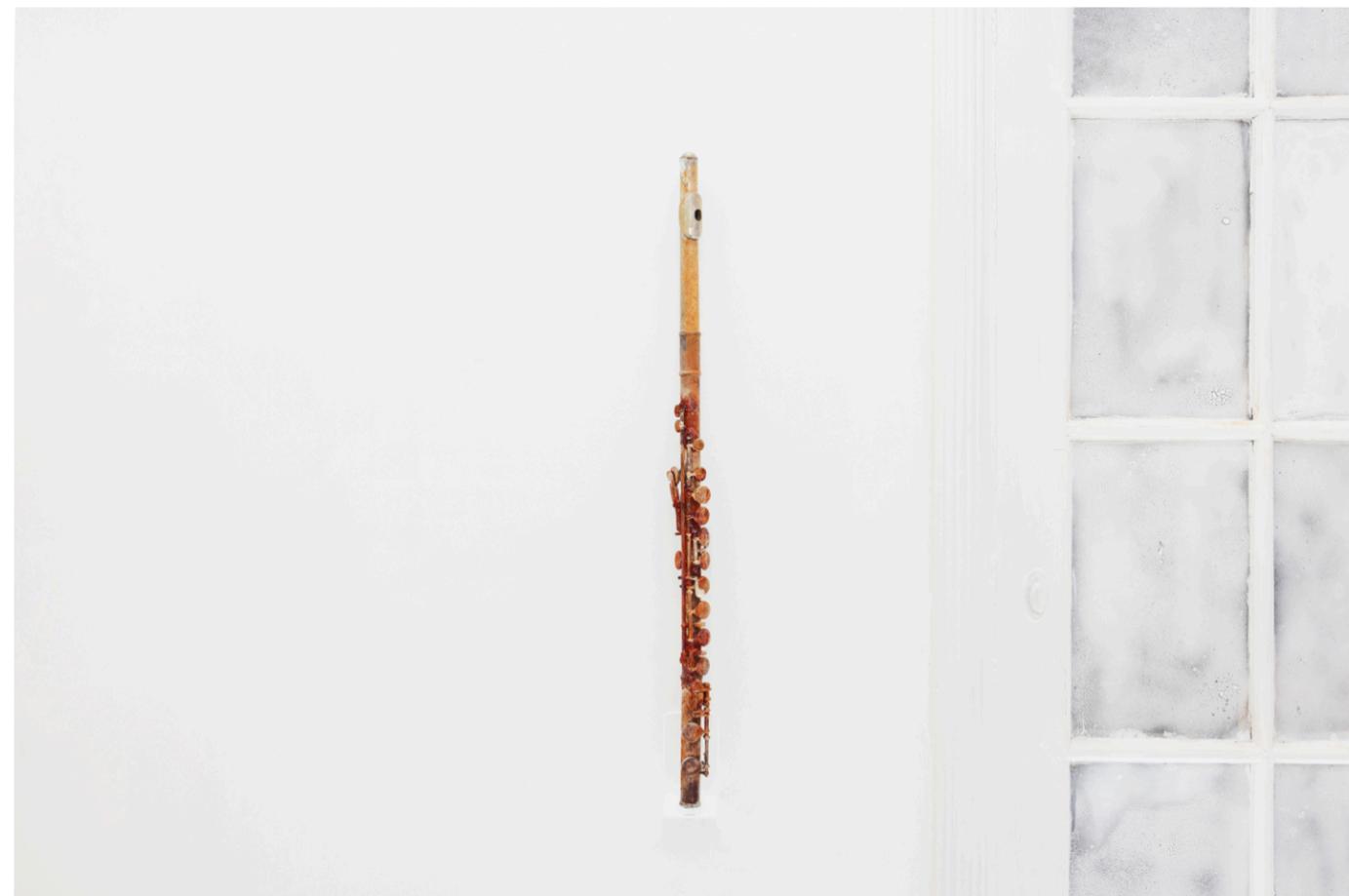
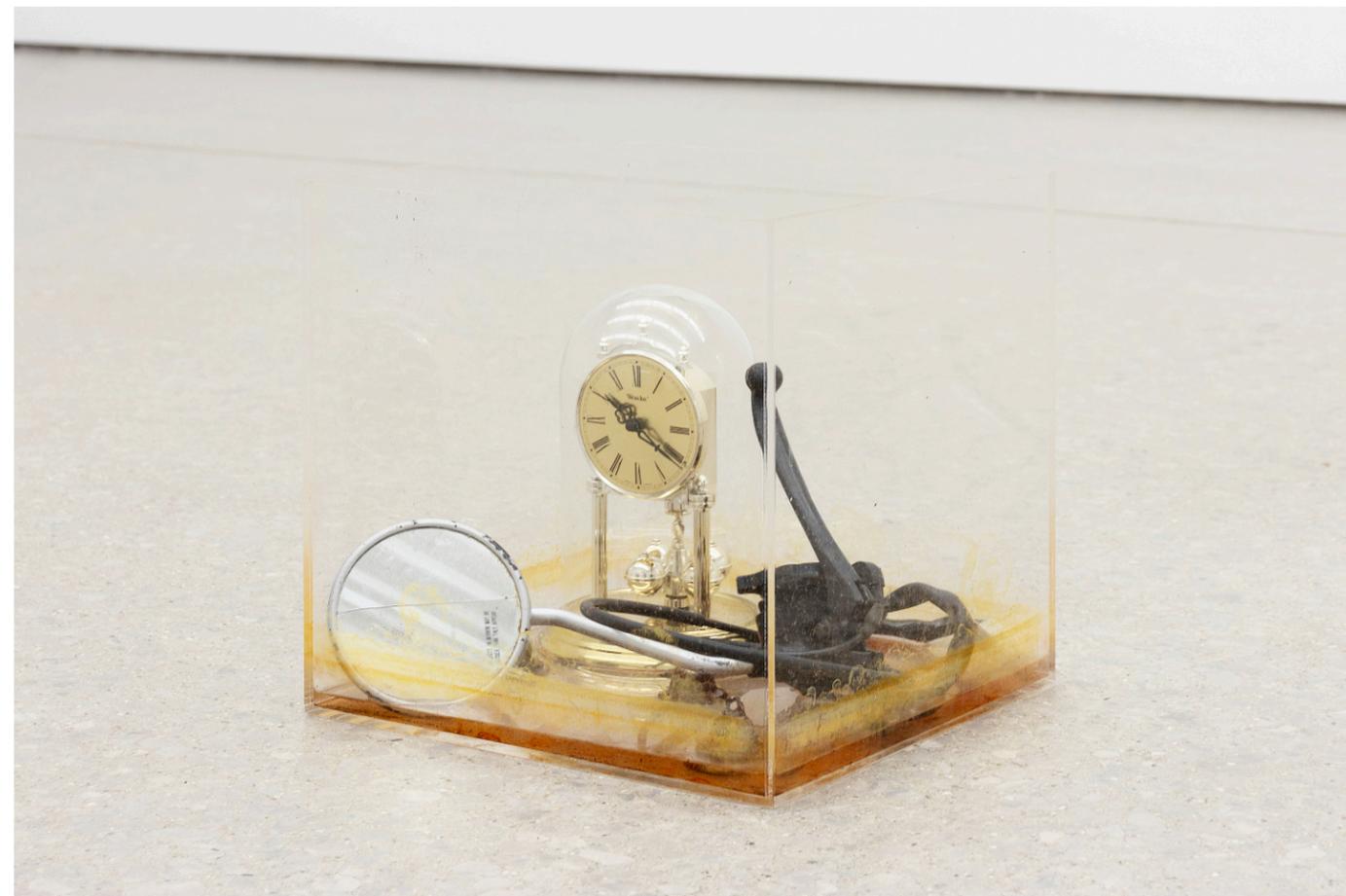












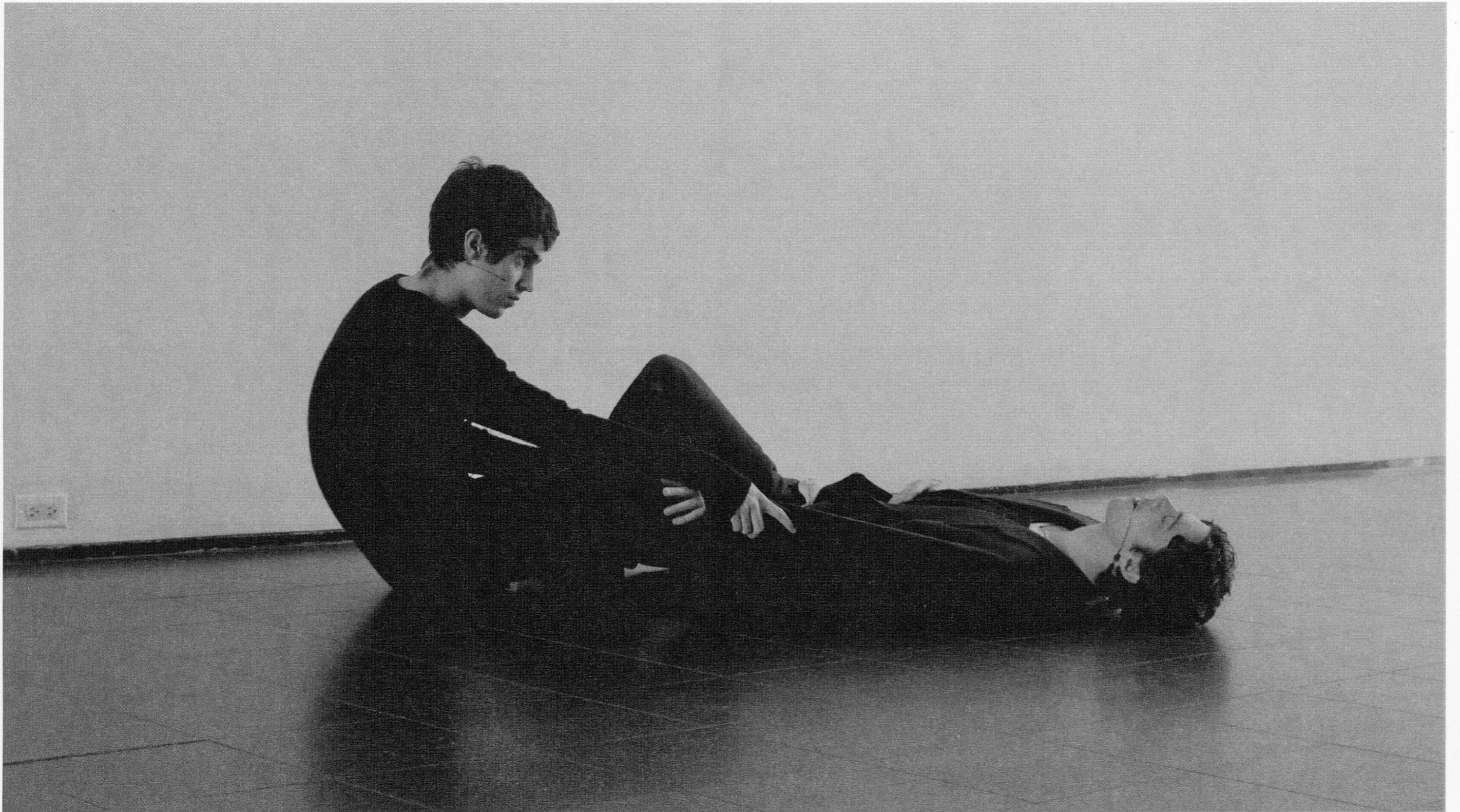














List of works in chronological order

Activities for Orchestra / Poisoning Infinity — choreographic score for two dancers, framed 9 x 11 x 1, 2024

as building from a limit / (suffers / even after metamorphosis / There is a point at the center of a bird — Zongshen Dual Sport Motorcycle 200CC engine dissolved in lacrimal solution (false tears formulated by the artist), vitrine, 26 x 28 x 28, 2024. Title of the piece from a poem by Elizabeth Willis.

ECONOMY OF RELATION — flute last played by mother of the artist, previously dissolved in gastric solution (false stomach acid formulated by the artist), 26.5 x 2.5 x 2.25, 2024

The mutilation of a swan. The mass production of bells. — image of Ulysses Wildfong performing choreographic work of the same title dissolved in liquid fog, Borgova 500W fog machine, found copy of “The Battle for Warsaw”, two mass produced metronomes from the collection of the artist, found bird form bell, dimensions variable, 2024

These flutes are very pleasant to work with and repairing them is a pleasure. They are pleasant to hold in your hands and they obey the master. They are not at all capricious. I speak as a master with 33 years of experience. — 5 fluorescent lights, electrical timers each set to intervals of 15-20 seconds (the amount of time the brain can function without blood flow, the time it takes to deseed a pomegranate, or to tie shoes), mass produced bells from the collection of the artist previously used in “Sequence for fish processing vessel” performance, theater curtains, false snow, all the birds of Pittsburgh, all the fish of the Allegheny, salt, dimensions variable, 2024

The collecting of horse meat. Marrying one’s sweetheart. Everyday chores. — torn page from “The Battle of Warsaw” depicting everyday life and its distortion during wartime, steel, plexiglass 1 x 1 x 1, 2024

A man must pass through his own ghost. A guest must pass through his host. To enter, the viewer must divest themselves of their flesh. — various glassware removed from local bars, clubs, galleries and houses, various global currencies, mass produced costume blood, vodka, hydrochloric acid, whiskey, acetone, salt water, motorcycle components delivered to artist in a plastic bin, cardboard boxes used to transport the exhibition, paint, dimensions variable, 2024

american depression — ventilation system congested with disassembled flutes to alter the air that passes through them, to inebriate any attendees, to nullify any electric field, 2024

Continuing an earlier proposition — clock mechanism previously dissolved in bleach, vitrine, 11 x 17 x 5, 2023-2024

Proposition for Assembly — found objects from the collection of the artist with the stipulation that they must emit or collect light, electricity, or any other various fields, however broadly this may be defined. Objects include embalmed electric eel, whale oil lamp, fluorescent bulbs from the artist’s previous studio, brass cow bell, lightning rod ball chamber to collect and disperse electricity, and shells for the making of fireworks. Objects were also collected from other artists, including small oil lamp on loan from David W. Norman and pigmented cast silicone gifted by Craig Jun Li, cardboard boxes used to transport the exhibition, and paint, dimensions variable, 2024

Unknown Orchestral Activities — found photograph after a wedding, found photograph of unknown orchestral activities, photograph on rag from Negative Ecstasies, found Welsh love-spoon, which is a traditional object given between betrothed couples, vitrine, 20.5 x 30.5 x 7, 2024

Syntax of The Flood — clock mechanism previously dissolved in lacrimal solution (false tears formulated by the artist), vitrine, 11 x 17 x 5, 2023-2024

Have we overstayed our party in the heavenly city or are we spilling through its gates trying not to get trampled? On the berm I filled a basket with crashing birds. In the dream you pointed sideways with your thumb where the cars were flying — broken anniversary clock, pelvic bone and spine from unidentified mammals found in the Sonoran desert, broken trumpets played by the artist, lacrimal solution (false tears formulated by the artist), motorcycle components, and water in prefabricated tanks, dimensions variable, 2024. Title of the piece from a poem by Elizabeth Willis.

Letter to a fish — letter written by the artist to David W. Norman concerning the work and nature of this exhibition, which he was then commissioned to transcribe into his own handwriting, ink on paper in frame, 12 x 18 x 1, 2024

Preparation of a poisonous fish — for 1-2 performers in variable configurations, water, stage, and lighting, 17—41 minutes respectively, 2024

Music for Assembly — Two channel sound installation (24m01s), the box pro Achat 204 WH speakers, church pews ca. 1750, dimensions variable, 2024

Music for the fluorescent lamps of Europe, — Performance object. The gallery's lights are removed for the duration of the exhibition, tied in a bundle with violin string, and placed on pews, dimensions variable, 2024

Parliaments of the living — lights collected from various locations of purpose, each set to an automatic incremental timer, dimensions variable, 2024/2025

the host / Music for Assembly— church pew gifted from Chiesa di San Luca, electronic motion pounder, prop control motion trigger, 145cm x 79cm x 93cm, 2025

CHOIR OF MAN / Parliaments of Stone I, II, & III — materials not listed, 50cm x 12cm x 9cm/67cm x 12cm x 9cm/108cm x 12cm 9cm, 2025

First chamber of the house / the administration of plurals — clock mechanism from the collection of my grandfather previously dissolved in lacrimal solution (false tears formulated by the artist), various musical components, antique player piano sheet music cases, enamel, display cabinet, 151cm x 35cm x 32cm, 2022/2023/2025

Second chamber of the house / the administration of plurals— clock mechanism from the collection of the artists grandfather previously destroyed in a fire, found clarinets, plastic tubing with lacrimal solution, photograph of Alex Hovi performing “Preparation of a poisonous fish”, display cabinet, 151cm x 35cm x 32cm, 2022/2023/2025

The digestive qualities of photography and performance / the pain / of others is a weapon of great skill / and pleasure — photograph of Alex Hovi performing “Preparation of a poisonous fish” ingested by the artist, the resulting urine of which was then collected in vials, vitrine, 26cm x 26cm x 26cm, 2025

american sleep — lights collected from various locations of purpose, each set to an automatic incremental timer, dimensions variable, 2024/2025/2026

What innocence has given me you have given me twice — two headed taxidermy dove containing handwritten letter, ribbon, 2026

Sister — found wooden industrial pulley, found plastic object, wax inlay, wax wash, 2026

Sister — CO2 glass laser tube, wire, found clarinet components, handwritten letter, epoxy, enamel, wax, 2026

Sister — modified found alarm clock, wax wash, odd/even number brass clock winding keys, enamel, 2025

Sister (from New York) — clock movement mechanism previously dissolved in lacrimal solution (false tears formulated by the artist), 2025

It's been a long time since the last revolutions and the faggots and their friends are still not free. — clock movement mechanism previously dissolved in lacrimal solution made with rainwater (false tears formulated by the artist made with rainwater instead of still water), 2025. Title from “The Faggots & Their Friends Between Revolutions” by Larry Mitchell.