

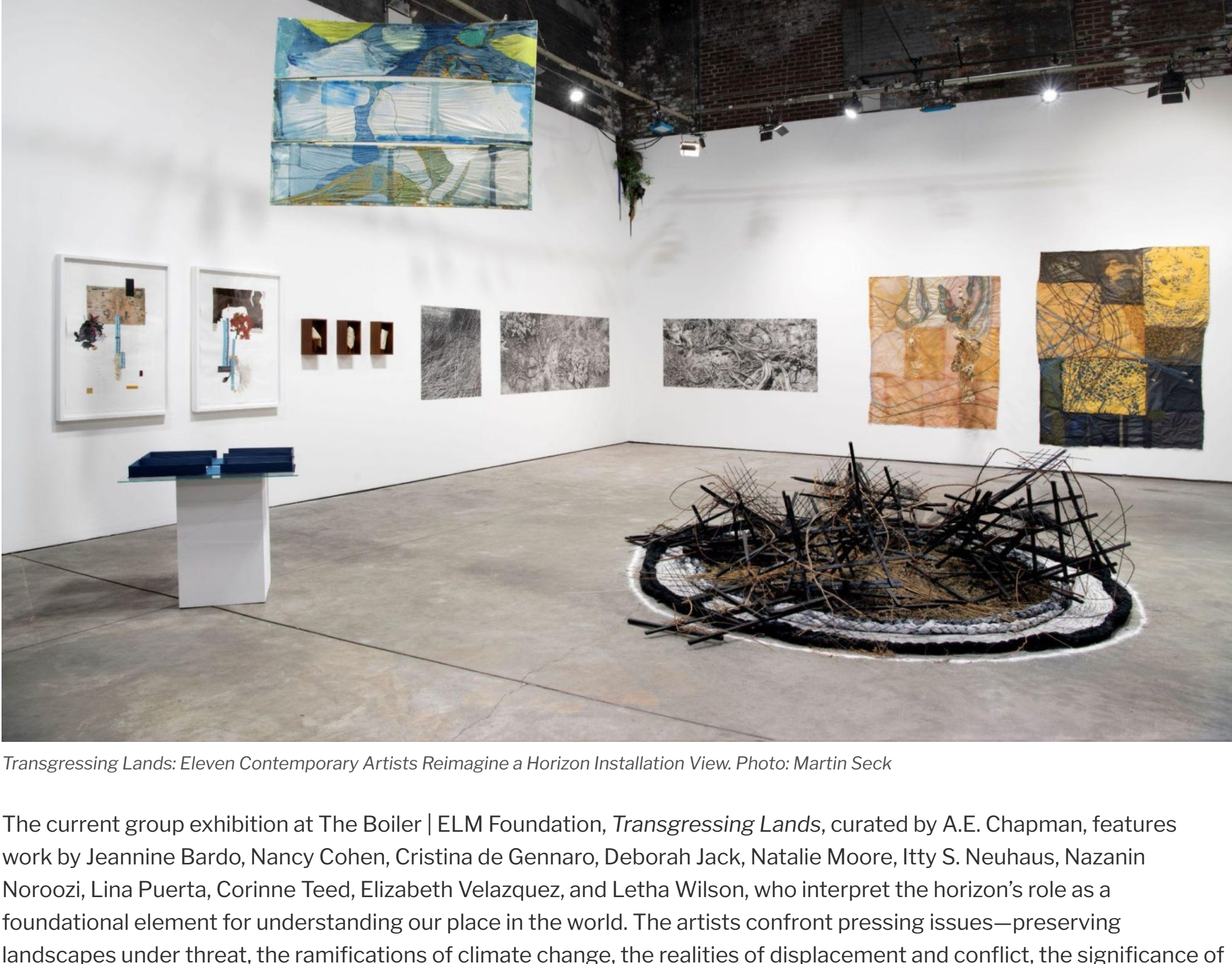
ART SPIEL

Contemporary Art and Culture

MARCH 14, 2024 BY ART SPIEL

Transgressing Lands at the Boiler

HOT AIR



Transgressing Lands: Eleven Contemporary Artists Reimagine a Horizon Installation View. Photo: Martin Seck

The current group exhibition at The Boiler | ELM Foundation, *Transgressing Lands*, curated by A.E. Chapman, features work by Jeannine Bardo, Nancy Cohen, Cristina de Gennaro, Deborah Jack, Natalie Moore, Itty S. Neuhaus, Nazanin Noroozi, Lina Puerta, Corinne Teed, Elizabeth Velazquez, and Letha Wilson, who interpret the horizon's role as a foundational element for understanding our place in the world. The artists confront pressing issues—preserving landscapes under threat, the ramifications of climate change, the realities of displacement and conflict, the significance of mindfulness, challenging colonial legacies, and the ever-present cycles of destruction and rejuvenation. Chapman's direction for the exhibition invites viewers to engage with how landscapes can anchor us in the present moment and our collective history.

Tell us more about your curatorial vision for this large-scale show.

A.E. Chapman: In developing *Transgressing Lands: Eleven Contemporary Artists Reimagine a Horizon*, I was thinking about ways to subvert past artistic engagement with the environment. In particular, art historical landscape painting not only privileged but structured spatial hierarchies which were then circulated as “natural” nature. With the primary goal of facilitating a conversation between the artists, their works, attendees, and the space itself, I aimed to scaffold an experience of the show, not just a viewing, with the hope that all of these elements would play an active role in the production of meaning during its run. With these interconnections in mind, I considered transgression, land, water, and the horizon literally and metaphorically as acts of meeting, connecting, overlapping, merging and separating, and negotiation within those moments and spaces. The interdependent relationships inherent to the horizon also persist in the ever-fluctuating line where water meets land as its own horizon line, both symbolizing mutual containment and existence. I intended to incorporate concerns surrounding our environment that I feel are very much related to this history, including the depletion of our environment, colonial extraction, labor, migration, and war.



Transgressing Lands: Eleven Contemporary Artists Reimagine a Horizon Installation View. Photo: Martin Seck

What is the genesis of this show?

A.E. Chapman: This show coalesced around several factors. In June of this past year, one of the artists in *Transgressing Lands*, Cristina de Gennaro, approached me with an idea for a show on nature and aspects of ecofeminism which emphasized care featuring work by her and a handful of artists that she knew working in similar thematics. The conversation with Cristina piqued my interest as I had been thinking about location and care since developing two exhibitions at Hunter College during my masters studies there.

For one show, *Life as Activity: David Lamelas*, I developed an essay published at the end of 2021 that explored concepts of limitlessness and orientation in Lamelas's *Limit of a Projection I*. The second exhibition, *Care of the Future*, coincided with the 150th anniversary of Hunter College and aimed to celebrate the history of the Hunter Art Department via a group show of alumni work. In both shows, our efforts were upended by Covid-19, and we moved to working remotely. Ultimately, *Care of the Future* was never shown due to the length of the pandemic. In fact, one of the artists in *Transgressing Lands*, Letha Wilson, was seriously considered by my cohort to be included in the show. Even more ironically, Cristina had taught Letha as an undergrad at Syracuse University before her MFA at Hunter College.

After much thought on my conversation with Cristina, I saw commonalities and the opportunity to productively unpack and further expand on the ideas that were still lingering from these two exhibitions in particular (arguably lingering due to the impact that Covid-19 had on the process of both) by more than doubling the number of artists that Cristina had initially proposed in order to offer a richer survey of concerns related to our surroundings—which included climate change but also the power and socio-historical dynamics that have structured that current reality. *Transgressing Lands* exhibiting artist Nancy Cohen was also integral early on in the planning stages of the show and contributed much knowledge from her extensive network and background in scaffolding our grant, budgetary, and catalog efforts. Additionally, Elisa Gutiérrez Eriksen contributed an exceptionally beautiful and productive essay to the catalog.

In the text for the show, you say that the artists “explore the potential that landscape offers to locate ourselves within specificities of finite time and place as well as reveal entry points into infinitude.” Can you elaborate on that and give us an idea of how the artists manifest that premise in their work?

A.E. Chapman: Strongly embedded in traditional orientations of landscape, the horizon presents a sense of location of both time and place, endings and beginnings, as it is the site where the sun rises and sets, constructing the most fundamental concepts of time—day and night; yet, it is literally infinite, a marker of the earth and sky meeting that wraps around the globe.

The curved reality of the horizon upends linear notions of perspective and time. Its expansiveness presents a space for imagination to play and for the mind to rest or wander beyond the performance principle so present in the performative structure of our daily lives. The digital saturation of our contemporary experience complicates our relationship with this quotidian sign of time, leaving less and less room for tactile experience beyond our screens. The artists in this show present both specific sites and times for consideration, along with ideas that collapse these geographical and temporal boundaries.

For example, in *Rombo*, Lina Puerta depicts a circle overlapped with several diamonds emanating outward. The diamond symbolizes femininity for several indigenous cultures in Colombia, including the Embera Chami women in Puerta's hometown of Chinchiná. Puerta purchased necklaces at a local market from the Embera Chami women; these necklaces encircle crisscrossing bands of yellow, orange, and red that fill most of the circle, suggesting the sun. The diamonds create the sensation of a portal within the horizon, suggesting an entry point into infinite space.

Presenting many perspectives at once, Nancy Cohen's paper works blur distinctions between veins, tendrils, waterways, and aerial topographies; the delicate faculty of the medium connects the body and broader ecological systems as complex, sensitive, and ephemeral sites. In terms of expanse, Cristina de Gennaro's panoramic charcoal drawings of viscerally detailed groundscapes attend intensely to the site and time and foster the close, slow, and attentive observation that brought them into being.



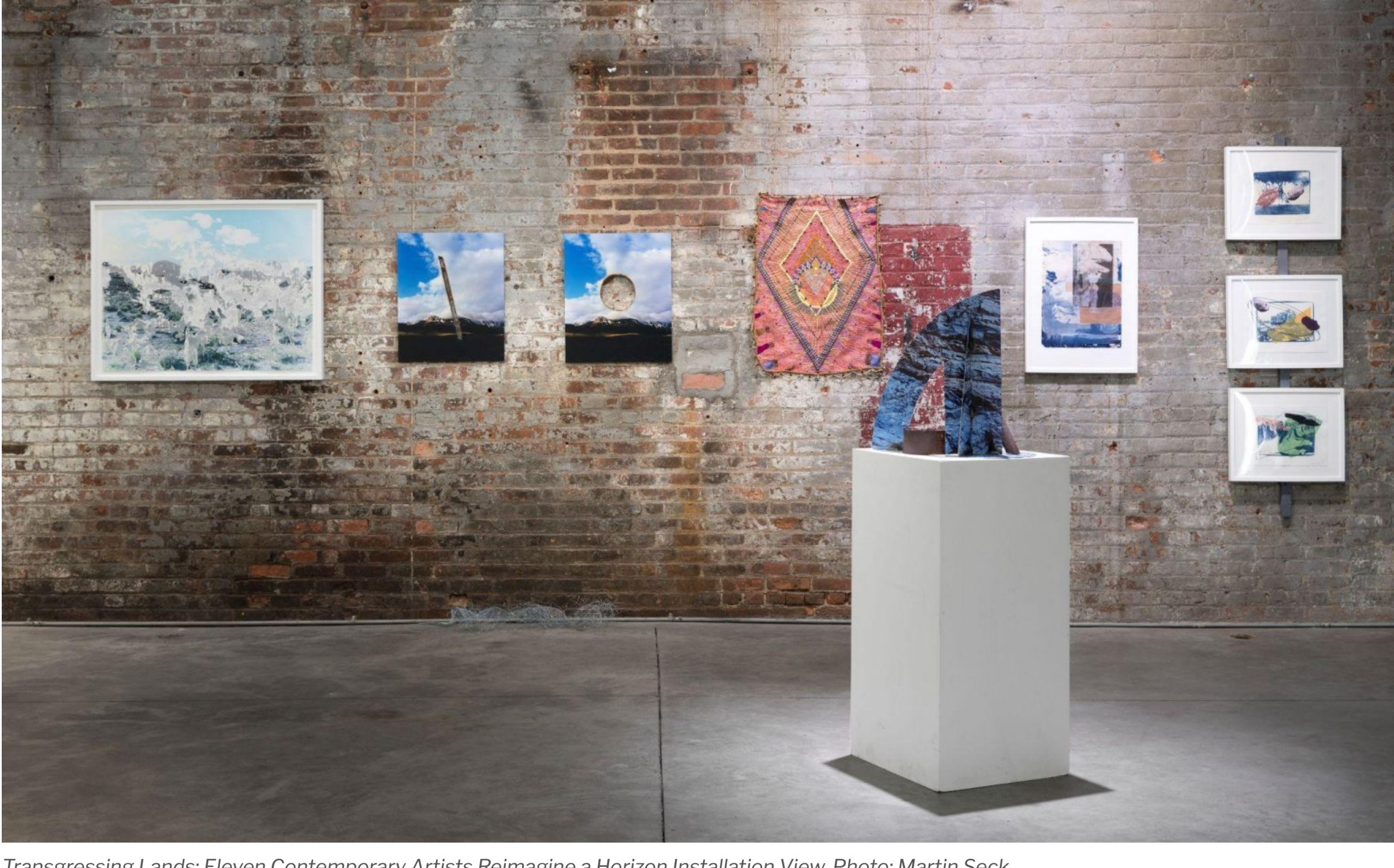
Detail of Nancy Cohen's *Therebetween*, 2023-24. Photo: Leslie Sheryll

Furthermore, Nazanin Noroozi's assemblage of imagery sourced from personal and public archives, each documented from a particular site and time, activates personal and collective memories simultaneously, eliciting a feeling of uncanny familiarity and empathy across social, temporal, and geological divides. Emphasizing the fragmentation of place as well as the boundless power of the sea, Deborah Jack explores the resilience and reckoning of nature through themes of natural disaster and seasonal rebirth juxtaposed with traces of the terrors of the transatlantic slave trade still present and haunting the water.



Nazanin Noroozi's *The Book of Passages I* and *The Book of Passages II*, 2023. Photo: Martin Seck

Finally, Corinne Teed experiments with the interplay between site, time, and boundlessness in their video *Feral Utopias* and book *The Song of the Bestiary*. In *Feral Utopias*, Teed employs scans of 19th-century wood engravings made by colonial naturalists to build a speculative world populated by recordings of queer project participants discussing intersections of queerness in relationship to affinities and alliances with other animals.



Transgressing Lands: Eleven Contemporary Artists Reimagine a Horizon Installation View. Photo: Martin Seck

How do you see the works interacting with each other and within the Boiler space?

A.E. Chapman: The placement of works in The Boiler activates the floor, hidden historical nooks, the vastness of the air space above, and the tactile contrast between the original factory brick wall juxtaposed to the adjacent crisp, white walls. This presents several organic paths to travel and emphasizes a bodily and temporal experience of the show, leading to a bounty of dialogue between the works.

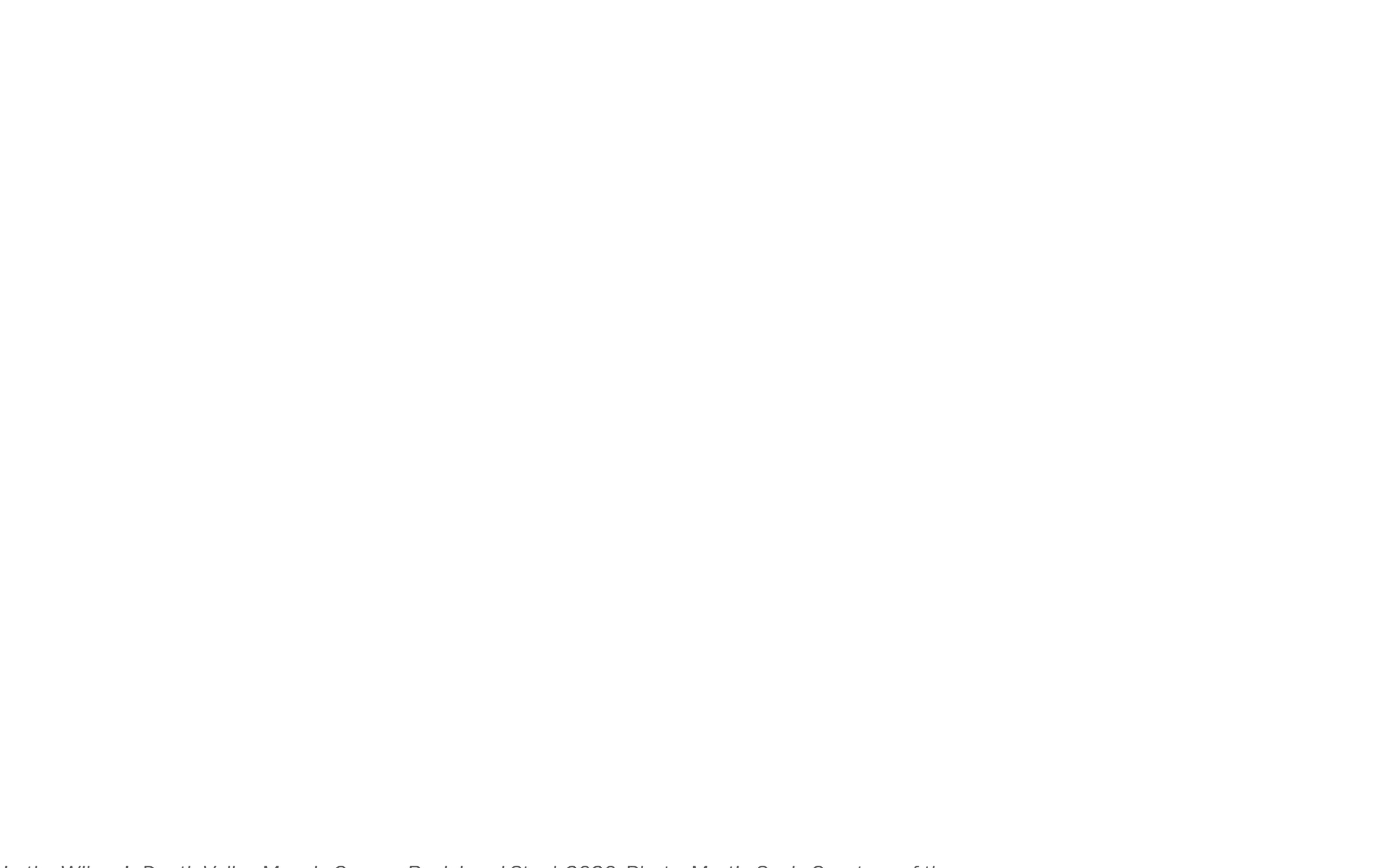
Many of the artists have created new works that respond to the industrial interior landscape of The Boiler, including Jeannine Bardo's *Shift*, where she has pulled rubbings from seventeen panels of a sliding historical door in the entryway of the gallery and laboriously worked over the surface of each panel with metallic encaustic wax in her studio, meditating on scars, erasure, wealth, and labor. Natalie Moore's undulating *Flood* spills out of an existing rectangular niche in the original brick wall of The Boiler, with remnants of the piece trickling out of a smaller crevice located high up on the same wall and a smaller puddle of the work placed quietly a yard away.



Detail of Jeannine Bardo's *Shift*, 2024, installed on a historical sliding door in *The Boiler*. Photo: Martin Seck

Itty S. Neuhaus's *Kaaterskill Falls — in Love Again*, a scroll of back-lit film emphasizing the vertical weight of the falls located in the Catskill Mountains, cascades 20' down from the top of the boiler that in its original operation produced 50,000 pounds of steam per hour. In her *Invasive Ideologies*, *Transgressive Systems* round sculptural installation situated on the gallery floor, Elizabeth Velazquez employs the geometry of the circle to soften the hard edges of not only the monolithic interior of the building but also those of brittle ideologies.

Additionally, Letha Wilson's use of industrial materials in *Death Valley Mosaic Canyon Reclaimed Steel* calls attention to the supporting architecture of original beams and pipes throughout the space while the large voids featured in the diptych combination of *Yellowstone Steel Cut (Hole)* and *Yellowstone Steel Cut (Slash)* frame the brick and concrete of their supporting wall, pulling it into the composition of the violated landscape of Yellowstone National Park while *Salt Flats Cement Dip (3)* possesses a self-similarity to the layers of paint, brick, steel, and concrete that peel and push throughout the plane of the wall.



Letha Wilson's *Death Valley Mosaic Canyon Reclaimed Steel*, 2020. Photo: Martin Seck, Courtesy of the Artist, The Boiler | ELM Foundation and GRIMM, Amsterdam | London | New York

Transgressing Lands at the Boiler

Featured artists: Jeannine Bardo, Nancy Cohen, Cristina de Gennaro, Deborah Jack, Natalie Moore, Itty S. Neuhaus, Nazanin Noroozi, Lina Puerta, Corinne Teed, Elizabeth Velazquez, and Letha Wilson

curated by A.E. Chapman. Related event schedule [here](#).

Transgressing Lands was made possible by funding from the Jacques and Natasha Gelman Foundation.



IN DIALOGUE

#ARTSPIEL, #ASHLEYCHAPMAN, #JEANNINEBARDO, #NANCYCOHEN, #NYCART

PREVIOUS

← Hudson Valley Artists: Bibliography Sourcing Inspiration at Dorsky

Way finding: Caroline Burton at the New Jersey State Museum →

NEXT