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**MUSEUM**

**"Soft Water Hard Stone," the Fifth New Museum Triennial,  
Brings Together Works by Forty Artists and Collectives,  
Opening October 28**



Soft  
Water  
Hard  
Stone

**New York, NY...**The 2021 New Museum Triennial, **"Soft Water Hard Stone,"** brings together works across mediums by forty artists and collectives living and working in twenty-three countries. On view from October 28, 2021 to January 23, 2022, and now in its fifth installment, the exhibition is co-curated by Margot Norton, Allen and Lola Goldring Curator at the New Museum, and Jamillah James, Senior Curator, The Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (ICA LA), and presents new and recent work by a majority of artists who are exhibiting in a U.S. museum for the first time.

The title of the 2021 Triennial, "Soft Water Hard Stone," is taken from a Brazilian proverb, versions of which are found across cultures:

*Água mole em pedra dura, tanto bate até que fura*  
Soft water on hard stone hits until it bores a hole

The proverb can be said to have two meanings: if one persists long enough, the desired effect can eventually be achieved; and time can destroy even the most perceptibly solid materials. The title speaks to ideas of resilience and perseverance, and the impact that an insistent yet discrete gesture can have over time. It also provides a metaphor for resistance, since water—a constantly flowing and transient material—is capable of eventually dissolving stone—a substance associated with permanence, but also composed of tiny particles that can collapse under pressure.

In this moment of profound change, where structures once thought to be stable are disintegrating or on the edge of collapse, the 2021 Triennial recognizes artists re-envisioning traditional models, materials, and techniques beyond established paradigms. Their works exalt states of transformation, calling attention to the malleability of structures, porous and unstable surfaces, and the fluid and adaptable qualities of both technological and organic mediums. Throughout the exhibition, artists address the regenerative capabilities of the natural world and our inseparable relationship to it, and grapple with entrenched legacies of colonialism, displacement, and violence. Their works look back at overlooked histories and artistic traditions, while at the same time look forward to the creative potential that might give dysfunctional or discarded remains new life. It is through their reconfigurations and reimaginings that we are reminded not only of our temporality but of our adaptability—fundamental characteristics we share, and which keep us human.

The proverb that gives the exhibition its title was the inspiration for a work by **Gabriela Mureb**, *Machine #4 – stone (ground)* (2017). The work consists of a small motor that activates an aluminum rod that repeatedly hits a stone in a steady staccato. Over time, the rod will eventually bore a hole in the stone, creating a fine powder that accumulates and dissolves into the surrounding atmosphere. Depending on the duration of the work's display, this hole will alter the stone's weight, potentially causing it to topple over. One of the smallest works included in the exhibition, the piece provides a potent metaphor for ideas surrounding determination, reciprocity, and revolution, as the antique motor steadily hums.

A number of artists in the exhibition including **Ann Greene Kelly**, **Blair Saxon-Hill**, and **Bronwyn Katz**, collect and alter found objects, producing sculptures that transcend the banality of their content. **Samara Scott** will transform the glass façade of the New Museum with *Lonely Planet* (2021), a site-specific installation composed of organic materials and everyday debris. Scott's alchemical explorations, which she describes as being about "mutation, rot, and change," result in vibrant, viscous abstractions, layering and collaging liquids like fabric softener, energy drinks, and hair gel with items such as old T-shirts, cigarette butts, and broken jewelry. **Nadia Belerique's** *HOLDINGS* (2020–ongoing) is a series of white plastic barrels commonly used to send goods and gifts as cargo across seas. In this work, each barrel becomes a frame or vessel for compositions of liquids, photographs, and object assemblages outfitted with lens-like stained-glass coverings. The translucency of the glass and the stacked barrels produces a porous wall through which her objects can be looked at and through—existing simultaneously inside and outside, the shifting light changing them throughout the day.

Other artists, such as **Angelika Loderer**, **Jes Fan**, and **Iris Touliaou**, present works that shift, dissolve, decay, transmute, and fade away. **Tómas Díaz Cedeño's** *1000 años* (2019) is a stalactite-like arrangement of poured concrete sculptures connected to an irrigation system, which sends drops of water down the chains and concrete to pool into ceramic bases. Like the exhibition's titular proverb, the water slowly dissolves particles in the concrete and seeps into its structure, keeping it in a state of gradual yet persistent transformation.

Within "Soft Water Hard Stone," many works directly interplay with the gallery architecture, affecting the viewer's physical experience of the space and objects in relation to their bodies. **Laurie Kang's** *Great Shuttle* (2020–21) replaces the typical temporary drywall traditionally used in museums, dividing the exhibition space with flexible track and steel studs affixed with continually sensitive,

unprocessed photographic film that will shift over time. This relationship between architecture and the body is taken up in many other works that portray the built environment as an extension of our own corporeality, including **Yu Ji's** *Flesh in Stone* series (2012–ongoing), **Krista Clark's** *Annotations on Shelter* (2021), and a new work by **Kate Cooper**.

*Clay Theory* (2019), a stereoscopic 3D film by **Amalie Smith** delves into the profound connections that exist between humans and the Earth, as well as the concept of artificial life. In the work, Smith speaks to scientists about the DNA compositions of the human body and clay, and to art historians about ancient Cypriot terracotta figures that were once thought to be alive. **Hera Büyüктаşçıyan's** *Nothing Further Beyond* (2021), **Gaëlle Choisne's** *Temple of love – Love to love* (2021), and a new large-scale panoramic painting by **Ambera Wellmann** also consider ideas of fluid boundaries and hybridity.

For some artists in the exhibition, a complex materiality emerges, one invested in local contexts and personal histories. A suite of tabletop sculptures by **Kahlil Robert Irving** appears as ordinary materials and refuse, but are produced entirely in ceramic, and are imprinted with the residues of time and the post-industrial American city. **Nickola Pottinger's** paper pulp wall reliefs incorporate found scraps of paper, torn parts of earlier works, broken ceramics, and organic materials, as well as brightly colored, graphic drawings atop the heavily textured surfaces. **Erin Jane Nelson's** ceramics, which collage found and archival photographs and collected elements from the natural world, meditate on the ongoing climate crisis, while painter **Christina Pataialii's** large-scale, abstract paintings on cotton drop cloth evoke issues of class and labor through the lens of familial history and migration.

Other artists, including **Kang Seung Lee** and **Rose Salane**, create new forms of archives as an act of recuperation, reconciling under-recognized histories through materials or re-presentation. *As I Lay Dying* (2021), a series of eight new paintings by **Cynthia Daignault** depicts “witness trees” in the American South, the remaining survivors and witnesses of the Civil War and the Jim Crow era, and symbols of generational trauma that still resonate today. **Tanya Lukin Linklater's** *An amplification through many minds* (2019) reflects upon the issues of provenance, museum collections, and museological display, activating Indigenous cultural belongings kept in storage through relation and movement.

Finally, the politics of visibility and social space are represented in videos, installations, and sculptures that examine cultural inheritance and the role of history and the state in systems of oppression. **Jeneen Frei Njootli's** *Fighting for the title not to be pending* (2020) is composed of the artist's weight in beads, which can be found in various cracks and corners throughout the Museum. *Fighting* articulates a dichotomy of absence and presence, alluding to the ongoing disenfranchisement and violence against Indigenous people throughout the world. These works are joined by **Sandra Mujinga's** speculative exploration of Blackness and visibility in the three-channel video *Pervasive Light* (2021), and **Haig Aivazian's** *All Your Stars are but Dust on my Shoes* (2021), which considers issues of surveillance and control in the context of Lebanon by compiling found footage following the October 17, 2019 uprisings.

“Soft Water Hard Stone” follows the previous installments of the New Museum Triennial, “Younger Than Jesus” (2009), “The Ungovernables” (2012), “Surround Audience” (2015), and “Songs for Sabotage” (2018).

#### ARTIST LIST

**Haig Aivazian** (b. 1980 Beirut, Lebanon; lives and works in Beirut, Lebanon)

**Evgeny Antufiev** (b. 1986 Kyzyl, Russia; lives and works in Moscow, Russia)

**Alex Ayed** (b. 1989 Strasbourg, France; lives and works in Brussels, Belgium, and Tunis, Tunisia)

**Nadia Belerique** (b. 1982 Mississauga, Ontario, Canada; lives and works in Toronto, Canada)

**Hera Büyüктаşçıyan** (b. 1984 Istanbul, Turkey; lives and works in Istanbul, Turkey)

**Gabriel Chaile** (b. 1985 San Miguel de Tucumán, Argentina; lives and works in Lisbon, Portugal)

**Gaëlle Choisne** (b. 1985 Cherbourg, France; lives and works in Paris, France)  
**Krista Clark** (b. 1975 Burlington, VT, United States; lives and works in Atlanta, GA, United States)  
**Kate Cooper** (b. 1984, Liverpool, United Kingdom; lives and works in Amsterdam, the Netherlands)  
**Cynthia Daignault** (b. 1978 Baltimore, MD, United States; lives and works in Baltimore, MD, United States)  
**Tomás Díaz Cedeño** (b. 1983 Mexico City, Mexico; lives and works in Mexico City, Mexico)  
**Jes Fan** (b. 1990 Toronto, Canada; lives and works in New York, NY, United States and Hong Kong)  
**Jeneen Frei Njootli** (Vuntut Gwitchin) (b. 1988 Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada; lives and works in Vancouver, Canada)  
**Goutam Ghosh** (b. 1979 Nabadwip, India; lives and works in Kolkata, India)  
**Harry Gould Harvey IV** (b. 1991 Fall River, MA, United States; lives and works in Fall River, MA, United States)  
**Clara Ianni** (b. 1987 São Paulo, Brazil; lives and works in São Paulo, Brazil)  
**Kahlil Robert Irving** (b. 1992 San Diego, CA, United States; lives and works in St. Louis, MO, United States)  
**Arturo Kameya** (b. 1984 Lima, Peru; lives and works in Amsterdam, the Netherlands)  
**Laurie Kang** (b. 1985 Toronto, Canada; lives and works in Toronto, Canada)  
**Bronwyn Katz** (b. 1993 Kimberly, South Africa; lives and works in Cape Town, South Africa)  
**Ann Greene Kelly** (b. 1988 New York, NY, United States; lives and works in Los Angeles, CA, United States)  
**Kang Seung Lee** (b. 1978 Seoul, South Korea; lives and works in Los Angeles, CA, United States)  
**Amy Lien and Enzo Camacho** (b. 1987 Dallas, TX, United States; lives and works in New York, NY, United States) and (b. 1985 Manila, Philippines; lives and works in Berlin, Germany)  
**Angelika Loderer** (b. 1984 Feldbach, Austria; lives and works in Vienna, Austria)  
**Tanya Lukin Linklater** (Alutiiq) (b. 1976 Kodiak, AK, United States; lives and works in North Bay, Ontario, Canada)  
**Sandra Mujinga** (b. 1989 Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo; lives and works in Oslo, Norway and Berlin, Germany)  
**Gabriela Mureb** (b. 1985 Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; lives and works in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)  
**Brandon Ndife** (b. 1991 Hammond, IN, United States; lives and works in Brooklyn, NY, United States)  
**Erin Jane Nelson** (b. 1989 Neenah, WI, United States; lives and works in Atlanta, GA, United States)  
**Ima-Abasi Okon** (b. 1981 London, United Kingdom; lives and works in London, United Kingdom and Amsterdam, the Netherlands)  
**Christina Pataialii** (b. 1988 Auckland, New Zealand; lives and works in Wellington, New Zealand)  
**Thao Nguyen Phan** (b. 1987 Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam; lives and works in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam)  
**Nickola Pottinger** (b. 1986 Kingston, Jamaica; lives and works in New York, NY, United States)  
**Rose Salane** (b. 1992 New York, NY, United States; lives and works in New York, NY, United States)  
**Blair Saxon-Hill** (b. 1979 Eugene, OR, United States; lives and works in Portland, OR, United States)  
**Samara Scott** (b. 1984 London, United Kingdom; lives and works in London, United Kingdom)  
**Amalie Smith** (b. 1985 Copenhagen, Denmark; lives and works in Copenhagen, Denmark)  
**Iris Touliatou** (b. 1981 Athens, Greece; lives and works in Athens, Greece)  
**Ambera Wellmann** (b. 1982 Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, Canada; lives and works in New York, NY, United States)  
**Yu Ji** (b. 1985 Shanghai, China; lives and works in Shanghai, China)

## **PUBLICATION**

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue copublished by the New Museum and Phaidon Press Limited. The catalogue is designed by Elizabeth Karp-Evans and Adam Turnbull of Studio Pacific and includes contributions from Jamillah James, Margot Norton, Karen Archey,

Eunsong Kim, and Bernardo Mosqueira, and features original interviews with all forty artists and collectives participating in the exhibition.

## **PUBLIC PROGRAMS**

### **2021 Triennial Curator Roundtable, October 28, 7:00 PM**

To celebrate the opening of the 2021 Triennial, co-curators **Margot Norton**, Allen and Lola Goldring Curator at the New Museum, and **Jamillah James**, Senior Curator at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, will speak together with **Eva Respini**, Barbara Lee Chief Curator at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston. This roundtable will explore the intricacies of curating an international exhibition during times of significant change. The curators will also share stories, insights, and concepts that undergird the 2021 Triennial.

### **Soft Water, Hard Stone: (But I Know) A Change Is Gonna Come, November 5, 1:00 PM**

Join Triennial artists **Laurie Kang**, **Gabriela Mureb**, and catalogue contributor and curator **Raphael Fonseca** for a roundtable exploration of the proverb that inspired the exhibition's title. Moderated by **Bernardo Mosqueira**, ISLAA Curatorial Fellow at the New Museum, participants will consider the relationship between the proverb, each panelist's individual practice, and the Triennial at large.

### **The Fluid City: From Death to Life, December 2, 7:00 PM**

Featuring Triennial artists **Krista Clark**, **Harry Gould Harvey IV**, catalogue contributor and curator **Carson Chan**, and moderated by Triennial co-curator, **Margot Norton**, this program will discuss how artists excavate urban histories and architectural records, mine discarded remains, and interrogate urban development to create between physical and social landscapes.

### **Workshop for Educators: Erin Jane Nelson, December 9, 4:30PM**

For this online workshop, Triennial artist Erin Jane Nelson will introduce educators to her work in the exhibition and then guide participants in art making, asking: How might art attune us to entangled relationships with materials, systems, land, and community? This 90-minute program is free of charge and registration is [available here](#).

### **Mediated Bodies, Thursday, December 16, 1:00 PM**

What happens when technology extends life beyond its biological limits? How can we complicate traditional and normative ideas of identity? And what happens when artists interrogate bodies—their own, those of others, and those they imagine—to envision new forms of living? Join us for a panel discussion in conjunction with the 2021 Triennial, "Soft Water Hard Stone," featuring artists **Kate Cooper**, **Jes Fan**, and **Jeneen Frei Njootli**, and moderated by **Jeanette Bisschops**, Curatorial Fellow at the New Museum.

### **Colonial Legacies: Spaces as Witness, January 13, 1:00 PM**

This panel will collectively consider the relationship between memory and creative practice, moderated by Triennial co-curator **Jamillah James**. Featuring Triennial artists **Amy Lien** and **Enzo Camacho**, **Tanya Lukin Linklater**, and catalogue contributor and poet **Eunsong Kim**, the panelists will discuss how their respective practices engage the act of witnessing across time and space, with particular attention to the legacies of colonialism.

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## **ABOUT NEW MUSEUM**

The New Museum is the only museum in New York City exclusively devoted to contemporary art. Founded in 1977, the New Museum is a center for exhibitions, information, and documentation about living artists from around the world. From its beginnings as a one-room office on Hudson Street to the inauguration of its first freestanding building on the Bowery designed by SANAA in 2007, the New Museum continues to be a place of experimentation and a hub of new art and new ideas.

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## **SUPPORT**

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### *Co-Chairs*

Shelley Fox Aarons, Charlotte Feng Ford, Ken Kuchin, and Toby Devan Lewis

### *Travel and Research Fund*

Jerri and Steven Nagelberg

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Alexandra Bowes, Peter Boyce II, James-Keith Brown and Eric G. Diefenbach, Maureen Carr and Walter Nollmann, Glori and Meir Cohen, Abbie and Patrick Dean, Dudley and Michael Del Balso, Sandra and Leo DelZotto Rebecca and Martin Eisenberg, Judith and Paul Fried, Carol and Arthur Goldberg, Elaine Goldman, Christina Hribar, Tina Kim, Ahmet Kocabiyik, Jill and Peter Kraus, Lynn K. and Jules Kroll, Stanley Lumax, Lorraine and Edouard Malingue, Iris Marden, Carlos Marsano, Daniel Palacio, Tommie Pegues and Don Capoccia, Steven Pulimood, Almine Rech and Bernard Ruiz-Picasso, Debbie and Mitchell Rechler, Lisa Roumell and Mark Rosenthal, Sybille and Gregorio Schneider, Lyn and Sam Schwab, Susan and Kent Seelig, Tracey Serko, Amir Shariat, Michael Wise, Laurie and David Wolfert, Neda Young, Rosina Lee Yue, Margot and Scott Ziegler

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