



# RAW: *Craft, Commodity, and Capitalism*

September 29, 2019 – January 5, 2020



Sonya Clark, *Encrusted (Blinded + Drowning)*, 2015. Currency and sugar crystals, 4 × 6 each. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Taylor Dabney.

LOS ANGELES – Craft Contemporary presents *RAW: Craft, Commodity, and Capitalism*, a thematic exhibition featuring nine contemporary artists who work with commodities as their materials to construct works that reflect upon the history of colonialism, slavery, and globalization, on view from September 29, 2019 to January 5, 2020. The artists featured are: Charmaine Bee, Atul Bhalla, Sonya Clark, Raksha Parekh, Jovencio de la Paz, Ignacio Perez Meruane, Amor Muñoz, Juana Valdes, and Ken + Julia Yonetani.

The exhibition concept was inspired by an interview with Sven Beckert, author of *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (2014). In examining the rise and fall of the European-dominated cotton empire, Beckert writes, “Because of the centrality of cotton, its story is also the story of the making and remaking of global capitalism and with it of the modern world.” Indeed, goods such as cotton, sugar, salt, tea, etc. became a driving force behind the industrialization and expansion of Western civilization, weaving farflung populations, geographies, and market systems inextricably together to shape contemporary understandings of economics, politics, and nationhood. The exhibition traces how this operating framework of capitalism – extracting labor and natural resources from colonized regions – has rippled across time.

“The artists in *RAW: Craft, Commodity, and Capitalism* all approach the commodities they utilize as a form of biographical or historical record. Their use of these materials acknowledges the layers of repressed histories encapsulated in each commodity,” explains Exhibitions Curator Holly Jerger. The exhibition spotlights commodities including salt, sugar, copper, water, tea, cotton, indigo, agave, and porcelain.



**Top:** Amor Muñoz, *Yuca\_Tech*, 2014-2015. Textiles with electronics and video documentation, dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Amor Muñoz Studio.

**Bottom:** Ken + Julia Yonetani, *Grape chandelier*, 2011. Murray River salt and metal, 90.5 x 55.1 inches. Courtesy of Ken + Julia Yonetani and Mizuma Gallery, Singapore. Photo: Catherine Brossais.

Artist duo Ken + Julia Yonetani's *Grape chandelier* is beaded with salt sourced from the Murray-Darling Basin in Australia, drawing attention to the problem of salinization in the region. Charmaine Bee, Sonya Clark, and Raksha Parekh investigate the African diaspora by tracing the migration, trade routes, and goods that historically accompanied the slave trade, such as sugar, cotton, and tea. Ignacio Perez Meruane experiments with copper, referencing how its excavation has scarred the landscape of Chile. Atul Bhalla's conceptual practice is centered around the politics of water in his birthplace, New Delhi, filling ten glass vitrines with river sand and water in his installation *Immersion*s. Amor Muñoz makes use of both henequen, or agave, as well as solar electricity, in establishing the community initiative, *Yuca\_Tech*. Jovencio de la Paz's textile-based practice explores how colonialism and labor have been integral to the production of fabric and dyes, evidenced by the shades of indigo in his piece *Bluets (for Maggie Nelson)*. Finally, Juana Valdes questions the hierarchies associated with the luxury status of porcelain in her works, *RedBone Colored China Rags* and *SED (-to thirst)*.

By taking a closer look at commodities, the exhibition allows complex issues such as these to be told, prompting audiences to consider how materials are used and distributed around the world. *RAW: Craft, Commodity, and Capitalism* examines the tangle of geopolitical and historical factors that tie together craft, community, and capitalism.

#### OPENING

An opening reception for *RAW: Craft, Commodity, and Capitalism* will take place on Saturday, September 28, 2019 from 6 – 9 PM.

#### PROGRAMS

##### Curator Walkthrough:

##### Holly Jerger with Artists Ignacio Perez Meruane and Raksha Parekh

Sunday, November 17 | 1 PM | Free

Exhibitions Curator Holly Jerger is joined by exhibiting artists Raksha Parekh and Ignacio Perez Meruane for an engaging walkthrough of *RAW: Craft, Commodity, and Capitalism*. Learn more about the intersection between craft and capitalism, and hear about the process and ideas behind the artworks featured in the exhibition.

#### CATALOGUE

A fully illustrated catalogue will be published to accompany the exhibition, which includes essay contributions by Alicia Ory DeNicola, Risa Puleo, and Namita Gupta Wiggers. The publication will be available in the Craft Contemporary shop and online.

#### CREDITS

*RAW: Craft, Commodity, and Capitalism* has been organized by Craft Contemporary and Exhibitions Curator Holly Jerger. This exhibition is funded in part by the Pasadena Art Alliance. Exhibition research was supported by a Craft Research Fund grant from the Center for Craft.



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Located on Los Angeles' historic Miracle Mile since 1965, Craft Contemporary reveals the potential of craft to educate, captivate, provoke, and empower. With a focus on contemporary art made from craft media and processes, Craft Contemporary presents dynamic exhibitions by established and emerging artists and designers who are often underrepresented in larger art institutions. Through a robust roster of regular programs and events, Craft Contemporary offers creative opportunities for the public to participate in hands-on workshops led by professional artists. Craft Contemporary cultivates an environment for people in Los Angeles to deepen their relationship to art, creativity, and one another. For more information, visit [www.cafam.org](http://www.cafam.org)

LOCATION: 5814 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90036

ADMISSION: FREE every Sunday

REGULARLY: \$9 for adults; \$7 for students, teachers, seniors; free for Craft Contemporary members

HOURS: Tuesday - Friday, 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.; Saturday & Sunday, 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.; closed Mondays. Every first Thursday of the month, extended hours 6:30 - 9:30 p.m.

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