

RAYMOND ELOZUA



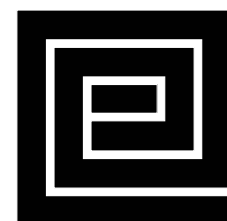
STRUCTURE &
DISSONANCE



RAYMON ELOZUA

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September 10 – December 31, 2022



Everson
Museum of Art

Essays by Garth Johnson
Maria Porges
Thyrza Nichols Goodeve
Catalog Concept: Raymon Elozua

INTRODUCTION

Raymon Elozua is something of a modern-day alchemist, transforming the decay of America's industrial landscape into images and objects that are hauntingly beautiful and infused with life. Elozua's technically complex sculptures—composed of ceramic, glass, and steel—feel very much at home at the Everson Museum of Art, a tenacious Syracuse institution that has born witness to the hardships and struggles of life in a post-industrial city, and has emerged as a harbinger for creativity and progress. The Everson began collecting Elozua's work in the 1980s, a time in which the city's decay was in synch with his bleak constructions. In a period of creative and economic rebirth for Syracuse, the Museum's acquisition of *R&D IV: RE-32-1*, a landmark work featured in *Structure/Dissonance*, brings the Everson's deep philosophical connection with Elozua full circle.

The major exhibition *Raymon Elozua: Structure/Dissonance* and this accompanying publication bring together 22 sculptures and more than 100 prints and photographs made over the last three decades. This many years-long undertaking is a testament to the Everson's longstanding support of artists who push boundaries and follow their own idiosyncratic paths. The overall

project is the dramatic result of the steadfast vision and perseverance of Garth Johnson, the Everson's Paul Phillips & Sharon Sullivan Curator of Ceramics. *Structure/Dissonance* was originally scheduled to open in 2020, just after the pandemic began. Despite the many hurdles and delays, Garth and Raymon managed to move the project forward, and we are eternally grateful to their perseverance. It was worth the wait.

Many other individuals helped bring *Structure/Dissonance* to fruition. I would specifically like to acknowledge Leslie Ferrin, without whom this exhibition would not be possible. Leslie was one of the first to see the magic of Raymon's work and has worked diligently ever since to share it with the world. Thanks also go out to Rick and Alita Rogers for their financial support, as well as Raymon's partner Micheline Gingras, whose creative support and steady hand kept this project moving forward.

Lastly, my sincere appreciation goes to Raymon himself—not only for his patience and goodwill (which he mustered through a pandemic!), but more importantly, for his innate ability to reveal the hidden beauty contained in the imperfect, the rejected, and the forgotten. Thank you, Raymon, for helping us to see the world in a new light.

Elizabeth Dunbar

Director & CEO

Everson Museum of Art

FOREWORD

Structure & Dissonance is a three-decade survey of the work of groundbreaking sculptor Raymon Elozua. Elozua's astounding compositions in ceramics, steel, and glass appear to float, or even explode in space. His exploration of materiality is grounded in nearly a half century of experimentation that started with hyper-realist ceramic miniatures of decaying billboards, steel mills, and other relics of America's industrial peak. Although his compositions are now completely abstract, they are grounded in a rigorous conceptual framework.

Throughout his career, Elozua has also placed research at the forefront of his practice. Whether surveying the human wreckage left by the decline of the steel industry or exploring the shuttered "Borscht Belt" resorts and bungalows in the Catskills, where he now lives, Elozua has always girded his sculptural output with scholarly archival and photography projects, which are also documented in this volume. New essays by Garth Johnson, curator at the Everson Museum, Maria Porges, and Thyrza Nichols Goodeve explore the parallels and intersections between Elozua's scholarly and artistic investigations.

Raymon Elozua: Structure & Dissonance represents the Everson Museum of Art's continuing commitment to exhibiting the most vibrant, challenging artists in the ceramic field. Elozua proves that as he enters the sixth decade of his career, he remains in the vanguard. *Structure & Dissonance* is not just a retrospective exhibition for an important artist, it is an affirmation of the Everson Museum of Art's core values, which include engaging diverse communities, inspiring curiosity and lifelong learning, and contributing to a more vital and inclusive society.

Garth Johnson

Paul Phillips and Sharon Sullivan

Curator of Ceramics, Everson Museum of Art.

HIDENTIFYING

ELOZUA

GARTH JOHNSON

To get to the tiny hamlet of Mountaindale (pop. 633), you have to take a series of winding two-lane roads that pass through a variety of sites spread out like a history book that tells the story of the shifting fortunes of the Catskill's "Borscht Belt" region.

The ruins of resorts that once welcomed thousands of guests are interspersed with dilapidated poultry coops. Rambling bungalow colonies where generations of families once summered have been converted to Hasidic resorts and Yeshivas. As ever, new populations filter in to escape the city. The influx of hippies in the 1960s and 70s has given way to a new generation of boutique owners and AirBnB landlords who, just like their forbears, promote the Catskills as a holistic alternative to crowded city life.

Not every resident of Mountaindale fits into these narratives. Several generations of "townies" have grown up without having experience of even the twilight of the "Borscht Belt" resort culture. Over the past two decades, the hamlet has attracted an eclectic group of artists, eccentrics, and entrepreneurs who chose it for its affordability and scruffy charm. In Mountaindale, you can

now get a decent cup of espresso, biodynamic wine, and if you are in the market, a bikini made from angora rabbit wool. But at its heart, the town still reflects the spirit of the residents who have chosen to live here through thick and thin.

The town's former service station is a few doors away from Mountaindale's Jewish temple on the south side of town. The gas pumps, tanks, and signage are long gone. In their place, the building is marked by a single name, ELOZUA. The gas station is a fitting home for the studio of sculptor Raymon Elozua, who rose to prominence in the late 1970s in the stable of pioneering Soho gallery OK Harris Gallery, home to anachronistic artists like Duane Hanson, Deborah Butterfield, Luis Jimenez, Marilyn Levine, and Jack Goldstein. The gallery's owner, Ivan Karp, was drawn to artists who tackled the notion of "Americana" through their own complicated personal lenses.¹



Elozua Studio, One Main St.,
Mountaindale, NY
(aka Freddy Eckard's Garage)

Elozua's lens was more complicated than most. He is the child of a mother, a French war bride, and a father, an illegal alien via Cuba, but who also served in the U.S. Army for 25 years. While his father was stationed elsewhere, Elozua was raised primarily by his mother, a seamstress, who passed along her discerning eye for meticulous construction. Elozua's father, whose sense of masculinity was challenged by his son's "sensitive"² tendencies, gave young Raymon an HO gauge train set as a course correction. Model railroading led to a love affair with model building that provided both the physical skills and the visual vocabulary that were the bedrock for his early *trompe l'oeil* work in clay, consisting primarily of tabletop models of crumbling billboards, drive ins, and other fading symbols of postwar industry and consumerism.

Elozua's identity as an artist was shaped in large part by growing up as the child of immigrants. In school, he placed a high priority on blending in with the crowd and was shy to bring friends back to his house. He was enrolled in a parochial Catholic school, where he was the standout student in his class of 35, always striving to please the nuns. This continued in an all boys' high school, where he was also a top student, the editor of the yearbook, and even lettered in track to prove that he was equal to the athletes. While he was in grade school, his father was laid off from his job at U.S. Steel, so he made ends meet through building maintenance. Raymon, who tagged along in the summer, learned to repair and care for buildings, which gave him skills in carpentry and construction that would serve him well in his art career.

After graduating from high school, Elozua enrolled at the University of Chicago, not fully realizing its elite reputation for academics. After his first year, understanding that he was about to fail out, he enrolled in a handful of classes that he wanted to take first, including modern theater, American history, and most fortuitously, Introduction to Art. Intro to Art was conducted in two-week sessions with the visual art faculty, which at the

time included legendary German-born sculptor Ruth Duckworth. Elozua recalls Duckworth's teaching style, which did not come with much practical advice, but was instead rooted in the close critique of one's own work, something he continues to be deeply invested in.

His time at the University of Chicago broadened Elozua's horizons, ultimately teaching him that he could construct his own identity rather than merely blending in and accepting what was handed to him. In addition to introducing him to art and theater, Elozua's time at the University of Chicago left him with another critical piece of his identity—*college dropout*. Over the past five decades, Elozua has pursued an unconventional path to a career as a visual artist. Far from a hindrance, his lack of academic credentials gave him the freedom to define himself in a self-deprecating way. During his time at OK Harris, Elozua was so uncomfortable at being labeled an "artist" that he preferred the term "model railroader."

Elozua moved to New York City in the summer of 1970 after spending a year in California working in a dune buggy shop for a mechanic with a side hustle as a sculptor. New York in 1970—particularly Little Italy, where Elozua settled—bears little resemblance to the tourist-friendly streets of the present. As a welcome, local teens set his 1954 Plymouth sedan on fire right after moving in. New York became another important layer of Elozua's identity, a mixture of cultures, an abundance of art, dance, and theater, and enough grit and danger for a Chicagoan to feel at home. Elozua naturally blended in with the creative neighbors on his street. Randa Haines (director), Daniel Nagrin (dancer), Robert Frank (photographer), Robert Grovesnor (sculptor), Lee Nagrin (theatre), June Leaf (artist), and Philip Glass (composer), who opened his loft for regular performances, all lived on this one short block.

In between gigs constructing theater sets and props at Julliard Theater, Elozua also gained a reputation as a handyman for creatives in Soho. He worked for many artists who were transforming old factory spaces into live-in studio lofts. Elozua describes himself at that time as "an ex-hippie," but he was also a serious gearhead,



Studio interior,
One Main St.,
Mountaindale, NY

and quickly found a group of misfit bikers that included artists and other creative types, for Sunday rides along the Hudson River.

In 1973, Elozua found himself at a crossroads. His father passed away, and he broke up with the girlfriend who brought him to New York, leaving him with a profound sense of loss. It was during this time that he bought a few boxes of clay, which he modeled into “pseudo-Ruth Duckworth” pieces and a few abstract busts. These early works did not exactly strike joy in Elozua’s heart, and pragmatically, he knew that there was no market for them. Instead, he began producing large slab built plates and bowls, which he could make quickly and inexpensively. The following year, he began selling this work at the pioneering Northeast Craft Fair⁴ in Rhinebeck, New York, where he found immediate financial success.

For an artist as self-effacing as Elozua, it is remarkable that throughout his career, he has opened himself up to both collaboration and extensive dialogue with scholars and collectors. Elozua met artist and collector Allan Chasanoff in 1974 when he was hired to create bases to be used for his close-up photography. The two quickly formed a tight bond. Chasanoff bought several of Elozua’s early ceramic sculptures and taught him the basics of photography. Elozua and he explored the abandoned industrial landscape of New York and New Jersey, which in turn influenced the *trompe l’oeil* sculptures that brought him to prominence at OK Harris.

Even though Chasanoff had an elite degree from Yale, he had walked away from film school at NYU. His own renegade path through the worlds of photography, real estate, and collecting served as a perfect model for Elozua. When the two met, Chasanoff was focusing on macro-photography, which he conducted in his tiny studio apartment. Elozua remembers that:

...the entire space was filled with materials, sculptures, props and equipment. I was amazed. Allan then proceeded to show me

some slides of his current project; close-ups of paint squeezings. He explained that since it was so easy for photographers to depict reality, it was incumbent for photographers to explore abstraction. In that meeting I also viewed slides of his light bulb series, based on a sculpture with numerous electrical sockets to affix different size light bulbs, which also rotated to introduce motion and blur into his photos. After that day I was never the same. I viewed photography from a different perspective although my heart was still attached to documentary photography. Over the years, I learned a lot about the technical and aesthetic sides of photography from Allan. More importantly, Allan, and his photographic quest, was extremely influential for me in understanding an artistic mode of inquiry rather than the usual commercial mode.⁵

For both his own work and his photo collecting, Chasanoff focused on the idea of *optical confusion*—cases where the camera lens captures a moment of ambiguity or spatial paradox. Chasanoff estimated that fully half of the photographs in his collection presented some sort of optical puzzle to be solved.⁶ **Meeting Chasanoff came at** a perfect time for Elozua, who was having success selling pottery at Rhinebeck and other craft fairs. But he was clearly at a creative juncture where he felt like he wanted his ceramic work to communicate more.

Despite—or perhaps because he did not spend his formative years in endless critiques—Elozua has always made himself vulnerable by opening himself up for dialogue. Through all of his bodies of work, Elozua went to great lengths to invite gallerists, critics, and collectors to his studio. In addition to his long-term friendships with fellow polymaths like Chasanoff, Elozua met his partner Micheline Gingras in 1981. Gingras, a French-Canadian artist and educator, is a perfect foil for Elozua, intuitive, emotive, and highly prolific, who balanced Elozua’s

more measured conceptual tendencies. The two have collaborated on several bodies of work over the years, but perhaps more importantly, they are currently enmeshed in the hard work of embedding culture into the community of Mountindale as it rapidly gentrifies.

Even though he has stated unequivocally that he does not enjoy teaching workshops and giving lectures, Elozua has used his few stints as an adjunct college teacher and visiting artist to experiment with new ideas and technologies. For most artists in the field of ceramics, a workshop is an opportunity to lean into sharing one’s most time-honored tips and tricks that have been honed over years in the studio. For Elozua, he used one such workshop (his only ever) in Westchester, New York, 1989, as an opportunity for experimentation. Elozua decided to combine steel wire and mesh wire cloth to create a geometric abstraction of a cup. The results, which appear cracked, weathered, and deteriorated, were so pleasing to Elozua that they would be the focus of his sculptural output for the next thirty years.

As with his earlier collaborations with Chasanoff, Elozua showed a willingness to share his excitement about a new process. During a 1989 residency at the Watershed Center for the Ceramic Arts in Maine, Elozua and Gingras used Watershed’s facilities to greatly expand the scale and ambition of his previous experiments in steel and ceramics. The final result was a body of nearly life-sized figurative *Demons* and *Sirens*, with skeletons welded from rebar, fleshed out with fired terra cotta clay. These sculptures allowed Elozua and Gingras, both raised Catholic, to explore archetypes of religion and gender while significantly moving the ball forward in terms of Elozua’s material explorations.

Those who are familiar with his work will be unsurprised that music played a pivotal role in Elozua’s turn toward abstraction. Elozua had always been a passionate lover of music, but never a musician in the traditional sense. His taste in music had always been eclectic, veering from 1950s Chicago blues to Free Jazz to the work of modern composers, Terry Riley and Steve Reich. The rise of sampling culture in the 1980s prompted Elozua to

purchase a computer and equipment that allowed him to sample and manipulate sounds, as well as to compose audio scores using visual data points and scoring software. The use of MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) allowed him to experiment with virtual instruments and digitally rendered sounds.

Thanks to MIDI, Elozua developed a template that would serve him well over the next three decades. He began using paintings by Abstract Expressionists like Arshile Gorky, Hans Hoffman, and Clyfford Still that he translated into visual separations’ defined by their colors and marks. Through software, he could assign a key and rhythm to his new works. This led to the creation of *Music of Abstract Expressionism*, an audio CD that Elozua self-released in 1997. Despite his love of abstraction and free expression in music, it was only through this elaborate conceptual dance that he was able to make the leap into abstraction with his visual work. At first, these works took the form of digital drawings executed in Photoshop. For example, using Photoshop, Elozua could separate a de Kooning painting into seven layers that represented different colors or shapes. Then, like a hip-hop DJ, Elozua could freely sample and borrow from multiple painters and paintings to create his own digital compositions.⁷

In 1999, Elozua accepted a position as an Artist-in-Residence at Louisiana State University. He came to Baton Rouge armed with his mashed-up digital compositions. At LSU, Elozua leaned into the technical expertise that was available on campus. In a playful rebuke of Clement Greenberg’s exhortations toward flatness in Modernist painting,⁸ Elozua learned to use 3D Max Studio software to manipulate his flat digital compositions into three-dimensional ones. The resulting “Word” sculptures, which shared the visual language of his deconstructed wireframe teapots and figures, are shocking in their material prescience.

One important lesson that Elozua took away from his time studying with Ruth Duckworth was a desire to



Micheline Gingras and Raymon Elozua on a Harley Davidson 2007 Road King with Motorvation sidecar.

Photograph:
Ben Halpern

make his sculptural work “float.” After utilizing steel as a structural element for his compositions, Elozua began the process of finding ever-more-elaborate ways to lift his works into space. At LSU, he created his first sculpture utilizing a stratagem that can now be found in all of his sculptural works, a solid rectangular steel base that anchors the visual pyrotechnics that happen in the space above. Elozua has taken great pains to credit sculptors like Art Nelson and Thom Boehnert, who pioneered using metal in ceramics in the early 1980s, but over the course of the next three decades, he would make the technique his own.

Although dictated by his meticulous conceptual ideas, full abstraction proved to be transformative. Even though he had begun using steel mesh coated in ceramic slip as an element in his work since the early 1990s, Elozua became comfortable with letting these elements grow in scale and

self-confidence. Where shards of angular color were once choked by tangles of wire, his *LSU Sculptures* introduce larger areas of negative space that allow his increasingly clay and glaze encrusted surfaces to not only breathe, but to perform acrobatic feats. For all of their charms, the LSU sculptures hewed close to their digital source materials, unfolding in shallow layers like stage sets. Elozua was clearly searching for the next leap in his work.

Despite leaving OK Harris in 1982, Elozua maintained a remarkable track record with commercial galleries. Over the years, he held solo exhibitions at important galleries like the Braunstein Gallery in San Francisco, the Garth Clark Gallery and Carlo LaMagna Gallery in New York, and his current gallery, Ferrin Contemporary in North Adams, Massachusetts. In 2000, he was one of the artists featured in the exhibition *Color and Fire: Defining Moments in Studio Ceramics, 1950-2000* at the Los Angeles Museum

of Contemporary Art, and in 2003, he was rewarded with a mid-career retrospective, *Constructing Elozua*, at the Mint Museum of Art in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Along with the frenzy of activity surrounding his retrospective, 2003 also saw the health of his mother in Chicago deteriorate to the point where Elozua had to help her move back to her native France. After the 9-11 terrorist attacks, lower Manhattan had become a very different place, and Elozua began to yearn for a more rural existence, which he attributes to his mother’s romanticism about the countryside. For Elozua, who by now owned his studio building, it made sense to move away from Manhattan in order to rent out his space, which was barely useable, full of the crated works returned from the Mint retrospective. Elozua searched the Hudson Valley for a new home, initially focusing on the areas that he had come to know around Rhinebeck. He followed his instincts further afield, to Sullivan County in the Catskills, where a broker introduced him to the Schmitt family, who owned practically the entire hamlet of Mountandale.

Mountandale proved to be an immediate fit for Elozua. Main Street was a virtual ghost town, so affordable space was plentiful, and it fairly dripped with the faded glory and decay that Elozua built into his ceramic work. In 2005, he rented out his Elizabeth St. storefront and set out for Mountandale. Elozua maintained a connection with Manhattan but he immediately and enthusiastically immersed himself in local history. While he built his new studio in the gas station, Elozua threw himself into Catskills-centric research projects. Armed with his camera, he explored the surrounding area, with its crumbling “Borscht Belt” resorts, bungalow colonies, and abandoned chicken farms.

Over the years, Elozua has proved himself to be an astute collector. He served as a curator to Chasanoff, who amassed a distinctive collection of more than 400 pieces of ceramic art during the 1980s and 90s that now reside in the collection of the Mint Museum of Art. Elozua also collected objects that reflected his surroundings.

Throughout his time on the Lower East Side, his imagination was sparked by the inventiveness and sheer variety of cast iron stove burners that he salvaged from abandoned stoves and gas appliances on the Bowery. Elozua’s collection of more than 200 gas burners is a testimony to both innovation and the maniacal attention to detail of American artisans and designers.

As he explored the Catskills, Elozua’s imagination was captured by new mundane objects that littered the landscape. Rusty buckets and battered enamelware became self-contained ready-mades that packed the decayed punch of his earlier *trompe l’oeil* work. His work as collector and archivist are covered in greater depth in this volume’s essay by Maria Porges, but suffice it to say that whether he is collecting, documenting, or producing sculptures, Elozua is utilizing a series of skills that each feed into the other. The monumental outcome of this period is *Vanishing Catskills*, a set of seven self-published books accompanied by two websites (www.vanishingcatskills.us) and (www.eggbasket-scny.us) which are laden with maps, writings, ephemera, and search features.

While he was giving birth to these research projects, Elozua was not letting his new studio go to waste. With ample garage space and empty county roads, his childhood love of cars and motorcycles could now blossom. Elozua has restored several vintage motorcycles, including a 1970 Triumph Bonneville and a 2007 Harley Davidson Road King, which he hot-rodged to accommodate a sidecar. Over the years, his car collection has included a rare 1984 Avanti II, and now a new Mach 1 Ford Mustang.

Inspired by Chasanoff’s conceptual tabletop photography, Elozua now had ample room to construct a photo studio, where he went to work setting up and documenting still lifes of his buckets and enamelware combined with shards of mirror that evoked his earlier sculptures while exploring Chasanoff’s ideas about optical confusion and abstraction in photography.

*In 2006, I began to explore ideas of still life photography. I created sculptural objects and placed them into a controlled environment, limiting the viewer's frame of reference. Employing a digital camera, I photographed each setup. The digital process made life both easier and more difficult. One no longer had to labor under a financial awareness of the cost of film or the constraints of composing the ideal photograph. More than ever the decisive moment gave way to multiple moments. Editing became the art. Photographing each setup over the span of several days also changed my ideas of photography. Taking a picture now meant both the memory of past images and a dialogue with the present setup. Photographic events became linear in time and circular in vision.*⁹

In 2013, Elozua followed another hunch, traveling to Corning, New York to meet glassblower Lorin Silverman, who was then serving as a technician for the Corning Museum of Glass, helping artists translate their artistic vision into glass. The two made an immediate connection based on a shared curiosity about materials, and Elozua began having Silverman blow molten glass into steel armatures. The resulting glass bubbles, in primary colors that matched Elozua's palette, were both luminous and voluminous, providing an alternate path to the sense of weightlessness that he had admired in the work of Ruth Duckworth. Using CAD drawings, Elozua then constructed steel and ceramic sculptures that supported the blown glass.

The resulting sculptures are miraculous. The first time I experienced them in person was in a 2016 visit to Elozua's Mountaintale studio, which had grown to include two storefronts on Main Street. Nine of his *R&D Sculptures* were arranged in a grid in an otherwise empty room. Elozua welded slender steel pedestals for each of the sculptures, which gives them an immediate relationship to the human body. As with each facet of Elozua's practice,

the glass, steel, and ceramic are all interrelated, feeding upon each other to create something larger. Elozua surely recognized this power, because the relationship between the three materials continues to consume him and fuel his work.

Much more eloquent paeans to these works than I can muster are contained in the other two essays in this volume, but they are a powerful culmination of Elozua's scholarly research and mastery of materials. Elozua has now lived in Mountaintale for close to seventeen years. Elozua arrived in Mountaintale at arguably the region's lowest point in the last 75 years, which started with a boom in tourism, as New York's Jewish population sought space and fresh air, then dwindled in the 1970s and 80s as the "Borscht Belt" resort clientele aged and new generations found it easier to hop on a plane to exotic locales.¹⁰

As Elozua turns the page, the next chapter for Mountaintale is being written as well. In 2012, Butch Resnick, who grew up in town, acquired 31 buildings in the village. Resnick's goal was to attract more residents like Elozua—artists who would naturally attract a younger population, as well as visitors who shared Elozua's connection to the countryside. Resnick went so far as to hire a "town curator" in Nhi Mundy, a young magazine editor and restaurateur who helped usher in a vintage store, an apothecary, restaurants, and a combination café/wine shop/bookstore.¹¹ The COVID-19 pandemic provided bumps in the road, but Mountaintale ultimately saw the same influx of new residents and visitors from New York City as the rest of upstate New York.

For an artist who has proudly spent his career on the margins, and who styles himself as a bit of a curmudgeon, Elozua now finds himself in an unusual spot: insider. When it comes to Elozua's residency in Mountaintale, the influence of Micheline Gingras can not be overstated. Gingras is an accomplished artist in her own right, and taught art for 37 years at Saint Ann's School in Brooklyn Heights. As Resnick pushed for Mountaintale to open

itself to new residents and businesses, Elozua and Gingras have periodically opened their storefront studios to art exhibitions, including two iterations of the Mountaintale Biennial, which ran in 2015 and 2018, and took a hiatus during the pandemic.

Speaking of the pandemic, *Structure & Dissonance* was originally planned for fall of 2020 at the Everson Museum of Art. Because of the pandemic, Elozua pushed to delay

the exhibition by not just one year, but by two. With the pandemic raging and the exhibition pushed safely down the road, Elozua rolled up his sleeves and set to work on *Clarity in Confusion (C.i.C.)*, a series that puts an exclamation point on his work in ceramics, steel, and glass. Ever since his *R&D Sculptures* that first utilized blown glass, Elozua had gradually dropped the conceptual fig leaf that has almost invariably tied his work to an underlying concept.

Clarity in Confusion ties in very loosely with Chasanoff's exhortation that photography must push beyond mere documentation. Paraedolia is the scientific terms for seeing patterns in randomness—like perceiving a face on a piece of toast. As conspiracy theories have become more widespread over the past decades, scientists have recognized that some degree of paraedolia is a natural part of human evolution.¹² For Elozua, seeking order in chaos is a natural part of the human condition, but he has come to the understanding that accepting confusion in itself is a necessary condition for clarity.¹³ Look closely at the *Clarity in Confusion* series, and you will spot familiar items that resonate with Elozua's biography. Auto parts like the headers from a V-8 engine form the core of many of the *Clarity in Confusion* pieces, and the thicket of steel wire and mesh has been joined by metal barbecue grates and refrigerator shelves, all encrusted with layers of ceramic slip and glaze, and punctuated with sparsely used, but powerful blown glass. When he was asked about his relationship with the sculptures, he had this to offer:

*"Our minds are a maelstrom of energy. Some of us can go straight down a path and execute, others let our moods, our emotions, and other people impact and affect us. The idea of having a pure clean form is really antithetical in my mind to the human condition. What I'm very happy about in *Clarity in Confusion* is that I've taken all my craziness and I've built an interior model of who I am, and it's external for everyone to see."*¹⁴

As Elozua's sculptural work has evolved, the physical sculptures have become denser while his conceptual approach has lightened. Like the contradictory layers of his identity, viewers must unpack the layers for themselves. Catholic Schoolboy. Hippie. Gear-head. College Dropout. Autodidact. Curator. Collector. Blue-collar Intellectual. Urban Dweller. Townie. Curmudgeon. Civic Maven. Artist. Little did Elozua know as he was growing up that being the child of immigrants would give him the ability to follow his own restless imagination and intellect to pursue disparate projects that may look to some like a tangle of unrelated elements, but if one accepts the confusion, clarity will surely follow.



Garth Johnson is the Paul Phillips and Sharon Sullivan Curator of Ceramics at the Everson Museum of Art.



Rusty Bucket Trinity
#31, 2007, 17" x 22";
Archival Digital Print

Endnotes

- ¹ Ivan C. Karp, "Pure Karp." *Women Artists News*, vol. 16–17, Dec. 1991, pp. 29–30.
- ² Interview with the artist, 14 July, 2022.
- ³ In French, *trompe l'oeil* is translated literally as "fool the eye." Through the ages, painters from the ancient Greeks onward sought to create work that appears to be three-dimensional. Starting in the early 1970s, ceramic artists like Marilyn Levine and Richard Shaw used ceramics to create incredibly lifelike versions of objects rooted in American material culture like leather bags, books, and tin cans.
- ⁴ Sarah Warren, "Selling Rhinebeck: Confrontation, Profit, and the 'Mass-Anxiety Attack' of the Northeast Craft Fair." *The Journal of Modern Craft*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2014, pp. 141–167. Before the Northeast Craft Fair, which moved to Rhinebeck in 1973, craft fairs were largely tiny homespun events in church basements or farmer's markets. Rhinebeck set the standard for the craft fairs that would come to define the 1980s and 1990s, including the American Craft Council's regional shows and Chicago's Sculptural Objects Functional Art + Design (SOFA).
- ⁵ Raymon Elozua and Elizabeth Hansen, "Allan Chasanoff Photography: An Unauthorized Web Site." *Allan Chasanoff Photography | An Unauthorized Web Site*, <http://allanchasanoffphotography.com/index2.htm>.
- ⁶ Joshua Chuang et al., *First Doubt: Optical Confusion in Modern Photography: Selections from the Allan Chasnoff Collection*. Yale University Press, 2009.
- ⁷ Raymon Elozua, *Ab-Ex Combines 1997-1998*. Cold Magic Press, 2008.
- ⁸ Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting." *Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology*, 2018, pp. 5–10.
- ⁹ Raymon Elozua, *Conversations with a Still Life*. Terrain Vague Press, 2008.
- ¹⁰ Jillian Scheinfeld, "A Look at What's Left of the Abandoned Borscht Belt Hotels." *Hudson Valley Magazine*, 8 May 2020, <https://hvmag.com/life-style/history/abandoned-borscht-belt-hotels>. To be more specific, Sullivan County historian John Conway blames this decline of resort and bungalow life on the "three 'A's": air conditioning, assimilation, and airfare.
- ¹¹ Jennifer Miller, "Can You Curate a Town?" *The New York Times*, 3 Nov. 2018.
- ¹² Joel L. Voss et al., "The Potato Chip Really Does Look like Elvis! Neural Hallmarks of Conceptual Processing Associated with Finding Novel Shapes Subjectively Meaningful." *Cerebral Cortex*, vol. 22, no. 10, 2011, pp. 2354–2364.
- ¹³ Raymon Elozua, *Evolution of Steel & Ceramic 1986-2019*, Savoir Tout Press, 2019.
- ¹⁴ Interview with the artist, 19 August, 2022.



Kiln load prior to
Cone 04 glaze fire

EARLY
WORK
1988-2001

Wirecup Prototype, 1990, 14h x 14w x 14d"; 04 terra cotta, whiteware, glaze & steel





Tertiophrenic Head #1, 1986, 33h x 18w x 24l", bronze & mixed media,
Collaboration with Allan Chasanoff

right: **Siren: Public Relations**,
1991, 49h x 13w x 16d", 04 terra
cotta, whiteware, steel and mixed
media

far right: **Demon: Defence**,
1991, 46h x 21w x 22d", 04
terra cotta, whiteware, steel
and mixed media

Collaborations with
Micheline Gingras





left: **Teapot w/ Sails**, 1994, 25h x 19w x 31d", 04 terra cotta, whiteware, glaze & steel

below: **Digital Word Sculpture: RE9-1a**, 2001, 31h x 12w x 22d", 04 terra cotta, glaze, steel rod & plate



left: *Pitcher with Triangles, WF4*, 1996, 44h x 20w x 36d", 04 terra cotta, whiteware, glaze & steel
Collection of Marc Sarkady, MA

right: *"Goat:" Stil1/Tob/Kra2/New4/Klin8>2*, 1998, 44h x 20w x 36d", 04, terra cotta, whiteware, glaze & steel



below: **LSU: Dek 2/Gor2/Sti2/Kli7>HP**, 1999, 22h x 8w x 12d", 04 terra cotta, whiteware, glaze & steel



opposite inset: **Dek2+3/Gor10/Gus5/
Hof10+11>2***, Archival Digital Print, 17"
x722x 1998



opposite: **LSU: Dek 2+3/Gor10/Gus5/
Hof10+11>3**, 1999, 31h x
12w x18d", 04 terra cotta,
whiteware, glaze & steel



BEAUTIFUL DECAY

MARIA PORGES

Installation: Structure & Dissonance
Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse NY



But the landscape of devastation is still a landscape.
There is beauty in ruins.

Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*

has been recorded in countless photographs taken in many places, over several decades.

It has also expressed itself through his idiosyncratic and highly original approach to sculpture. An inveterate experimenter, Elozua has found multiple ways to respond to his own enduring interest in preserving and recording history's relics while simultaneously exploring entropy and decay, using a complex palette of materials and methods. There is nothing like his work, yet when examined as a whole, its parts fall into place in the context of contemporary art.

A point to consider: though fully-versed in the practices and peculiarities of the art world, Elozua is essentially self-taught, confidently following his own path from the beginning of his career. Even as a boy engaged in a passion for meticulously assembling model trains, he would patinate them so they more closely resembled the rolling stock he saw in the train yards adjacent to south Chicago where he grew up. The nearby US Steel plant—source of much of the air and water pollution that aged everything and everyone—employed some 20,000 people at its peak, many of them immigrants like Elozua's parents.

His father worked there; Elozua himself spent a summer working at Inland Steel, a nearby Indiana mill that specialized in sheet metal for Campbell soups.

1. RUINS

The English language lacks a term to describe our enduring fascination with ruins. German, at least, with its compound words, offers us *Ruinenelust*, which suggests the kind of passion for decaying remains that becomes a near obsession for some. For centuries, artists have pictured them, sometimes accurately, sometimes fancifully. Perhaps part of the enduring attraction of such fragments of the past, from the Acropolis of Athens to abandoned movie palaces or factories in towns across America, is the way in which such places allow their viewers to imagine past and present together, traveling back and forth through time.

Stepping into this long tradition of artists investigating ruin, Raymon Elozua has used his lifelong familiarity with the slow decline and ultimate destruction of the steel industry on Chicago's South Side as his point of entry. Over time, his desire to memorialize and reframe decay

US Steel South Works would shut down in the 1990s, leaving behind a near-complete desolation as the loss of jobs led to the gradual, inexorable shutdown of whole neighborhoods.

Some of Elozua's earliest sculptural works elegize the kind of beautiful but bleak decrepitude he witnessed, first in Chicago and then in his new home, downtown New York in the 1970s. These highly realistic urban landscapes were rendered in clay in the miniature scale of the models he had assembled as a boy. Some were whole scenes like sawmills, coaling towers, and shipyards. Other sculptures were singular—like billboards, peeling and falling apart; disintegrating drive-in movie screens, or weathered water towers. As a college student, Elozua had started working with clay in an introductory art class at the University of Chicago, where his exposure to the teaching artists Ruth Duckworth and Virginio Ferrari had led him away from becoming a lawyer towards eventually dropping out of college and building his own studio.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, his sculptures of urban landscapes were extremely well-received, both in terms of exhibitions and sales. Over time, though, Elozua realized that he did not want to become trapped in a style, and ended the series by making two panoramic works, each measuring 4 by 8 feet. His next project was something that his dealer did not want to show, ending his relationship with the gallery.¹ Instead, Elozua focused on a different kind of project: one he had begun in 1975, when he met photographer and collector Allan Chasanoff and started taking pictures of urban decay in industrial New Jersey.²

In the early 1980s, Elozua began exploring the desolate remainders of steel plants all over the Northeast. After his departure from the gallery, he thought about his own artistic labor in relationship to the shutdown of the steel industry: the lost jobs and ruined neighborhoods. It helped him place his own experience of being 'fired' in

perspective. At the same time, drawing on his academic studies in American history, he built a substantial collection of books, eventually gathering more than 1100 volumes relating to the rise and fall of American industry. Some of the images in this archive, collectively titled *Lost Labor: Images of American Workers 1900-1960*, are included in this exhibition.³

During this same period, his friendship with Chasanoff meant that Elozua spent every weekend going to galleries, expanding his own knowledge about both historical and contemporary photography and ceramics.⁴ Interestingly, he did not consider his own photographs to be art—or, perhaps more accurately, he identified his own studio practice with the making of physical objects, rather than images.

By 1987, he had found a way to express his ideas about labor, industry, and loss through a new kind of sculptural work that drew on his peripatetic photographic research. He began constructing large mixed media three dimensional wall paintings that incorporated fragments of materials he had found at various steel mill sites. Titled *Home Scrap*, this series, eventually exhibited in multiple venues, made what essayist Lucy Lippard called "the connections between heart and heartlands by merging the artist's voice with the worker's voices."⁵ The pieces also foreshadowed both Elozua's ingenious combinations of materials and his artistic exploration of entropy and loss.

2. ARTIST/ ARCHIVIST

This ongoing conversation between photographs and sculpture in Elozua's practice is key to understanding the evolution of his current practice. In 2005, he left downtown New York City, relocating upstate to an abandoned gas station in the tiny hamlet of Mountindale. This part of the Catskills offered a series of rich opportunities for documentarian exploration. Elozua soon discovered that he was living in the midst of not one, but two abandoned cultures. Both the ruined buildings of "Borscht Belt" cottages and resorts⁶ and a series of abandoned egg farms⁷ represented aspects of American life lost forever, due to social and commercial change.

Elozua's pictures of the outside of houses and chicken coops in various states of disintegration recall both

Bernd and Hilla Becher's images of water towers and grain elevators and Walker Evans' somber churches. In contrast, his images of the interiors can only be understood in the context of documenting some kind of disaster: the owners' possessions still there, looking as if someone might return momentarily, and others as if an invasion had turned the contents upside down, forcing the residents to flee. This discovery—of the suddenness of many different kinds of endings—became a way for him to internalize his understanding of his mother's experience as a wartime refugee from eastern France.⁸

The shocking, beautiful, and nearly abstract chaos of some of these interiors is also significant in its relationship to the complicated textures and color of the series of sculptures that Elozua would later make. In some pictures, still-bright fragments of color contrast with cascading disintegration, within which traces of patterning reveal that there was once a floor, a window screen, a curtain. Even the earliest of these works, such as *R&DV* (2014), creates a layering of pattern and texture, color and open grids that echoes some of those rooms full of oddly beautiful trash.

In the 1998 exhibition and catalogue *Deep Storage: Collecting, Storing and Archiving in Art*, curators Ingrid Shaffner and Matthias Winzel try to come to grips with why artists collect, what such collections consist of and, crucially, how they intersect with studio practice—indeed, with how collecting becomes some artists' *only* practice. Even 25 years ago, Shaffner, Winzel, and various other essayists were already trying to understand the inexorable transition that was already taking place, from the actual/physical to the virtual/electronic. The title *Deep Storage* refers to work "(w)hich both anticipates its own future condition and reflects on past, often accumulative, aspects of the artists' visual practice."⁹ This definition aptly describes what was taking place for Elozua, as he

moved from a determination to catalogue the objects and places he was encountering before they disappeared into entropic disintegration, by making works in which a measure of ephemerality is tacitly accepted as a condition.

Still life negates the whole process of constructing and asserting human beings as the primary focus of depiction... it assaults the centrality, value and prestige of the human subject.

Norman Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked: Four Essays on Still Life Painting*

3. DEAD NATURE: STILL LIFE

As Elozua picked his way through the left-behind possessions and even the garbage dumps of these lost cultures, he found himself drawn to particular kinds of objects that were notable for their survival. He began to collect speckled enamelware, rusty buckets, and dresser mirrors.

This accumulation of not only images but objects had a precedent in his practice. Elozua's archive of gas burners—every gas appliance requires such a component—began in the late 1960s, and was eventually documented in a self-published book and website that includes some 200 examples. These angular bits of metal, separated from function, are redolent with mystery, even as a patina of rust on their widely-varied, seemingly abstract shapes gives the viewer a frisson of aesthetic pleasure. The pictures of them are beautifully lit, each piece framed against a white background that transforms them into faintly Surrealist works of art.¹⁰

Although he followed a similar methodology with his collection of rusted buckets,¹¹ he took a different kind of approach to photographing groups of these objects. The

pictures, rigorously edited and presented in a series of photo books, are true still lifes—or, as they are known in French, *nature morte*, a literal translation of which is dead nature. In the 2006 book *Kitchen Table*, the objects he found—battered cups and pitchers, exquisitely rust-stained funnels and bottomless colanders, ladles, and kettles—are thoughtfully placed, with pieces sometimes tucked inside others or balanced upon them, on what is identifiably a kitchen table. The pictures included in the seven other books he made are strikingly different. To make them, Elozua created a setup on a four by eight foot table, piling together tableware and propped-up mirror shards. In his explanatory note to one of the books, he describes these accumulations, as “sculptural objects.”

The images are dense, fragmentary, almost Cubist compositions, bright color punctuated with reflections, objects leaning or held together with clamps and hot glue. They are invented worlds, rather than the real places he had encountered over the previous quarter century. They are different from Elozua’s earlier photographs in another way as well. In 2006, he began working with a digital camera for the first time—a transformative change in both methods and results that made things both easier and more difficult. As Elozua has described it,

*One no longer had to labor under a financial awareness of the cost of film or the constraints of composing the ideal photograph... Editing became the art. Photographing each setup over the span of several days also changed my ideas of photography. Taking a picture now meant both the memory of past images and a dialogue with the present setup.*¹²

Elozua’s other photographs, whether of derelict steel mills or abandoned vacation bungalows, are reminders of mortality: elegies for lost worlds. In contrast, these setups on a table follow Bryson’s rule for still life. They “expel the

values which human presence imposes upon the world.”¹³ Primary among these values is storytelling, recounting the actions of human protagonists, whether good or bad. There is no story here; no loss or abandonment, only things, arranged and seen up close, beautifully decayed.

4. AGAINST GRAVITY

Since he began using clay in the 1970s, Elozua has been working against one of its most salient natural properties: the way in which gravity dictates form, the weight of the **material both pulling downwards and determining the manner in which it is manipulated.** In 1989, he expanded his experimentation into using steel and clay together, creating spare, open forms that clay alone could never achieve. Some of these pieces, the earliest examples of sculpture included in this exhibition, make figurative references—whether to ceramic forms, as in *Teapot with Sails* (1994) or *Pitcher with Triangles* (1996)—or to more humanoid ones, as in the skeletal *Demon: Defense* and *Siren: Public Relations* (both 1991).

After his move to Mountindale, he began to define his work as something *other*: work that was not being made in ceramics by anyone else. He envisioned pieces that embodied a kind of open, organic abstraction that not only worked against gravity, but seemingly defy it, a direction made possible by his skill in welding. In addition, in 2013, he found someone willing to create the glass elements he wanted to incorporate in his new pieces—Lorin Silverman, then the resident technician at Corning Glass.

Sometimes elongated, sometimes closer to spherical, these balloon-like forms in bright primary colors are blown into metal armatures Elozua constructed, the metal deforming the smooth glass shapes. They become the final addition to sculptures made from a steel and wire structure, parts of which are covered with terra cotta. These have been fired several times for the glaze colors,

causing the steel and wire to distort and slump, cracking the ceramic components. As he has described it, “The tension between the fractured ceramic and the reflective glass is fascinating, a feeling of beauty born out of decay.”

Over the past eight years, four different series of multimedia sculptures have resulted: *Research and Development* (2014), *Hubris* (2016), *Tri-Harmonic*

(2019), and *Clarity in Confusion* (2021). In *Research and Development*, there is a strong visual connection back to the clay and steel pieces from fifteen years before, but the scale is more ambitious. Of the four series, these pieces are the most dense, and at the same time, the easiest to read—composed of strong blocks of color. Most importantly, the glass elements transform them



Installation: Gas Burners, Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse NY

into something startlingly new.

The title *Hubris* refers to Elozua's attempts to recreate his childhood experience, pre-eyeglasses, of blurred vision. A 2010 series of out-of-focus images he had taken of his still life setups suggest what it must have been like for the profoundly nearsighted boy to see color and light. Elozua thought it would be interesting to replace the floating two dimensional forms in the photographs with a three dimensional version made from ceramic and steel. It was, perhaps, an impossible goal. Nevertheless, the bold, scribbly, almost calligraphic lines of steel wire in each of the *Hubris* pieces create a strong context for multicolored ceramic spheres and linear forms of terra cotta covered in brilliant hues.

Ceramic, steel, and glass are connected by the fact that their genesis is in intense heat. For that reason, Elozua chose to call one of these series *Tri-Harmonic*. In these sculptures, light reflections on the smooth glass forms are amplified by the addition of actual mirrored strips, engineered into the work in a complex multi-step process. The expressive spontaneity of works like *Tri-Harmonic B2* (2018-19) seems to belie such deft engineering. Dense and detailed, it is filled with color and texture. The mirrors recall the still life compositions of the previous decade, and the chaotic beauty of all of the pieces in this series calls to mind his pictures of interiors of deserted "Borscht Belt" bungalows filled with layer of colorful debris in varying stages of decay.

The newest work included in this exhibition is the series called *Clarity in Confusion*. This title is intended to reflect the fact that life is incredibly complex, but Elozua has found a way through this complexity and the confusion that it brings. The most important thing about these pieces, however, is that they break a crucial physical limit. The size of the works in the three earlier series was controlled by the measurements of his kiln. In this series, Elozua has welded on steel elements after the pieces were fired, extending them outwards and increasing their visual lightness. In *Clarity in Confusion*



IV (2021), a chaos of colorful shapes is topped with a layer of whiteware-glazed steel parts—some handmade, others the familiar forms of dish drainers, barbeque grills, or screens—unified by their color into a sweeping cloak of movement and materiality.

The explosion of color and texture of these floating forms places them in the visual context of the work of artists such as Sarah Sze, Nancy Rubins, and Judy Pfaff. At the same time, Elozua's inventions have a strong material relationship with Leonardo Drew's sculptures, which are created by subjecting his materials to processes of oxidation, burning, and decay. Like Drew's, Elozua's pieces are in a state of constant change: the combination of

**Dek1n+6/Gor10/
gus3/Hof7-orig***,
1998, Archival Digital
Print, 17" x 22"

glass, steel, and ceramic elements slowly, imperceptibly oxidizing, separating, disintegrating—mirroring, in a very real sense, the way we are living through the gradual dying of the American empire.

Elozua tells a story about a collector at an opening for one of his shows some years back, eyeing a piece and asking him if the work was archival. His response encapsulates how this work should be both understood and appreciated. "When GM makes an archival car, I will make archival art," he said. These extraordinary sculptures may not last forever, but they have achieved a kind of weightlessness that clay alone cannot.

Throughout his career, Elozua's hybrid and dynamic sculptures have succeeded in going beyond the technical demands of the ceramic medium. In these recent pieces, terra cotta fragments are seemingly propelled outward from the framework of the sculpture, part of a maelstrom of color and texture that seems to transcend gravity. Each of these mysterious, complicated works are rich visual experiences that reward close looking—but they are also anti-monuments elegizing the many post-industrial worlds Elozua has explored.



Maria Porges is both a writer and fine artist. Her critical writing has been published widely in Art Forum, Art in America, and the New York Times Book Review among many others.

Endnotes

- ¹ The gallery OK Harris, founded by art dealer Ivan Karp, showed the work of many Photorealist artists.
- ² These vivid Kodachrome images are now catalogued on the artist's website under the title *Blue Skies Blue Collar 1974-88*.
- ³ Lost Labor is available on www.lostlabor.com as a downloadable pdf.
- ⁴ In 1978, Chasonoff decided to create a collection of contemporary ceramics (later given to the Mint Museum). Elozua served as a consultant.
 - ⁵ *Home Scrap: post-industrial landscapes*, catalogue for 1988 exhibition at Carlo Lamagna Gallery, p.4
 - ⁶ As early as the 1890s, Jewish immigrants began to vacation in upstate New York's Catskill Mountains, where resorts catering to them proliferated. As many as 500 such hotels and bungalow colonies prospered between the 1920s and the 1960s, but with the rise of air and rail travel, most closed by the 1980s. Available as a pdf download from vanishingcatskills.us
 - ⁷ Changes in poultry production methods and dropping egg prices meant that, by the 1960s, family farms had a hard time competing with larger facilities located in other states.
 - ⁸ Elozua also hopes that, as an archive, the pictures might serve as a record for future generations, particularly the egg-farming families who still remain in his county. Available as a pdf download from eggbasket-scny.us
 - ⁹ Ingrid Schaffner, *Deep Storage: Collecting, Storing and Archiving in Art*, Prestel 1998, p.11
 - ¹⁰ Available as a pdf download on www.stoveburner.com.
 - ¹¹ In another of Elozua's photo-books, *99 Buckets*, In & Of Press, 2006, all found, as he states, between April and August in 2006 "on the side of the road, in and around abandoned bungalows or farmhouses" are presented one, two, or three to a page, each one different and yet intrinsically the same as its fellows, isolated against a pristine white background. Available as a pdf download on www.rustybuckets.com.
 - ¹² Raymon Elozua, foreword to *Conversations With a Still Life*, Terrain Vague Press, 2008. Available as a pdf download from www.elozua.com
 - ¹³ Norman Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked: Four Essays on Still Life Painting*, Harvard University Press 1990, p. 61



Installation: Structure & Dissonance
Everson Museum of
Art, Syracuse NY

PHOTOGRAPHY

1975-2022

All photographs: 17" x 22"; Digital Archival Prints

Catalogs for all photographic projects are available
for free download at www.elozua.com/publications.

EW-WeldMir 6&3+ExMir-11-14-903



LANDSCAPE
PHOTOGRAPHY
1975-2000



Vanishing Catskills
Camp Sherwood, (demolished), Kiamesha Lake, NY



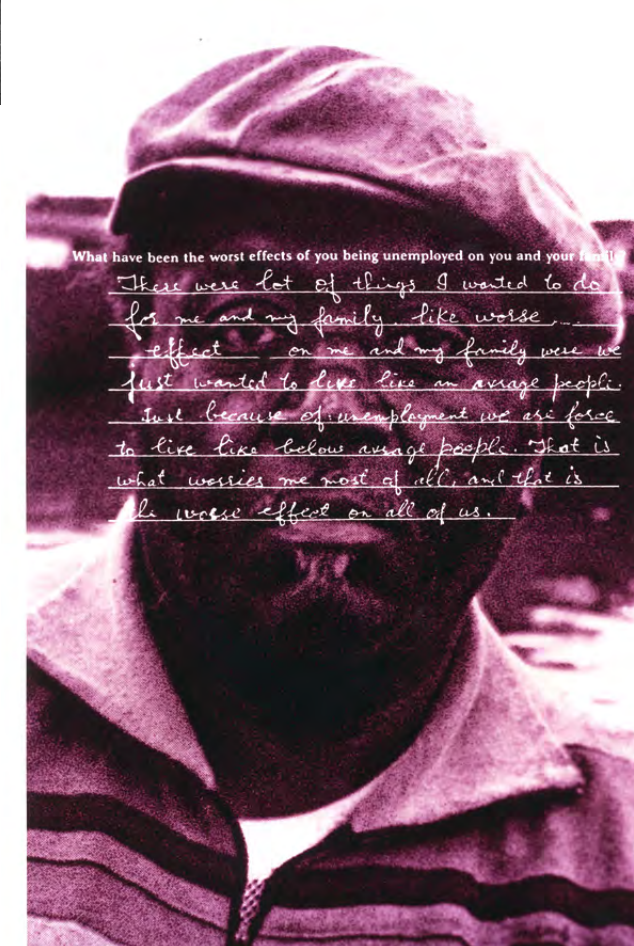
Blue Collar, Blue Skies
Oakland, CA, BSBC_478



Vanishing Catskills
Unk. Bungalow Colony 17,
Spring Glen, NY



Egg Basket
Walter Schneider's Beef & Poultry, Narrowsburg



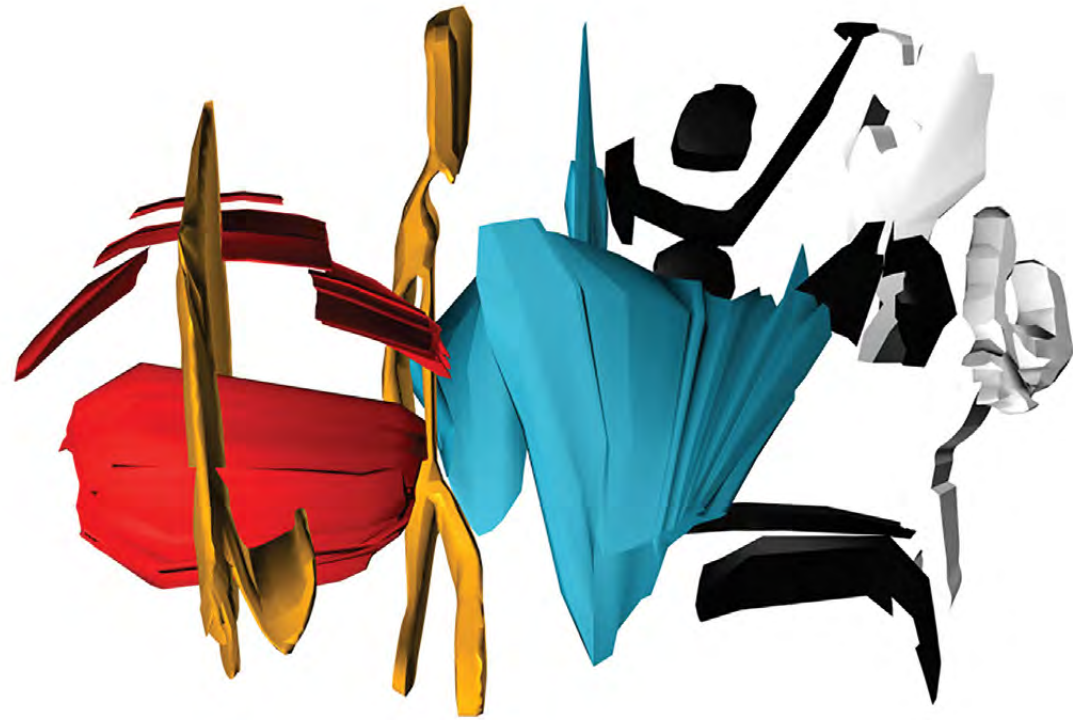
What have been the worst effects of you being unemployed on you and your family?
*There were lot of things I wanted to do
 for me and my family like worse
 effect on me and my family were we
 just wanted to live like an average people.
 Just because of unemployment we are force
 to live like below average people. That is
 what worries me most of all, and that is
 the worse effect on all of us.*

Home Scrap
Wisconsin Steel Corp.,
South Chicago, IL, 1985-87

Home Scrap
Pittsburgh Survey, Steel-
worker Portrait 3



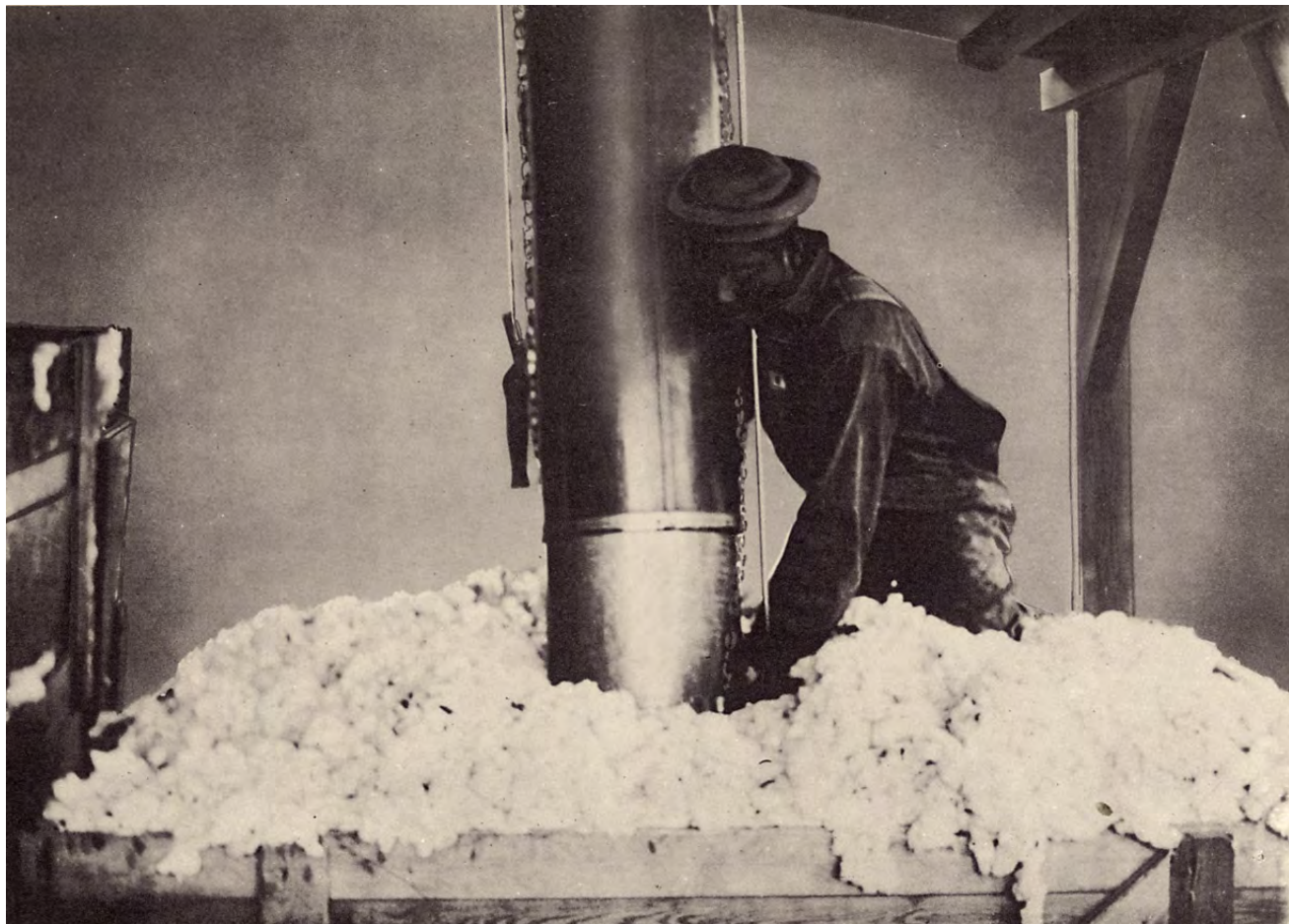
DIGITAL
PROJECTS
1999-2011



Ab-Ex CADs
RE17-1-word



Ab-Ex Combines
Pol9/Stil5/Rot3/Wrig>2,
1998



Lost Labor
Callaway Mills, 1939

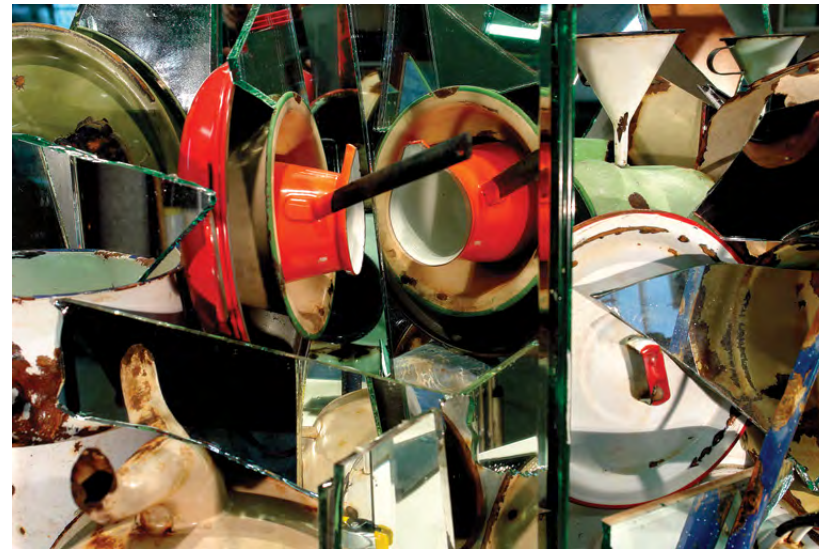


Gas Burners
Gas Burner G^rouping #103

STILL LIFE
PHOTOGRAPHY
2006-2010



Refractile
MirOnl-1-1835



Corners & Reflections
NFS-1-Dble-4785, 2007



Details and Sequences
NFS-Setup-2-2-5637, 2006



Kitchen Table
KT-Wed-29new-1083, 2006



Conversation with a still life
EW-WeldMir 6&3+ExMir-856



Blur
Still Light II: Canon 100m_0678*P,



Pitcher with Triangles, WF4, 1996, 44h x 20w x 36d", 04 terra cotta, whiteware, glaze & steel
Collection of **Marc Sarkady**, MA

'Scrap'

noun

1. a small piece or amount of something, especially one that is left over after the greater part has been used.

2. discarded metal for reprocessing.

verb

discard or remove from service (a retired, old, or inoperative vehicle, vessel, or machine, [human])

*In a global state of precarity, we don't have choices other than looking for life in this ruin."*¹

The materials an artist uses to make an artwork tell a story. The story is as much about the artist as it is about the artwork. In the 21st century, the story is also about our relationship to the biosphere. Raymon Elozua is a material poet of our capitalist ruins;² an earthbound wizard who wields fire like Hephaestus, who forges steel, "fires" (as in ceramics) clay and

glazes, and reinvents from the broken and overlooked scraps and detritus of postindustrial capitalism.

Best known as a ceramicist, sculptor, and transdisciplinary artist working within high modernist genres of photorealism, cubism, collage, Abstract Expressionism, and postindustrial labor history, something happens to the meaning and significance of his art when placed within the context of the Anthropocene.³ His work shifts from a collection of elegiac sculptures and photographs of decline and

decay to living performances—still life sculptural explosions—transformed by the introduction of blown glass, signifying hope, play, and resilience.

From the photorealist miniature ceramic works made in the early 1980s of aging industrial infrastructure of

the **early 20th century** to the loopy, abstract, wild, completely untethered sculptures of *R&D (Research and Development)*, 2014; *Hubris*, 2016; *Tri-Harmonic*, 2019, and *C.i.C. (Clarity in Confusion)*, 2021, the

THE GLASS ORB AT THE END OF THE WORLD

HOPE AND AGENCY IN THE ART OF RAYMON ELOZUA

THYRZA NICHOLS GOODEVE

work transforms formalist abstraction from a rebellious aesthetic convention bracketed within the history of modern art, to an aesthetic performance of humanity's resilient lyricism and agency in the face of climate catastrophe.

INTERLUDE ON THE STILL LIFE: ART OF THE OVERLOOKED, THE SCRAP, THE LEFT BEHIND

*Still life takes on the exploration of what "importance" tramples underfoot.*⁴

While the worlds of 17th century Dutch still life painting—"the lowest category of picture making,"⁵—and the 21st century polyphonic assemblage sculptures of Elozua, couldn't seem more distant from one another, Elozua's work takes on a new layer of meaning when set in relation to the evolution of still life painting as discussed by Norman Bryson in his book *Looking at the Overlooked: Four Essays on Still Life Painting*.

Bryson situates the emergence of Dutch still life painting within the material conditions of 17th century mercantile capitalism, trade, and colonialism. Teeming with commodities and "an influx of colonial possessions from the East and West Indies," 17th century Netherlands "had neither a courtly tradition in which to display luxury or excess" or "yet possess[ed] the full machinery for integrating consumption into the general economy, as would be standard with the Industrial Revolution."⁶ In fact, as it became the richest nation in the West, an aesthetic culture was born to manage or model this "oversupply." For Bryson, the society "resolves the problem of overproduction by indicating general models for managing the superabundance of goods." Still life painting is one of these models. In fact, it is "a dialogue between this newly affluent society and

its material possessions."⁷

Key to Bryson's discussion is the distinction made by Charles Sterling between "megalography"—the depiction of things in the world that are great such as "the legends of gods, the battles of heroes, or the crises of history," and "rhopography"—the depiction of things that lack importance, or "the unassuming material base of life that 'importance' constantly overlooks." The word rhopography is derived from *rhopos*, and refers to the depiction of "trivial objects, small wares, trifles."⁸ But, as Bryson states,

*The categories of megalography and rhopography are intertwined. The concept of importance can arise only by separating itself from what it declares to be trivial and insignificant—'importance' generates 'waste,' what is sometimes called the preterite, that which is excluded or passed over.*⁹

Certainly, the book cover image used to promote Bryson's book, Wolfgang Heimbach's rather odd *Breakfast table with kitchen maid behind the window*, (1670), tells the story of "the unassuming material base of life that 'importance' constantly overlooks." In it we see a maid—certainly no hero of history—peering through a barred glass window at the leftovers of an abundant breakfast: a half wheel of cheese, a grotesque partial hambone, a crumbled, half-eaten biscuit, glass of wine, and meat scraps left haphazardly on a pewter plate. "The look [of the maid] through the bars evokes a desire to be part of the meal or at least to eat the rest."¹⁰ But she is excluded, just another thing overlooked and left behind by the diners, less a human presence, than another trifle, "a home scrap."

*"Removal of the human body is the founding move of still life..."*¹¹

Born in 1947, Elozua grew up in the 1950s and 1960s on the south side of Chicago "home to steel mills, coke plants, soap manufacturers, auto plants, and cereal factories, the perfect industrial landscape."

His father worked at US Steel South Works and Elozua himself spent one summer working at the Inland Steel Tin Mill in Indiana Harbor, Indiana. These well-known biographical facts represent not just the influence of the ruins of the decline of industrial capitalism on his life, but the livingness, tactility, and material grit of post industrialism as an embodied experience. In his art, it is not just clay, metal, and glass, that he molds and welds but fire, labor, and sweat—the sensorial scraps of our capitalist ruins.

Elozua's first show at the OK Harris Gallery, located at 383 Broadway in SoHo, was called *Souvenir*. Founded by Ivan Karp, a larger-than-life art dealer and former co-director of the Leo Castelli Gallery (1959-69), Karp chose the name "OK Harris" because "it sounded like the name of a riverboat gambler." Karp's appellation reflects his knowing, cynical participation in an art world bred of vernacular American hucksterism. It is not surprising then that when Elozua began producing more experimental work, e.g., works that did not sell since they were not in line with the fad of photorealism OK Harris was known for, Karp let him go from his gallery. Elozua could have continued making market-ready photorealist sculptures, but as he describes it, he "grew bored" of the repetition of making such works. In other words, he was an artist, not a worker in an assembly production of commodities. At one point, he referred to this pressure of being asked to work within the same style as "the General Motors philosophy: change as refinement, the perfecting of

a craft as opposed to substantive growth."¹²

At the time he was let go, Elozua, "realized others were experiencing their own personal displacements," because he was reading about the horror stories of "the attendant economic and personal abandonment and wreckage" of devastated towns and unemployed workers across America as steel mills and huge industry shut down in the post-Fordist shift of the 1970s and 1980s away from manufacturing to information and service. And so, while he was experiencing what it was to be overlooked and abandoned by the 80s gallery system, in 1985, he visited these shuttered ruins of industry in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Illinois. It is during this time that he compiled the archive of photographs excerpted from 1,100 company histories, pamphlets, and technical brochures that he titled *Lost Labor: Images of American Workers 1900-1985* (available as a pdf download on lostlabor.com). These slick promotional photographs, produced by the companies themselves, lionized the laborer and monumentalized the machines and architecture of industry. Here were heroes of history, a visual story of the American worker in the 1920s through the 1950s, exemplary of the tradition of megalography—exalted photos of man and machine monumentality composed with the machine aesthetics of the time (think Paul Strand). These photographs contrasted starkly with what Elozua witnessed and paid homage to in the 1988 exhibition *Home-Scrap: Post-Industrial Landscapes: Paintings, Photographs and Sculptures*, 1985-87 at the Carlo Lamagna Gallery on West 57th street. Writing in the catalog he wrote:

The delicate social fabric of community and family has been undermined and destroyed as every individual has slowly and painfully come to realize the new truth, that what once was, is no longer; that the future is a



Installation: Structure & Dissonance,
Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse NY

dim, anxious and unsettling vision; that the American Dream of economic progress and social stability lies in rusted ruins.

"Rusted ruins" is no metaphor as the painterly reliefs he constructed for the Carlo Lamagna exhibition were 3-D "paintings" made of actual rust, crushed rock, terra cotta, and factory debris collected from the abandoned sites he visited. Such works as *United States Steel Corp., McDonald Works, Youngstown, Ohio* (1986) and *Youngstown Sheet and Tube Co., Breer Hill Works, Youngstown, Ohio* (1986) are thick, heavy (as in weight) still life assemblages mounted on plywood. They are representational scenes, absent of the human form,¹³ at once paintings, sculptures, reliefs, homages, and functional debris maps of the late 20th century decline and abandonment of the steel industry. In *United States Steel Corp., McDonald Works, Youngstown, Ohio* (1986) we see an outline of a factory made from cut steel, pressed flat in cookie cutter shapes, set along a horizon. The sky is a toxic smokey shade dabbled with blue and white made from crushed rock and concrete.¹⁴ Tumbling down towards the viewer, embedded in ravaged concrete, are burned out, rusted scraps of pipes, rods, and metal sheets Elozua collected from the sites. As Lucy Lippard puts it, describing this and other works in the exhibition:

*The works in the exhibition are rooted deep in time, place, and real life. The very raw materials of the paintings/reliefs/sculptures have been wrenched from the macrocosm of life and lovingly transported to the microcosm of art. Chunks of cement, a hardhat, pipes, screws, gears, branches, a foam rubber car seat dissected, broken glass; they settle uneasily on gritty surfaces under skies bleeding rust.*¹⁵

The heroes of the *Lost Labor* archive photos are absent from these works, transformed into the genre of "rhopography," what Lippard calls "the atomized mirror of modern life" that "reflects the shattered lives scrapped in favor of profit."¹⁶

Of note, Elozua does feature the shattered lives of specific workers in his *Pittsburg Survey: Portraits* (1985-88). Like *Lost Labor*, these photo-based works feature the image of the steelworker. Although the subject is the same, the status of the worker under capitalism in the 1920s and 30s steel mills has shifted in the 1980s from the category of megalographic hero to rhopographic unemployed scrap. In *Pittsburg Survey: Portrait 5* (1987)-"*Being out of work has hurt me and my family great dearly...*" printed in acid green, a close-up portrait of a white man in hard hat is obscured by the worker's handwritten response to the question: "What have been the worst effects of you being unemployed on you and your family?" One of eight portraits, each is printed in a solid toxic color denaturalizing the notion of the simple black and white portrait (available as a pdf download on homescrap.us). The punctum of these works is less any expression or detail of the face, which is difficult to see, then the scrappy, tortured, irregular handwriting of the worker written in irregular block print sometimes lacking proper spelling and punctuation, as in,

"I can not find work and it very hard and sad It like a bad dream Everything has gone wrong in my life. I am just barely holding Onto Life I stay very bad now day because I cannot find a job It like a curse please help me before it to late."

Such portraits of the unemployed and overlooked steel worker who has been scrapped and transformed into a trifle, are familiar and almost cliché today, but

in 1988, Lippard emphasized it "is not only the death of an industry, but"—and this is crucial—"of ways and lives still absent from art."

WHY IT MATTERS HOW ART IS A MATTER OF WHAT HAPPENS IN LIFE

*This is a story we need to know. Industrial transformation turned out to be a bubble of promise followed by lost livelihoods and damaged landscapes. And yet such documents are not enough. If we end the story with decay, we abandon all hope—*¹⁷

Lippard's, "still absent from art" is a telling phrase in 1988. The nature of lives and living, as well as the subjects of art, have obviously changed since the 1980s—the emergent gallery system, located mostly in SoHo, is now everywhere. At the same time, the mechanisms and meaning of capitalism—far from the industrial model of the 20th century—has shifted to finance, data mining, and immaterial labor, instituting insane levels of inequality and the renaming of our geologic epoch as mentioned above from the Holocene to Anthropocene. But in 1988, Lippard is struck by how "... Raymon Elouza's show remains a rarity within the New York Gallery system." She is speaking specifically of its content: "Although some artists have responded to the more abstract fears of nuclear holocaust and **the ecological destruction of the planet**, the ignorance of the plight of the American worker carries over into indifference to all aspects of everyday life and lived experience." [emphasis added]

It is a sobering reminder to read Lippard's discussion of the indifference to topical subjects such as unemployment or climate change (a phrase that hardly existed then) in the art fads of the 1980s.



Certainly, since Pop Art, capitalism was on artists' minds, but more in terms of consumer culture and the hyper commodification of the art object itself. And while a handful of artists were concerned about "the ecological destruction of the planet," art about "the plight of the American worker" came off to Lippard as "dislocated into fine art contexts" to the point that "it runs the danger of being misunderstood and misinterpreted." She goes so far as to call for the work "to find an audience waiting in schools and union halls."

Looking at the exhibition today, from our deep immersion in the precarity and ruins of capitalism and the evident “ecological destruction of the planet,” it is difficult to imagine an art audience that would not know how to respond in 2022 to this “responsible art.” But the attentions and tastes of art audiences shift with the movement of time as do the tones and topics of art itself. Let us turn from these works of the past and look at Elozua’s activation of abstraction in the ceramic, steel, and glass sculptures from 2014 to the present. How are they not extensions of abstract expressionism into the 21st century, but material storytelling machines of hope and agency in the age of the Anthropocene? What exactly is it that shifts the affect of Elozua’s art from themes and materials of loss and ruin to icons of play and resilience?

“the flame is the source for a living creature. Life is a fire.”

Gaston Bachelard, *The Psychoanalysis of Fire*

Continuing his interest in making art out of what is overlooked and left behind in the wake of capitalism’s gutting of certain industries, Elozua

spent 2006 to 2010 photographing the abandoned buildings and bungalows of the devastated economy of the once abundant Catskills. His photographs of Sullivan County, *Vanishing Catskills* (2006-20) (available as a pdf download on vanishingcatskills.us) are striking, almost painterly photographs of the degraded domestic interiors and even of a casino (Bungalow 377-1739 & Casino 29-2818) In one, an awkwardly placed rusty refrigerator squeezed into a corner against a mint green wall, is framed by a busted window with broken window shade on the left and a doorway to a bathroom on the right—we know because of the toilet. The bathroom is painted vibrant yellow and coral. The foreground, much like the composition of *United States Steel Corp., McDonald Works, Youngstown, Ohio 1986*, contains a pile of junk: a white fan, a collapsed cart, garbage bags, and broken bits of metal chairs. The floor is a dull gray, sprinkled with fragments of sheetrock. Like other of Elozua’s photographic works,¹⁸ the image has the flat geometric planes of a modernist painting. Color and composition are balanced between the rectitude of order and the chaos of entropy. During this period, he also constructed riotous tableaux of rusty buckets, mirror fragments, junked enamelware,

and debris that he then photographed. He used these photographs as inspiration for the steel and ceramic sculptures he started making in 2014. But the major event came in 2013, when he began to work with the glass blower Lorin Silverman of the Corning Museum Glass Studio in Corning, NY, and UrbanGlass, Brooklyn, NY collaborating on a way to incorporate, of all things, the fragile biomorphic alchemy of blown glass into his battered wire and steel creations.

INTERLUDE ON ENTROPY

Entropy is life, meaning, whatever we do, we cannot alter the fact that the second law of thermodynamics states all energy is subject to principles of disorder, randomness, and decay. In metaphysical terms, we call this death. In art, we call it transformation¹⁹ or even alchemy. While death is the one thing that is certain for all living things, the transformation of base materials into something called art is certain only for those whose relation to the materiality of the world is as an artist. But Elozua did not go to school to learn to be an artist:

I am a college drop-out. I have worked as a batting machine operator, hardware store clerk, sculptor assistant, tin mill laborer, library stacker, mimeograph operator, baby sitter, junkman, auto body painter, dune buggy mechanic, house painter, roofer, band roadie, pa system builder, macrobiotic baker, plumber, delivery truck driver, theatre carpenter, prop maker, construction contractor, landlord, potter, college instructor, art consultant, property manager and local historian. I am a self-educated artist, not exactly a role model for college students; nonetheless I taught at the college level for some years.

It is only in later years that he saw how “the personal psychology of the work is echoed in the marriage of dissimilar materials whose only commonality is fire and heat.” In other words, through a lifetime of working in sync with his own interests and desires, rather than those of the contemporary art market, he transformed the craquelure texture of his autobiography into the following schema:

Steel :: Strength :: Father
 Ceramic :: Emotion :: Mother
 Glass :: Hope :: Artist²⁰

What more entropic and yet affirmative medium is there than the art of glass blowing, the medium Elozua turned to in 2014 and associates not only with the resolution of his own autobiography (two immigrant parents, scarred and shaped by World War II)²¹ and into his role as “Artist,” but with the emotional exposition and agency of hope. Hope is a surprising association considering just how difficult glass blowing is. As Elozua states,

It’s fraught with the tension of accident or failure. You have to dance with the glass. You have to be in the moment. No other medium have I seen like this. I’ve done bronze. I’ve done a lot of mediums, but working with blown glass, it’s like wow this is something else. Painters can come back and repaint, they can erase, they can turn the canvas over and paint on the backside. Sculptors can add or subtract but with glass you are in that moment of creation where it’s hot but if you f—k up it’s gone.²²



Turick’s Salvage Yard,
 Monticello, NY

PRECARIOUS AND YET DIVINE IN THEIR IMPOSSIBILITY—

Like the ceramic materials fired in a kiln, and the welded steel wire and plate he has worked with for decades, glass is an earth material that Elozua manipulates using heat. Heat, in the form of global warming, is one of the main consequences of the Anthropocene. In a conversation over Zoom about introducing blown glass into his work Elozua said to me,

it was almost like the missing element in terms of adding something –okay this is cracked, this is crusty, this is black, this is flaking but the glass offers a sense of potential hope.

Precarious and yet divine in their impossibility (how long will they last?)²³ these conglomerations of conflagration—grates slathered with white glaze, stuck with mirror shards that break up space as one moves around the object so we are at once in the present (the moment we are in as we look at the

sculpture), the past (both the language of abstraction and the nature of the found materials), and the future (the fire of global warming), Elozua’s ceramic, steel and glass sculptures made from 2014 to the present, embrace, even perform, both categories of the heroic and the trifle. This is important because

such works as *R & D III: Re- 16 1* (2014), *Tri-Harmonic S 1* (2019), or *C.i.C.I (Clarity in Confusion)* (2021), transcend both categories of megalography and rhopgraphy, Elozua’s polyphonic assemblages are redeemed of the presence of loss, sadness, decline, and decay of the 20th century work, by the wonder and majesty of the blown glass globes. No longer relegated to the status of overlooked waste, the industrial kitchen grates, welded rebar, pistons,

and discarded steel cable wire (some salvaged from the renovation of the Brooklyn Bridge) covered with terra cotta and glaze become armatures for the most hopeful, even happy (if blown glass can be considered to evoke affect), of brilliant biomorphic bulbs of opaque colored blown glass. In contrast to the topic of decay and *stilled* lives that characterize his work of the 20th century, these ceramic, glass, and steel sculptures of the 21st century, are icons of explosive ebullience, emblems of what Elozua calls the “beauty born of decay,” emerging from the ruins of the Anthropocene.

I did not know of Elozua’s association of glass with hope when I set out to write this essay. What I did know was that when I was in proximity to *C.i.C. I (Clarity in Confusion)* (2021), standing in his studio—the presence of the commanding yellow orb stuffed and bursting with vitality amid the chaos of bent and burned welded steel and terra cotta glaze, brought to mind the relentless aliveness of a city tree whose roots burst and break through toxic slabs of concrete, reforming the landscape into a wonderland of precarious resilience. As I stood there, I experienced a freeing sense of optimism, a giddy sense of gratitude for Raymon Elozua and those plucky glass orbs.



Thyrsa Nichols
Goodeve is a writer, editor, and educator who lives in Brooklyn Heights. Senior Art Editor of the Brooklyn Rail from 2017-2019, she teaches at the School of Visual Arts.

Endnotes

- ¹ Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton University Press, 2015), 6.
- ² The phrase “capitalist ruins” is borrowed from Tsing’s important 2015 book about capitalism and the remarkable matsutake mushroom quoted above. Oddly, along with Norman Bryson’s book on the still painting, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*: is an essential inspiration for this essay.
- ³ Or when placed within what more exacting scholars call the Capitalocene: a geologic epoch characterized by catastrophic climate change driven by the extractive anthropogenic ideologies of colonialism and capitalism.
- ⁴ Norman Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked: Four Essays on Still Life Painting* (London: Reaktion Books, Ltd, 1990), 61.
- ⁵ Bryson, 9.
- ⁶ Bryson, 98.
- ⁷ Bryson, 104.
- ⁸ Bryson, 61.
- ⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰ RKD Netherlands Institute for Art History, Accessed July 29, 2022 <https://masters-of-mobility.rkdstudies.nl/14-wolfgang-heimbach-161316-1678-a-deaf-mute-travelling-artist/143-heimbachs-handicap/>
- ¹¹ Bryson, 60.
- ¹² Edward Leffingwell, “Raymon Elozua: The Evolving Paradox,” in *Constructing Elozua: A Retrospective, 1973–2003*, Curator Melissa G. Post, organized by the Mint Museum of Craft + Design, Charlotte, North Carolina, 2003, 29.
- ¹³ As still life paintings were originally about taking human presence from the scene—documenting the objects—Elozua’s 3-D paintings are of landscapes absent of the worker. In his *Pittsburg Survey Portraits* he shows how the worker has become the thing, the stilled life, of post Fordist capitalism.
- ¹⁴ Speaking of his *Water Tank Series 11-#10*, 1979, Melissa G. Post, says, “employing colors such as barn red, rust, grey, and slate blue, Elozua establishes his signature palette of decay” in “Conceptual Containers: Raymon Elozua’s Vessels,” in *Constructing Elozua*, 42.
- ¹⁵ Lucy Lippard, “Shutdown,” in *Home Scrap: Postindustrial Landscapes* (Proper T. Press, 1988).
- ¹⁶ Ibid.



- ¹⁷ Tsing, 18.
- ¹⁸ His eye for oblique angles, bright color juxtapositions, and graphic geometric composition in his photographs is of a decidedly modernist sensibility but he does not think of himself as a photographer.
- ¹⁹ The word entropy was introduced in 1865 by Rudolf Causisus as a more accurate description of energy. Although he found the concepts “nearly analogous in their physical significance” he preferred to switch the root of ἔργον (‘ergon’, ‘work’) to that of τροπή (‘tropy’, ‘transformation’).
- ²⁰ Raymon Elozua, Artist Statement, email communication with the author August 5, 2022.
- ²¹ Speaking of his mother in conversation on August 5, 2022, “She was a young girl in France and the Germans come in and there’s a blitzkrieg. She talked about being forced to build graves for people who have been killed. But they didn’t use lime, so three days later they had to re-dig graves and bury the bodies again with lime. My mother always wanted to be cremated. Imagine, you’re a 22-year-old young bourgeois lady—her family owned a café and town hotel—and all of a sudden you are meant to be a grave digger? Those scars left her with a brittle sensitivity and fear her whole life.”
- ²² Elozua, artist statement.
- ²³ At one point while looking at his sculptures in his studio in Mountindale, New York, he said with a twinkle in his eye, “I’m making work for future museum conservators.” He was referring to the physical treachery and fragility of the pieces.



RIESTEIRICH
&
DEVELOPMENT
2014-15

R&D III, 2014, 46h x 31w x 44d",
04 terra cotta, glass, steel and glaze



R&D IV, 2014, 44h x 32w
x 38d"; 04 terra cotta, glass,
steel and glaze
Collection of Everson
Museum of Art, NY



R&D III, 2014, 42h x 31w x 44d",
04 terra cotta, glaze, steel & glass



R&D IV, 2014, 44h x 32w
x 38d; 04 terra cotta, glass,
steel and glaze



HUBIRIS

2015-16



Hubris: IMF-11, 2016, 29h x 23.5w x 29d", 04
terra cotta, whiteware, glaze + steel rod and plate



Hubris: IMF-10, 2016, 28h x 23w x 23d"; 04 terra cotta, whiteware, glaze + steel rod and plate





Hubris: IMF-11, 2016, 29h x 23.5w x 29d",
04 terra cotta, whiteware, glaze + steel rod
and plate

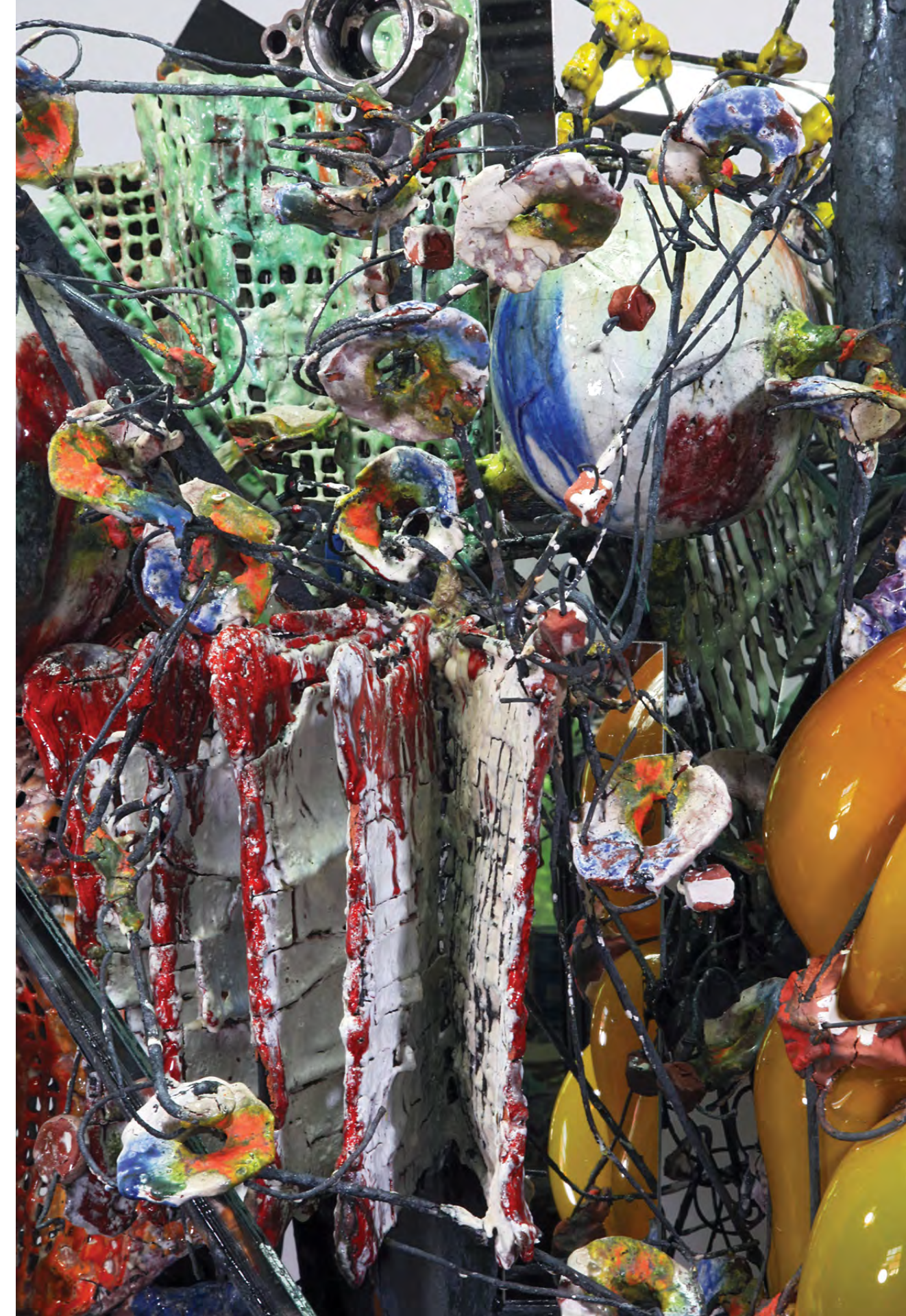


TRB HARMONIC
2019-20

Tri-Harmonic B.1, 2019, 41.5h x 36w x 50d", 04 terra
cotta, steel, blown glass, and mirror



Tri-Harmonic B.1, 2019, 41.5h x 36w x 50d", 04 terra cotta, steel, blown glass, and mirror



Tri-Harmonic B.2, 2019, 43h x 32.5w x
52d", 04 terra cotta, steel, blown glass,
and mirror



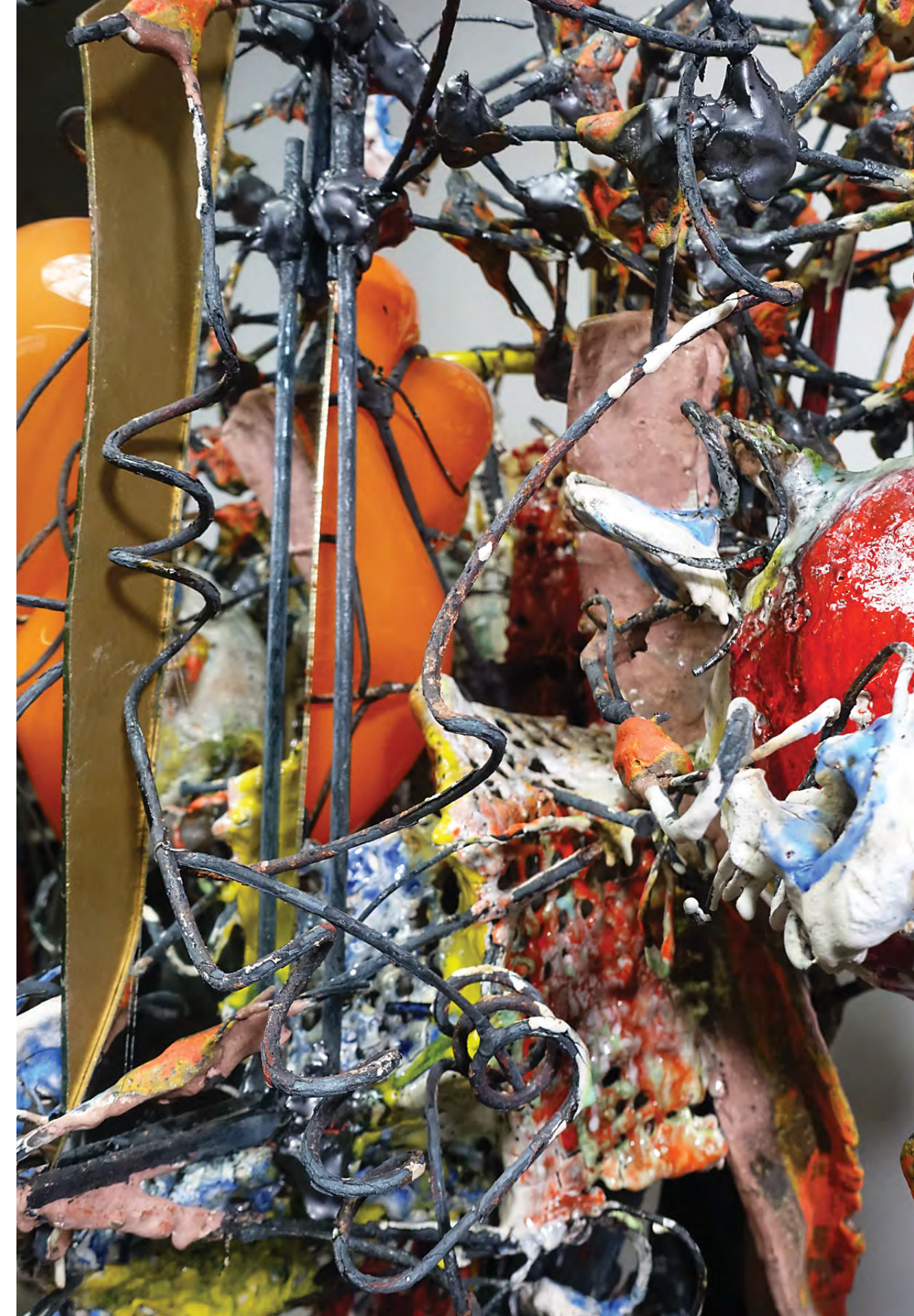
Tri-Harmonic

S.1, 2019, 36h x
32w x 34d", 04
terra cotta, steel,
blown glass, and
mirror





Tri-Harmonic S.2
2019, 37h x 32w x
34d", 04 terra cotta,
steel, blown glass,
and mirror





Tri-Harmonic S.3, 2019, 36h x 32w x 33d", 04 terra cotta, steel, blown glass, and mirror



C.i.C. III: (Clarity in Confusion), 2021,
46h x 42w x 48d", 04 terra cotta, steel,
blown glass, and mirror

CLARITY IN
CONFUSION





C.i.C. I: (Clarity in Confusion), 2021,
44h x 38w x 46d", 04 terra cotta,
steel, blown glass, and mirror





C.i.C. III: (Clarity in Confusion), 2021,

46h x 42w x 48d, 04 terra cotta, steel,
blown glass, and mirror

C.i.C. IV: (Clarity in Confusion),
2021, 46h x 45w x 52d", 04 terra
cotta, steel, blown glass, and
mirror

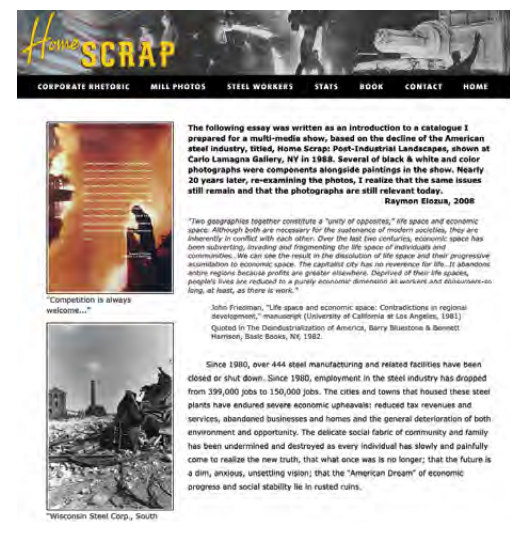




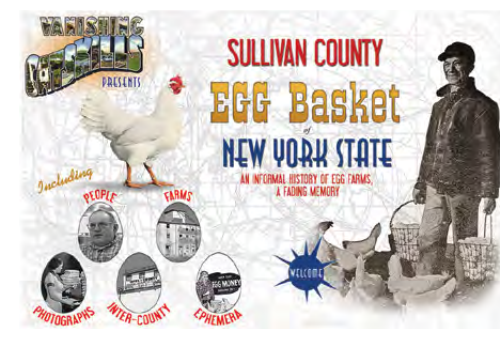
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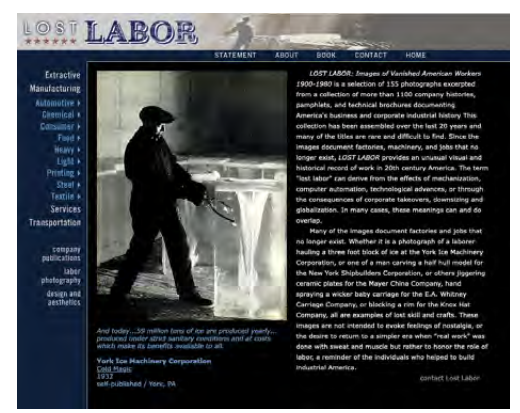
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lostlabor.com

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popsongpoems.us



Photograph: Micheline Gingras

Raymon Elozua, b. 1947, West Germany, is a trans-disciplinary visual artist working in Mountaintdale, in the Catskill region of New York. His extensive studio practice consists of large-scale sculpture in ceramic, steel, and glass, photography, visual research and archiving, web-based projects, and other forms of documentation. Elozua's work often references the vessel, Abstract Expressionism, industrial decline and decay, and regionalism.

Elozua has been awarded three grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, a New York State Foundation for the Arts Grant, and a Virginia A. Groot Foundation Grant. His work has been exhibited at The Carnegie Museum of Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Mint Museum of Art, Museum of Fine Arts (Houston), and Yale University Art Gallery, among others. He has taught at The California College of Arts & Crafts, Louisiana State University, New York University, Pratt School of Design, and The Rhode Island School of Design.

Structure & Dissonance is at the Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, NY, September 10 - December 31, 2022.

www.elozua.com

www.instagram.com/raymonelozua/

Artist acknowledgements and dedication:

Lazaro Raimundo Elozua y del Castillo & Gisele Madeleine Paulette

Baubonne, my parents, were immigrants who came to America in the hope of a better life. They taught me the value of critical thinking and relentless hard work. Without their example, I would not be here today.

Micheline Gingras has been my life partner since 1980. Together, we have shared our dreams and creative endeavors. Micheline, without doubt, sparkles with an incredible combination of beauty, grace, and joy in conjunction with a willful, dedicated and industrious character. She is a wonder to behold. I cherish her loving and comforting presence in my life.

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