

Liz Glynn
No Second Troy





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Curated by Ciara Ennis
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Liz Glynn *No Second Troy*

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Paper trash and gold acrylic
6 x 5 x 5 ¼ inches

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Single-channel HD video, 13:25 minutes

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Single-channel HD video, 21:06 minutes



Time Travel: New Work by Liz Glynn Thomas Lawson

A piece of information or an object, often something that encapsulates a confounding contradiction in the way things are understood, will catch Liz Glynn's eye. There is usually something historical about this, often something even pre-historical, something to do with antiquity and therefore of uncertain meaning. She begins to think about it, to do some reading and research, some poking around. Soon enough a whole bunch of odd things and ideas are linked, and objects are being made, usually in un-prepossessing materials like papier-mâché or cardboard, shipping and packing materials. Contemporary reality gives form and life to ancient artifact and idea; the old inhabits the new, and the new, being already discarded trash, reminds us that everything can and will be discarded. There is an active sense of absurdity to this, a double disconnect, since both elements seem out of time. If it is considered at all, classical antiquity reverberates with notions of nobility and loss, mental images of marble columns and heroic stories. The idea of it conjures obscure professors in dusty classrooms, or megalomaniacal leaders building an ever more eternal Rome. Cardboard, on the other hand, is all about abject transience; it seems all about a modern consumer society of cheap merchandise and waste, of cultural aspirations reduced to material expediency. Her studio becomes a laboratory in which a complex narrative of interpretative leads and dead-ends circles around the conundrum of history; events change, but the story remains the same.

One piece at the center of this show—*Untitled War Memorial (After Treptow)* (2011)—captures this ironic play between abstract thought and rude materiality. At first sight it is a gray lump of concrete, rough of surface, indeterminate of shape. Closer inspection shows that it appears to be constructed of bunches of wilted flowers,

Images on pages 4, 6, 8: *Untitled War Memorial (After Treptow)* (2011)
Cast concrete
9 x 3 x 4 feet



now cast in cold concrete. It turns out these are the discarded waste from a Soviet war memorial in Berlin commemorating the defeat of Nazism. Flowers are laid fresh each week to preserve the undying memory of military valor, and swept aside as their fading threatens to overwhelm that clichéd metaphor with the bathos of failed empire, of military might cast down. Glynn's work touches on all kinds of solemnities of a sort often used to enshrine the inevitability of a certain history, and inspire social conformity and obedience to authority. But it does so with a sense of absurd humor that makes these solemnities meaningless, while refocusing our attention on the ironies of unintended consequences.

Glynn encountered this upended memorial in East Berlin as she pursued the research at the heart of this project, the parallel, but opposite journeys of Trojan gold and Turkish immigrants from the shores of the Aegean to the heart of Europe, and her interest in tracing a path back. At its core this is an investigation of various ideas of authenticity. The idea of truth is central to any society's idea of order and justice, to progress of any sort. We like to think that facts provide a foundation to understanding the truth, but facts only gain meaning when put in some kind of interpretative narrative, opening the door to mischief. Some facts in areas of human behavior can be

difficult to determine, and thus the recognition of truth often lies with the emotions, a situation that gives rise to further uncertainty. To be sure there are artifacts and records of events, the stuff of history, but there are also motives and emotions, the elusive explanatory tissue that goes to explain how and why things happen.

For millennia histories were only kept and repeated if they told an overarching truth. Nobody really cared if Achilles or Odysseus were real historical figures because the stories surrounding the siege of Troy told us so much more about the interplay between human action and natural event, about consequences and character and the nature of heroism and leadership. The Homeric epics explored the ramifications of various types of betrayal, and the countervailing strength of loyalty, the dangerousness of uncontrolled pride and anger, the superior value of strategic thinking over brute force. At the end of the *Odyssey* and in the later tragedies we are asked to consider the domestic, the fallout of war on the women and children left behind. We don't need to know if Penelope really unpicked her work each night, or if there was a historical house of Atreus driven to murderous self-destruction, but we do need to consider the cost of ambition and conquest.



The modern age has a different take on the arc of truth and since the nineteenth century we have been gripped by a need to know what really happened; the authentic ruins of Troy had to be discovered, the evidence sifted and weighed. This process began in earnest with the archeological work of Heinrich Schliemann who went in search of the historical Troy and was the first to excavate the site in Anatolia in western Turkey considered the most likely location. There he found ruins of a city dating back at least 3000 years, and in one layer he found a horde of treasure—various vessels made of gold, silver and copper, along with some jewelry and weaponry. He dubbed his find “Priam’s Treasure” and smuggled the talismanic booty back to Berlin where he sold it to the Royal Museums (now the Berlin State Museums). Subsequent work has shown that, in his zeal to find authentic relics of the Trojan War, Schliemann misjudged, the gold comes from an era several hundred years before that now ascribed to the war described by Homer. Thus the first ostensibly authentic evidence of the existence of a real, historical Troy proves to be compromised by inadequate science. Adding a delicious twist of the knife, the Red Army, whose sacrifices are represented by the wilted flowers now cast in concrete by Glynn, removed the golden relics from Berlin in 1945 and took them as trophies of war back to Moscow, where they remain. The

objects on display in the museum in Berlin today are replicas, valueless copies of objects which may not be what they were claimed to be in any case.

Glynn is interested in the ironies of the backflow, and set out to perpetuate a sly game of substitution and role reversal. She traveled to Berlin and made her own, papier-mâché copies of the replicas, then wandered around the museum with one of her own creations in a tote bag. Perhaps she was attempting to imbue the object with the troubled aura of the copies in the vitrines, or perhaps she was willing the guards to accuse her of theft so that she could in turn point to the complex misdeeds of the museum dating back to its colonial hubris. Then she traveled to Turkey, original home to Germany’s underclass immigrant labor force, taking her fake souvenirs with her. In doing this she was consciously reversing history. For the *gastarbeiter*, long-term resident in Germany but never allowed citizenship, no longer fully Turkish, clings to souvenirs of a lost home. The tchotchke embodies a dream of a deferred return to the real home.

Once in Anatolia Glynn made her way to the site of Schliemann’s excavations, broke into the archeological site, and left her copies where the originals were found, to rot in the sun and rain.







Trojan Return (2011)
Single-channel HD video, 21:06 minutes



















Objects from the *Trojan Surrogates* (2011)

Flask with Spherical Body
Paper trash and gold acrylic
6 x 5 x 5 ¼ inches

Flask with Spherical Body
Gold-plated bronze
6 x 5 x 5¼ inches

Annular bracelets
Paper trash and gold acrylic
3 ¼ x 3 ¼ x ¼ inches

Large Diadem
Paper trash and gold acrylic
22 x 16 x 9 inches

Basket Shaped Earring with Pendants
Paper trash and gold acrylic
4 x 2 x ¼ inches

String of Beads
Paper trash and gold acrylic
11 x 14 ½ x ¼ inches

Diadem
Paper trash and gold acrylic
11 x 23 x ¼ inches

Torc, Twisted into a Spiral
Paper trash and gold acrylic
4 x 3 x ¾ inches

Hair Ring
Paper trash and gold acrylic
Approximately ¾ x 1 x 1 inch

Hair Ring
Gold-plated brass
Approximately ¾ x 1 x 1 inch

Hair Rings
Paper trash and gold acrylic
Each approximately ¾ x 1 x 1 inch

Hair Rings
Gold-plated brass
Each approximately ¾ x 1 x 1 inch

Ceremonial Hammer Axe
Paper trash and gold acrylic
13 x 4 x 6 inches

Ceremonial Hammer Axe
Cast bronze
13 x 4 x 6 inches

Small Fluted Beaker
Paper trash and gold acrylic
4 ½ x 3 ½ x 3 ½ Inches

Small Fluted Beaker
Gold-plated bronze
4 ½ x 3 ½ x 3 ½ inches

Sauceboat with Double Spout and Two Handles
Paper trash and gold acrylic
4 x 8 ¾ x 8 ¾ inches

Sauceboat with Double Spout and Two Handles
Gold-plated bronze
4 x 8 ¾ x 8 ¾ inches



Ausländer Ciara Ennis

In May 2011, the German edition of the flagging pin-up magazine *Playboy*—more comfortable in the sexual milieu of the 1970s—featured for the first time a Turkish/German Playmate on its cover. Sparking renewed debate about the notion of German-ness and its relation to religious, cultural and ethnic identities, German/Muslim soap star, Sila Sahin—known to many for her role as Ayala in *Guten Zeiten Schlechte Zeiten* (*Good Times Bad Times*)—became a target for racist and religious scorn as well as a symbol of Muslim sexual emancipation and an ethnically integrated Germany. Such conflicting viewpoints cast doubt on any consensus pertaining to German/Turkish relations and religious/cultural tolerance. Such contradictory sentiments are the subject of Liz Glynn's *No Second Troy*, which spans ancient and contemporary worlds, traces the trading of goods and people between Germany and Turkey, and examines a German archeologist's obsession, through plundering and subterfuge, to prove the validity of Homer's *Iliad*.

Relations between Germany and Turkey have ebbed and flowed since the heyday of the Ottoman Empire—the highly centralized geo-political and economic entity that successfully assimilated and governed multiple states and people. Positioned at the nexus of Asia, Europe and Africa, the Empire's capital, Constantinople—present day Istanbul—developed into one of the most dominant trade centers of the world with clearly defined and aggressively policed trading routes. Rivaling Europe's political, cultural and military might, the Empire represented Europe's religious and ideological opposite until its decline in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and eventual dissolution upon Turkey's declaration of a republic in 1922. However, trading between Germany and Turkey, and the circulation of goods and people, has continued at varying levels to this present day.

¹ The Ottoman Empire included Turkey, Greece, Bosnia, Serbia, Albania, Romania, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Palestine, Algeria, Tunisia and Mesopotamia.

² Said, Edward. 1979; 1994. *Orientalism*. Random House, New York and Toronto, p.1

Image on left: *Ottoman/Kreuzberg* (2011)
Cast concrete and hand-painted ceramic

By the late 1800s, the weakened Empire, having lost many of its states, was absorbed and reconstructed into what had become “the Orient”—a romantic inferior and exotic other—by Western colonialists eager to lend a civilizing and paternalistic hand: “The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, and remarkable experiences.” As a result, this vast land became a playground for ambitious Europeans keen to build their careers abroad and a treasure trove for wealthy historians and amateur archeologists in search of ancient tchotchkes to bring home as proof of their intellectual and cultural wealth and superiority over the natives whose treasure they looted. German businessman turned archeologist, Heinrich Schliemann, exemplified this impulse; he spent twenty years excavating what he believed to be the famous city of Homer’s *Iliad*, Troy, located in the area of Hellespont, a strategic landmass separating Greece from Turkey. Schliemann’s attempt to prove the historicity of the siege of Troy led him to fudge the provenance, dates and exact location of his excavations—elaborate jewels, goblets, vases, weapons and plates made from copper, silver and gold—which he affectionately named “Priam’s treasure” after the King of Troy. Eager to control the treasure’s reception and historicization, Schliemann and his wife smuggled the booty into Germany, donating it to the Royal Museums (now the Berlin State Museums) where it remained until liberated in 1945 by the Red Army.

As a result of the treasure’s confiscation, the Neues Museum commissioned the production of replicas, on display in the museum today, which Glynn used as a reference for her own versions of the Gold of Troy in a series of works entitled *Priam’s Treasure* (2011). Despite being composed of trash, Glynn’s recreation of the rings, headdresses and goblets have a surprising antique credibility, due to the patina created by the drenching of the objects in gold-plated silver and bronze, lending plausible weight to the crumpled paper. However, despite their luxurious and extravagant coating, they persist in their status as sloppy replicas, thus mimicking the poorly made copies in the Museum’s handsome vitrines that proudly display their counterfeit nature—their significance as stand-ins outweighs their aesthetic value—as evidenced by richly explanatory text relating the reason for the treasure’s absence. The theft of the artifacts from Berlin, which had previously been purloined from Turkey, in concert with the museum’s ersatz copies and Glynn’s reproduction of those copies, presents an intriguingly ambivalent symmetry, complicating notions of ownership, authorship, authenticity and intent.

Theft of another kind—albeit indirectly—of Helen (of Troy) and the horrific nine year Trojan War that her kidnapping provoked was the inspiration for Glynn’s on-site performance, *Untitled Epic Poem (after Homer on the shores of Gallipoli)* (2011), made into a single-channel video. Characterized by its cruel violence and distinct

graphic imagery, the *Iliad*’s depiction of battle remains one of the bloodiest and most vivid representations of the brutality of war. In *Untitled Epic Poem (after Homer on the shores of Gallipoli)*, Glynn, her back to the sea with gentle waves lapping at her shoeless feet, is shown ritually cleansing the *Iliad*’s violent descriptors from what look to be large canvas swatches from an oversized book. Glynn sets the pages out to sea to erase such cruelty from our consciousness. Separated from Troy by the Dardanelle straits, Gallipoli, for Glynn, functions as a symbolic platform to connect with, and absorb, the events of Troy, while linking the Trojan War to another brutal military campaign, Gallipoli, one of the deadliest battles of World War I, when Turkey and Germany were allies. Despite tragic losses on all sides, Gallipoli was considered both a military and ideological victory for Turkey, charged with keeping the last vestiges of the Ottoman Empire.

Gallipoli was the death rattle of an exhausted Ottoman regime. So swift was the decline in global influence and economic power that Turkey has since become a pool for cheap labor to be siphoned by richer European nations. When a labor shortage threatened to derail its miraculous economic engine (the capitalist workforce was virtually cut in half by the Berlin Wall), West Germany imported thousands of Turkish *gastarbeiter* (guest-workers) during

the 1960s and 70s to temporarily staff its factories. With little incentive to return home, many made their lives in Germany. Yet due to the lack of parity—economic imbalance, conditional citizenship, and cultural and religious differences—German-Turkish relations, despite the passing of three generations, have remained tense.

The notion of German-ness—how it is defined and who is entitled to share in it—has been the subject of countless books, films and debates, and is defined to some degree by those who have historically been excluded. Germany’s deeply troubling Nazi legacy haunts any discussion of the subject. More than sixty years later assimilation by certain populations is still a struggle and carries with it a certain taint. German filmmaker Rainer Fassbinder examines this predicament head on in *Fear Eats the Soul* (1974), which focuses on the relationship between an older white woman and a Moroccan man, Ali, who has come to Germany looking for work. Doomed from the start due to the disparities in age, race and social position, the film goes from one humiliating scene to another. For Ali assimilation and acceptance is clearly not an option. Similarly, the resistance of some Turkish emigrants to fully assimilate into Germany is easily understood and, as a result, enclaves of Turks live relatively autonomous lives. However, influence from both cultures is evident in the material culture

³ Said, Edward. 1979; 1994. *Orientalism*. Random House, New York and Toronto, Preface xviii



produced on both sides and is hinted at in *Kreutzberg Hoard* (2011), a cheap rolling suitcase filled with fruit and drizzled in a gold-plated sauce; the decomposition of the fruit issues forth a heady bouquet of fermentation. The gilding alludes to the guest workers' descendants' right-of-residency status that veneers their lack of full German citizenship. It is like the Gold of Troy, treasure stolen from their native Turkey that has since been absorbed as German property.

Debating the acceptability of a German/Turkish pin-up girl is itself a testament to our lack of progress and sustained—albeit ingrained—conviction in the primacy of the western imperialist model. Invariably misrepresented as our opposite, the East is still characterized by a set of inaccurate generalizations and abstractions neatly parceled out for easy dismissal or brought forth as evidence of need for correction. The prolonged western occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan illustrates this ethos so eloquently articulated by the late Edward Said: "... the hardening of attitudes, the tightening of the grip of demeaning generalizations and triumphalist cliché, the dominance of crude power allied with simplistic contempt for dissenters and 'others' has found a fitting correlative

in the looting, pillaging, and destruction of Iraq's libraries and museums." The antiquity plundered from poorer nations by richer ones persists not only in countries occupied in times of war, but also in poorer European nations. The recent scandal involving The Getty—the world's richest art institution—is a case in point, where the museum knowingly bought archeological treasures stolen from Italy, thus divesting the nation of its priceless cultural heritage. Roman and Greek antiquities in the form of artifacts such as the Gold of Troy or epic poems like Homer's *Iliad* can still have profound influence on our contemporary consciousness. Glynn's exhibition *No Second Troy* reminds us of the ancient and recent past, each with its share of triumph and duplicity. Yet, how does one resolve the emanating influence of objects over those who come into contact with them? As a child I sat in the British Museum entranced by the Elgin Marbles. Commandeered by the British ambassador to Greece, chiseled off the Parthenon and given pride of place in London, these artifacts are as irreplaceable to British identity as our traditional cup of tea (an import from China).

Images on left:
Kreutzberg Hoard (2011)
Market suitcase armature, perishable produce, gold leaf and acrylic

Kreutzberg Hoard (2011)
(installation view, week 7, Nichols Gallery, Pitzer College)
Market suitcase armature, perishable produce, gold leaf and acrylic



Untitled Epic Poem (after Homer on the shores of Gallipoli) (2011)
Single-channel HD video, 8:12 minutes



Interview between Liz Glynn and Mark Allen

Mark: Your work often points to the plasticity inherent in what an artifact is and to different ways people can engage with it as a vehicle for ideas about history or aesthetics or culture. I'm also thinking about the piece that you did at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) where the participants remade the papier-mâché pieces of antiquities in the museum's collection. In addition to that, you also work a lot with performance. I'm interested in how you think about the relationship between the artifact and the performative.

Liz: Well, my interest in the artifacts is not the idealized artifact that is fixed in time, but the artifact as a way to trace history and politics. So I think performance, to some degree, is a way of drawing out of the objects, or putting it back into objects, the complexities and the points at which these objects have become contested or become a battleground by following their movement—because often when they are moved or altered, it's through acts of war or export and not always under legal terms.

Mark: You're suggesting that from the moment of the artifact's creation it continues to accumulate a history: first it's made; then 200 years later it's buried; 1,000 years later it's uncovered; 50 years after that it's transferred from one country to another as the result of a global conflict; and then even later it moves from country to country as a cultural artifact, legally or quasi-legally.

Liz: Interspersed with long periods of dormancy, too. They are not always in motion; there are thousands of years where they're just under the ground and no one's looking for them. I'm also interested in that loss. But for me it's not about explicating official narratives. I'm not interested in finding some objective truth. I'm interested in the multiplicity of truths, stories, narratives, lies and justifications that have been told around the object. I think the artifact is quite literally a vessel. It gets filled up with what people put upon it. Attic pottery is a really great example, where some

Image on left: Photograph of Heinrich Schliemann's first trench, Troia archaeological site (2011). Photo by Liz Glynn

of the pots were used ceremonially. Later they were displayed mostly as evidence of human culture or the prowess of Greek civilization, and then later as fine art, but not until very recently, in the last 30 years or so. But once the narrative is disseminated in a certain context, it's very hard to remove it, even if it is proven false. It acquires a mythology.

Mark: The postmodern take on that would be that the cultural narrative is where the meaning is located, so there is no recourse to a real fact behind it in the end.

Liz: That's Britain's argument for keeping the Elgin Marbles.

Mark: [laughs] How so? I don't know anything about that.

Liz: That they've been in Britain long enough and become such an intrinsic part of British culture that they are no longer purely Greek.

Mark: What do you think about that?

"It's like everything Damien Hirst touches turns to gold, but he's not able to make anything ... he can't make a ham sandwich and eat it anymore. All he can do is make a ham sandwich that is a vehicle for global capital."

—Mark Allen

Liz: I think you can't restore them to their native state of significance, but that's not really what the argument is about. I think what the Greeks are actually fighting for is cultural tourism and its economic benefits. I don't think you can look at cultural values without also looking at the economic and political histories of the cultures. One thing that's really interesting, actually, is looking at the difference between how the Trojan artifacts are displayed in Turkey—where they've jammed so many into the cases as evidence of human civilization—whereas if you see artifacts, literally from the same find, in the Neues Museum in Berlin, curators tend to put far fewer artifacts in the cases and separate them a lot more; they are treated as art objects.

But Germany invested a huge amount in these archaeological expeditions at the turn-of-the-century that actually brought a lot of the artifacts that populate their museums. Because of that investment and what that investment represents—a certain elite global power and cultural superiority—they've continued to invest in keeping the best artifacts in Germany and presenting them in the best conditions. Whereas in Turkey, the best

of the objects have left; it feels like almost without a fight. When I was in Bergama, the museum there has images of the city's Pergamon Altar that is now in the museum in Berlin, with no critical text or suggestion that they would like someday to bring it back because it's so clear from the size and the scale of the museum and the social structure of the town that there is really no possibility of doing that.

Turkey is a multicultural state, so the relationship between the Greek or Roman past and Turkey has been contested, and it changes depending on which political party is in power. Hence cultural values are more dynamic. In fact, the times during which most of the artifacts were removed from Turkey the territory was under control of the Ottoman Empire. They were less interested in preserving those objects as a representation of state power than they were in the capital return.

Mark: So there are different economic reasons, but also differences and changes in the symbolic role of the classical culture.

Liz: Yeah. That's something I started to get interested in with the *California Surrogates for the Getty*, where I used trash from around California to make copies of antiquities in their collection. For me, that piece was about the tension between the way these objects are presented in museums here, and particularly at the Getty, as sort of perfect and infinite, and the fact that they're actually

going to decay unless someone does what the Getty does to those objects, with their massive conservation department—continually intervening, preserving. It's like having a pet: you have to actively keep these objects alive. If you haven't studied pottery that much, you might think those things just sort of came out of the ground like that, got dusted off and put in the case. And I think in Europe and the States we take for granted the idea that classical artifacts are the penultimate evidence of the origin of civilization and culture in a way that is almost mythic; that is not necessarily the case in the Middle East or Far East. In Turkey—and this is true of parts of Italy as well—they have a totally different educational structure, so the people who are doing the conservation, who are actually handling the artifacts, don't necessarily have PhDs. Sometimes they just grew up in the town where the museum is and got into it that way. I think there is something poetic about the way these artifacts were repaired to the best of someone's ability and means, which is to say not with laser technology and scanning to render the perfect shape of something, but with cement and rebar, because that's what they had.

Mark: Right. Which seems like very much the way you are interested in working.

Liz: Yeah. By any means necessary.

Mark: So part of this project is about the movement of real people, real goods, and about how meaning is

invested and transformed by those movements. How do you connect the extraction of the physical, and then the construction of its relationship to the mythic, with the movement of global capital, whether it be people or whether it be stuff?



Sophia Schliemann, wife of Heinrich Schliemann, wearing treasures discovered at Hisarlik, site of ancient Troy
Photo credit: *Storia Illustrata* n. 167, published in Italy in 1971

Liz: Well, I'm actually less interested in the global movement than the personal movement. People move in ways that are irrational and clunky. I saw a guy move with a microwave in a suitcase once, just like this old, dirty microwave with all his clothes stuffed in the microwave, and the suitcase around it, but he was very happy

to just be bringing a microwave. And actually, when you're moving between places or between cities, you don't necessarily pick the 100 things you most need that fit well into this bag. So you'll see people moving with these taped-up boxes and a trash bag to carry their clothes because they don't have another bag or something. Or you over-pack and bring stuff that just doesn't make any sense at all—it's incredibly subjective.

Mark: It's not optimized.

Liz: No. And people bring tile, or other material things. There's a German version of most of that stuff, and a lot of Turkish products are imported now and relatively easy to get, so you don't have to bring it with you, but many people do. So for me, with the piece, part of actually bringing the objects to the site—and in some ways it's a little bit indulgent to take this trip—is that I'm interested in the clunkiness and, let's just say the stupidity of trying to construct this history and imbue these objects with meaning, in order to point to something that someone in the '60s could have elegantly arrived at through conceptual work.

Mark: Yes, actually, I feel like this points to an important shift in how a number of artists are working now that is different from past modes of operating. With conceptual

work, like with Kosuth's chair piece—where there's the chair, the photograph of the chair and the description of the chair—the idea is to articulate the relationship between a real object and an object that is constructed in a person's imagination discursively or through representation. Whereas I think the work that you're doing is more about actually doing something—returning the gold to Troy—to the extent that your personal circumstances allow.

Liz: Right.

Mark: Your personal circumstances don't allow you to take the actual gold from Germany and bring it to Troy. But your personal circumstances allow you to make this replica and bring it there.

Liz: Actually, one of my favorite pieces, in relation to that idea of what you're able to do, is by Gordon Matta Clark who was invited to the Berlin Biennial in 1970. He went to Berlin saying, "I'm going to go blow up the Berlin Wall." The film that results is a black turtle-necked Gordon Matta Clark trying to wheat-paste posters on the Berlin Wall. And the paste isn't sticking—it's kind of a disaster. He gets stopped by the German police, and they do not care that he's an American artist or that he's in the Berlin Biennial. There's the ambition on the level of blowing up the Berlin Wall, but in the context he was operating in, this action proved impossible. Instead, he

was forced to do only what he could. The gap between the declaration and the resulting gesture points to an alternate reality that can never be. It makes that desire to do something palpable, and it also speaks to the limits of our ability to change our environment as one person operating autonomously.

With the *Trojan Return*, I couldn't actually carry as much as I wanted to. It got to the point in Berlin where I had made way more Trojan artifacts than would fit in the bag in that I had, so a lot of them were left behind in the studio of Mariechen Danz, where I was working in Berlin. Over the course of the project, I became interested in structuring the piece around my own physical limitations, or the practical limitations of what can travel with me, or what I could get away with. One's behavior in these sites is very controlled and under surveillance and access is limited. So part of the idea was that rather than trying to penetrate these boundaries—with the exception of the point where I jump the fence in the video in Troy—to

"You're trafficking in, or performing, a continual series of translations about how meanings circulate."

—Mark Allen

accept those limits. If I accept that I'm not going to dig up another gold treasure in my lifetime, or fight with the German government to return these artifacts, what is there that I can do as an alternative? I can move myself and I can make more objects. One of the things that I don't think I understood until taking this trip is the level of cultural capital that one might need as an artist to function above board. But if one ignores those limits, there is still quite a lot to do.

Mark: So then you're sort of like the Schliemann of this situation?

Liz: I am interested in following the logic of Schliemann operating in a legal gray area. However, when I visited Alexandria Troas, a lesser-known site, I came across a large pile of Hellenistic pottery fragments. The friend I was with asked me, "Do you want to take some? Do you want me to take some for you?" and I realized that I actually didn't want to enter into the network of illicit movement directly. I am tracing it, but I don't actually want to start trafficking antiquities.

Mark: Yeah, it's not what your work's about at all. You're trafficking in, or performing, a continual series of translations about how meanings circulate. In terms of the performance aspect of this piece then—the fact that you actually bring these copies of the Gold of Troy that

you made from Germany to the archaeological site in Turkey—I'm curious how you think about the relationship between the symbolic gesture and the real act of returning these artifacts that it sort of mimics or suggests. In your piece, it's important that these things actually get delivered, right?

Liz: Yes.

Mark: But you are not going and getting the actual artifacts from Germany and smuggling them

back into Troy. So it's operating both on the symbolic level in that it's talking about this reparation, but also on a real level, that in order to talk about the symbolic with authority, there has to be some real action.

Liz: Right. I think about this notion of what is "real" with the material as well. With sculpture, particularly in postmodern sculpture, there were a lot of artists using

the blood from this thing or the dirt from this site. This material specificity has emerged and imbued value into the work, similar to the way the Shroud of Turin functions. With my work, I sometimes think about if there's something that I can't get or don't have enough of to finish a piece, what happens if I just say it is so? What happens if I'm mixing the trash from here with the trash from there in this piece? It somehow matters if I tell you what it is.

Mark: That tendency in art is evident in the work of somebody like Dario Robleto. It entirely depends on you believing that that's actually where that stuff comes from. It's almost like the fingernail of a saint or something.

Liz: Or thinking about all the chunks of the Berlin Wall that you can buy in Berlin as tourist souvenirs. They all have paint on one side. But the Berlin Wall was kind of thick, and all fragments that are less than an inch are not all going to have paint on them, you know? But you kind of have to paint one side of the rocks for it to mean that it's part of the Berlin Wall. There's this specter of this real thing standing behind it that holds it up and gives it value, but also I think there's the desire on the part of the person buying the fragment of the Berlin Wall to say, "I was in Berlin. I stood in front of this wall"—maybe not when it fell, but trying to get as close as you can to this history that you actually in some way have no access to. I think about it actually a lot in California, where there are so few historic buildings; there is no old architectural history

relative to what I grew up with. I think that completely changes your relationship to building, destroying, renovating, altering one's own environment, because it seems like it's all relatively recently constructed.

Mark: Right.

Liz: But I think there is something—something that isn't just in the minds of manic-depressive billionaires—about the desire to own a little piece of the thing, but maybe especially if it seems like it wouldn't be missed. With the Berlin Wall fragments, there's this democratic idea that the thing was so big relative to the number of people; whereas if there was one artifact from Hitler's *Führerbunker* you probably wouldn't want to take that. That would be looting in some way. But taking a little piece of a building or something, or a tile, feels more anonymous, even proletarian.

Mark: I wonder if it's that the larger something exists in our imagination or in terms of its cultural size, there's some weird translation toward its infinite extendibility in terms of the number of pieces that are available. And so, that idea that the Berlin Wall is so huge as a cultural artifact and concept, one can infinitely divide it so that everyone in the world could have one piece of it. The other historical example of that is like the pieces of the True Cross, right? If you add up every piece of the True Cross, you have a redwood forest. But I think on a certain level just as a communion wafer is transformed

into the body of Christ, there's a certain understanding that that piece of wood has that transformative potential. It doesn't really matter that somebody painted half of those pieces of the Berlin Wall.

Liz: No. I find that desire to possess the real thing so interesting. Actually, with the large concrete piece that will be the centerpiece of the show, I had this real crisis when I found the "original"—which is this pile of castoff flowers that had been left at the Soviet War memorial. It was just this nine or 12-foot-long pile of trash, three feet high, and I'm sitting there in front of it. And I sat on the park bench for a couple hours, thinking that this is the best war memorial ever, and I can't take it with me. I went through the whole list of possible logistics, like: there's the problem of not being able to pick it up; and well, I could cast it, or I could ship boxes back to the studio; I could get trash bags now but it's just me on a Sunday afternoon in the park and I don't know where to get trash bags...I was doing the math in my head, and finally realizing no, this is not actually going to happen. I had to sit there and come to terms with the idea that it's more about the sentiment of the thing than the actual record of that physical material.

"But I think there is something—something that isn't just in the minds of manic-depressive billion-aires—about the desire to own a little piece of the thing, but maybe especially if it seems like it wouldn't be missed."

—Liz Glynn

Mark: So in a way, the piece you're making becomes your memorial to the memorial.

Liz: I guess it does. And it allows me to bring in other things. I wanted to make the piece out of concrete rather than stone, though the war memorial is made of stone, because concrete was the material used architecturally in a lot of the apartments that were supposed to house the German people in socialist East Berlin. Concrete had this utopian intentionality to house the masses that failed in its promise. And the monuments of the *Sowjetische Ehrenmal* in Treptower Park are on a post-human scale. Whereas, in part because of the technical challenges in casting, my piece is going to have to be cast in much smaller blocks, so it's not this singular monument, but a fragmented, imperfect, movable, transient object.

In general with the work I make, I do the best I can, or do the research I can, but sometimes I get the scale wrong. If it's not perfect, well, I think those mistakes are made all the time.

Mark: Right.

Image on right: Photograph of Alexandria Troas archaeological site (2001). Photo by Liz Glynn



Liz: But I think it's important that it's always a sincere attempt to do something, even if you know that it is perhaps doomed. It's always coming out of earnestness, rather than an irony, even if the initial conceit is stupid or ill-fated. It's not so much about functioning as an authority figure in the work, but as a vessel for continued belief.

Mark: So some of the pieces that you're doing for this show you're making out of paper and painting gold, and then some of those, you're casting in real gold. Can you talk about what that's about?



Morgantina Silver Hoard, from the series *Surrogate Objects for the Metropolitan* (2011)
Trash, yard waste, victory wax, silver acrylic

Liz: I'm interested in the way that the copies of the Gold of Troy currently displayed in the Neues Museum in Berlin are terrible. They're kind of poorly made and flimsy, and even if they're the right shape, they don't replicate the richness of the original. The surface quality isn't very good. The copies are almost there as a placeholder reminding viewers that the Germans once possessed these objects; there is a request in the didactic wall text stating that they would like the originals returned from Russia.

Mark: Right, so they point to the absence of the original, rather than attempting to give the viewer as close a simulation as possible of seeing the thing.

Liz: Yes. I'm interested in the bad copy, or the thing that takes up enough space so that you know it was there, but doesn't try to fool you, in a certain way. If you think about performance re-enactments, because I think it's a good metaphor for these objects, the worst attempts to re-enact historic performances have been the ones where an artist or curator looked at the documentation and actually tried to recreate the photograph, as though that were the truth of the piece.

A lot of the artists I've talked to in the context of the Pacific Standard Time project have pointed out that the political content of their work wouldn't make any sense now—for example Nancy Buchanan's piece *If I Could Tell You How Much I Really Love You*, which was based on the Sandinistas. While the Sandinistas are no longer topical, doing a piece about psychological warfare is still completely relevant. But it requires a different kind of investment for an artist to re-imagine a piece that speaks to the current context in a similar way, or with the same resonance. Even in the tradition of figurative sculpture, the works that aspire to present a one-to-one copy are always devalued. Whereas I think the more powerful work tries to get at the gesture of the original while giving you a wink that says, "I'm not trying to replace this."

Mark: I feel like we should rename the bad copy the honest copy in that it is more transparent about where it comes from.

Liz: And also I think the bad copy is also more accessible in terms of the idea that you too could make this copy, or anything else for that matter, by extension. Part of the proposition of the copy is that potentially infinite other copies exist. The proposition would be that one could have this object if one just stepped up and made it. In the tradition of sculpture, when someone didn't have access to the valuable original, going from Greece to Rome, the Romans copied a lot of the Greek sculpture. What

we think of as classical sculpture came out of Greece and into Rome. So I think, for me, the proposition is not only that you could make a bad copy, but that you can make the copy however you would like to make it. So in a sense you can literally re-materialize your own history. That's more of what I'm interested with Schliemann—just the idea of him walking around and declaring things to be what they were, and that he somehow claimed this position of authority.

Mark: Do you think there is a certain kind of analogy between the action of someone like Schliemann and the way a museum might function or a curator might function or an artist might function, in terms of the transformation of nothing into something of great cultural value by those who are viewed to have a lot of cultural authority?

Liz: I think, looking back historically at Schliemann, you have this sense of him making things up. Whereas, with the museum now, I think we accept the narrative that's presented on a didactic as true, or we assume a certain review process behind it in order to present an objective view.

Mark: Actually it seems like maybe it has a more fundamental connection with what an artist does. There is a manipulation of the physical, but the primary thing an artist does is to attach a narrative to an object.

Liz: Yes, and part of how objects acquire significance is that they are seen as having been made by an artist. Art objects are valued differently than, for example, a bunch of copies of something produced by my dad as a hobbyist.

Mark: But it's not because of your skill as an artist, because we are in a post-virtuosic environment for everything. You can make a laser scan of something and the computer can make a perfectly rendered model in a way that an artist by hand couldn't. So the difference between you and your father in this context is the cultural authority that you have. I sometimes feel like with someone like Damien Hirst that he has too much cultural capital—it's a little like the Midas touch. Whatever Damien Hirst makes will circulate as a vehicle for global capital in a way that the work can't really now talk about anything but its own existence as a vehicle for global capital. It's like everything he touches turns to gold, but he's not able to make anything ... he can't make a ham sandwich and eat it anymore. All he can do is make a ham sandwich that is a vehicle for global capital.

Liz: [laughs]

Mark: Whereas, if you have less cultural capital and you're not authorized, you are acting on the margins

of things, you can't do anything you want. But you can also do some things that you couldn't do in a position of more authority. Can you talk a little bit about the useful limits of not having endless cultural capital or economic capital?

Liz: What I have actually found is I feel like that opens up a lot, when I was denied permission to do things in very basic ways, like not being able to bring a tripod in, it forced me to figure out how to work right up to the margin of what I thought I could do and sometimes to just sort of push a little beyond that and see what was possible in that situation. In terms of the process of doing the project, I thought of it as functioning more just like a human out in the world than particularly as an artist.

Mark: I think that's something that your work is always coming back to: it's about the human scale, the scaled effort of one human being.

Liz: Yes. Any time I appear in the performances, I try to sort of function as a generic subject in a certain way. It's important to be able to become invisible in the work or to be replaceable within it. Even with a structure like the *24 Hour Roman Reconstruction Project*, I like that someone else could take the structure and execute it. I don't have a particular specialized skill set. The work is constructed to have a level of technical finesse such

that anyone could do it. It's less about some kind of expressionistic artistic gesture than it is demonstrating the degree to which history is plastic or pliable if one chooses to engage it.

Mark: What I like about this work and thinking about your body of work as a whole is that the emancipatory potential of participation isn't just assumed to be intrinsic. It's articulated in a more complicated way, in terms of the relationship between the literal and the symbolic. If we think about the *24 Hour Roman Reconstruction Project*, it's about this literal idea that the people who come and participate build Rome in a day. Right? But it's operating on the symbolic level of what that means to use this very phrase, which suggests something that can't be done and have people actually do it. In this show, you —with whatever degree of agency you have to remake these things or to inject yourself into this history of the circulation of artifacts—stand in for the idea that anyone can rebuild their history or participate in the construction of cultural narratives in our society. You are sort of making this Rosetta Stone between powerful cultural figures like Hearst and Schliemann and the general public.

Liz: Yeah. I think one's first impulse looking at a figure like Hearst or Schliemann is to be critical because of the wealth that's associated with those practices. But there's something really interesting about the way that

they operated, free from conservation or archaeological piety, to reconstruct and create this material. With the piece I created for the *Machine Project Field Guide to LACMA*, I wanted to put that ability into the hands of the participants, to say, "Yes, you too can do what Hearst did"—which is essentially that when he couldn't buy it, he made it up. He couldn't buy it for different reasons but if you don't have a billion dollars, I think what he pointed to—and that can be extended metaphorically—is that there's always another way to do it.



Untitled Epic Poem (after Homer on the shores of Gallipoli) (2011)
Single-channel HD video, 8:12 minutes

Artist Biography

Liz Glynn received her MFA from California Institute of the Arts in 2008 and a BA from Harvard College in 2003. Glynn uses epic historical narratives to explore cycles of growth and decay and the potential for change in the present tense through performance, sculpture and large-scale installation. She has presented numerous solo exhibitions and participatory performances including *the black box*, as part of the Pacific Standard Time Public Art and Performance Festival in Los Angeles, CA (2012); *loving you is like fucking the dead*, a MOCA Engagement Party at MOCA in Los Angeles, CA (2011); *Ill*, produced by Redling Fine Arts in Los Angeles, CA (2010); *Out of the Forest & Into the Light* at Machine Project & the LA Opera Ring Cycle Festival in Los Angeles, CA (2010); and *The 24 Hour Roman Reconstruction Project* at Arthouse at the Jones Center in Austin, TX (2009)

and at Machine Project in Los Angeles, CA (2008). Her work has been featured in group exhibitions including the *performa 11* Biennial in New York, NY (2011); *Temporary Structures: Performing Architecture in Contemporary Art* at the deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum in Lincoln, MA (2011); *On Forgery: Is One Thing Better Than Another?* at LA><ART in Los Angeles, CA (2011); *Sculpture* at the Paula Cooper Gallery in New York, NY (2011); *The shortest distance between 2 points is often intolerable* at the Brand New Gallery in Milan, Italy (2011); *Object Lessons* at the Carpenter Center for Visual Art in Cambridge, MA (2011); *Projects and Assignments* at Saprophyt in Vienna, Austria (2010); *Bellwether at Southern Exposure* in San Francisco, CA (2009); *the Machine Project Field Guide to LACMA* at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in Los Angeles, CA (2008); and the *Generational: Younger than Jesus* at the New Museum in New York, NY (2009). Glynn was awarded the California Community Foundation Emerging Artist Fellowship in 2010. Her work has appeared in the *New York Times*, *New York Magazine*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *Artforum*, *Art Lies*, *Mousse*, and *Archaeology Magazine*. Liz Glynn currently lives and works in Los Angeles.

Contributing Writers and Curator Biographies

Mark Allen is an artist, educator and curator based in Los Angeles. He is the founder and executive director of Machine Project, a non-profit performance and installation space in Los Angeles. Machine Project also operates as a loose confederacy of artists producing shows at locations ranging from beaches to museums to parking lots. Under his direction Machine Project has produced shows with the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Denver, the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis in Missouri, and the Walker Museum in Minneapolis. He has produced more than 500 events in Los Angeles at the Machine Project storefront space, and recently concluded a yearlong artist residency addressing topics of public engagement at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles. Allen has taught at the California Institute of the Arts and the University of California San Diego, and is currently an associate professor of art at Pomona College. He serves on the board of directors of the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts in New York and on the advisory board of the Center for Integrated Media at the California Institute of the Arts in Los Angeles. Allen received his MFA from the California Institute of the Arts following a residency with the Core Fellowship of the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston.

Thomas Lawson is an artist with a diverse, project-driven output that encompasses painting, writing, editing, curating and teaching. He has been showing paintings and developing temporary public works internationally since the late '70s. Lawson was one of three selectors of the British Art Show in 1995. In the spring of 2009, selections from his older works were included in historical survey shows of the '80s at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and at Le Magasin – Centre National d'Art Contemporain in Grenoble, France. His essays have appeared in *Artforum* and other art journals, as well as many exhibition catalogues. From 1979 until 1992 he, along with Susan Morgan, published and edited *REAL LIFE Magazine*. From 2002 until 2009 he was co-editor of *Afterall* Journal. In 2010 he launched www.eastofborneo.org, an online magazine and archive. A book of selected writings, *Mining for Gold*, was published by JRP-Ringier in 2005 and an anthology of *REAL LIFE Magazine* was published by Primary Information in 2007. Lawson has received support from the Guggenheim Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts. He has been Dean of the School of Art at the California Institute of the Arts since 1991.

Ciara Ennis is the director/curator of Pitzer Art Galleries at Pitzer College and was the curator of exhibitions at the University of California Riverside/California Museum of Photography, particularly of *Still, Things Fall From the Sky* (2005), *Ruby Satellite* (2006) and *Eloi: Stumbling Towards Paradise* (2007). Ennis moved from London to Los Angeles where she was project director for *Public Offerings*, an international survey of contemporary art, at MOCA, Los Angeles in 2001. From there she became associate curator at the Santa Monica Museum of Art, where she initiated the Project Room and programmed a series of experimental exhibitions with such artists as Urs Fischer, Simon Leung, Mark Leckey, Johan Grimmonprez and Eduardo Sarabia. Ennis has been director of Pitzer Art Galleries for the past four years. During that time, she has curated a number of exhibitions including: *Antarctica* (2007); *Narrowcast: Reframing Global Video 1986/2008*, co-curated with Ming-Yuen S. Ma (2008); *Veronica* (2009); *Capitalism in Question*, co-curated with Daniel Joseph Martinez (2010); and *Synthetic Ritual*, co-curated with Gabi Scardi (2011). Ennis's curatorial practice blurs fact with fiction and focuses on storytelling as a means to explore the fluidity and fragility of identity, revealing the subtleties of the social, political and cultural issues that impact our lives. She received her MA in curating contemporary art from the Royal College of Art, London.

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Image on right: *Hallowed Ground* (2011)
Single-channel HD video, 13:25 minutes





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