# Restless Debris

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University Art Gallery,
Irvine, CA

**Ruins, Ruination, and the Politics of Decline**

The three artists participating in this exhibition investigate the politics of decline embedded in "ruin imagery." Kevin Jerome Everson's synthetic artifacts capture the legacy of migration within the routines of people in spaces of capital disinvestment. Michelle Dizon's visual deconstruction conceives ruination as an inscription on the bodies displaced by globalization. Ivor Shearer's critical appropriation addresses the deployment of "ruin imagery" by entertainment media to foreground the racial politics such representations elide. By addressing the ruins of the past, each artist activates an encounter with collective memory in the present. This exhibition thus seeks to defamiliarize what is commonly understood by the word "ruins" and to ask what is at stake when debris acquires symbolic meaning. As cultural historian Michael S. Roth has shown, the meaning of ruins, specifically in the West, has a long and varied history.

In the introductory essay for the exhibition catalog *Irresistible Decay: Ruins Reclaimed,* Roth notes that before the Enlightenment the ruins of the ancient world merely signified the debris of a pre-Christian era. Decaying temples were not "ruins" in our modern sense but rather conveyed the rubble of a failed religious order and bespoke the providence of Christendom. Empirical thought initiated a shift towards a more secularized notion of debris as scientific artifacts for historical interpretation. In other words, ruins no longer signified the course of idolatry but served a heuristic function in the study of civilization. Dissociated from the divine, they suggested something about Man's condition locked in a timeless struggle with the unpredictable forces of Nature. An historical imaginary emerged – guided by Reason's "promise" to bring about an orderly peaceful world – that divided the globe between rational and irrational forces, proving useful in justifying the expansion of Imperialism.[1] By the 20th century, through a series of man-made ruins such as WWI and II, debris became visible in sites of remembrance.[2]

No longer symbolic of Reason's struggle, ruins now signified humanity's self-destructive tendencies. Sites such as the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche – a church partially destroyed during the bombing of Berlin – took on a tutelary function to preserve a shared memory. Although we may see some debris as "ruins," this is merely an historical contingency informed by a long succession of connotations that have been passed down through cultural convention. Thus, "ruins," as literary scholars Julia Hell and Andreas Schönle argue, cannot exist without creative appropriation.[3]

The paradox of ruins, Hell and Schönle maintain, is that they all evoke the past while at the same time denoting its irretrievable loss in the present. This ambiguity is indicative of ruins' productive "vacuity of meaning."[4] Perhaps this is why discussions of ruins never seem to escape drifting into grand allegories about the *fate* of humanity. This tendency is symptomatic of the self-reflexive potential of ruins; "ruin-gazing" is an exercise in an historical imagination watching its own becoming.[5] Likewise, this productive link between "ruin-gazing" and consciousness suggests why there seems to be such a natural affinity between photography and the sense of loss evoked by ruins, as art historian Charles Merewether speculates. Photography satisfies our desire to arrest the past out of the flow of time. However, as Merewether points out, when ruins are uncovered they are irrevocably changed; they become part of the present. The quandary of ruins is that the impulse to preserve ruins only accomplishes their erasure, and Merewether finds in this predicament an unlikely parallel—psychoanalytic theory.[6]

In his meditations on memory, Freud speculated that people likely never remember their childhood as it actually was. He believed our impressions of the distant past are aroused by the concerns, desires, and wishes of the present that retroactively project themselves back onto the fragments of our memories. This projection, then, covers our memories

like "a stamp" that conceals an unconscious wish in the present. To recall something – to have a "memory" of a person, place or thing – is thus to actually *construct* the past *in* the present. This paradox confronts psychoanalytic theory with an implicit theoretical dilemma. Should the task of the analyst be to excavate the unconscious for authentic memories? Or should fidelity be abandoned altogether, thereby undermining the premise upon which the "talking cure" rests? As Merewether points out, Freud finally came to the realization that this dialectic was a false one. The ruins of the unconscious can neither be left alone nor kept intact because "stones speak."[7] How, in turn, ought artists invite ruins to speak without silencing them?[8] *Restless Debris* argues that subjective documentary – an art form that conflates photographic fidelity with the temporal unfolding of conscious experience – resolves the analyst's dialectic by supplanting ruins with "ruination."

When "ruins" are allegorized they tend to symbolize something eternal about humanity. Decay, however, is an ongoing act whose effects – material, physiological, and psychological – continue well after the shuttering of industry or *the end of a regime*. What are ruins to some are homes to others; rubble is always subject to reuse by those left behind to extract a living, a memorial, and so on. Symbolic appropriation of ruins, then, silences the very voices it purportedly amplifies. Any aesthetic program that negotiates the politics of decline must take as its guiding focus ruination as an ongoing process that informs the present as much as it preserves the past.[9]

The artists in *Restless Debris* activate ruination by situating "ruin-gazing" within the space between documentary and subjectivity – history and memory. Should ruination thus be understood as an encounter with collective memory then this reorientation would be the strategy that unites the disparate issues attended to by each artist. In short, debris for these artists is restless; it neither possesses pastoral tranquility nor truths

to uncover. Rather it constantly resurfaces and informs the present in the subjects they "document."

Through this exhibition, I argue that analyzing the manner in which ruination manifests itself within the shared memories of different collectivities is a major step in advancing an understanding of the cultural formations around the uneven distribution of wealth and environmental rights created by the development of capital. Instead of showcasing ruins, *Restless Debris* focuses on the innocuous objects of memory – a billboard, a screen, a remittance box – around which legacies of ruination have formed – and the voices that call upon them to understand the present. In all the exhibited artworks, the way ruins are *seen*, and hence brought into being, is constantly brought to the fore.

**Kevin Jerome Everson's Synthetic Archive**

Kevin Jerome Everson's films document the everyday routines of African Americans and the conflicted nostalgia many of them harbor toward their collective past. *American Motor Company* (2010) – a collaborative piece between the artist and historian Carmen Higginbotham in the form of a billboard – demonstrates the artist's interest in the crossing between memory and performativity. The billboard is designed to imitate mid-twentieth century advertisements typically seen along U.S. highways during the post-war industrial boom. During the boom, manufacturers were motivated to persuade southern Blacks to migrate north because they were regularly paid less and placed in higher risk positions than their white counterparts. In this historical context, *AMC* appears to be a commentary on the role of industry in the coordinated exploitation of marginalized labor. Yet there is something rather ambivalent about Everson's coupling of signifiers within the billboard.

First of all, the man casually leaning into a Volkswagen is actually a depiction of the artist's uncle – while he was stationed in Germany – taken when the artist's family moved from their native Mississippi to the thriving and predominately black neighborhood of Mansfield, Ohio.[10] For Everson, this is a nostalgic image whose trappings of a comfortable middleclass life harken back to a time of hopeful prosperity.[11] However, when viewed from a different, less biographical angle, *American Motor Company* also calls to mind the long defunct icon of the American muscle car manufactured by the American Motors Corporation (1954-1987). This allusion to the unraveling of the U.S. auto industry is also suggestive of the dwindling options available to Black communities following deindustrialization when millions of manufacturing jobs either disappeared or moved overseas between 1970 and 1985.

The clash between the promise of prosperity, coupled with the looming decline of a strong Black middle class, sparks a contradiction that is amplified by the photo's military context, all of which intimates a tinge of earnest, or perhaps sardonic, national pride. One may also wonder whether the photograph's composition – the framing of his uncle's commanding pose against the driver-side door – was influenced by the kind of billboard *AMC* attempts to imitate. If this is the case, then Everson's synthetic "artifact" illustrates how collective memory might be imbued in the slightest gestures, postures, and mannerisms. In this way, might *AMC* create a historical object to stand in for another that may have existed in memory?

In a 2009 interview, Everson expressed his difficulty in finding archival footage of Black lives, which ultimately led him to produce his own.[12] The nonsensical idea to just "produce" artifacts represents the subtle depth of his conceptual approach. Instead of lamenting the historical record's massive voids in the everyday histories of Black folk, Everson simply fills them. This writing of history, as film scholar Michael B. Gillespie argues, is indicative of Everson's casual aesthetic. His films are not meant to convey the theoretical prowess of a heavily considered masterpiece, but rather "the discarded reportage of an incident" whose sheer contingency bears the allure of the "historiographic trace."[13] Take for example, his films on labor and community in *Fe26* (2014) and *Sound That* (2014), which indirectly document the legacy of the housing crash on Black communities in Ohio following 2007.

Both films follow the daily routines of interconnected forms of labor within Cleveland's declining infrastructure via a seemingly restrained observational sensibility. *Sound That* documents city workers, as they probe beneath Cleveland's streets to locate decaying water mains, *Fe26* records two men as they navigate the city in search of metal and manhole covers to sell illegally. Beyond location, what these two films

have in common is an indirect meditation on the daily lives of people who extract a living out of spaces of capital disinvestment. Moreover, both films are actually choreographed. In *Fe26*, not only are the male subjects actors, the manhole covers and crowbars are props the artist crafted. As an artist, Everson thus treats his subjects as full collaborators, encouraging them to improvise their onscreen performances. One sees this in the sometimes humorous way that both the formal and informal workers demonstrate a desire to have their respective expertise acknowledged. In other words, there is a deeper desire for recognition that each film captures – if only obliquely – by adopting an approach reminiscent of cinéma vérité. This is because his subjects bring their assumptions of what they believe an audience of a film about their respective roles expects to see.

Like *AMC*, the politics of Everson's films are entirely incidental components of what might otherwise be considered earnest attempts to produce archival footage of an exceptional quality. Everson's voice, or perhaps lack thereof, thus captures ruination through synthetic objectivity within the collective recognition of how one group is perceived by another. Importantly his choreographed films are situated within a desire to mend an historical record, as opposed to capturing an essential sense of "Blackness." In this way, Everson's practice may be understood as an ongoing process of restoring from the fragments of history a sense of collective identity that began in a field cast in ruins.

## Michelle Dizon's Visual Deconstruction

For Michelle Dizon, working *in* video means working *through* the semantic knot enclosed around her and her subject. "Video," she reminds us, is a multilayered term, whose Latin root "*videre*" ("to see") is conjugated by the first-person singular tense-form "*eō*," hence *videō* ("I see"). If video thus signifies vision, and, by extension, a universal present and a singular subject, then vision can be said to link time and perception to a fixed vantage point. It follows then, that video – like the Western tradition of Quattrocento perspective – constructs an image in which the exterior world is subordinated to conform into a rigidly linear and economical vision of just one homogenous reality. Dizon therefore asserts that the camera's aperture does not open up onto one shared present but rather encircles one temporality at the expense of other temporalities.[14] From this conceptual vantage, video is a form of enclosure, which raises the question of how one might best document the experience of people who are tasked with negotiating multiple national identities and temporalities. In her multimedia installation *Perpetual Peace* (2012), Dizon's response to this dilemma is to deconstruct the "economistic" lens through which the West sees the Global South, in order to convey the experience of rupture endured by people displaced by global trade.[15]

Prompted by a journey to her native Philippines to bury her father, Dizon shot *Perpetual Peace* in an attempt to work through the liberal ideology behind charitable giving and its culpability in neoliberal forces of exploitation. For instance, the film exploits the routine framing devices of humanitarian aid organizations – such as a downcast tilt-shot of a destitute child – and juxtaposes them with archival footage of the American demilitarization of the Philippines. She then couples these signifiers with documentary footage of today's extractive industries within the Philippines' "Special Economic Zones," covert tax-dodging zones literally built over the ruins of American military bases. In Dizon's

hands these Zones indicate the temporal continuity between the old occupation and the present-day trade hubs of Western hegemony.[16] She moreover asserts that while humanitarian campaigns may produce in audiences an earnest desire to invest in the Philippines, "[they do] not shift the terms in which the relation occurs in the semantic arsenal of a [NGO]."[17] In essence, while images of impoverished people render the marginalized visible, such visibility is couched within a logic that shores up the corrosive march of capital. By connecting military debris with the current flow of commodities, Dizon's videowork makes clear the dubious link between "economic growth," the ideology of charity, and the new imperial order. However, specifically relevant to ruination is the means through which her intertwining of capital and "charity" is set into motion by her own memories of the "balikbayans" (remittance boxes) that her family sent back to the Philippines.

Ironically, Dizon's critique is driven by memories of similar earnest aspirations to "raise" the material living standards of those who remained in the Philippines under a series of corrupt regimes. And the close proximity between liberal ideology and the ambitions of the Filipino diaspora is the final critical remove the installation enacts. In other words, Dizon draws out the tragically poetic nature of remittance by circumscribing the vexing relationship to homeland that displaced people must negotiate in the present. At stake, then, is the question of what it means to document the affective registers the status of displacement produces in people. Dizon, herself, likens this task to charting the erosion carved out by a river. This erosion is not seen in capital's ecological destruction, but in "the glossy new metro, the third world global city, the cultural museum…and the incessant logic of development" that pulls migrants and refugees in its wake.[18] But this "erosion" may be equally palpable in the curious distance between Dizon and her subject. For instance, none of her subjects speak, nor are their relationships to the author ever discussed. She also neither uses the Philippines' national or

regional languages nor takes any interest in investigating the perception of foreign aid among her subjects. A cursory interpretation might thus conclude that her macroscopic approach offers the viewer precisely the totalizing gaze her deconstructive practice seeks to redress. To the contrary, I would argue that by disavowing vision as the only way to *see* the world, the installation touches upon something deeper than the insidious nature of foreign aid. *Perpetual Peace* casts into relief the material relations that bind a people together as a "nation" intimated by the word "balikbayan," meaning to repatriate or return to one's country. For the Filipino diaspora this experience comes with an irreconcilable conflict of belonging and estrangement that extends equally to both the United States and the Philippines. This is not only suggested by her critique of the identity behind the banner "the American people" – ubiquitously disseminated throughout the country – but also her journey to a site of origins. Where, finally, standing above burial grounds she concludes: "There is no one Philippines. There is no one language there. There is no one people there. And there is no one story to tell."

In short, Dizon's journey is a funerary one made across the expanse of the Pacific, whereupon the author is confronted with a fictitious America abroad, an "America" that reflexively points back to a "Philippines" that is as imaginary as the former. The identity of the film's voice is thus dislocated from these two imaginary nation states and surfaces only within the material practices – balikbayans, burial ceremonies, language – that pull a people together under one collective cultural experience. In this way, *Perpetual Peace* destabilizes the artist's authorial voice, which, in conventional autobiographic documentary is a fixed position behind a given "video's" embedded meaning "I see." Working against this grain, Dizon instead challenges us to ask just who sees and from where. In the end, such indeterminacy evokes a continuous state of rupture endured by those who find their lives set adrift by the "incessant logic of development."

## Ivor Shearer's Critical Appropriation

Ivor Shearer's *Shooting the Road* (2013) addresses popular representations of real disaster-sites in post-apocalyptic films that function ideologically to obscure the historical culpability of capitalism in producing concentrated spaces of poverty and racialized hegemonic structures. *Shooting the Road* underscores the economic and political processes that create spaces that allow for the capture of popular representations of disaster on film. Shearer recreated scenes from John Hillcoat's 2009 film *The Road*, which took advantage of postindustrial urban ruin and post-Katrina wreckage as its mise-en-scène, to demonstrate the social inequities sublimated by the artifice of narrative cinema. Furthermore as a former New Orleans resident, Shearer sees a pressing urgency to address what he sees as the destructive neoliberal forces currently cutting through the city's fabric.[19] Among these forces is Louisiana's attempt to rebrand New Orleans, through extraordinary tax incentives, as a destination city for the film and television industry, earning it the new nickname of "Hollywood South."[20] *Shooting the Road*, then, provokes larger questions about the commodification of a city's landscape by a state government that has a spotty record of helping the communities that are still enduring Katrina's aftermath. Shearer's film accomplishes this by exploiting the uncanny surplus in meaning Hillcoat captured incidentally through the timing of his film's production.

*The Road*, set in a post-apocalyptic world, follows a father and son's journey across a wasted landscape in search of a warmer climate. This image of destitute migrants traversing a ruined earth inspired Hillcoat to search out locations reminiscent of the iconic FSA photographs, ultimately leading him to the scarred spaces of the Rustbelt and post-Katrina New Orleans.[21] Coincidentally, these "sets" served as a stage where a very peculiar type of re-performance was metaphorically enacted through the film's production. Filming began in February 2008 and finished in

August; in roughly that same period runaway bank defaults wiped out $8 trillion of assets among U.S. stockholders.[22] Poetically, Hillcoat's film is not only a historically based representation of a global catastrophe but also an incidental record of a national one as well. This multiplicity of historical registers is especially visible in one particular scene: where Viggo Mortensen's character shares an unearthed Coke with his son inside the remains of New Orleans' real-life Grand Movie Theater.[23]

The Grand – a graffiti-laced ruin in a blighted community – was a late addition to the Lake Forest Shopping Center destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. Just like the theater, the predominately African American community of Eastern New Orleans – where the site remains – was also a relatively recent development in the city's history. Eastern New Orleans was modestly occupied until the OPEC Oil Embargo prompted a large migration to the Gulf Coast's massively expanding offshore drilling operations.[24] The Lake Forest Shopping Center was erected in 1974 for this booming area. However, the Oil Glut following the end of the embargo in the 80s precipitated massive layoffs leaving Eastern New Orleans in a protracted economic malaise.[25] Uncannily, then, like Hillcoat's inspirational FSA photographs, the center was also an "image" of a large recession era migration. Fast-forward to 2013, Katrina not only shuttered the plaza indefinitely, but the city's repeated negligence to raise the structure echoes the uneven response to the event that took place to the horror of millions in 2005.

It could thus be said that Hillcoat's film offers a series of catastrophic representations and, further, that this surreal surplus is precisely what Shearer counter-appropriates by shooting every locatable scene, at their original sites, that possesses politically significant historical valences. Shearer then projects his film onto a screen that is stretched over a wooden frame, suspended by cables just above eye-level. This is not just any screen, but, of course, the actual screen from The Grand Movie

Theater. By repurposing the screen, Shearer has reintroduced into the flow of time, the use-value that Katrina halted.

Shearer therefore denies the aura of serene mummification, typically associated with ruin photography, foregrounding instead the callous neglect by city officials that blighted neighborhoods endure in the present. Nowhere else is this slow violence more present than on the surface of the screen. On the side that receives his projection, the surface is pulled taught around the edges of the frame, while the reverse side is slumped over, revealing the canvas' discoloration, blotches, wrinkles, and frayed edges. Within this configuration the screen sits precariously between functional and rarefied object. Perhaps this termination point is where the piece silences even the author, for what *Shooting the Road* ultimately asks is who can speak on behalf of others, especially when that voice speaks from a position of privilege. Shearer answers by not speaking. Instead, he turns Hillcoat's voice in on itself in order articulate the politics of power embedded within fantasy. By couching a critique of city negligence at the juncture of functionality and aesthetic autonomy Shearer offers a frustrating image of the precarious condition of the city itself.

**Debris Revisited**

The artworks gathered in *Restless Debris* were made following one the most devastating economic meltdowns of recent memory. The Great Recession's accelerated unraveling of the middle class has shaken the public's confidence in American institutions to the core. The current state of financial precariousness has in recent years, as art historian Dora Apel argues, led to a veritable explosion of "ruin imagery" across popular media. She suspects this phenomenon is fueled by a conviction that the collapse of the current world order is not only imminent, but also inevitable.[26] I, in turn, would suggest that the concerns at play in Everson, Dizon, and Shearer's respective works are symptomatic of the sentiment expressed by Apel to greater or lesser extant. In a broader context Apel speculates that what lies at the core of this trend is the emergence of a "global ruin imaginary," one feeding off images of decay and domesticating anxieties about the inexorable trajectory of capitalism.[27] This trend likely extends to the recent spate of post-apocalyptic films released in the last decade, John Hillcoat's *The Road*, among them. As Apel reminds us, it was during the Cold War that the dominant end of the world motif was nuclear war.[28] Indeed we are currently witnessing a likeminded political pathology in contemporary apocalyptic film.

During the Cold War, apocalyptic scenarios were generally illustrated as dodged by the cooperation of the state and the military. By contrast, in media today both the military and the state are regularly characterized as impotent, ineffective, or basically non-existent.[29] This is particularly the case in the exponential growth of zombie motifs within pop culture, which attest to new fears exacerbated by growing inequalities and the acceleration of globalization.[30] In short, the zombie disaster genre is demonstrative of the bankruptcy of progress' hold on our collective imagination, summed up in the somnambulistic march of the undead as they consume what's left of the world. Following Apel, I argue that these

fatalistic visions both eschew the corporate culpability for the present state of affairs as well as dismiss their audiences from critically engaging with the historical memory "contained" within sites of ruination.

Ruination serves as a counter-strategy towards this broader tendency of passive resignation. Moreover, ruination advances an understanding of how the geographic inequalities wrought by the development of capital not only affect the relationships between people and the places they call home but ultimately the relationships people have towards one another. Without engaging such memories, one cannot begin to understand the relations of power manifest in our present moment. These relations are foregrounded by the artists in this exhibition through a variety of strategies. They contest and arrest memory so as to bring the critical challenges of the present into focus.

**Notes:**

1. *See* Michael S. Roth, "Irresistible Decay: Ruins Reclaimed," in *Irresistible Decay: Ruins Reclaimed*, ed. Lynne Kostman and Rebecca Frazier (Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1997), 1-11.
2. Ibid, 15.
3. Julia Hell and Andreas Schönle, "Introduction," in *Ruins of Modernity*, ed. Julia Hell and Andreas Schönle (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 7.
4. Ibid, 6.
5. Ibid, 6-7.
6. Charles Merewether, "Traces of Loss," in *Irresistible Decay: Ruins Reclaimed*, ed. Lynne Kostman and Rebecca Frazier (Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1997), 25.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid, 33.
9. My use of "ruination" is indebted to the work of Alice Mah and Ann Laura Stoler. *See* Alice Mah, *Industrial Ruination, Community, and Place: Landscapes and Legacies of Urban Decline* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012) and Ann Laura Stoler, "The Rot Remains: From Ruins to Ruination," in *Imperial Debris: On Ruins and Ruination*, ed. Ann Laura Stoler (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 1-35.
10. Kevin Jerome Everson (artist) in discussion with the author, November 2015.
11. Ibid.
12. *Quoted in* "To Do Better: Notes on the Work of Kevin Jerome Everson" (supplementary essay by Michael B. Gillespie), 61. *Broad Daylight and Other Times: Selected Works of Kevin Jerome Everson*. DVD. Video Data Bank, 2010.
13. Ibid, 69.
14. Michelle Yap Dizon, *Vision in Ruins* (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2011), vi-xvi.
15. Ibid, 1-10.
16. Ibid, 91.
17. Ibid, 7.

18. Ibid, 82-91.
19. Ivor Shearer (artist) in discussion with the author, November 2015. For an extended discussion of this topic *see* John Arena, *Driven from New Orleans: How Nonprofits Betray Public Housing and Promote Privatization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012). Also *see* Cedric Johnson, *The Neoliberal Deluge: Hurricane Katrina, Late Capitalism, and the Remaking of New Orleans* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).
20. See Byron Pitts et. al., "Hollywood South: Why New Orleans is the New Movie Capital," *abc NEWS*, November 19, 2014, accessed December 7, 2015. http://abcnews.go.com/Entertainment/hollywood-south-orleans-movie-making-capital/story?id=27036988.
21. John Hillcoat,"The Road: John Hillcoat's Diary." *The Telegraph*, January 4, 2010, accessed March 13, 2014. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/film/6930953/The-Road-John-Hillcoats-diary.html.
22. Alan Greenspan, "Economics Focus: Banks Need More Capital." *The Economist*, December 18, 2008, accessed March 14, 2015. http://www.economist.com/node/12813430.
23. Mike Scott, "Post-apocalyptic drama 'The Road,' shot partially in New Orleans, lands on DVD." *The Times-Picayune: Nola.com*, May 27, 2010, accessed March 14, 2015. http://www.nola.com/movies/index.ssf/2010/05/post-apocalyptic_drama_the_roa.html.
24. Ivan Miestchovich, *New Orleans Market Assessment: A Comprehensive Analysis of Demand and Supply Dynamics* (New Orleans: University of New Orleans Press, 2011), 19.
25. Ibid, 20.
26. Dora Apel, "The Ruins of Capitalism," *Jacobin Magazine*, June 5, 2015, accessed June 8, 2015. https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/06/ruin-porn-imagery-photography-detroit/.
27. Ibid.
28. Dora Apel, *Beautiful Terrible Ruins: Detroit and the Anxiety of Decline* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2015), 133.
29. Ibid, 133.
30. Ibid, 136.


Kevin Jerome Everson,
*American Motor Company* film still, 2010
Courtesy of the artist; Trilobite Arts-DAC;
Picture Palace Pictures

Kevin Jerome Everson, *Fe26* film still, 2014
Courtesy of the artist; Trilobite Arts-DAC;
Picture Palace Pictures



Kevin Jerome Everson, *Sound That* film still, 2014
Courtesy of the artist; Trilobite Arts-DAC;
Picture Palace Pictures

"When Ferdinand Magellan, first crossed the straight between Antarctica and South America, he named the ocean into which he entered the Pacific because he found the waters to be peaceful. But this voyage across the Pacific would prove anything but calm. Looking for the Spice Islands, Magellan would instead find the Philippines. There he befriended some local chieftains and brought with him the icons of Christianity. He also involved himself in a struggle to take over Mactan Island. He would be killed in this battle and Lapu-Lapu, who refused Magellan's authority, would be celebrated as one of the first national heros to resist foreign rule. The story that I offer you takes place across this same Pacific. It is a story about peace as it swims in waters christened by colonial expansion.

If the contours of the world are shaped by images, I began this film with the desire to offer different kinds of images, ones that would show how peace in the United States is upheld by wars elsewhere. But as the years have passed and as life has moved forward, so too has experience reshaped my relation to these images. The image of peace as it folds into war that I once hoped to offer has expanded with the years, as not only the way that an archipelago continues to be ravaged by foreign interests and a local elite, but also the way that peace might mean something about the cycles of life and death, about what passes between generations, and about the question of inheritance.

My relation to these images changed when my father passed away last year. My mother and I carried his urn through airport security, overhead compartments, and across time zones so that he might be buried back home. In the Philippines, we thought, he would finally be able to rest in peace. It is possible that the peace that we imagined he would find in death might be one of our imagination-- a fulfillment of his desire to go home that because of illness, he could not realize in his life.

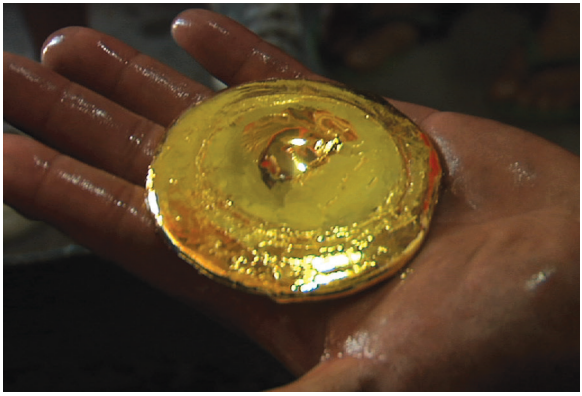
When someone that you love dies, a large part of yourself dies with them. How could it be otherwise when so much life has passed between? But so too do such moments contain an offering. A gift to see oneself in time.

If peace first meant a discussion around global war and violence, it now is also about the cycles of life and death, the times that we can see ourselves inhabiting, and the way that such understandings of time allow for images to open and for many more ways of seeing to emerge."

- Michelle Dizon

Michelle Dizon, *Perpetual Peace* film still, 2012

Courtesy of the artist



Michelle Dizon, *Perpetual Peace* film still, 2012

Courtesy of the artist

"Hegemony still organizes the repression and thus the confirmation of a haunting. Haunting belongs to the structure of every hegemony." [1]

This is a cinematic experiment that examines the conditions that made possible the production of the 2008 film "The Road." The original film made use of real sites of disaster for set design in order to construct an escapist post-apocalyptic fantasy world.

Many of the more sensational shots in the film were captured in the wreckage of post-Katrina New Orleans and depressed post-industrial towns in the Pittsburgh area.

With close attention placed on matching the geographic locations, this project replicates with near precision the camera position, frame, camera movement, film stock, and duration of the shots. We then matched the original audio from "The Road" with each of our corresponding shots.

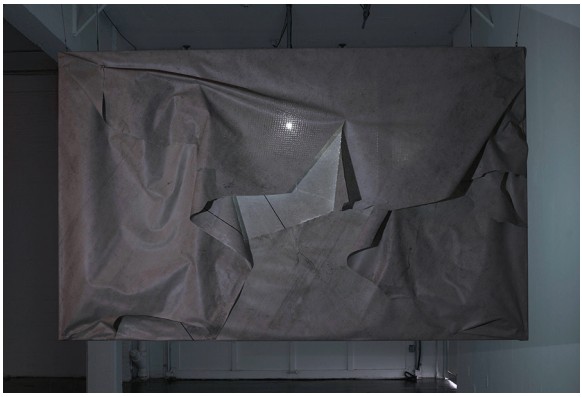
Whatever existed at these locations between 2012 and 2013 is what was filmed."

- Ivor Shearer

1. Jacques Derrida, *Spectres of Marx: The State of the Debt, The Work of Mourning & the New International* (London: Routledge, 2006), 37.

Ivor Shearer, Shooting the Road film still, 2013

Courtesy of the artist



Ivor Shearer, Shooting the Road installation photo, 2013
photograph by Mark Menjivar
Art Pace, San Antonio, TX 2013

Courtesy of the artist

# Exhibition Checklist

**Michelle Dizon**

***Perpetual Peace***
2012, HD Video,
00:42:53

***Perpetual Peace*** (Three "Balikbayan" Boxes)
2016, cardboard,
18" x 18" x 24"

**Kevin Jerome Everson**

***Fe26***
2014, 16mm transferred
to HD, color, sound
00:07:22

***Sound That***
2014, 16mm transferred
to HD, color, sound
00:11:40

***American Motor Company***
2010, 16mm transferred
to SD, b/w, sound
00:12:06

***American Motor Company*** (Billboard)
2010, Vinyl,
10.6' x 22.9'

**Ivor Shearer**

***Shooting the Road***
2013, 35mm transferred
to HD, color, sound
00:06:08

***Shooting the Road*** (Projection Screen)
2013, canvas and wood,
114.5" x 1.5" x 70.5"

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For more information go to
*https://uag.arts.uci.edu/exhibit/restless-debris*

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