



# Exhibition Education Resource Guide

Developed by Rosemary Lennox

## Grant Mooney *calcis*

September 17–December 8, 2024

**Ezra and Cecile Zilkha Gallery** | Center for the Arts | Wesleyan University

This resource guide is meant to supplement the visit to the exhibition and the exhibition handout. It includes an overview of the exhibition, the artist, explanation of art terms referenced, discussion questions, as well as suggested activities and additional resources.

Visiting the exhibition is always free of charge, and guided tours are available by request. Please allow two weeks' notice. To schedule a tour, contact Rosemary Lennox, Exhibitions Manager, [rlennox@wesleyan.edu](mailto:rlennox@wesleyan.edu).

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# About the Artist and Exhibition

## About the Artist

Grant Mooney (b. 1990, Seattle, WA) lives and works in New York. He studied art at Central Saint Martins, London and California College of the Arts, San Francisco. Mooney's work has been featured in solo exhibitions at Midway Contemporary, Minneapolis (2024), Progetto, Lecce, Italy (2023), Miguel Abreu Gallery (2022/2023), Konrad Fischer Galerie, Berlin (2021), Altman Siegel Gallery, San Francisco (2019), Kunstverein Braunschweig (2017), and as part of the SECA Art Awards at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (2017), Pied-à-terre, Ottsville, PA (2015), and the Wattis Institute for Contemporary Art, San Francisco (2015). His work has been included in group exhibitions at Konrad Fischer Galerie, Düsseldorf, the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY (2024), the Hessel Museum of Art, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY (2022), Braunsfelder, Cologne (2022), Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York (2021), the ICA, Los Angeles (2021), Yale Union, Portland (2020), Stadtgalerie Bern (2020), SculptureCenter, New York (2020), Fondation D'entreprise Ricard, Paris (2017), and Kunst-Werke Berlin (2017), White Flag Project Library, St. Louis (2016), Futura Centre for Contemporary Art, Prague (2016), and Altman Siegel Gallery, San Francisco (2016), among others.

## About the Exhibition

Grant Mooney's *calcis* is an installation of sculptural forms in a rich array of materials—including bronze, plaster, metal, exhibition prosthetics, machinery—that responds to the gallery's form and its function, specifically the building's limestone bricks, as well as the often invisible apparatuses used in exhibition making. This interaction continues the artist's practice of referencing the site the artwork is presented in and caring for what is often unseen.

Limestone rock is composed primarily of calcium carbonate, a mineral that makes up the shells and skeletons of many marine organisms, including the cuttlebone, the cartilaginous internal shell of the cuttlefish. Cuttlefish bones have many uses and have been employed for centuries as a medicinal treatment. Cuttlebone can withstand high temperatures and is easy to carve, and thus has historically been valued by jewelry makers for creating casting molds. Mooney originally trained in jewelry design and has used cuttlebone and his metalsmith techniques in a number of sculptures, including two abstract assemblages presented on the gallery walls. These works contain both observable and hidden properties of jewelry making, such as the wax pattern pressed into the outside of the ring mold— instead of the inside— creating a record of what might otherwise be unknown.

Throughout his work, Mooney shifts or alters the viewer's relationship to the site and space where the artwork is displayed. For instance, by using the gallery's temporary walls as part of his sculptural artwork, Mooney is emphasizing their significance and importance to the space. As Mooney explains in an interview in *Mousse Magazine*, "A priority for me is to attend to an object's ability to act as a political agent...to have a voice and participate in public life."

# For Reference

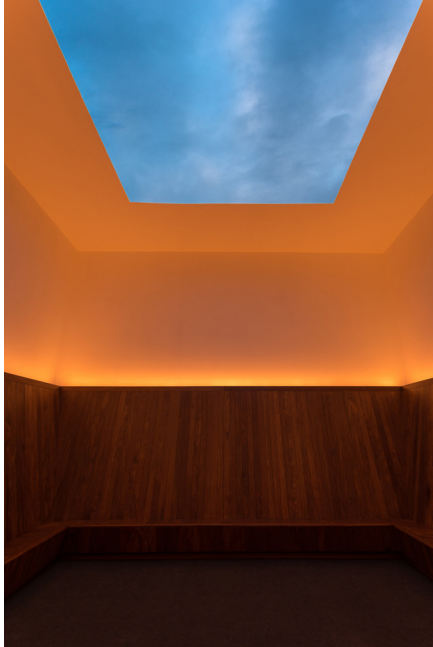


### **Abstract Art”**

Abstract art is art that does not attempt to represent an accurate depiction of a visual reality but instead uses shapes, colors, forms and gestural marks to achieve its effect.

Example: Simone Leigh, *No Face (Crown Heights)*, 2019

This face, like many of the faces of Simone Leigh's works, is missing its distinctive features—eyes, nose, mouth—and yet it still suggests a Black female subject with its floral wreath and a neck form traditionally associated with African art. By removing the characteristics of a face, Leigh abstracts the idea of one singular person so that the face can be a vessel for exploring many topics related to the history of the Black female body.



### **Art Intervention**

The term art intervention applies to art designed specifically to interact with an existing structure or situation, be it another artwork, the audience, an institution, or in the public domain.

Example: James Turrell, *Meeting*, 1980–86, MoMA PS1

James Turrell's installation *Meeting* invites viewers to encounter an unobstructed view of the sky, in an exploration of light and perception. Originally commissioned in 1976 for the MoMA PS1's inaugural exhibition, Turrell worked on *Meeting* for almost ten years, cutting out the original ceiling of the building and consistently modifying the room until, as Turrell has stated, the viewer meets “the space of the sky.”



## Assemblages

Assemblage is art that is made by assembling disparate elements—often everyday objects—scavenged by the artist or bought specially.

Example: Betye Saar, *Weight of Persistent Racism (Patented)*, 2014

Betye Saar's medium of assemblage allows her to make layered works with both personal and political undertones of the African American experience. She would acquire items used in her artwork during international travels or in American flea markets where Saar would collect anti-Black memorabilia (e.g. mammy jars and lawn jockeys). By combining and arranging two antique scales, a clock and black crow in *Weight of Persistent Racism (Patented)*, Saar is referencing both the Jim Crow segregation laws and the weight of the seemingly endless violence against Black people.



## Installation Art

The term installation art is used to describe large-scale, mixed-media constructions, often designed for a specific place or for a temporary period of time.

Example: William Pope L, *Whitney Version*, 2017

For the Whitney Biennale in 2017, Pope L created an installation that was composed of a large pink and green cube that visitors could enter. On both the inside and outside of the cube, the artist affixed a grid of floor-to-ceiling bologna slices, each one pinned with a photo of a person that will diminish in size as the meat cures overtop of it during the course of the exhibition. For Pope L, smell is sculptural, so he includes the audience as part of the installation as their senses take in the decomposing meat.

Art terms definitions from the Tate's Art Terms Glossary: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms>. We encourage you to visit to learn more about art words, phrases, and terms.





## Medium

Medium can refer to both to the type of art (e.g. painting, sculpture, printmaking), as well as the materials an artwork is made from. For example, a sculpture in the medium of bronze.

Example: Louise Bourgeois, *Hanging Janus with jacket*, 1968, bronze.



## Site Specific

The term site-specific refers to a work of art designed specifically for a particular location and that has an interrelationship with the location.

Example: Michael Heizer, *North, East, South, West*, 1967/2002

*North, East, South, West*, is a sculpture that was originally created in the Sierra Nevada mountains in 1967 and then reconstructed when Dia Beacon commissioned Heizer to produce it as a permanent installation. Four geometric shapes of extraordinary size (a cube, cone, wedge and conical section) are sunk twenty feet below the ground, evoking an intense physical relationship between the viewer and the volume of the void. As an artist that generally exhibits outside of traditional museum or gallery spaces, Dia (an expansive former Nabisco factory) was the ideal site for Heizer to realize the work.

# Materials and Process

■ Materials used by the artist in *calcis* include a range of metals, construction materials, and hardware.

■ Limewash paint, which is derived from natural limestone, was specifically chosen to paint the temporary gallery walls, connecting them to the limestone blocks of the gallery.

■ Through processes like electroplating that Mooney learned in jewelry school, the artist transforms precious metals and industrial materials, like silver and steel, into abstract objects.

■ Electroplating consists of coating a metal with a thin layer of another metal by electrolysis, mostly to prevent corrosion of metal or for decorative purposes. Mooney is attracted to the process because it is also a connection to industry, energy, and systems of power.

■ The works that are installed on the floor are to encourage other senses in viewing artwork (e.g. crouching on the ground, walking around the work) rather than the traditional viewing position of standing upright.

■ Works also contain non-traditional sculptural materials such as motor mixers, electrical cords that have been left unplugged, and a cast bronze that retains some of its plaster shell from the process of casting. Mooney is interested in resting objects at different points in their process than when we would typically consider it to be a “finished” work.

■ In the process of making the artworks, Mooney considered all elements of the gallery building— the walls, windows, the floor, the volume of space— and how to connect them both to the artworks and the bodies that move through the gallery.

# Examples of Previous Works by the Artist



Grant Mooney, *Housing (c.) ii*, 2022. Steel, electroplated steel, silver, brass, neodymium, copper coated polyethylene, paint, polymer resin, and iron oxide. 14 × 7 × 3½ inches.



Grant Mooney, *En I*, 2018. Engraving block, polyurethane, cast mistletoe, silver, gold 7 × 4 1/2 × 4¼ inches.

# Discussion Questions

**1.** Mooney wants the viewer to experience his floor work in non-traditional ways, to reorient their experience of art outside of vertical viewing. In moving your body around and up and down the works—crouching on the floor for example—and in not only using your eyes, what do you notice about the way you experience the work? And how many unusual ways can you spot sculptures taking up space in the exhibition?

**2.** Choose one work in the exhibition. Consider the shape—does it feel large and imposing, or small and demure? Use your body to mimic its shape. What sound do you think it would make if it could make one?

**3.** Mooney often uses found materials to make his work. List other materials or objects that you could use to make a sculpture inspired by Mooney's style.

**4.** Mooney's materials often have generative qualities that shift with environmental factors, such as an oxidation of the metal, which changes the color of the metal as it interacts with oxygen. Why do you think the artist intends for the work to change over time? If you close your eyes and were to picture a different color to the work, what would it look like?

# Art Activities in the Gallery or at Home

**1.** Make your own assemblage artwork (supplies needed include everyday materials—e.g. kleenex box, toilet rolls, leaves, rocks, yarn, and adhesive). As we see with Mooney's exhibition, artists can use almost any material to create a work of art. When Mooney is deciding which material to use, he considers how that particular material and form will impact one another in their assemblage. Using an assortment of everyday material, make a small sculpture. Consider how each material may express an idea alone and then perhaps a different idea when mixed together with other materials.

**2.** Write a few sentences inspired by what you saw—or didn't see—in the exhibition (can be done in pairs or alone). Mooney's work may appear 'unfinished' or unrealized in a traditional sense. For instance, why are the motors in the floor works not plugged in? How might you view the work differently if they were plugged in? Now write out a paragraph on a recent experience (e.g. what you did on the weekend, a performance you went to). Read it aloud. Then, with each sentence, remove 2–3 random words. Read it aloud again. Does it change the way you feel about or remember your experience?

*Please note that the gallery does not have supplies on-hand.*

# Supplementary Readings and Related Events

## Interviews

Maddie Klett, *BOMB*, November 2021

Erin O'Toole, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, March 2910

## Reviews

Catherine Taft, *Artforum*, May 2015

Alex Bennet, *Flash Art*, Spring 2023

Ashlyn Mooney, *The Brooklyn Rail*, Dec 22–Jan 23

Ava Morton, *48hills*, August 2023

Carlo Prada, *Conceptual Fine Arts*, September 2019

## Artist Books

K.R.M. Mooney, *Carrier*, 2019

## Opening Reception

Tuesday, September 17, 2024, 4:30pm–6pm

Ezra and Cecile Zilkha Gallery

## Artist Talk with Grant Mooney and Alan Ruiz

Moderated by Benjamin Chaffee

Tuesday, November 12, 2024, 4:30pm

Ezra and Cecile Zilkha South Gallery, Reading Room



[www.wesleyan.edu/cfa](http://www.wesleyan.edu/cfa)

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