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Joan Semmel's

FEARLESS PEERLESS
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MUSEUMS
REMIX THE
CLASSICS

—
Crash
Course:
INDIGENOUS ART

—
& REMEMBERING
POPE.L

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COVER ARTIST: JOAN SEMMEL

American



READY- MADE

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©Tom Friedman/Courtesy Lehmann Maupin, New York, and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London

Tom Friedman: *Kid*, 2023.

As the planet fills with trash,
artists reconsider the ethics
of making work from scratch.

**by Emily Watlington
& Andy Battaglia**

When environmentalists launched the slogan “reduce, reuse, recycle,” they listed the verbs in order of priority: recycling was always meant as a last resort. But throwing packaging in a blue bin sure is more convenient than a major lifestyle change. And so, in the past few decades, our planet has been inundated with plastic that is sure to outlive us all. Now, we are starting to wonder where it will all go.

Around the world, artists—known for their resourcefulness and finding new meanings for myriad materials—are trying out new approaches. Whether adopting zero-waste studio practices or repurposing what others might call refuse, they’re modeling creative ways to help us wade through the unfathomable quantity of trash overburdening our planet. Too often, we send our packaging away, never to be seen again. By showing it back to us in galleries, these artists aren’t letting us off the hook.

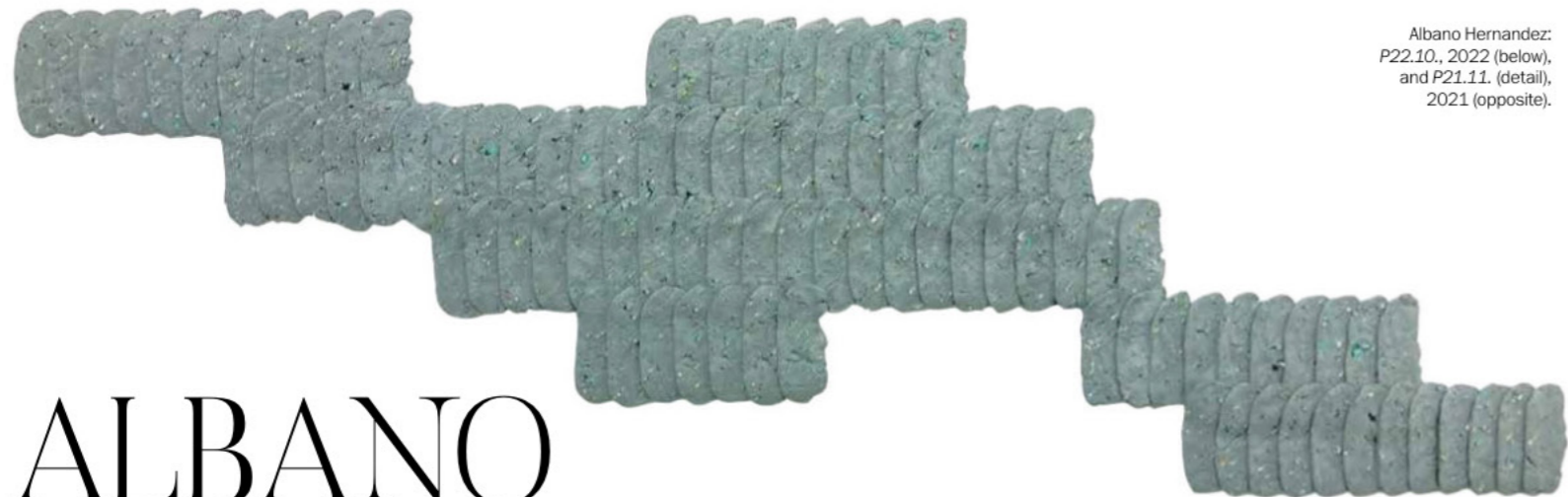


Tom Friedman: *Being*, 2021.

Tom Friedman

I collect a lot of stuff everywhere. My wife accuses me of being a hoarder, but I always say, “There’s going to be someplace that this can go...” When we go to the dump every Sunday, there’s a “take it or leave it” recycling place. I scavenge in that and always find new things. There are a lot of kids toys and other things to take. I’ve got boxes and boxes labeled “things” and then “miscellaneous things.” I’ve been collecting things for 30 years, like old phone cords ... casting old spiral phone cords can be kind of difficult. I still have my old Walkman CD player. I just don’t throw things away. I think about objects having a history – and representing a sort of culmination of a history that, if you want to be absurd about it, could be charted back to the Big Bang. They have a sort of cultural meaning that can be very specific and very diverse, which is a point of departure I like.

For *Kid* [on the previous page], I used a lot of found objects to create the surface. I made a model and ultimately the piece was cast in stainless steel. On the arm is a plastic conduit used for drainage, a muffin tin, a Nerf football, donut shapes that kids put on cones, a sippy cup, oven roaster tins, some dolls – a wide variety of things. There’s an ecological element to it, but an individual can only do so much. There are also elements of fantasy and cataloging in it, which I like. Creating an avalanche of associations when you put a bunch of things together is interesting to me.



Albano Hernandez: *P22.10.*, 2022 (below), and *P21.11.* (detail), 2021 (opposite).

ALBANO HERNANDEZ

These works were made with a process I started three years ago, at the end of my first term at the Royal College of Art. I’d been working on other kinds of paintings with the material remainders of images in my workshop, but I wanted to create paintings based on the idea of a brushstroke. I got the idea for how to do this in the supermarket when I saw some chorizo.

First, I take air dry clay, mix it with PVA [primer], and add color with acrylic. I’m

taking waste from the workshop – from packages and whatever else comes to the studio – and putting it into the clay. That makes a material that I can then roll up and slice with a food-slicing machine. The materials appear in the slices of paint.

It’s a domestic slicer that I bought, and it really works. My studio is like a kitchen, with mixers, the slicer, and a shredding machine strong enough to shred plastics. Conceptually, it is important to me to create

a circular economy that doesn’t generate waste in the studio. Now I’m also using other materials from my everyday life. The paintings in the end are like a diary, where I can find waste and materials that came from my everyday. I’m looking at it from an ecological point of view, and I like purity and impurity in the paintings. I’m trying to do serious work in a playful way.

Friedman: ©Tom Friedman/Courtesy Lehmann Maupin, New York, and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London; Hernandez: Courtesy the artist (2)

