

Sikkema Jenkins & Co. is pleased to present *Scraps and Legal Tender*, a solo exhibition of two photo-based series by Vik Muniz. In *Scraps and Legal Tender*, Muniz continues to utilize unorthodox materials to subvert notions of image production, value, and the permeable distinctions between an art object and the idea of it. The exhibition will be on view March 22 through April 27, 2024, with an opening reception on Friday, March 22, from 6-8 PM.

Vik Muniz's practice is guided by an interest in reframing and renaming materiality. Wielding an innovative variety of source material, including torn fragments of magazines and photos, food, wire, trash, and thread, Muniz meticulously reconstructs images across a wide range of subject matter: iconic works of art, landscapes, portraits, family pictures, and nature photography. These layers of physical reconstitution and translated mediums become embedded in the final composition, provoking for each viewer a reflexive experience of "when" and "how" an image takes form.

The first iteration of Muniz's money-based photo works utilized shredded banknotes from the National Mint of Brazil to reproduce images of native Brazilian animals and nineteenth century landscapes. Both the value of fiat currency, and the signification assigned to the national archetypes that commonly appear printed on a country's banknotes, are elastic concepts that evolve or shift with economic or socio-political trends. After obtaining a supply of shredded dollars from the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, Muniz recalled the 2015 initiative to replace Andrew Jackson on the twenty-dollar bill with Harriet Tubman and began thinking how *Legal Tender* could engage constructs of material and representational value as they manifest within American culture.

Following from Tubman's portrait, the American *Legal Tender* works reproduce in currency a panorama of this country's revolutionary figures, influential leaders, national symbols, and pivotal historical events; these include Frederick Douglass, Oglala Lakota Chief Wašičuŋ Tħašúŋke (American Horse), Amelia Earhart, the bald eagle, American bison, and the aftermath of the 1921 race massacre that destroyed the Black neighborhood of Greenwood in Tulsa. Through these works, Muniz seeks to engage viewers in questions of collective myth-making and visual economies, and what inspires trust or pride in the histories we choose to commemorate on legal tender.

In his ongoing *Scraps* series, Muniz uses reclaimed elements from his studio to reproduce a collection of personal photographs and culturally significant imagery. Ranging from the microscopic to the cosmic, the subjects in this incarnation of *Scraps* are presented in a candid array of three-dimensional photo-based compositions and flat reproductions. These varied dimensionalities play with physical and conceptual layers of visual memory and disrupt conventional readings of pictorial space and surface. By foregrounding the process through which abstracted fragments coalesce into discernible representation, Muniz opens a space for each viewer to locate their own understanding of the works in *Scraps and Legal Tender*, shaped by individuated conceptions of medium, value, and image-making.

Vik Muniz (b. 1961, São Paulo) lives and works in New York, NY and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. His work was most recently on view in *Flora Industrialis* at Museo Universidad de Navarra, Spain (2023-24) and the group exhibition *Reverso* at Museo del Prado, Madrid (2023-24). Other notable solo exhibitions have been presented at the Figge Art Museum, Davenport, IA (2020); the Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, VA (2018); Belvedere Museum, Vienna, Austria (2018); Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Monterrey, Mexico (2017); the High Museum, Atlanta, GA (2016-17); and Maritshuis, The Hague, the Netherlands (2016). His work is included in the collections of major global institutions, including the Art Institute of Chicago, IL; The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY; Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo, Brazil; Museum of Modern Art, NY; and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, United Kingdom.

Muniz is involved in social projects that use art-making as a force for change. In 2010 his work with a group of *catadores*—pickers of recyclable materials—was the subject of the Academy Award-nominated documentary film *Waste Land*. In recognition of his contributions to education and social development including his work with the *catadores*, he was named a UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador in 2011. In 2017, he founded Escola Vidigal, offering preschool and after-school programs in art, design, and technology to children 4 to 8 years old at the favela Vidigal in Rio de Janeiro.

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