

MIT List Visual Arts Center

No Wrong Holes: Thirty Years of Nayland Blake

October 16, 2020 - February 14, 2021

Exhibition Installation Views



2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_1.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_1.jpg

Installation view of *No Wrong Holes: Thirty Years of Nayland Blake*, MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, October 16, 2020–February 14, 2021

Photo: Charles Mayer



2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_2.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_2.jpg

Installation view of *No Wrong Holes: Thirty Years of Nayland Blake*, MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, October 16, 2020–February 14, 2021

Photo: Charles Mayer





2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_3.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_3.jpg

Installation view of *No Wrong Holes: Thirty Years of Nayland Blake*, MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, October 16, 2020–February 14, 2021Photo: Charles Mayer





2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_4.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_4.jpg

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Photo: Charles Mayer



2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_5.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_5.jpg

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Photo: Charles Mayer



2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_6.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_6.jpg

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Photo: Charles Mayer



2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_7.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_7.jpg

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Photo: Charles Mayer



2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_8.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_8.jpg

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Photo: Charles Mayer





2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_9.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_9.jpg

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2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_10.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_10.jpg

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2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_12.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_12.jpg

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2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_13.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_13.jpg

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2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_14.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_14.jpg

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Photo: Charles Mayer



2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_15.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_15.jpg

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Photo: Charles Mayer





2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_16.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_16.jpg

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Photo: Charles Meyer



2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_17.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_17.jpg

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2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_18.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_18.jpg

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2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_19.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_19.jpg

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Photo: Charles Mayer



2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_20.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_20.jpg

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2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_21.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_21.jpg

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2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_22.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_22.jpg

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Photo: Charles Mayer



2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_23.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_23.jpg

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Photo: Charles Mayer





2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_24.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_24.jpg

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Photo: Charles Mayer



2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_25.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_25.jpg

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Photo: Charles Mayer



2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_26.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_26.jpg

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Photo: Charles Mayer





2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_27.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_27.jpg

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Photo: Charles Mayer



2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_28.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_28.jpg

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Photo: Charles Mayer





2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_29.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_29.jpg

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Photo: Charles Mayer



2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_30.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_30.jpg

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Photo: Charles Mayer



2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_31.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_31.jpg

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Photo: Charles Mayer



2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_32.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_32.jpg

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Photo: Charles Mayer



2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_33.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_33.jpg

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Photo: Charles Mayer



2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_34.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_34.jpg

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Photo: Charles Mayer



2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_35.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_35.jpg

Installation view of *No Wrong Holes: Thirty Years of Nayland Blake*, MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, October 16, 2020–February 14, 2021

Photo: Charles Mayer



2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_36.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_36.jpg

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Photo: Charles Mayer



2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_37.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_37.jpg

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Photo: Charles Mayer



2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_38.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_38.jpg

Installation view of *No Wrong Holes: Thirty Years of Nayland Blake*, MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, October 16, 2020–February 14, 2021

Photo: Charles Mayer



2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_39.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_39.jpg

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Photo: Charles Mayer



2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_40.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_40.jpg

Feeder 2, 1998

Steel and gingerbread

7 × 10 × 7 ft. (213 × 305 × 213 cm)

Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at

Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, New York;

Gift of Peter Norton. Produced with assistance from Flour Bakery + Cafe, Boston and Cambridge, MA

Installation view of *No Wrong Holes: Thirty Years of Nayland Blake*, MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, October 16, 2020–February 14, 2021

Photo: Charles Maye





2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_41.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_41.jpg

Feeder 2, 1998

Steel and gingerbread

7 × 10 × 7 ft. (213 × 305 × 213 cm)

Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at

Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, New York;

Gift of Peter Norton. Produced with assistance from Flour Bakery + Cafe, Boston and Cambridge, MA

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Photo: Charles Mayer





2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_42.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_42.jpg

Top Bunny, 1994

Plush toy, steel, leather

16 ½ × 12 × 9 in. (41.9 × 30 × 23 cm)

Collection of the artist; courtesy Matthew Marks

Gallery, New York

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Photo: Charles Mayer





2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_43.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_43.jpg

Untitled, 2018

Wood, acrylic paint

20 × 14 ¼ × 10 in. (50.8 × 36.2 × 25.4 cm)

Collection of the artist; courtesy Matthew Marks
Gallery, New York

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Photo: Charles Mayer



2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_44.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_44.jpg

Satanic Ritualized Abuse, 1994

Two stuffed bunnies, wood, leather, rope, plastic
knife, birthday candles, and plastic bell

12 x 12 x 9 ½ in. (31 x 31 x 24 cm)

Collection of Peter and Shannon Loughrey

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Photo: Charles Mayer



2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_45.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_45.jpg

Joe Dallesandro as Augustin (from *The Philosopher's Suite* series), (detail) 1991-94

Painted wood, cloth, and metal

73 × 14 × 12 in. (185 × 36 × 31 cm)

Collection of the artist; courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery, New York

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Photo: Charles Mayer



NO WRONG HOLES: THIRTY YEARS OF NAYLAND BLAKE

No Wrong Holes: Thirty Years of Nayland Blake is the first museum survey of artist, educator, and curator Nayland Blake since 2003 and marks the most comprehensive presentation of the artist's work to date.

For over thirty years, Blake (b. 1960) has been a crucial figure in American art, working between sculpture, drawing, performance, and video. Heavily inspired by feminist and queer liberation movements, and subcultures ranging from punk to kink, their multidisciplinary practice considers the complexities of representation, particularly racial and gender identity. Blake examines the subjects of desire, loss, and power through references to play and fantasy. The artist's sustained meditation on "passing" and duality as a queer, biracial (African American and white) person is grounded in postminimalist and conceptual approaches made personal through an idiosyncratic array of materials, such as leather, medical equipment, tar, stuffed animals, and food. Throughout their career, Blake has foregrounded intimacy, humor, and play as strategies to address challenging times in our collective history when the personal and private have become heavily politicized—an approach as critical and relevant thirty years ago as it is today.

The exhibition begins with works produced while Blake lived on the West Coast, first in the greater Los Angeles area as a graduate student at CalArts in the early 1980s, followed by a decade in San Francisco—years bookended by the advancement of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the 1980s and the "culture wars" of the 1990s. Certain motifs emerged at this time, particularly the desire to reveal the dynamic of interpersonal relationships as a series of transactions with visual references to BDSM and intimate play. In the 1990s, Blake began exploring the use of costumes and toys, particularly puppets and stuffed bunnies, as their surrogate or avatar in a continued exploration of fantasy as a form of embodiment. These works, alongside several full-body costumes, use theatricality and concealment of one's identity to disarm viewers in the interest of approaching difficult topics. Blake's work after 2000 finds the artist closely engaging personal narrative, focusing on race, gender, and sexuality. Blake invokes a number of racial tropes in drawings and sculptures of this period—the recurring motif of rabbits, which have been connected historically to racial and sexual stereotyping; and the cascading metal links of *Chains II* (2000), rendered in heavy charcoal, could refer to consensual bondage or the bondage of slavery. For Blake, mining racist iconography is a way to examine their own racial identity and familial history, bias, and generational trauma, as well as the ways in which identity is both lived and performed.

In recent years, Blake's work has focused on the relationships formed by intentional community making. The artist is active in a number of social groups dedicated to crafting, gaming, and fandoms. Their video *Stab* (2013) documents Blake's visit to an artist friend to mend a damaged sock-monkey puppet with great sentimental value, with casual yet heartfelt discussions about personal relationships, loss, and friendship serving as the backdrop. Blake's recent performance, *Crossing Object (Inside Gnomes)* (2017–18), debuted their "fursome" or "furry" persona, a fantastical, costumed representation of the artist. Half bear, half bison, *Gnomes* is reminiscent of earlier works in which Blake constructs a sense of selfhood through dress-up and blurs distinct categorizations of race and gender, since the visual markers of identity are hidden from view by the costume. This performance, and Blake's practice overall, underscores the artist's ability to navigate between different positions and into troubled terrain. With unorthodox materials and sharp wit, Blake's groundbreaking work articulates the contemporary experience of embodying many histories and identities at once, and reveals the radical potential of vulnerability in a world obsessed with power.

No Wrong Holes: Thirty Years of Nayland Blake is organized by the Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles and is curated by Jemimah James, Curator. The List Center presentation is organized by Selby Nimrod, Assistant Curator, MIT List Visual Arts Center.

No Wrong Holes: Thirty Years of Nayland Blake is made possible thanks to lead support from The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. Generous support is provided by the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs, Beth Rubin DaWoody, Marielise Hessel, Linda Jagger, Matthew Marks Gallery, and Friends of Nayland Blake: Karyn Kohl, Stephen J. Javara and Robert A. Collins, and Marka and Jeffrey Michaels.

Additional support is provided by the ICA LA's Curator's Council, Fieldwork, and 1717 Collective.

Exhibitions at the List Center are made possible with the support of Karen & Gregory Aronson, Fotene & Tom Côté, Audrey & James Foster, Ida German Schoenheimer, Joyce Linda, Cynthia & John Reed, and Sara Ann & Robert Sanders. Additional support for the List Center presentation of *No Wrong Holes: Thirty Years of Nayland Blake* was generously provided by Matthew Marks Gallery.

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2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_46.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_46.jpg

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Photo: Charles Mayer





2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_47.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_47.jpg

Crossing Object (Inside Gnomen), 2017

Mixed media

Approx. 72 × 34 in. (182.9 × 13.4 cm)

Collection of the artist; courtesy Matthew Marks

Gallery, New York

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Photo: Charles Mayer





2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_48.tiff

2020_Nayland Blake_No Wrong Holes_install_48.jpg

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Photo: Charles Mayer

