

EARTHSHAKER
ANA MENDIETA, DEREK JARMAN & P. STAFF
DEL VAZ PROJECTS
TUESDAY 02.18 – FRIDAY, 04.18.25



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Del Vaz Projects is pleased to present *Earthshaker*, an exhibition, publication, and public program series featuring artwork by Ana Mendieta (1948–1985), Derek Jarman (1942–1994), and P. Staff (b. 1987). While informed by divergent generations, geographies, and practices, Mendieta, Jarman, and Staff find common ground in their subversive existence—creating artwork that sows dissident bodies into natural and chemical environments as an act of defiance against definition, control, or expulsion by authoritarian systems. Through camouflage, collage, poetry, and chromatic manipulation—posed as parallel processes to metamorphosis, sublimation, incantation, and transmutation—these artists create mutable forms in which earth and body permeate one another and, in the course of their uncanny transfiguration, propose more deviant and transgressive ecologies. Seeding the corporeal with the alchemical, they conjure and then dissolve those divisions that distinguish, and thus distort, the body as *separate* from the earth—queering language, limb, and land to situate their audience in the irreconcilable.

Ana Mendieta—an artist whose brief, groundbreaking career encapsulated drawing, film, photography, sculpture, site-specific installation, and moving-image media—experimented with diverse materials as a means of investigating and reimagining notions of disembodiment, displacement, and homeland, synthesizing her own experience of political asylum after she was forcibly relocated from Cuba to the United States at the age of twelve. Epitomized in her *Siluetas Series*, Mendieta enmeshed her own physical form and, later, more universal corporeal forms into vast landscapes; in the still-image works on view, made between 1978 and 1980, she photographed silhouettes that are almost imperceptibly camouflaged into the mossy rock beds, muddy riverbanks, and overgrown forests of Iowa—where she lived from her adolescence through her undergraduate and graduate studies at the University of Iowa. In moving-image works like *Untitled: Siluetas Series* (1978), she filmed an open field in which white gunpowder was poured along the outline of a body, ignited and left ablaze until the

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entire form was illuminated. Once the smoke cleared, a blackened, scorched scar was revealed on the ground—an ephemeral imprint of alchemical fusion. While Mendieta's actions and experiments were conveyed through mediums like photography and video, her actual work was, in and of itself, the complete identification with and total subsumption *into* nature.

Derek Jarman, the visionary British filmmaker, writer, painter, gardener, designer, and AIDS-rights activist, was a luminary of London's counterculture in the late 1970s and 80s—protesting against Margaret Thatcher's conservative governance through ecstatic and explicit depictions of queer life. In 1986, when Jarman was diagnosed with HIV, he bought an abandoned fisherman's cottage in Dungeness, Kent, where he lived and cultivated a flourishing garden on the property's desolate terrain, situated near a nuclear power station, until the end of his life. Reckoning with analogous implications of institutional violence against queer bodies and natural landscapes, from 1986–1993, Jarman composed the *Black Paintings*—Tenebrist canvases coated with tar or impasto and collaged with talismans of mortality, love, sex, faith, illness, exile, and nature. His gleaming surfaces recalled alchemist John Dee's obsidian scrying mirrors, instruments for divination and communion with angels that symbolized melanosis—a process of refining black matter to create a philosopher's stone. Incantations drafted from syringes, seeds, coffin nails, bibles, condoms, bullets, compasses, rosaries, stones, wedding rings, and shattered panes of glass inscribed with poetry, each work was a melancholic and mystical reliquary of anticipatory mourning. In his subsequent series, the *Slogan Paintings*, his confrontational, cunning voice returned with rightful vengeance; with palette knives and bare hands, he scrawled subverted double-entendres and catchphrases in order to reclaim rampant homophobic slurs and headlines. *Acid Rain* from 1992 is at once punning and piercing—conflating the release of greenhouse gas into the atmosphere with chiding critiques of Thatcher's reign and those traumatic rashes scarring the flesh of AIDS victims.

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At the intersection of film, installation, and poetry, P. Staff's interdisciplinary practice weaves theoretical phenomena, experimental media, and staged environments, through which they dissect themes ranging from biopolitics to trans-poetics, astrology, dance, and end-of-life care. Their work pulses with a fascination for how bodies—particularly those of people who are queer, trans, or disabled—are interpreted, regulated, and disciplined within violent, surveilled societies. Products of the site-specific installation *On Venus* at the Serpentine Galleries in 2019, *Compensation* and *On Living, Still II*, are composed of steel barrels onto which lactic acid leaked over their perpetually corroding surfaces from pressurized pipes hung throughout the gallery—just as all living species incrementally absorb the planet's toxic environs until both reach the brink of collapse. Splayed and flattened, the barrels transform into scarred etchings, abstracted plates that galvanize Venus's contradictory symbolism and circumstance—suspended between potion and poison, desire and desolation. In contrast to *On Venus*' corrosive process, in *To Live a Good Life VI* (2022), Staff embalms a fluorescent print—a manipulated photograph of an unidentifiable body shrouded in accordance with an unclear ritual—in a resin cast; a fragmented constellation of personal and biological matter is encased in the resin's film, preserving the image alongside the artists' hair, dead insects, ash, and sulfur. Staff's 2023 work, *In Ekstase*, is a five-channel video that rhythmically projects a poem across five holographic fans like a phantasmagoria of light and air. Darting and strobing to strain the eye, these projections inspire discordant, disorienting sensations that—not unlike a drug high—metastasize the poem's descriptions of bodies undergoing a cataclysmic, hysterical euphoria.

What makes Mendieta, Jarman, and Staff suited to such enduring correlation and comparison is their shared capacity to remain porous to their persistently evolving environment. Each absorbs, reflects, and refracts the earth—whether raw and volcanic, deserted and nuclear, or exploited and poisonous—with concern for its physical and psychic implications and its metaphysical and metamorphic potential. Denatured and rena-

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tured through heat, smoke, fire, and acid, they reveal the earth/body as a site of perpetual becoming and self-shattering unknowability. *Earthshaker* is an exhibition and a map, charting new relationships between the (al)chemical body and the (al)chemical world. The map begins with us and leads towards the unknown future. The artists involved do not take these ideas as mere subject matter but lived reality, leveraging different forms of technology, chemical experimentation, and their own queer flesh as sites of regeneration, complexity, and the birth of possibility on a planet poisoned with itself.

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INSTALLATION VIEWS



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INSTALLATION VIEW



INSTALLATION VIEW



ANA MENDIETA



Untitled: Silueta Series, 1979
Color photograph, 10 × 8 in. (25.4 × 20.3 cm)

ANA MENDIETA



Untitled: Silueta Series, c. 1980
Color photograph, 20 × 16 in. (50.8 × 40.6 cm.)

ANA MENDIETA



Untitled: Silueta Series, 1978
Color photograph, 8 × 10 in. (20.3 × 25.4 cm)

ANA MENDIETA



Untitled: Silueta Series, 1980
Color photograph, 8 × 10 in. (20.3 × 25.4 cm)

ANA MENDIETA



Untitled (Silueta Series), 1978

Super-8mm film transferred to high-definition digital media, color, silent, 03 min 14 sec

DEREK JARMAN



The Fifth Quarter of the Globe, 1987

Oil, glass, driftwood, rope, hagstone, nail coffin, wedding band and other mixed media on canvas
12 × 10 in. (30.48 × 25.4 cm)

DEREK JARMAN



Untitled (Gold Bible), 1990

Oil, glass, gold leaf, pocket bible, medical thermometer and condoms on canvas

12 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 10 in. (30.8 × 25.4 cm)

DEREK JARMAN SIDE VIEW



Untitled (Gold Bible), 1990

Oil, glass, gold leaf, pocket bible, medical thermometer and condoms on canvas

12 1/8 x 10 in. (30.8 x 25.4 cm)

DEREK JARMAN



Ich grete thee with songe, 1990

Oil, glass, barley seeds, rose canes, hagstone, thermometer, wedding band and other mixed media on canvas
18 1/8 x 16 in. (46 x 40.64 cm)

DEREK JARMAN



Untitled (Bone, Face and Cross), 1988

Oil, glass, rock, bone, gold leaf and other mixed media on canvas

18 × 10 in. (45.72 × 25.4 cm)

DEREK JARMAN SIDE VIEW



Untitled (Bone, Face and Cross), 1988

Oil, glass, rock, bone, gold leaf and other mixed media on canvas

18 × 10 in. (45.72 × 25.4 cm)

DEREK JARMAN



Black Wedding, 1987

Oil, glass, handfan, wedding band, bullet, nail coffin and other mixed media on canvas
16 × 14 1/8 in (40.6 × 35.9 cm)

DEREK JARMAN

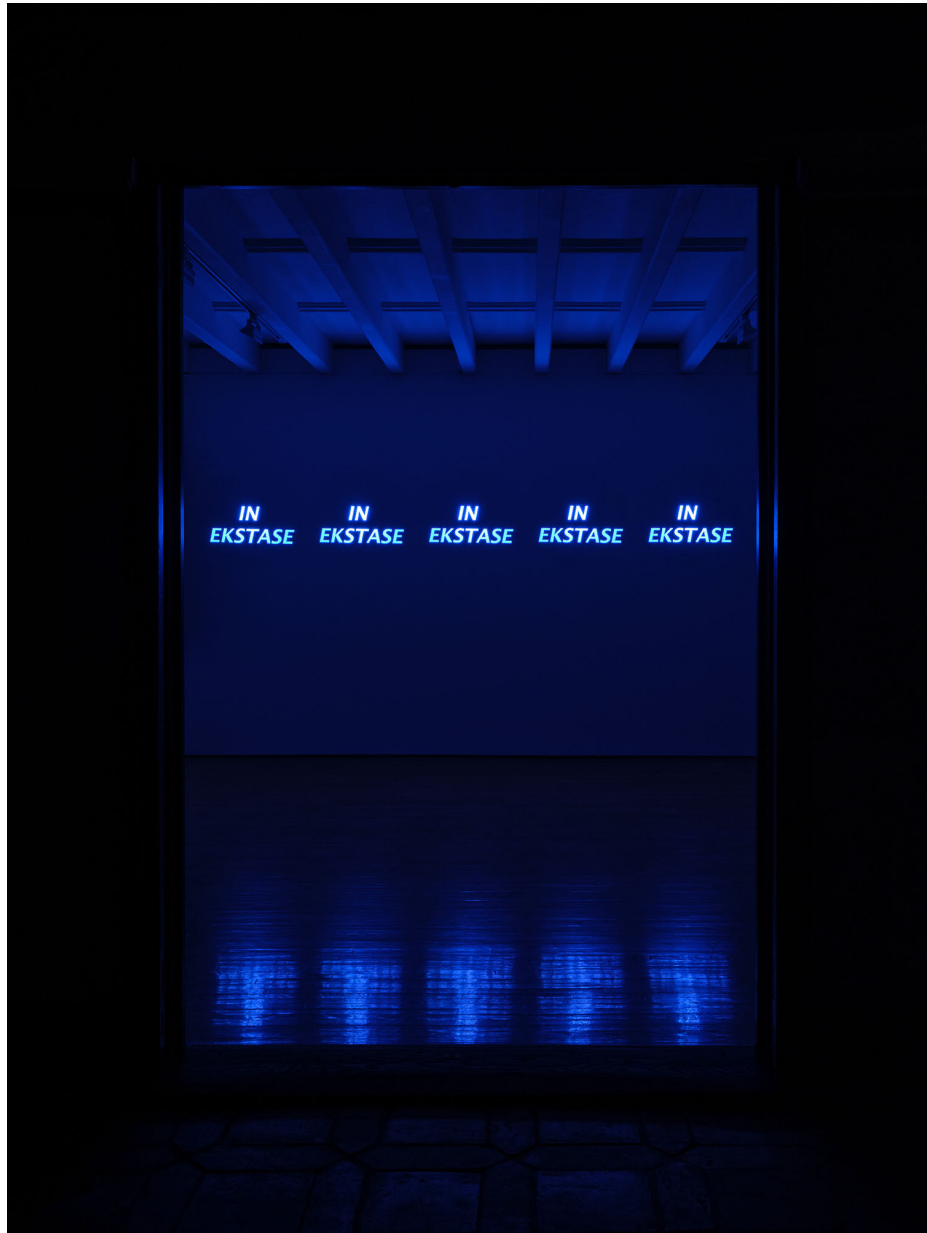


Acid Rain, 1992

Oil on canvas

84 1/8 x 84 1/8 x 1 1/8 in (213.5 x 213.5 x 3 cm)

P. STAFF

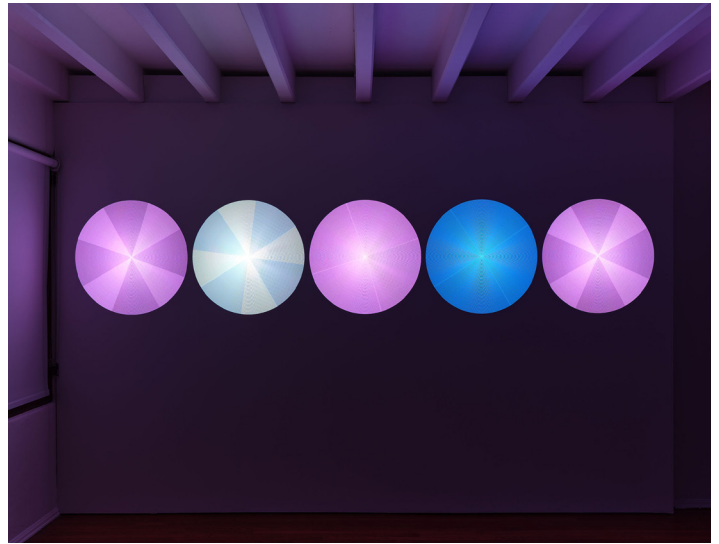
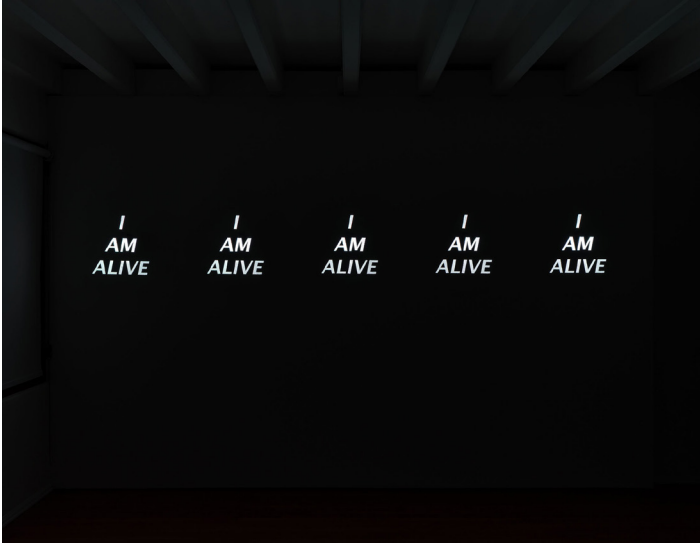


IN EKSTASE, 2023

Holographic fans, video, 5 fans, each 25.6 in (65 cm)

Video, color, no sound, approx. 5 min, looped

P. STAFF



INEKSTASE, 2023
Holographic fans, video, 5 fans, each 25.6 in (65 cm)
Video, color, no sound, approx. 5 min, looped

P. STAFF



Compensation, 2022
Acid treated galvanized steel barrel, aluminum
Approx. 23½ x 23½ x 1½ in (60 x 60 x 4 cm)

P. STAFF



On Living, Still II, 2022

Acid treated galvanized steel barrel, automotive lacquer,
temporary tattoo, acid etched aluminum frame

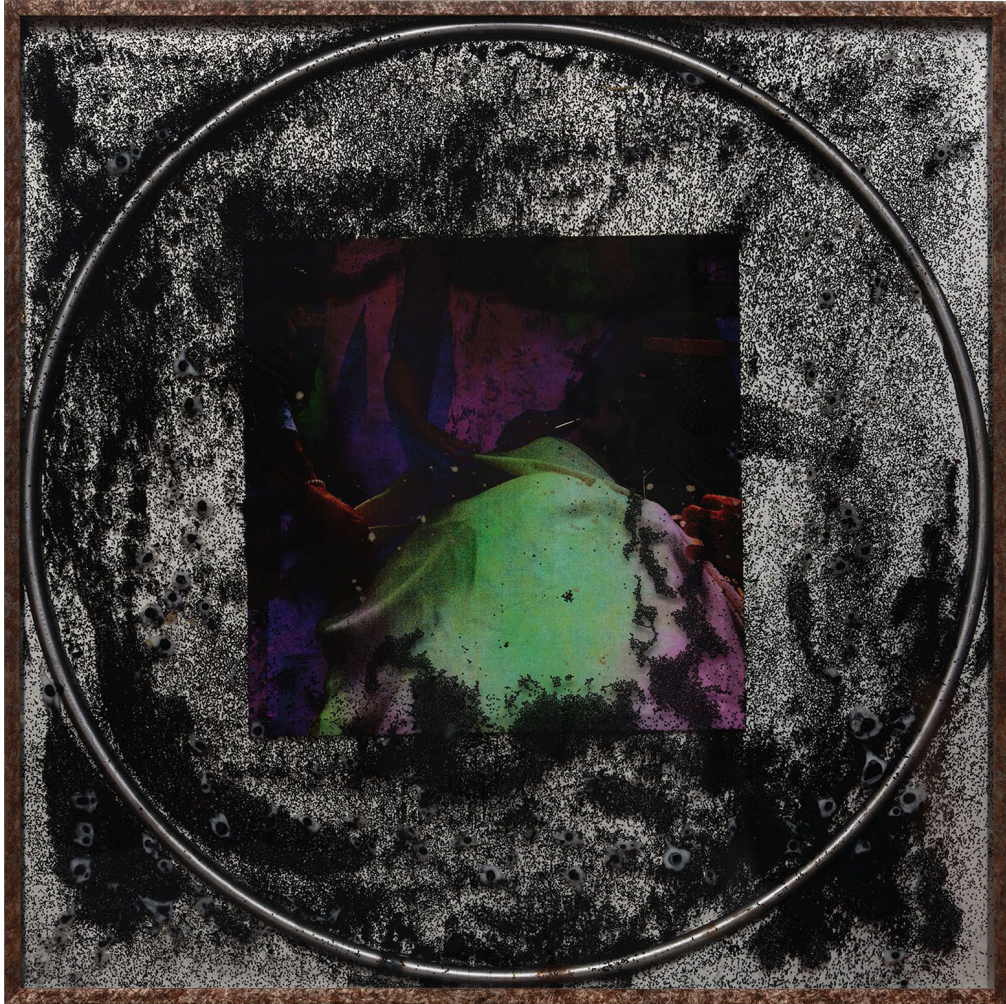
34¼ x 71½ x 1½ in (87 x 182 x 4 cm)

P. STAFF



On Living, Still II (detail), 2022
Acid treated galvanized steel barrel, automotive lacquer,
temporary tattoo, acid etched aluminum frame
34¼ x 71½ x 1½ in (87 x 182 x 4 cm)

P. STAFF



To Live A Good Life VI, 2022

Epoxy resin, inkjet print, steel, glitter, ink, hair,
sweetgrass, gold leaf, acid etched aluminum frame

24 ¼ × 24 ¼ × 1 ½ in. (62 × 62 × 4 cm)

P. STAFF



To Live A Good Life V, 2022

Epoxy resin, inkjet print, steel, glitter, ink,
white ash, acid etched aluminum frame

24 ¼ × 24 ¼ × 1 ½ in. (62 × 62 × 4 cm)

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Del Vaz Projects is a non-profit art space based in Los Angeles, California—founded in a home-turned-artists’ space in 2014 and accredited as a 501(c)(3) in 2021. Our team collaborates with artists to manifest projects in our space and throughout our city’s cultural and historical institutions—with each endeavor, infusing diverse environments with a sense of collective intimacy, intellectual inquiry, and expressive invention. An incubator for artists, archives, and estates, our space is driven by four essential initiatives: a curatorial platform that produces on-site and off-site exhibitions; a research collective that pairs cutting-edge scholarship with experimental authorship; an independent press that designs, publishes, and distributes artist books and exhibition catalogs; and an artist production fund that secures fiscal and material resources for underfunded artists through our extended community of collaborators.

DEL VAZ PROJECTS
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