

*"I ended up with a stack; a pile of tickets, including the one they were talking about on the news," he said. "I stood there for a minute thinking, 'Do I see what I think I see?' I had to stick my head out of the window and breathe in some fresh air. I was in serious doubt. I really had to convince myself this was real."*

*"For me it's the unknown and the what ifs that have been terribly haunting. I've been feeling that something was wrong for weeks, but I convinced myself 'you're just being paranoid!' We'd come back from wherever we were and the front door would be unlocked and it didn't make sense until we heard that sound..."*

*"Bespoke plushies like that are very expensive and personal to the commissioner," he explained. "Usually the only time you see something like that thrifting is when someone has passed away and the folks donate them without knowing how much they are worth."*

*"I never would have suspected he'd be capable of this. He's a peaceful guy. We'd meet in the hallway or meet in the vestibule checking our mailbox. He was always friendly. On the outside of the door there's a Hello Kitty sign... He did definitely come across as a leader and a helper and exactly what went wrong after that remains mysterious to me..."*

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The cigarette's ember withers as it's snuffed out into an ashtray. As the spare lit ash slowly extinguishes when pressed to the tray's base, bacteria spread across the butt begin to reproduce and mingle with the neighboring stumps and roaches littered through the receptacle.

Life neither begins at conception, nor ends at death. I like to think that I throw away my trash at the right moment, but you can never be too sure. Consumer disposal is never its end, who knows what fate awaits it as it's packed in with other garbage in a landfill, or on a barge to float away into the sea, or incinerated into gas, casting toxins into the atmosphere.

I once accidentally threw away a camera with an exposed roll of film inside. Somewhere in a landfill, the latent images still wait on deck and will fester in place for decades to come.

I hope you throw things out at their right time. Maybe it's the exact right time for me to find them. It is impossible to pack in, pack out...we all leave a trace. The natural world leaves its trace too. Your trace becomes my history. No, not treasure. More of a flavor of the week style infatuation. I will watch it wither on my table, become dry, become brittle, break off into new pieces, perhaps giving way to new form.

But in the end it will see the same fate too. To decompose in the landfill, or the backyard, or to slowly droop or shrivel in a box or on the table's surface.

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*In The Hopper* centers around a slide projection of 50 macro photographs taken between 2014 and 2022. A static projection of a foundational 2012 photo is cast on the opposing side of the same wall. Upstairs, a stage (i.e.) persists as an unassuming relic. Unsure of its utility after the production has ended, after the slide has advanced, it glimmers as a feebly constructed vessel of forgotten (?) potential.

— Yair Oelbaum

Yair Oelbaum (b. 1988, New York) lives in Milan, NY, where he works as a clinical social worker. He published his first collection of photographs, *Asleep in Dirt* (Buchhandlung Walther und Franz König) in 2024, which compiled macro photographs shot between 2014 and 2022. His first solo exhibition, *Teiku*, opened in January 2025 at Galerie Buchholz in New York. His practice currently focuses on abstract-leaning photographic compositions of scavenged trash, revered objects, constructed components, and items from the natural world. This body of work developed following his father's decision to give him an outdated macro Polaroid camera instead of disposing of it.

Aléa is an exhibition program initiated by Pierre Allain and Antoine Dochniak in 2025, housed in Artagon Pantin, a former school repurposed into artist studios in Pantin. Conceived in dialogue with the building's history and the atmospheric conditions that may affect it, the program explores a sensitive reflection on the affective and emotional relationships between the artworks and their environment. Over the course of the year, international artists are invited to develop site-responsive proposals across varied timeframes. Each project will unfold in different parts of the building: a rooftop terrace, a meeting room, a screening room, and the hallways.