

Michael Rakowitz

25.02 —
14.08.22

↳ Curated by
Fanny Gonella

↳ Press visit
Wednesday 23.02.22,
10h30

The artist will be
attending.

49 Nord 6 Est – Frac
Lorraine

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www.fraclorraine.org

Reappearances



Michael Rakowitz, *The invisible enemy should not exist* (Room G, Northwest Palace of Nimrud), 2019. Courtesy Galerie Barbara Wien, Berlin and Malmö Konsthall

As Europe expanded beyond its frontiers, images and forms from elsewhere entered its museums. In time, they became reference points in this new context. What role do they play in such institutions today? And what do they reveal about Western history?

With Michael Rakowitz's first solo exhibition in France, 49 Nord 6 Est - Frac Lorraine continues to engage with such questions. Reflecting on the history of extraction and colonization that have shaped the history of museums, the Iraqi-American artist interrogates the dynamics of provenance and power. Referring to his works as ghosts that have come to haunt Western museums, he reminds us that these institutions assign value to the objects they preserve — and he shows that Iraqi objects are often treated with more care than actual Iraqis. In Metz, he presents works from the series *The invisible Enemy should not exist* (2007 - ongoing).

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Michael Rakowitz does not consider objects to be static entities. His work shows us that their fates are shaped by political decisions and that their preservation and restoration can be likened to an act of restorative justice. For nearly 15 years, Michael Rakowitz has labored to make objects reappear that were looted from the Iraqi Museum in Baghdad during the US-led invasion of the country in April 2003. He has expanded this work further to include items destroyed by the Islamic State at the Assyrian sites of Ninua (Nineveh) and Kalhu (Nimrud) in 2015. Drawing on data provided by Interpol, the Iraq State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, the National Museum of Iraq, the Nahrein Network, the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago, and UCLA's Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative, the artist rematerializes a destroyed heritage by reconstructing objects in his Chicago studio with materials drawn from contemporary Arabic culture in the United States including food packaging, newspapers, etc.



Michael Rakowitz, *The invisible enemy should not exist (détail)*, 2020. Courtesy Galerie Barbara Wien, Berlin

Born into a Jewish-Iraqi family, the American artist explores the transformations brought about by exile and finds ways to resuscitate images, forms, or architecture(s) that have disappeared, or are about to be erased. His work links the economic realities and cultural issues currently affecting Iraq in poetic and pragmatic ways. At 49 North 6 East, he explores the physical reality of his cultural heritage in order to question the relationship between provenance and hegemony, while charting new perspectives for potential decolonization. He has recently initiated a successful process of restitution between the United States and Iraq, as well as an overview regarding the situation of Iraqi objects held in the United Kingdom. Documents introducing these processes are also presented in the exhibition.

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Michael Rakowitz is well aware that no reparation can ever make up for the looting and destruction that occurred around the globe – perpetrated by the West - from the 19th century onwards. With *The invisible enemy should not exist*, he has embarked on a project that he will develop throughout the rest of his artistic career; more than 8000 artefacts will have to be reconstructed to counterbalance the losses suffered in Baghdad. The impossibility of identical reconstruction — as well as the imperfections inherent in this process — allows for

experimentation; it also opens up possibilities to reconfigure the power dynamics between the intertwined logics of capitalism and heritage.

Who has access to history? And to what history?

Michael Rakowitz's exhibition contributes to an ongoing investigation on the itinerancy and contingency of artworks; in this context, Rakowitz's practice eloquently delineates the transformative potential of diasporic realities. It fulfils an urgent need to invest the discipline of art history with an ethical rethinking between the links between past and present and to ask: who has access to history? And to what history? It also points towards new ways in which links between cultures and contexts can be formed.



Michael Rakowitz, *The invisible enemy should not exist* (détail), 2018. Courtesy Galerie Barbara Wien, Berlin

Objects and reliefs built with the assistance of Yani Aviles, Christian Campos, Maryam Faridani, J. Michael Ford, Alyx Harch, Erin Hayden, Elnaz Javanidizaji, Frances Lee, Wen Liu, Bishal Manandhar, Talal Al Najjar, Annie Raccuglia, Nick Raffel, Jeff Robinson, Deniz Turkoglu and Zespo

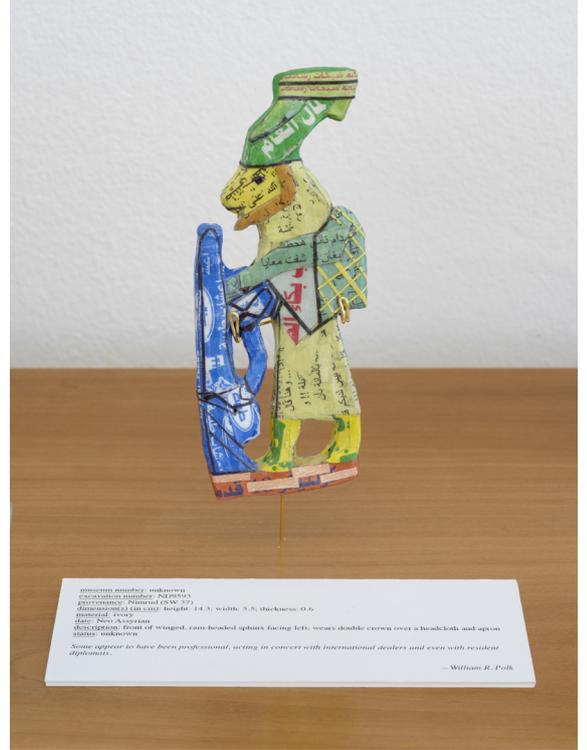
Michael Rakowitz has had numerous solo exhibitions, including at the Whitechapel Gallery in London and Castello di Rivoli, Turin (2019), the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (2017) and MoMA, New York (2015). In 2018 he installed a Lamassu in Trafalgar Square, London as part of the Fourth Plinth public commission project. He has also participated in numerous group exhibitions including the Yokohama Triennial (2014) and the 14th Istanbul Biennial (2015), at the Institute of Islamic Cultures, Paris (2018), Bonniers Konsthall, Stockholm (2017), the V&A Museum in London (2016). He is a member of the Gulf Labor Artist Coalition.

Born in 1973 in New York, he lives and works in Chicago.

→ Available pictures on request



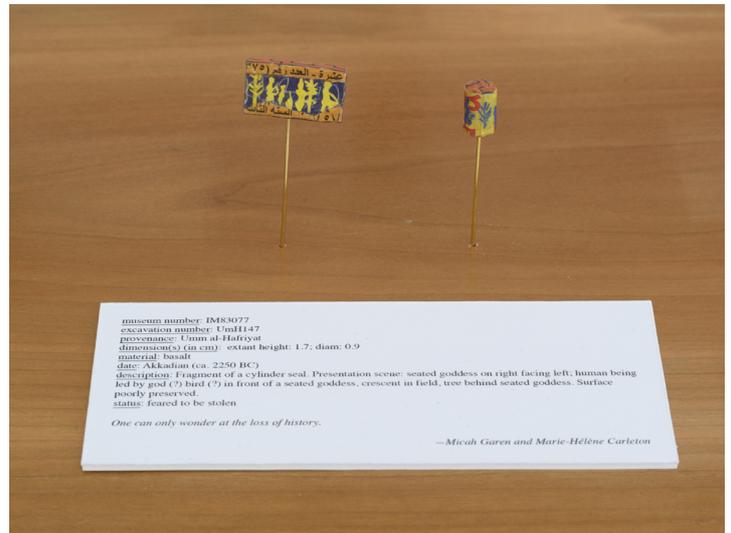
1 Michael Rakowitz



3 Michael Rakowitz



2 Michael Rakowitz



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→ Available pictures on request



5 Michael Rakowitz



5 Michael Rakowitz



6 Michael Rakowitz

Coming up at Frac Lorraine

→ Betye Saar *Serious Moonlight*

01.07 - 02.10.22

In cooperation with the Institute of Contemporary Art,
Miami and Kunstmuseum of Lucerne

→ Exhibition with immaterial works from the
Collection

21.10.22 – 12.02.23

fracloorraine.org

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d'art contemporain
de Lorraine

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Horaires
Gratuit

Ma. – Ve. : 14h – 18h
Sa. – Di. : 11h – 19h

Le Frac est soutenu par la Ré-
gion Grand Est et la Direction
Régionale des Affaires Cultur-
elles Grand Est

Press contact

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