

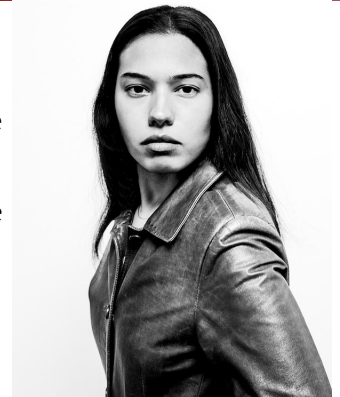
Then and Now: The Loop of Belongings

By Ricki Morse



Rose Salane (pronounced sayLAHN) is one of the youngest artists to mount a show at the Whitney, and certainly the most multi-faceted. A cognitive artist, curator, contemporary archeologist, she is also meticulous in her examination and display of the relics of our society, ultimately capturing the individual human experience within the anonymity of the New York world. Her work is haptic, like a pat on the back or a handshake. She reaches through to the individual experience—beautifully achieved in our *Window on the World* cover image, her first gallery-shown work.

Born in Queens in 1992 to a Peruvian mother and Italian-American father, her mother's early hardships living under a dictatorship shaped Salane's political education, enhanced by her time at two of Manhattan's most prestigious tuition-free institutions: La Guardia High School, then Cooper Union, where she graduated with a BFA in 2014. Exposed to



Rose Salane, 2022, photograph by Cruz Valdez

the conceptual art of the '60s and '70s, caught up in the populist, economic-equality movement Occupy Wall Street, she went on to a graduate degree in urban planning at City College of New York. These were anxiety-riddled times in the city, 9/11 and the debacle of war and withdrawal in Afghanistan.



Rose Salane, *McDonald's Bench*, 2018, plastic, wood, metal bench, polymer-based plaster, acrylic paint.

Now in her mid-twenties, Salane began making sculptures, indeterminate shapes formed in plastic bags accompanied by contrived, trivial journalistic stories framed beside them, which feels like a search for form. The *Windows on the World* (our cover) followed as her first of many collaborative works. The expanding memories of 9/11 led to Salane's first solo exhibition at the MIT List Center, again through a collaborator,



Rose Salane, *List Projects: Rose Salane*, 2019, shelving, assorted books, famed articles, floppy discs, memorabilia, MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, MA.

Carol Pazsamant, a librarian associated with the World Trade Center, who had a floppy disk of a now lost collection from the 55th floor displaced to the basement and then to the Port Authority second basement. Working with a curatorial team, they began the process of reimagining a curated version of the lost collection. This project established Salane as a professional curator, meticulous, disciplined, and imaginative.



It is with *Panorama 94* that Salane shares her literally found objects, combining her cataloguing skills, her excavation of meaning from found objects, her exposing of revealed history, her ability to make it personal. In 2017 she began purchasing rings lost on the New York City

Rose Salane, *Panorama 94*, 2019, Art Basel Statements, Basel.

subway system. The rigorous examination to which she exposed the rings emphasizes not monetary worth but human value. A jewelry appraiser and a psychic examined them, a chemistry lab assessed their DNA, leading us to question how we establish value, even of jewelry. The ultimate collection of 94 lost rings, documentation noted, draws close examination. Rings are inherently personal. Her ring installation was also included in the New Museum Triennial “Soft Water Hard Stone” in 2021.

Salane’s Bard College exhibition, *C21OWO*, was inspired by the closure of the downtown department store, Century 21, “luxury for less,” which Salane remembered visiting with her father in the early 2000s. The store’s bankruptcy in 2020, a direct result of the Covid pandemic, follows the underlying “cosmic shifts in Manhattan” theme which emerges in her work. Photographs from the liquidation sale, a disassembled cash register kiosk, an office



Rose Salane, *C21OWO*, 2021, Hessel Museum of Art, Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY.



Rose Salane, *64 Thousand Attempts at Circulation*, 2022, Whitney Museum Biennial.

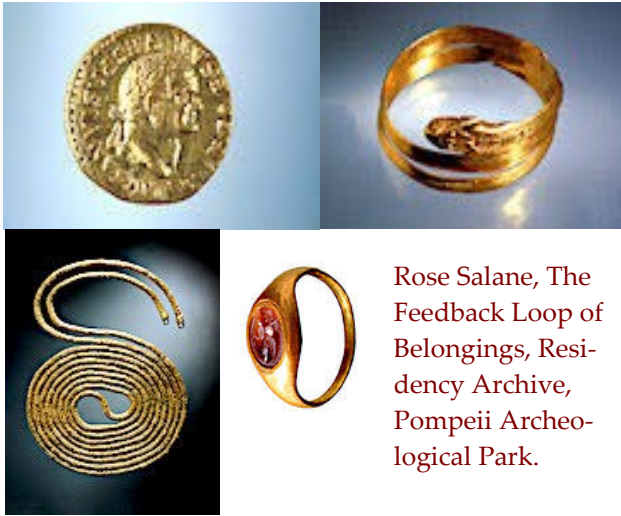
phone. Remembering her teenaged awe at the glamorous clothing, she called her father to share the memory, moving the objects from anonymous to personal. The Whitney Biennial in 2021 included Salane’s most extensive collection to date, 64,000 New York bus slugs, purchased in MTA auctions, used between 2017 and 2019 . She discovered that many were counterfeited, impressions made on guitar picks or some



Rose Salane, *64,00 Attempts at Circulation*, 2022, , artist’s photograph, bus slug coins-5 tables, Whitney Museum.

other small surface, some blank, testifying to the economic needs of the riders and the flaws in the slug vending machines. The urgency and energy of New York’s surging population is embedded in each slug—some tokens created by a bus rider. Applying her curatorial skills, she carefully examined each, documented their designs and divided them into one of five categories: Faith, Place, Chance, Imitation, Blank. The lists includes descriptions of images on both the front and back. As we scan down, the anonymity begins to crystalize into each single individual. In the “Faith” category is a commemorative coin from a Jewish Museum group, “Please God Make Tomorrow Better.”

The Archeological Park of Pompeii recently launched a fellowship program bringing artists to the ancient site/contemporary tourist attraction to take a fresh look at the “then” and “now” of Pompeii. The second fellowship was given to Rose Salane, who entitled her contribution, “The Feedback Loop of Belongings,” published by Pompeii Commitment. She spent four months in 2022 on the site, meeting with local curators and historians. The belongings she collected from the Pompeii archives were ancient jewelry and coins, measured, examined, dated, connecting the moment of the destruction of Pompeii in 79 AD with the present



Rose Salane, *The Feedback Loop of Belongings*, Residency Archive, Pompeii Archeological Park.

tourist destination. In choosing ancient rings, she continues her examination of the presence of the individuals who wore the rings on hands like ours thousands of years ago, the loop of belongings.

I chose to discuss our Rose Salane acquisition after providing an exposure to the depth and breadth of her work. Our *Nesting Tables*, 2016, requires that we adopt some of Salane's close attention to objects. Three 18th century-style tables with leather tops inlaid with gold filigree prop up a plaster cast ice skate which rests on a plaster cast pillow. Draped over the table is a dirty embroidered sheet, perhaps used to clean the skate blade. Lying on the table is a newspa-

per article reporting the warning given to a mother whose daughter wanted to take her ice skates on the plane with her for their holiday. The TSA warned the blade could be used as a weapon. It appears that the skate was left behind. The elegant tables suggest a well-to-do family, the embroidered sheet being used as a rag. Yet the power of the TSA's admonition is obeyed. Salane asks us to question submission, wondering if it becomes inherent in our reactions. Salane uses objects to contain stories and unravel their meaning.

Last year in a *New Yorker* magazine review of Salane's Whitney Bieneal installation, Peter Schjedahl writes fittingly, "The disconcertingly handsome assembly drolly epitomizes this Biennial's predominant detour, for now, from exalting autonomous art to braving the routine chaos of a world where no kind of comfort or conviction can be sure to persist from one day to the next." He really got her, and let us see her more clearly. His approbation heralds Rose Salane's arrival as the most prominent young American artist of our day.



Rose Salane, *Nesting Tables*, 2016, plaster cast, ink on newsprint, glass, SBMA.

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