

Too Good to Waste

Adam Basanta, Ari Bayuaji, Alexa Kumiko Hatanaka, and Kelly Jazvac
Curated by Nicole Burisch

This selection of works was curated in relation to the exhibition in the FOFA Gallery's Main Space, expanding upon its themes of labour, material care, reuse, and sustainability. Artists Adam Basanta, Ari Bayuaji, Alexa Kumiko Hatanaka and Kelly Jazvac all use repurposed materials or scraps, resourcefully transforming these into artworks that find new ways to value what is usually considered waste. Using hands-on processes that require a deep engagement with their specific materials, each piece draws attention to items that might otherwise be overlooked or discarded. These works exist in dialogue with the long history of artists and craftspeople who work with found materials – whether out of necessity or survival, an engagement with the everyday, or a desire to work more sustainably. Each of the works presented here intervenes at a distinct moment into the usual cycle of production-consumption-disposal, rethinking the very idea that anything can be thrown “away.”

Kelly Jazvac's work repurposes vinyl banners, strategically altering commercial imagery and symbols of prosperity to offer poignant critiques of consumer culture. Working with advertisements that depict luxury goods and pop culture icons, Jazvac interrupts their intended messages, while finding a new use for what would otherwise become plastic waste. In *Time Scale*, she combines a torso and mountain range, literally turning the figure on its (absent) head and inverting the original banners' references to superhero powers and untouched natural vistas. Dissolving into flowing strips that spill onto the floor, these malleable images remind us of the material consequences of the media we consume.

Alexa Kumiko Hatanaka recycles scraps from her personal archive of prints and paper pieces, incorporating them into new works. She uses natural dyes, inks, and traditional Japanese paper techniques to centre and preserve land-based knowledge. In *Namazu*, ice blue formations from the arctic, prints from actual fish, and a multicoloured array of paper squares are assembled into a massive paper banner. At the centre is a giant catfish – a figure from Japanese mythology who is believed to live underground and cause earthquakes – held and supported by representations of places and moments that are significant to the artist. Here, individual experiences are embedded within broader ecosystems; distinct places, stories, and lifeforms are stitched into a collective whole.

For *Grand Arch (Solid Waste)*, Basanta sourced material from local recycling centres, and used a custom-built DIY compactor to create a set of compressed bales. After carefully sorting, cleaning, and processing, the bales are assembled into a self-supporting arch – an ancient architectural form that requires no mortar. These modular blocks suggest the potential for continuous reconfigurations, while also speaking to systems of interdependent support as they hold each other in a state of perfect balance. The diversity and density of the bales attest to the overwhelming quantities of discarded matter and give

tangible form to the time, labour, and space needed to process recycled materials. Basanta's sculpture diverts materials from seemingly limitless flows of waste and suggests the potential for building new worlds and new systems.

Finally, Ari Bayuaji's series *Weaving the Ocean* salvages discarded material, carefully unraveling plastic fishing ropes washed up onto the shorelines of Bali, Indonesia and weaving the threads into multicoloured compositions. Working with teams of local weavers, Bayuaji's project also creates ways for local communities of craftspeople to support themselves, adapting traditional techniques to work with this newly available material. In the suite of works *The Moon's Reflection on the Ocean*, *A Floating House*, and *Fisherman's treasures* the artist combines a woven panel depicting water with various sculptural elements. Composed of items salvaged from architectural sites in Montréal, the works are adorned with shells, woven copper 'algae' and precious stones that recall the series' watery origins. The interplay between surfaces, textures, and sources insists upon connections between seemingly distant places, as well as the people and commodities that flow between them.

In a statement about her practice, Hatanaka cites the Japanese concept of *mottainai* or "too good to waste," to describe how she saves scraps for inclusion in future works. This view towards the future, combined with an acknowledgement of the intrinsic value of even the smallest leftover pieces, offers a powerful framework for rethinking the very concept of 'waste.' It asks us to think more carefully and more creatively about the materials that surround us, alongside the urgent need to reconsider how we interact with the systems and resources that we rely on.

Acknowledgements

My deepest thanks to the artists for participating in this project and generously sharing their work and ideas. Thanks to the always amazing team at FOFA, especially María who has taken to heart questions about sustainability and run with them to places I never could have imagined. Thanks also to Pierre-François Ouellette, the team at Patel Brown, and Fannie Gadouas and Camille Lalonde-Lachapelle at Art Volt.