

work from Batoul S'himi's "World Under Pressure" series assigns new visibility and status to the role of women by cutting the world map into a humble pressure cooker. In *Art as Environmental Action*, Younes Rahmoun's wall installation *Kemmoussa* offered a parable about recycling. Using the plastic bags that litter his native Morocco, he fashioned hundreds of tiny satchels and arranged them into three rows, transitioning from black into white. Like beads of a Muslim prayer chain, the piece entreats caregiving of the earth.

Earth Works, a final, outdoor component of the exhibition, was installed in the Smithsonian's Enid A. Haupt Garden, a first for the institution. Ghada Amer planted a vegetable bed of seasonal rice and kale to form the word "hunger" and bring out the relationship between poverty and democracy. El Anatsui coaxed a pyramid out of mirrors and rusted cassava graters. *Ala* (the name of the earth goddess in southwestern Nigeria) connects land and sky, art and life, sacred and profane, while addressing the challenges of resource management. Ledelle Moe explored ideas of permanence and place in her monumental steel and concrete *Land/Displacements*. By mixing soil from her native South Africa into the concrete and attaching human figurines to the sculpture's scored topography, she brought the mountains of her homeland to Washington, DC. Just outside the garden, Strijdom van der Merwe's *Land Reform* visually linked the exteriors of the Smithsonian's African and Asian museums. Three gravel-filled berms held in place by giant, Pop-styled mapping pins evoked continental connectivity against the historic division of Africa by Western powers.

In "Earth Matters," contemporary African practice emerged not as a post-colonial homogenization, but



as a network of particularized expressions deeply rooted in traditions that continue to thrive and give context to current issues. This ambitious, multifaceted exhibition seemed to follow the road sign challenge in Owanto's photograph *Où Allons Nous?* (Where are we going?). Set against dwindling resources and boundary disputes, "Earth Matters" asked us to reflect on our relationship to the Earth, what we want from it, what we leave behind, and ultimately, what we are willing to give back.

—Sarah Tanguy

#### MIAMI

#### Ai Weiwei

#### Pérez Art Museum Miami

A 2007 ceramic work in Ai Weiwei's blockbuster exhibition "According to What?" emblazons a Neolithic Chinese vessel with a silver Coca-Cola logo painted over original decorative motifs of people and turtles holding hands. Though this act could be called commercialization or desecration, to me, the work aims to unite popular taste with ancient ties to earth, nature, and humanity. Ai follows this strategy throughout the show, each time calling attention to and transforming something ancient

Above: Ai Weiwei, installation view of "According to What?," 2013. Below: Ai Weiwei, *Stacked*, 2002. 680 stainless steel units, dimensions variable.

or material, with one exception—a high, long wall crowded with the names of thousands of children killed when poorly built school buildings collapsed during the 2008 Sichuan earthquake. The government tried to cover up Ai's and other investigations of these unreported deaths and beat the artist so severely that he suffered a cerebral hemorrhage in 2009. He has been restricted from leaving China for more than three years.

*Moon Chest* (2008) consists of seven chests made of quince or *huali*, a precious wood. Each handcrafted cabinet features circular cut-outs on its front and back that line up across the installation to show the phases of the moon. Visitors photographing themselves inside the array of chests are, in effect, entering the artwork. The openings render the chests unusable for storage, and, as in the Coca-Cola vessel, this emphasizes the meeting of contemporary consciousness and ancient craft.

Ai has also transformed Han Dynasty vases (206 BCE–220 CE) by dipping them into vats of brightly colored industrial paint. Three life-sized pho-



tos show him dropping a Han vase to, he says, “express the notion that new ideas and values can be produced through iconoclasm” (the purposeful challenge of traditional beliefs). He asks viewers to address issues of authenticity and meaning. *Kippe* (2006), a construction of ironwood fragments from Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) temples, forms a solid rectangle within iron bars. The hues and textures of the ancient pieces contrast with the functionality of the iron. Other symbolic works in the exhibition include zodiac animal heads, teahouses made of compressed tea, a circle of black and pink

Ginsberg. Finally, an installation built from bicycle spokes and tire-less rims stacked and welded onto poles seems to symbolize China’s popular mode of transportation and its people.

This traveling exhibition was organized by the Mori Art Museum in Tokyo in collaboration with the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, the first of five U.S. venues. The Brooklyn Museum hosts the show from April 18 through August 10, 2014. A new Ai exhibition opens on Alcatraz Island, a former prison colony near San Francisco, in September 2014.

—Jan Garden Castro

symbol of the conference’s underlying mission to emphasize the importance of art in making cross-cultural connections.

The title of the installation, *uboc No. 1 & stuVi2*, refers to the two Boston University buildings connected by Dombois’s laser light beam. The Boston University School of Law Tower, a concrete structure designed in 1964 by Modernist architects Sert, Jackson, and Gourley, is called the ugliest building on campus by students—hence “uboc No. 1.” Dombois says that he actually finds it kind of beautiful, an iconic example of Modernist architecture. The

Dombois selected the two tallest buildings on campus; he also liked the fact that the laser would pass over a multi-purpose intersection—reputedly the only one in the U.S. that includes all possible kinds of human transportation, from boats on the Charles River and a railroad overpass to Interstate 90 traffic and a regular crossroads of two major city streets with lots of pedestrian traffic. The laser stretched across .68 miles of space, passing over smaller buildings and a busy maze of highways, streets, sidewalks, and bridges.

*uboc No. 1 & stuVi2* appeared to be just a straight line of light, but it also included live streaming of the real-time movement around the two buildings <[http://www.transculturalexchange.org/conference\\_2013/Dombois/uboc1.html](http://www.transculturalexchange.org/conference_2013/Dombois/uboc1.html)>. Using a smartphone at the site, one could connect to see not only the straight beam of light, but also images of the fluctuating laser, which appeared as a moving segmented line, making one aware of the Earth’s movement. *uboc No. 1 & stuVi2* was also a kinetic sculpture and a sound installation. Laser beams put out sound as well as light waves; we just cannot hear them. (Dombois won the German Sound Art Prize last year.)

Although the initial plan for this temporary installation called for a bright red beam, it was changed to green at the last minute. Dombois shifted the color because the human eye does not see red as clearly as it sees green. To me, red might have been better. Seen from the side at street level, the green beam did not show up very well against an already illuminated urban night sky, though photos taken from Interstate 90 show a dramatic straight beam of blue-green light. Though only of short duration, *uboc No. 1 & stuVi2* was a quiet spectacle and a thought-provoking poetic gesture, an almost intangible sculpture that vividly illustrated connection.

—Jane Ingram Allen



Florian Dombois, *uboc No. 1 & stuVi2*, 2013. Laser, rangemeter, Web site and mobile phone app, and 2 buildings.

crabs, a large bowl of pearls, a joined circle of Qing stools, and an array of rusted rebar pipes salvaged from the wreckage of Sichuan’s destroyed schools. Ai’s photos from his New York years (1983–93) provide a moving portrait of New York City’s Chinese community, document protests in Tompkins Square Park (1988), and record the artist’s friendship with poet Allen

## BOSTON

### Florian Dombois Boston University

*uboc No. 1 & stuVi2*, a four-day public art installation by Swiss artist Florian Dombois, was on view from sunset until 2 a.m. during the TransCultural Exchange’s third biennial conference on international opportunities for artists. The theme for the conference was “Engaging Minds,” and curator Mary Sherman, founder and director of TransCultural Exchange, invited Dombois to create this site-specific piece as a

other building, recently constructed student housing, is a more generic steel structure. These buildings from different eras are similar in style, rather like a modern father and post-modern son. Dombois’s installation helped to underscore the similarities between the two, connecting them across time and space. Though he considers this work post-conceptual, he wanted a tangible object for his concept. The light beam became a trigger to imagine the sculpture. The connected buildings were the sculpture, too.