

# Smack Mellon

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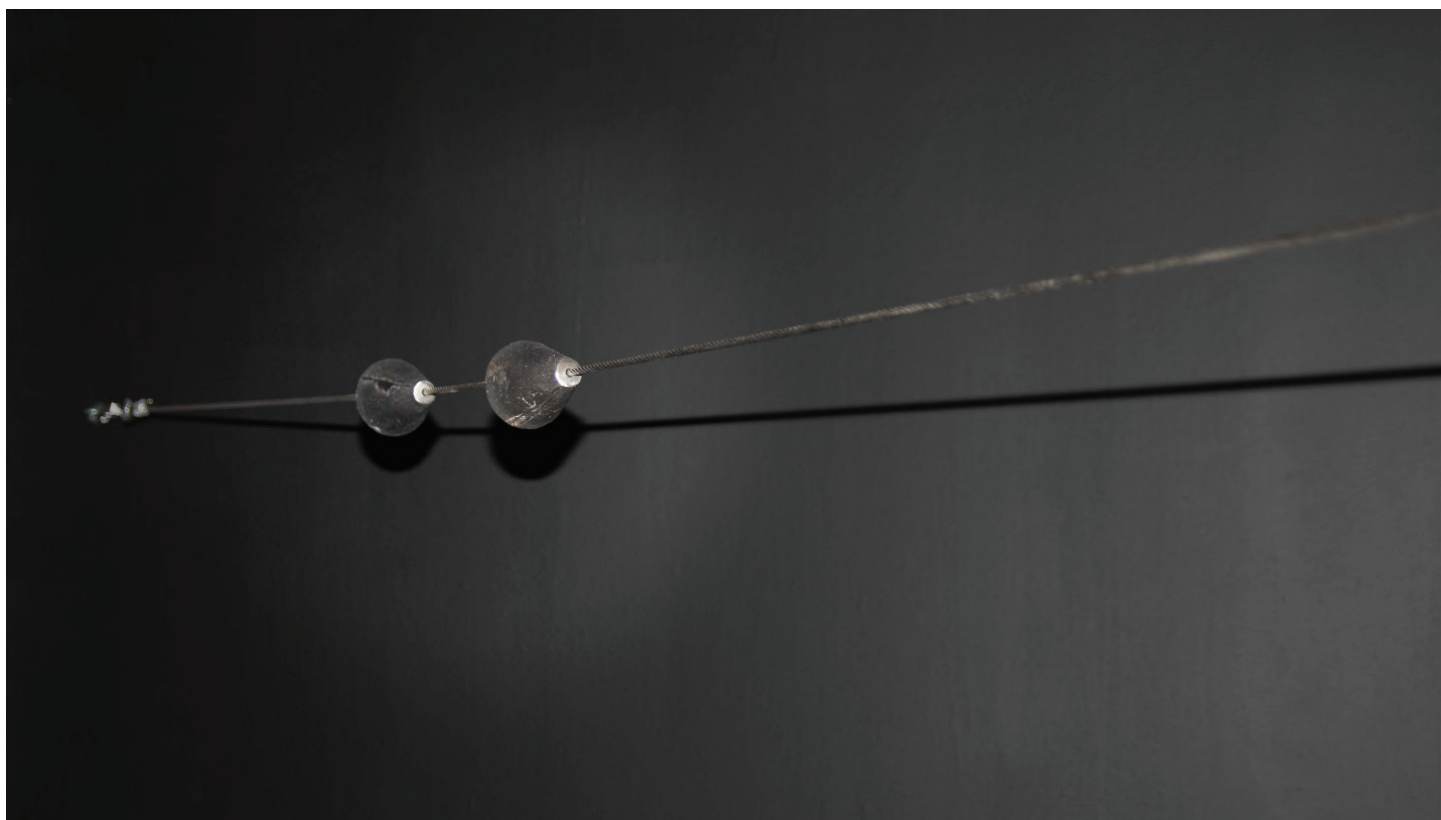
## *10 Billion Barrels*

dean erdmann, fields harrington, Rebecca Shapass

curated by Rachel Vera Steinberg and Zanete Liekite in collaboration with Jessica Segall  
[Gallery Two]

September 23-November 19, 2023

Opening Reception: Sat. September 23, 6-8PM



Rebecca Shapass, *lifeline*, 2023. Iron, stainless steel, dimensions variable.

[Public Programs]

Artist-Led Tour

Sun. October 8, 2pm

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Delving deeper into the themes introduced by Jessica Segall's concurrent installation *Human Energy*, the upcoming exhibition in the back gallery brings together the works of artists dean erdmann, fields harrington, and Rebecca Shapass. It focuses on the intricate interplay between humanity's historical resource extraction constructs, the resulting ecological landscape, the nuanced subtleties of addiction, and the intriguing alignment of queer desires within the realms of environmental preservation and ecological fetishism. The title is an homage to Nancy Holt's work "10 Billion Barrels of Crude Oil," serving to acknowledge her consideration of land as a resource. Holt's concrete poem, crafted in 1986 in response to an invitation from the Visual Arts Center in Anchorage, Alaska, is a testament to her encounter with the Trans-Alaska pipeline, which left a lasting impact due to its visual effect on the Alaskan landscape. Within the design of her concrete poem, Holt not only charts the pipeline's trajectory but also presents a wealth of data and vivid details, offering a unique perspective on its materiality and presence.

Through media such as video, glass, and plants containing ephedrine, dean erdmann's work addresses the politics of place, class, and the body, intertwining personal narrative with broader historical contexts and significant events. Probing the persistent reverberations of descendant technologies of the so-called superhuman drugs, the work unearths how substances like speed and meth have the capacity to shape and reshape our contemporary social and geopolitical terrain. Its mechanizing influence is pushing the body's physical limits while also disrupting its emotional and intellectual capacities.

Shapass' work traverses the domains of moving-image, installation, and text, adeptly interweaving tapestries of historical truths and imaginative constructs and eliciting a bond between geographically specific infrastructures and collective memory. Here, her work echoes the historical context of working-class human resource extraction through ruminations on societal collapse as well as the concept of the 'lifeline.' Also the title of her sculptural installation included in the exhibition, *lifeline* borrows its form from an essential element devised to assist miners in evacuating underground mines during fires or explosion incidents.

fields harrington initiates parallel dialogues further with the notion of 'Non-Exhaustive Work,' redefining the concept of immortality and everlasting, disembodied labor through the lens of the HeLa cell line. The designation HeLa is derived from the name of the patient, Henrietta Lacks, an African-American woman who was diagnosed with cervical cancer in the 1950s. Without her knowledge or consent, a sample of her cancerous cells was taken by doctors at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland, for research purposes. This enduring activity can be seen as a display of undying disembodied labor and survival, perpetually reshaping and disseminating the value of Blackness.

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*10 Billion Barrels* is part of Smack Mellon's *Close Readings* exhibition series. In this series, Smack Mellon presents a new commission by an under-recognized, early- to mid-career artist in Gallery One, accompanied by an exhibition in Gallery Two that employs the central commission as the curatorial framework.

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**dean erdmann** is a multidisciplinary artist working in moving and still images, sculpture and installation. Their work in the past several years grapples specifically with how biography and history collide. Their work explores class, whiteness and Americana; the body and queerness; place, family, geopolitics, and recuperative histories. erdmann is a 2018-2020 Vera List Center for Art+Politics Fellow, 2019 Urban Glass Fellow, 2013 California Community Foundation Fellow, and recipient Center for Cultural Innovation grant. Their work has been exhibited at ONE Archives, Mexicali Biennial, Hammer Museum, REDCAT, 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, Spiral Hall, Tokyo, Kavi Gupta Berlin, the Sheila Johnson Design Center, Torrance Art Museum, and Public Fiction, to name a few. Recently, their public commission for the LA K-line Leimert Park Station opened Fall 2022, and they had shows at the Herbert F. Johnson Museum and String Room Gallery (NY) in 2022. In 2024, they have a solo exhibition at Louche Ops (Berlin), will be included in Scientia Sexualis at ICA Los Angeles and will be a Chinati Artist in Residence in 2025. They are currently an Assistant Professor in the Visual Arts Department at UC San Diego.

**Rebecca Shapass** is a filmmaker and artist interested in documentary form and archival practice. Working across moving-image, photography, sculpture, installation, and text, Shapass' projects blend fact and fiction, abstraction and representation to evoke the affective experience of personal and collective memory—its fragility and fallibility. Her research-based work probes the unfixed nature of perception and its relationship to knowledge, intimacy, and power. Shapass' work has been exhibited and screened with institutions and festivals including the Miller ICA (Pittsburgh, PA), Microscope Gallery (Brooklyn, NY), The Basement @ the Knockdown Center (Queens, NY), the McDonough Museum of Art (Youngstown, OH), amongst others. In 2018-2019, Shapass was a resident at Smack Mellon Artist Studio Program (Brooklyn, NY) where she was also a NY Community Trust Van Lier Fellow. She has participated in residencies with NURTUREart (Brooklyn, NY), Signal Culture (Owego, NY), and Crosstown Arts (Memphis, TN). Shapass holds an MFA from Carnegie Mellon University and a BFA from New York University where she studied Film & Television and Art History.

**fields harrington** is an artist who lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. He works across disciplines and media to investigate the social and political dimensions of race, value, and the complex history of science. fields has a BFA from the University of North Texas, an MFA from the University of Pennsylvania, and studied at San Antonio Community College. He was a participant in the Whitney Independent Study Program. He has presented solo exhibitions at David Salkin Gallery, KAJE, and Y2K Group. He has exhibited in group shows at MIT List Visual Arts Center, Parsons School of Design, 52-07 Flushing Avenue, and Automat Gallery. fields harrington was a L.A.B. researcher in residence at The Kitchen in collaboration with The School for Poetic Computation and participated in the research residency Site to be Seen at RAIR. He has taught at Wagner College, Eugene Lang College of Liberal Arts at The New School, Parsons School of Design, and The Cooper Union.

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This exhibition is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, New York City Council Member Lincoln Restler, and the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Kathy Hochul and the New York State Legislature, and with generous support from The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Ruth Foundation for the Arts, Lily Auchincloss Foundation, Robert Lehman Foundation, Select Equity Group Foundation, many individuals and Smack Mellon's Members.

Smack Mellon's programs are also made possible with public funds from the National Endowment for the Arts and with generous support from The Edward and Sally Van Lier Fund of The New York Community Trust, Jerome Foundation, The Roy and Niuta Titus Foundation, Milton and Sally Avery Arts Foundation Inc., and Exploring The Arts. In-kind donations are provided by Materials for the Arts, NYC Department of Cultural Affairs/NYC Department of Sanitation/NYC Department of Education.

Space for Smack Mellon's programs is generously provided by the Walentas family and Two Trees Management.

Smack Mellon would like to extend a special thanks to all of the individuals, foundations, and businesses who have contributed to the NYC COVID-19 Response & Impact Fund.