

“Love of Things Old Preserves Community”, this is the headline and subsequent claim that opens a 1993 Los Angeles Times profile of the historic neighborhood Harvard Heights. This article portrays a neighborhood in transition, recovering from the LA uprisings in 1992 following the acquittal of officers Laurence Powell, Timothy Wind, Theodore Briseno, and Sergeant Stacey Kool for the infamous brutalizing of Rodney King. Ushering in this new wave of invigoration, the article opens on its protagonist, urban planner Stuart Anderson. Anderson who recently bought two homes in the neighborhood, lavishly recounts the trials and tribulations of his pursuits, extinguishing the flames from the rebellions and renovating his turn of the century homes for their eventual unveiling on a historic tour organized by the Harvard Heights Neighborhood Association and the West Adams Heritage Association. The article continues to give a general history of the neighborhood detailing how Harvard Heights formed the original tract of land developed in the West Adams District at the turn of the century. Following a period of intensive population growth at the time this former site of sparse agrarian production quickly transitioned into a streetcar suburb to meet the rising demand of homesteaders moving west to settle newly acquired land, spoils of American expansion following the continued genocide, incarceration, and removal of indigenous peoples from their native lands. Kelly Lyte Hernandez documents this massive transition in her text, *City of Inmates*, which charts the use of carceral geography as a tactic for enacting and maintaining settler colonialism. Hernandez shows the ways that city boosters heavily promoted and marketed Los Angeles as an oasis for Anglo-Saxon settlement. On this point she writes:

By the 1890s, the boosters’ narrative of paradise had transformed into an explicitly racial project. In particular, the boosters sold Los Angeles as the “Eden for the Saxon Homeseeker,” with “homeseeker” operating as a very particular late nineteenth- century term signifying middle- class, midwestern, hetero-patriarchal, and nuclear Anglo-American families moving farther west to acquire the land recently opened by the end to the nation’s brutal wars with Indigenous peoples on the plains and southwestern territories claimed by the United States. (Hernandez 49)

Hernandez’s work situates the founding of Harvard Heights within a larger racial-spatial project cohered through Anglo-Saxon ideals of family, property, and culture. These connections play out in both material and cultural modalities. Materially, Harvard Heights was founded under a restrictive covenant that set a minimum price upon which homes could be sold.<sup>1</sup> At \$2500 this minimum was enforced as a way to control who was and wasn’t permitted to live in the neighborhood. Centered on the control of private property, the home functioned both as the promise of Anglo-Saxon settlement as well as the mitigating tool for maintaining differentiation along the concordance of race, class, gender, sexuality, territory, and culture. This relationship to private property underscores what George Lipsitz called “the white spatial imaginary”<sup>2</sup>. Lipsitz describes how the white spatial imaginary functions in the following.

The white spatial imaginary deploys contract law and deed restrictions to channel amenities and advantages to places designated as white. It makes the augmentation and concentration of private wealth the central purpose of public association. It promotes policies that produce sprawl, waste resources, and generate enormous social costs in order to enable some property owners to become wealthier than others. It produces a society saturated with hostile privatism and defensive localism through secret subsidies for exclusive and homogeneous housing developments premised on promoting the security and profitability of private property regardless of the larger social costs to society. (Lipsitz 28-29)

Under Lipsitz, the white spatial imaginary is a powerful organizing structure through which uneven development is justified and perpetuated concentrating value within space defined as white while simultaneously producing spaces of dispossession read as racially other, amoral, and aberrant. This form of racialist thinking is a necessary precondition for the uneven organization of bodies

<sup>1</sup> This reference come from the article LA Times article, however at the time of this writing I have not been able to find primary documentation of the restrictive covenant.

<sup>2</sup> This term comes from Lipsitz’s work in *How Racism Takes Place*

and spaces along lines of valuation and negation upon which racial capitalism operates.<sup>3</sup> Through the mechanism of the restrictive covenant, whiteness, encoded within Anglo-Saxon normative prescriptions, “is inscribed in the physical contours of the places where we live, work, and play” (Lipsitz 28). Furthermore, Lipsitz theorizes white spatial imaginaries as cultural actants as well as material, stating:

The white spatial imaginary has cultural as well as social consequences. It structures feelings as well as social institutions. The white spatial imaginary idealizes “pure” and homogeneous spaces, controlled environments, and predictable patterns of design and behavior. It seeks to hide social problems rather than solve them. The white spatial imaginary promotes the quest for individual escape rather than encouraging democratic deliberations about the social problems and contradictory social relations that affect us all. The suburb is not only an engine of self-interest, but also a place that has come to be imbued with a particular moral value consistent with deeply rooted historical ideals and illusions. (Lipsitz 29)

Here Lipsitz starts to hint at some of the ways that white spatial imaginaries give form to various structures of feeling that in turn synthesize idealized social and aspirational spaces that are pure, manageable, predictable, and individualized. One instantiation of the socio-cultural consequences of white spatial imaginaries can be found in the design and aesthetic presentations within Harvard Heights. It’s very name is itself a signifier of Anglo-Saxon affluence and intellectual dominance, connoting wealth and Victorian etiquette. Other street names in the area, Oxford and Cambridge further exemplify the social and aspirational characteristics of Harvard Heights as a white spatial imaginary, which are then inscribed into the physical environment. This doesn’t end with spatial markers and street signs but is held in the architecture of the area and the praise of the single family estate.

Consecrating the sanctity of the single family home and the historic architecture of the area, Harvard Heights was designated as a Historic Preservation Ordinance Zone in 2000. This followed just seven years after the LA Times article was published and renewed interest in real estate sought to profit from depreciated value following the uprisings yet built on economic restructuring fomented in the 1980’s.<sup>4</sup> This turn is briefly hinted at in the LA Times article, when interviewing City Living Realty agent John Rake. Rake states, “While largely made up of black and Latinos, Harvard Heights has become a neighborhood whose diversity cuts across a broad cultural and social spectrum. Since the early 1980’s growing numbers of white homeowners have been wooed by the architecture of the area’s older homes and reasonable prices, additionally, a significant share of senior citizens, gays and families with young children make up the population.” Rake’s statements draw our attention to a few important distinctions. The first is that for Rake, diversity comports to neoliberal multicultural narrations of racial difference that in the words of Jodi Melamed, “deploys economic, ideological, cultural, and religious distinctions to produce lesser personhoods, laying these new categories of privilege and stigma across conventional racial categories, fracturing them into differential status groups.”

For Melamed, neoliberal multiculturalism is a discursive logic that recalculates racial difference as cultural difference and appropriates cultural difference into a taxonomy of injury based protections. This shift removes notions of race as a modality through which political-economic and spatial structuring occurs and instead employs culture as a malleable container through which identity based claims of injury are flattened and equated. So when Rake uses the term diversity to describe white families moving into Harvard Heights in the 1980’s it obfuscates political, economic, and spatial restricting that occurred at the national and state level creating a relative surplus

<sup>3</sup> Here I employ Cedric Robinson’s critical work on racial capitalism in *Black Marxism*. In this reading capitalism was always dependent on racial differentiation within ethnic European populations, and racialism is the primary modality through which differentiation operates.

<sup>4</sup> Geographer Ruth Wilson Gilmore tracks this shift in political economy closely marking transitions from a Keynesian military welfare state to a modern neoliberal state liberating capital through finance, real estate, and insurance sectors in turn limiting the power of labor and ushering in austerity measures regarding public benefits.

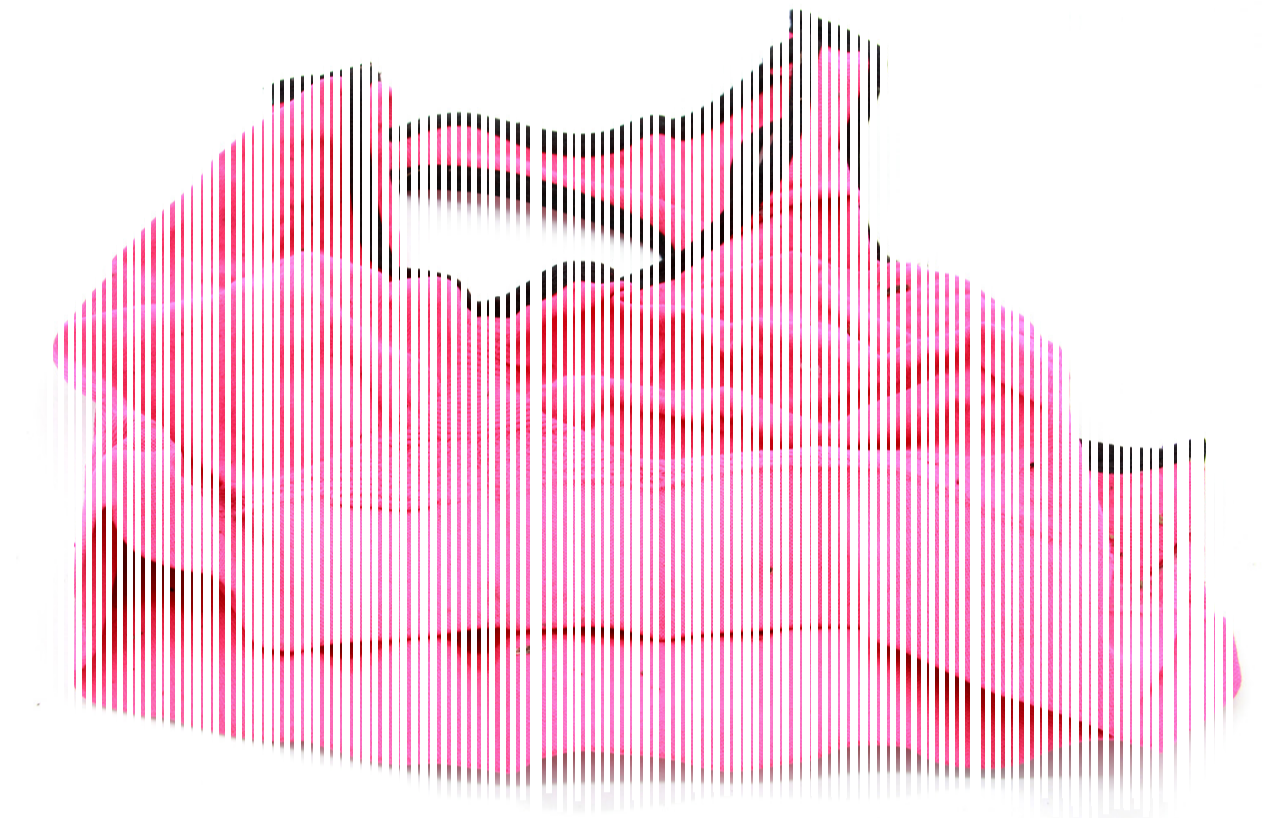
population of racialized, under or unemployed poor. This use of neoliberal multiculturalism simultaneously elides questions of why such historic homes of opulent architecture were so reasonably priced, and naturalizes reinvestment into the area and the return of white settlement.

Putting the article “Love of Things Old Preserves Community” in conversation with scholarship concerning geography, urban studies, and cultural studies begins to unearth the affects of coloniality, territoriality, purity, and privatization as they gave form to Los Angeles as a modern city as well as the development of Harvard Heights to accommodate its growing population. Yet these effects are not merely historic but manifest materially and culturally within the neighborhood today through architectural form, signage, and preservationist narration. Literary scholar Lisa Lowe would describe these lingering affects as residual.<sup>5</sup> Evoking literary critic Raymond Williams, Lowe describes the residual as “elements of the past that continue, but are less legible within a contemporary social formation.” (Lowe 19). Lowe builds on this explaining that, “Residual processes persist and may even deepen, despite a new dominant rendering them less legible...Because residual processes are ongoing, residual elements may be articulated by and within new social practices, in effect, as a “new” emergent formation.” (Lowe 19). Lowe’s offering of residue is a helpful analytic tools as well as a methodology for charting the influences of affect across fixed instantiations of time and space. This also allows for reading the residues of a white spatial imaginary in Harvard Heights from its development as a newly ordained white Anglo-Saxon oasis to accommodate population growth to Los Angeles to its current encapsulation as an HPOZ.

This is the context from which my project *Sedimentary Exits* emerges. Focusing on the affective, emergent, and personal I am drawn to experiences of space that draw out it’s potential for use value, for exchange, encounter, and effusive fleshy publics. *Sedimentary Exits* is an investigation into the partial histories, affects, and absences of place within the Harvard Heights neighborhood in central Los Angeles. This curious amalgam has become my new home, and in an attempt to know it I am left with questions of home, landscape, blackness, absence, and publics. Over seven weeks I took a series of walks along the boundaries of the neighborhood, taking field recordings, collecting discarded objects, and performing small public rituals. Through this methodology of walking I gathered scraps and traces to use as a text upon which to read speculative histories of lives lived in a public that only exists in the residue of lost objects. I am interested in these readings as archives of desires, wanting more from space than is allowed.

Through sound, video, ritual, and poetry I look for the sedimentary absences that give form to the landscapes we traverse, and the desires that allow us to imagine beyond them. I pay special attention to fleeting moments and quotidian objects that provoke a body no longer present, a well worn family photo, chipped plastic spoon, and lukewarm beer bottles.

<sup>5</sup> This is a term originally theorized by Raymond Williams that Lowe adapts to investigate the intimacies between Europe, Africa, Asia, and North America that were required for post-Enlightenment articulations and delimitations of the human subject.





What follows is a first attempt at sharing a personal cartography of my own affective landscape moving through the neighborhood, the items I have collected, the routes taken, words written, sounds recorded, and feelings flooded.

Rather than reconstructing these as linear progressive accumulations I intentionally play with the form in which they are reproduced here. They are meant to provide a visuality to affect that only becomes recognizable at the scale of the body and felt as emotion, tangled, opaque, searing, enthralled, a latent cacophony, a sensual din. By focusing on affective space I wish to diminish the preoccupation given to the material built environment, but not negate it. Instead, I am curious as to how the absent and unaccounted for allows for the materiality of Harvard Heights to appear as it is. Christine Berberich, Neil Campbell, and Robert Hudson capture this nicely in the opening of their journal edition, *Affective Landscapes* stating:

The affective landscapes explored in this edition "consider space and place beyond their material properties" while recognizing that this "beyond" of "imaginary places, ideals, and real but intangible objects... underpin and produce material places and social spaces" too. (Berberich Campbell Hudson 314).



whole worlds  
built from utterances  
whole societies  
claimed by property  
whats left to be desired?



RITUAL WALK FOR TIMELINESS

Prepare the space

Play William Basinski's Disintegration Loops

Meditate 30 min

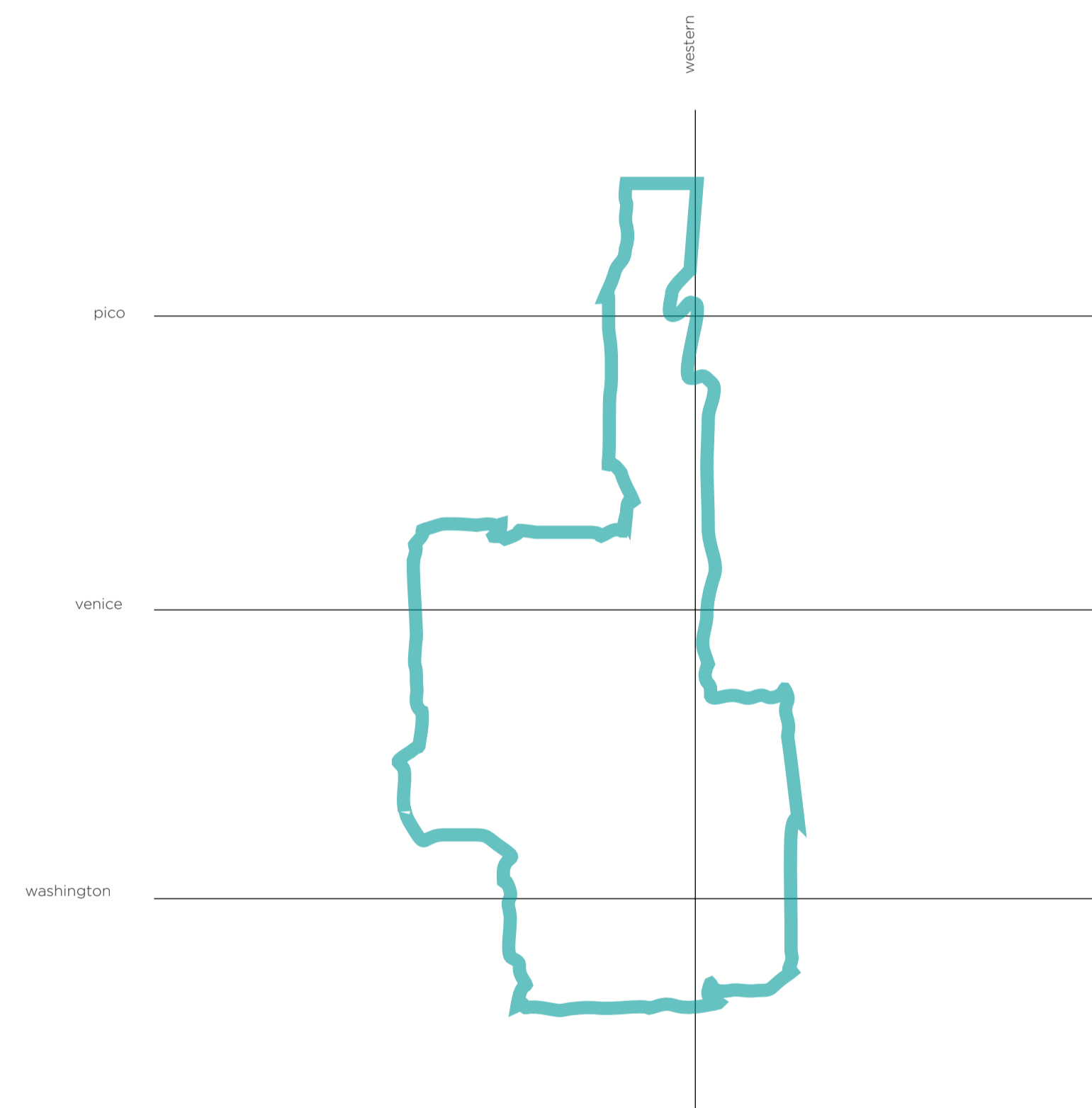
Anoint temple with Agua de Florida

Feel your self float with each inhale, what is being made with each breathe, dissolved with each exhale?

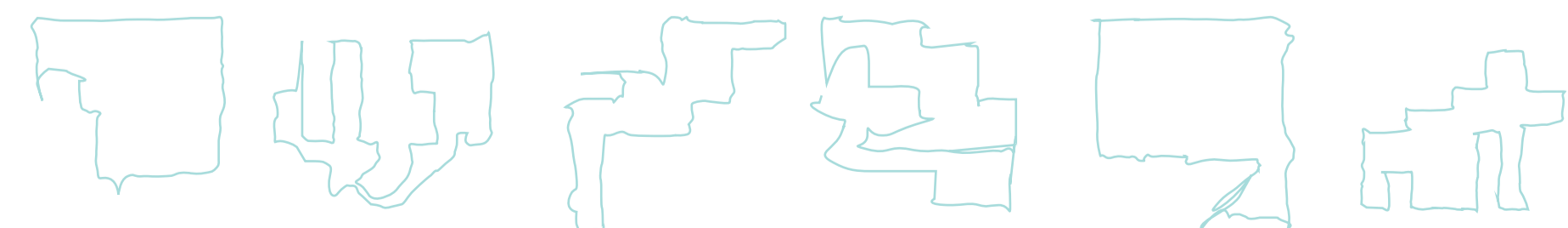
Allow yourself to live in the gulf between attachment and loss, finding hard won hope in the process of letting go, only to be cohered again.

Scan for the perishable things that fall out of time and history.

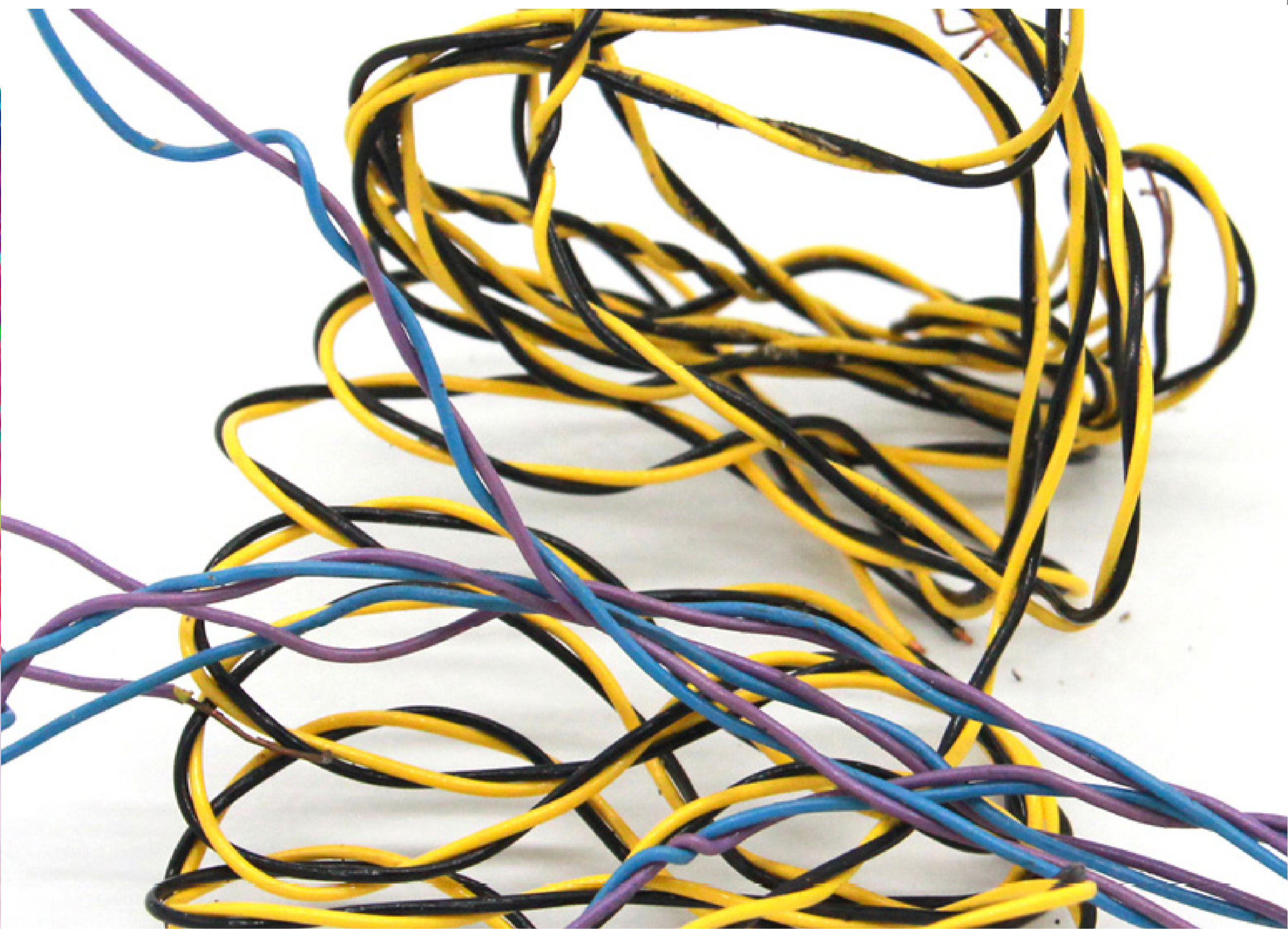
Pick up artifacts that mark the moment, born from the intimacy of the body, discarded in haste, inscribed with your taste.



walk 1 of 7  
distance: 1.3 miles  
time: 4:56:38pm  
altitude: 208 ft





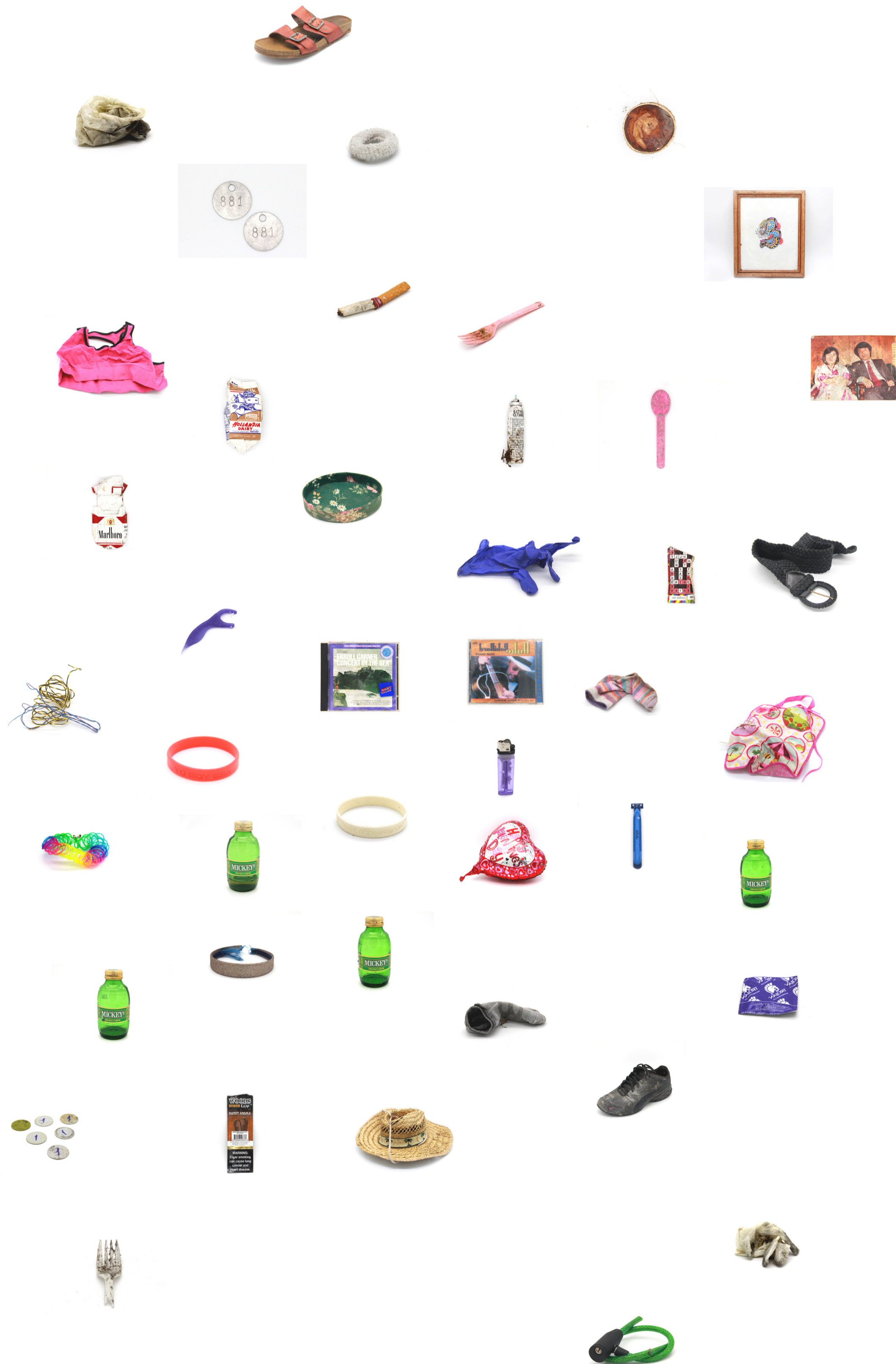


*sedimentary exits*  
FIELD NOTES FOR PUBLIC LONGING





Residue is the place  
 within which to linger. It  
 is in the *present* that we  
 are able to confront and to  
 contend with that which  
 we *miss* but that is  
 not *gone*. Residue is  
 the way to engage with  
 the *past*, pointing to  
 something that we  
 want to be present, it is the  
 path towards a presence  
 that is *absent* in the  
 contemporary moment.  
 But hints at an existence  
 in the *past*, a purpose to  
 pursue, a hope free from  
 optimism.



*lingering*  
*long for*  
*present*  
*absence*  
*hope*  
*disallowed*  
*future*