

SITE 20/20

SITE SANTA FE
1606 PASEO DE PERALTA, SANTA FE

THE WEEKEND THAT SITE 20/20 OPENED, ARTIST ANN HAMILTON

participated in a conversation with Sylvia Wolf, the director of the Henry Art Gallery at the University of Washington. It was at UW that Hamilton developed her installation *the common SENSE. the animals*, and SITE Santa Fe is now presenting a portion of that work as part of its twenty-year anniversary series of exhibitions featuring artists who have been part of SITE's history. While at UW doing research for the show she would have there, Hamilton visited the Museum of History and Culture Ornithology Collection at the university and she was struck by the specimen of a marmoset—a type of New World monkey—noting with a sense of poignancy how much the hands of the marmoset resembled human hands.

in a gesture of surrender to the forces of extinction pressing against the animal world.

It's been a while since I remember a series of installations at SITE that felt as deeply human and affecting as the ones in 20/20. There are five collaborative projects: *Honey Baby* by Janine Antoni with choreographer Stephen Petronio; *Angle of Repose* by Harmony Hammond with furniture maker Francis Cape; *unburdening* by Amy Cutler with musician Emily Wells and hairdresser Adriana Papaleo; *Goodbye, Babylon (Remix)* by Dario Robleto with sound historian Patrick Feaster and Lance Ledbetter of Dust-to-Digital Records; and Ann Hamilton with Friday evening performances in her space by

a pre-born is remarkably convincing and a visually seductive work—an experience that brings the viewer into spiritual contact with our sticky, humid, pre-natal life, and the struggle each one of us goes through in order to be born.

Death and birth, absence and presence, wounding and healing, physical struggle and metaphysical release—all these forces are made manifest in this literally and figuratively haunting exhibition through coded languages that conceptually unwind like so much thread from a spool as the viewer wanders from installation to installation. The Hammond and Cape work, *Angle of Repose*, in its spare modernist guise, is perhaps the most haunted piece of all, with Cape's furniture arranged so it appears on the verge of chaos—as if a ship full of beautifully made tables, chairs, chests, and beds had just barely survived a typhoon at sea. If a viewer walks into the space of this installation from the doorway to Cutler's piece, Hammond's large painting, *Flesh Fold #1*, seen across the



Hamilton scanned the hands of the preserved animal, an image that is now one of many depicting the remains of dead birds, mammals, and amphibians. Once scanned, the images were printed in multiples on newsprint and then made into thick pads, clamped at the top with metal bands, and each pad hung on the wall for viewers to tear away the sheets one by one. From floor to ceiling, the digital remains of the animals, sightless and silent, but sometimes inflected with flashes of muted color, were hung salon-style. Sitting in that room was like sitting in a chamber of a haunted house—a room of the spirits—where ghostly portraits of our ancestors reside. In front of me as I write is a newsprint sheet with the marmoset hands—as if they had just placed something against a wall, or were holding that wall in place, or the hands were held up

the Santa Fe Opera Apprentice Program for the duration of the summer opera season. These complex installations provide a tremendous variety of sensory experiences and opportunities to investigate a range of ideas that provide much philosophical ground. For example, only a few feet of gallery space separates the threat of extinction from the simulation of life *in utero*. *Honey Baby* is a video of a dance performance conceived by Antoni with choreography by Petronio and performed by Nick Scisione as if the dancer was in a bottomless vessel filled with honey. It's uncanny how much Scisione was able to mimic a baby's movements in the womb, defined by slow turnings, pushing, erratic kicks, and the tensions expressed of being confined in a small, albeit protective place. This exotic simulation of the life of

room, appears almost an extension of Cape's furniture—the palette of the wood and Hammond's paint are remarkably similar, and for a few moments *Flesh Fold #1* could be a plank of wood leaning against the far wall. But Hammond's painting soon takes on its own reality, evoking an absent protagonist from some conceptual dimension who presents herself as an expanse of torn skin, perhaps ripped in the metaphorical storm at sea. Now, however, a healing phase has begun in an endless task of art's rearrangement and reincarnation.

The aforementioned themes of rearrangement and reincarnation are also very much at play in the work of Cutler and Robleto as well, especially in the latter's archive of lost-and-found sounds—heartbeats, anxious breathing, along with some fabulous and visceral early blues music. I copied the following phrase from one of the installations—"the quest to find the materiality of consciousness"—and in fact it could be the underlying meaning for all the work in this intensely rewarding exhibition.

—DIANE ARMITAGE

Ann Hamilton, *the common SENSE. the animals* (detail), installation view, 2014

Janine Antoni and Stephen Petronio, *Honey Baby*, video still, 2013