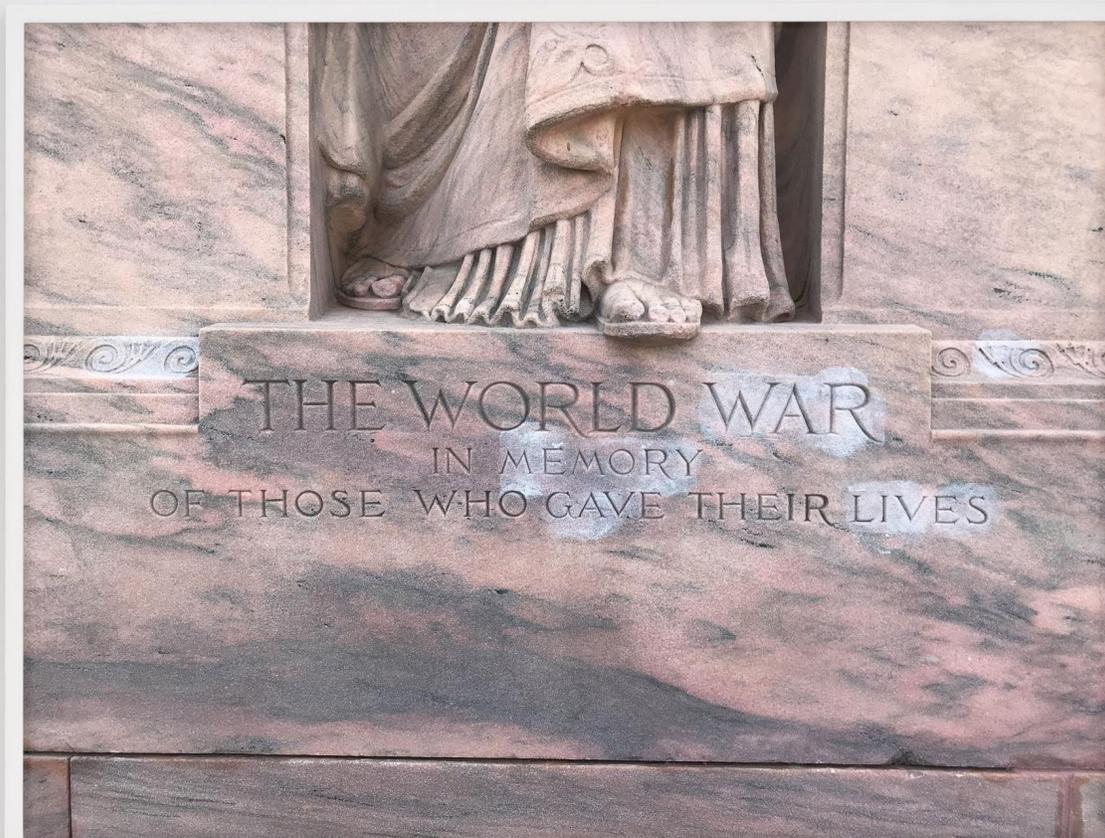


Alix Vernet: City, When Will You Keep Your Promise?

NADA House ▪ May 8 - Aug 1, 2021



For the past year, Alix Vernet has been quietly pulling clay reliefs from the surfaces of public monuments and building facades around New York. As the country faced a larger reckoning of its imperialist history, Alix was shadowing Theo Boggs, a monument technician from the New York Parks Department who restores and cleans facades throughout the city. Her work has produced a series of renegade impressions of lettering, textures and visual motifs, as well as select photographs. Navigating a nuanced line between practices ascribed to both “conservation” and “vandalism” the ceramic fragments are a fractured inquiry into the rhetoric of memory and the aesthetics of power. Seen together “City When Will You Keep Your Promise?”, presents a rebuke of permanence and an investigation into the instability, maintenance, and care that are necessary elements of the city.

Vernet's NADA House booth is an installation of photographs and ceramic works that engage fully with both the building-as-readymade and modalities of display and maintenance inherent to the site. Vernet's objects, like the surfaces and actions from which they derive, are porous. Here she displays ceramic castings as wall-bound readymade poems, interspersed with photographic documentation in the form of framed C-prints. Vernet's cosplay as a monument specialist engages with the inherently performative nature of sculpture, the aesthetics of the archive, and the status of sculptural installation as remnant or "trace" of prior action. Her focus on the Washington Square Arch and early 20th century war memorials is uniquely suited to the Governors Island, tracing its history as a confederate prison, military base to present day conditions. In her words, "The fragments themselves reference the display of ruins and ancient remnants within museums. I am interested in how the reconfiguration and alienation of these fragments from their original 'whole' offers an opportunity to reconsider their programming and emphasize that memory occurs in present tense."

Vernet's project reveals that like the structures on Governor's Island, the city's public monuments are not "fixed" as they first appear, but rather are always encountered in a state of rest, momentarily still until the next inevitable bout of scaffolding, power washing, or reconstitution. She gratefully allows us a moment to contemplate the delicate patchwork of social codes, symbology and shared memory that informs our experience of public space, at a time when it is so desperately needed.