

***Asif Mian***

***Born in Jersey City, NJ***

***Lives and works in Brooklyn, NY***

Working at the intersection of sculpture, video, and performance, Asif Mian's practice explores how ritual, behavior, and memory are impacted by violence and its perception. His varied methods have employed the splicing of rugs together as 'event sculptures', intimidation rituals for performance, and thermal (IR) cameras for video installations. The concept of hauntology and "the figure of the ghost as that which is neither present, nor absent, neither dead nor alive" is influential in the development of his multi chapter *RAF* project.

Asif Mian (b. Jersey City, NJ), earned an MFA from Columbia University (2018), a B.A. in Studio Art & B.S. in Biology (Genetics) from Drew University, and attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture (2018).

Recent exhibitions include *Queens International: Volumes* at The Queens Museum; "Always, Already, Haunting, "diss-co," *Haunt* " curated by Whitney ISP fellows at The Kitchen; the inaugural *Open Call* exhibition at The Shed; and *Beyond Geographies: Contemporary Art and Muslim Experience* at BRIC, Brooklyn.

Mian was recently awarded the *2019-2020 Queens Museum-Jerome Foundation Fellowship for Emerging Artist* with a solo exhibit at The Queens Museum in 2021.

[Full CV](#)

## **Select Events**

age 0 - born in Jersey City, NJ to Pakistani immigrants.

age 4 - with a gun to my head, I am held hostage in parents' pharmacy in Astoria, Queens. The perp demanded Valium which was not carried in the store.

age 6 - I get in my first fist fight with a kid flying a kite.

age 8 - News about kids killing kids over Nike Air Jordans spreads through school.

age 9 - My father is indicted for sexual assault at his pharmacy job. Charges are dropped. While he was in jail, we lived in a Dodge Colt in a Queens White Castle parking lot for 3 days.

age 10 - Get in my 2nd and 3rd fist fights at school recess.

age 11 - Get in a fist fight at a mosque in Teaneck, NJ.

age 12 - My *fresh* Raiders hat is stolen off my head in a Jersey mall.

age 14 - Miscellaneous fist fight with a neighbor.

age 16 - Elected High School Wrestling captain.

age 16 - Fistfight with my estranged father to force him to leave the house.

age 16 - Steal a car and bash 31 mailboxes with an accomplice on Homecoming night.

age 17 - Miscellaneous fist fight with a neighbor.

age 17 - Shatter my left wrist by falling 13 feet while polevaulting.

age 20 - My father is victim of homicide in Terrell, Texas (32.7375° N, 96.2825° W).

age 21 - Graduate with a B.S. Genetics & B.A. Studio Art from Drew University.

age 22 - 2 crackheads surround me outside BoBs in LES. They think I have drugs in my rolled up shirt.

age 23 - Street fight on 31st and Park Ave with a drug dealer whose 'drop' phone landed at our feet.

age 26 - Start meditating daily.

*c. 2012*



*Fronting*  
2015

Confrontation is limited to the performativity of intimidation, as imposed rules do not allow the event to reach a violent climax. Rather, the characters, or avatars, continually loop in alternative forms of engagement.

[View Performance](#)



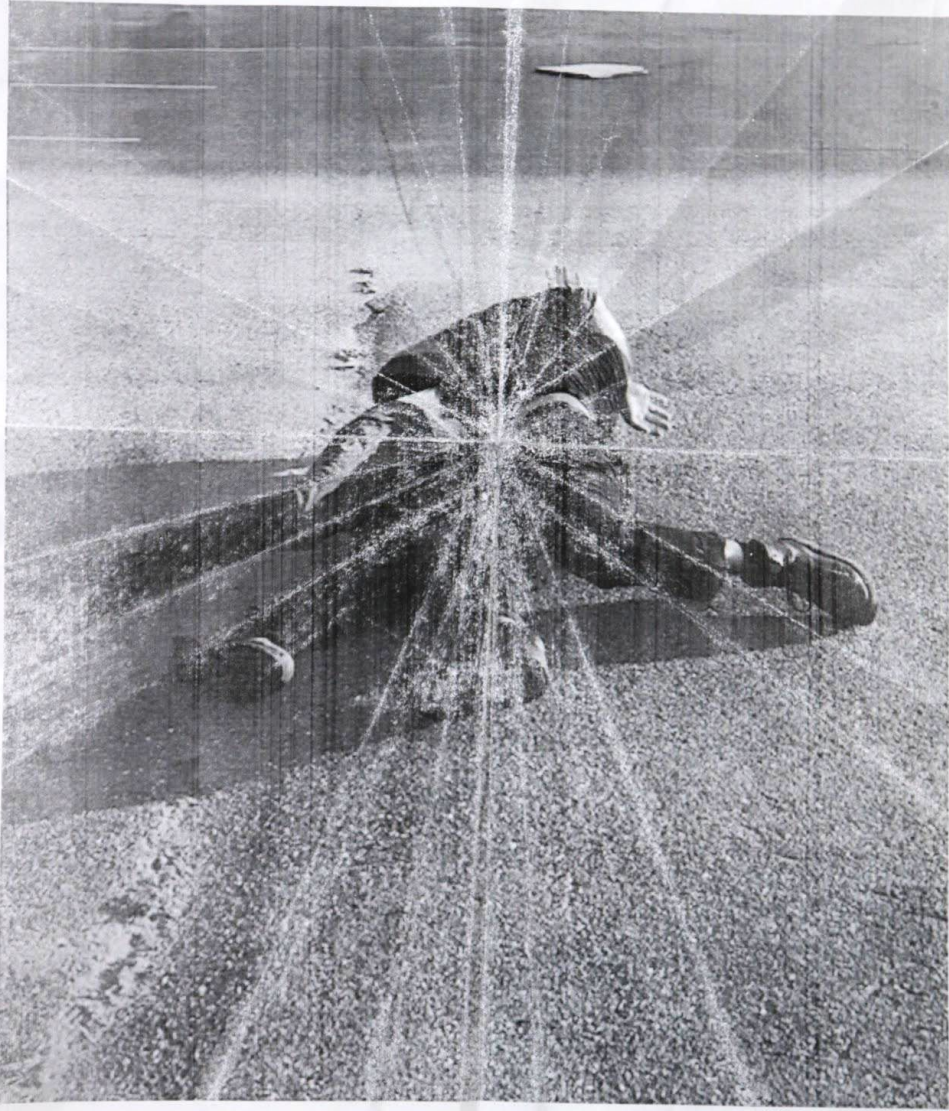
*Sedated Snake*

2019

Reacting to the subgenre of YouTube fight videos, Asif Mian & SV Randall perform in a slow motion, improvisation of struggle and intimacy at the Skowhegan High School parking lot. During the process of slow movement, aggressivity and attack is transformed to caress and support for the other body.

[View Performance](#)







*More Human photo series*





### *More Human*

2017

*More Human* enlists sports and movement performers to practice directed yet improvised rituals within multi-room architecture. Live-camera feeds from an adjacent bathroom and side room are fed to a projection for the audience to voyeuristically observe. The voyeurism collapses when the performers surround and then converge in front of the audience.

[View Video](#)



### *Training Day*

2017

From *More Human*, theater actor, Francis Pace Nunez, is 'coached' through a performative training session. He continually bounces through the polarities - intimidation/toughness to fear/embarrassment - of the "shame-anger loop". Physical and emotional expressions contradict in a show of performative dexterity.

[View Video](#)



The Queens Museum presents  
***RAF: Prosthetic Location***

*Prosthetic Location* is an expansion of Mian's ongoing multi-chapter project, *RAF*, which takes eyewitness reports and evidence from the unsolved murder of the artist's father as a point of departure.

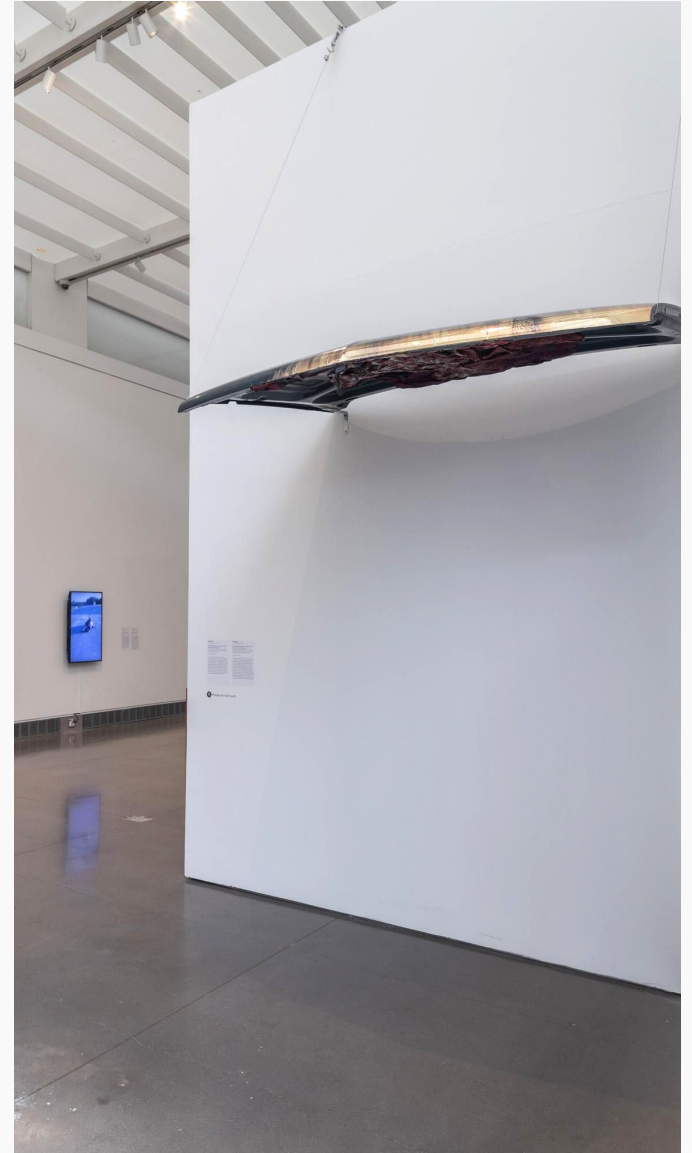
The exhibition's narrative surrounds a single event not as a static occurrence, but a continuum of interpretations, reenactments, and reverberations. It uses the format of a behavioral science case study to imagine a profile of the unidentified suspect, named RAF: his appearance, behaviors, clothing, bedroom, and lifestyle.



*The Slippage Stuck on the Roof of Your Mouth, Tip of Tongue, 2019*

1997 Chevy Silverado dually hood, red and black plaid shirts, aluminum, silver nitrate chroming, and urethane

The story of RAF, Mian's name for the unidentified suspect of the murder of his father, structures the artist's sculptural work as an investigation into the psychological roots and inherited culture of violence in the United States. According to eyewitness reports, RAF was last seen wearing a red plaid shirt and escaping the scene of the crime in a green dually pickup truck with chrome trim. Swaths of plaid shirts are arranged in the shape of Rorschach inkblot often interpreted to symbolize "father".













*One Inch of Separated Red and Black Plaid: Version C, 2021*  
Separated red and black plaid fabric, forensic ruler, magnifying glass

Mian uses the tools and formal procedures of investigation and forensics in order to process the circumstances of violent behavior. The meticulous acts of dissecting, measuring, and magnifying evidence are made visible in which the artist pulls apart each thread from a swatch of the plaid fabric RAF was reported to have worn by witnesses.





*Six Eyewitnesses, Three Detectives, 2021*

Plaid fabric, muslin, flannel, satin, silk, velvet, dye, ink, and trajectory rods

Inside the vitrine, copies of the original eyewitness reports are rendered on different textiles and pierced by trajectory rods, often used to illustrate the direction of a bullet in a crime scene. Mian traces over the handwriting of each of the assigned detectives, effectively redacting the content of each testimony. The text comes in and out of visibility as the letters seep into silk, are transferred onto flannel, and burned out of velvet.





*Smokeless Fire (CG Djinn), 2021*

Red and black plaid shirts, jeans, screen printed T-shirt fabric, clear acrylic, aluminum and hardware

RAF's plaid shirts, jeans, and flame adorned textiles morph into a shell-like armor as they twist and ascend upwards.

The work demonstrates how the spiritual force of Djinn, specifically a Djinn of violence, possesses RAF's body. Djinn are often invisible, interfering spirits in Islamic mythology that are able to inhabit the form of an animal or human. The Qur'an mentions these sometimes treacherous supernatural life forms as being created from "smokeless fire" as the physical and metaphysical collide.





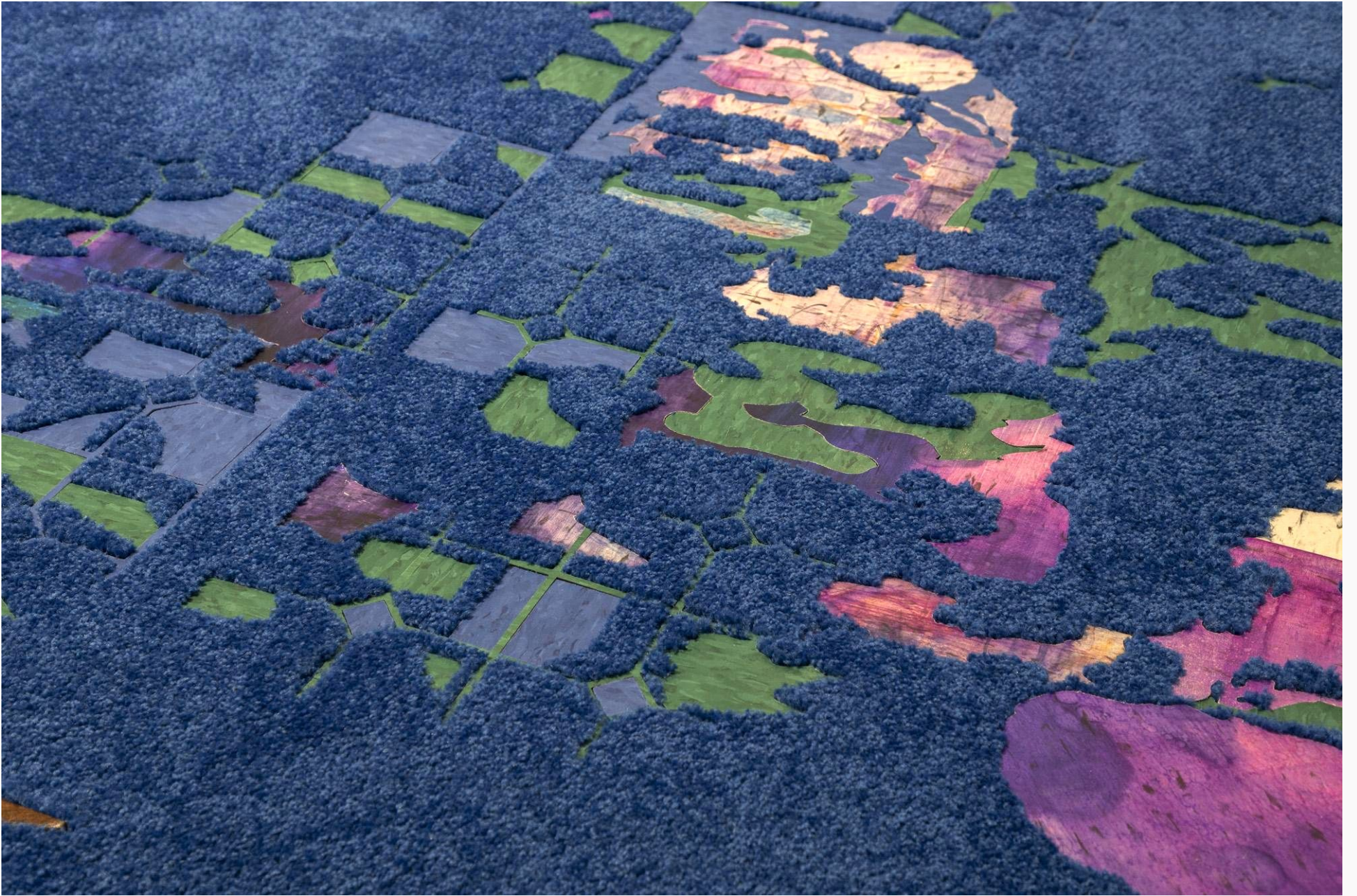


*November 25th (Vestiges of Memory), 2021*

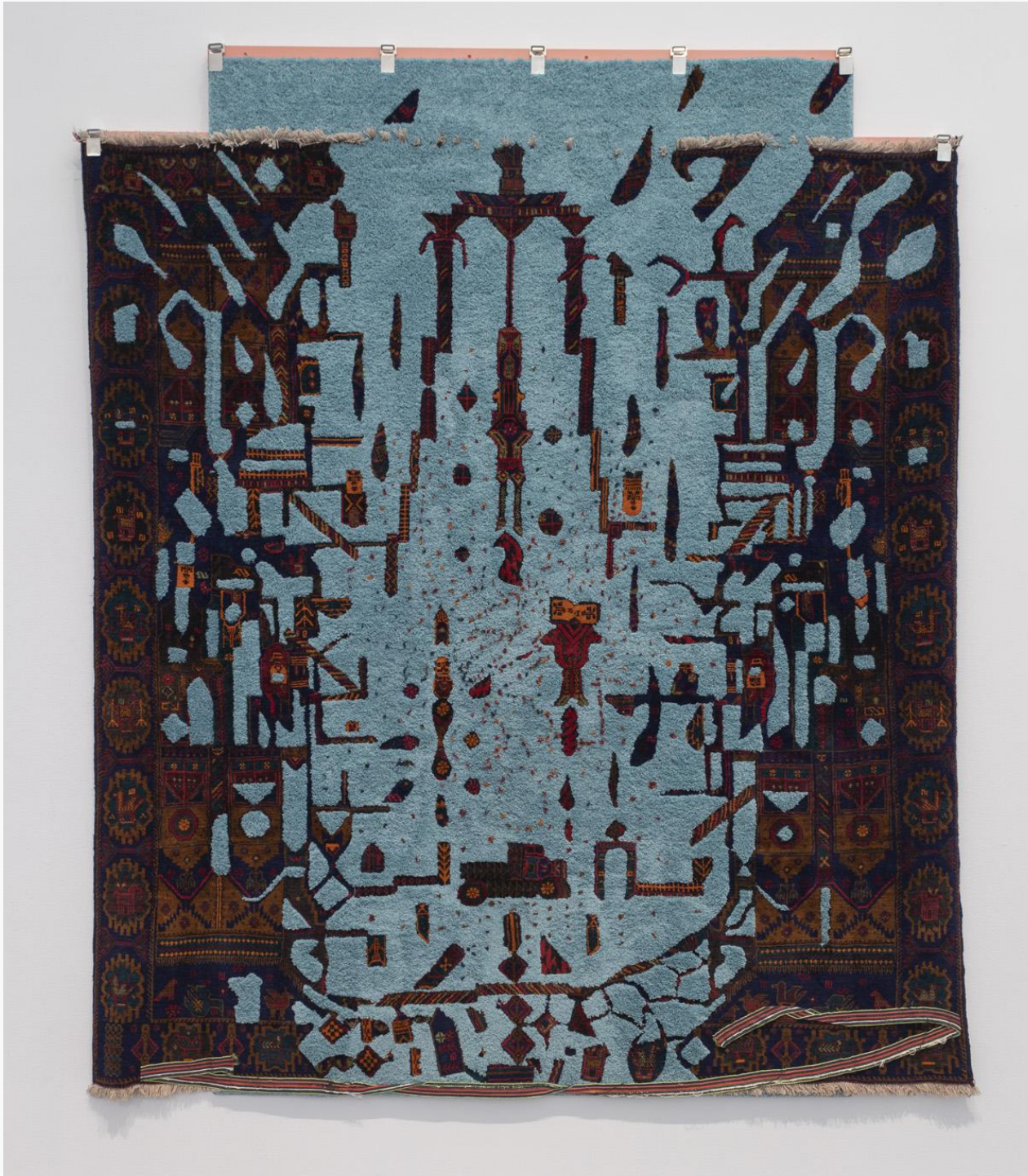
Vinyl tiles, newspaper, rocks, wood, separated plaid fabric, forensic ruler embedded into polypropylene nylon rug

Debris from RAF's story is embedded into the surface of the carpet, including a mosaic of tiles that recall arabesque patterns or the cartographic outline of a neighborhood seen from above. The rug becomes both an archaeological site and an emotional landscape, with the sound of humming reverberating under the surface. This sound work stems from Mian's daily practice of meditation to demonstrate the healing power of vibration in the aftermath of violence.









*The Meeting of RAF and Djinn (November 25th)*  
2021

Afghan tribal rug made in Pakistan, spliced with  
polypropylene nylon rug made in America

An Afghan tribal rug is cut, reorganized, and spliced  
together with an American synthetic rug to create a  
new folklore in pattern.

For Mian, this method is akin to genetic  
recombination, where two molecules of DNA swap  
information. The artist adapts the imagery of the  
handmade Afghan carpets--that traditionally depict  
narratives tied to the land, animals, plant life, and  
spiritual figures--to represent the characters in RAF's  
story. Geometric motifs and symbols are  
repurposed and interwoven to create an elongated  
Djinn moving towards a two-headed RAF figure.







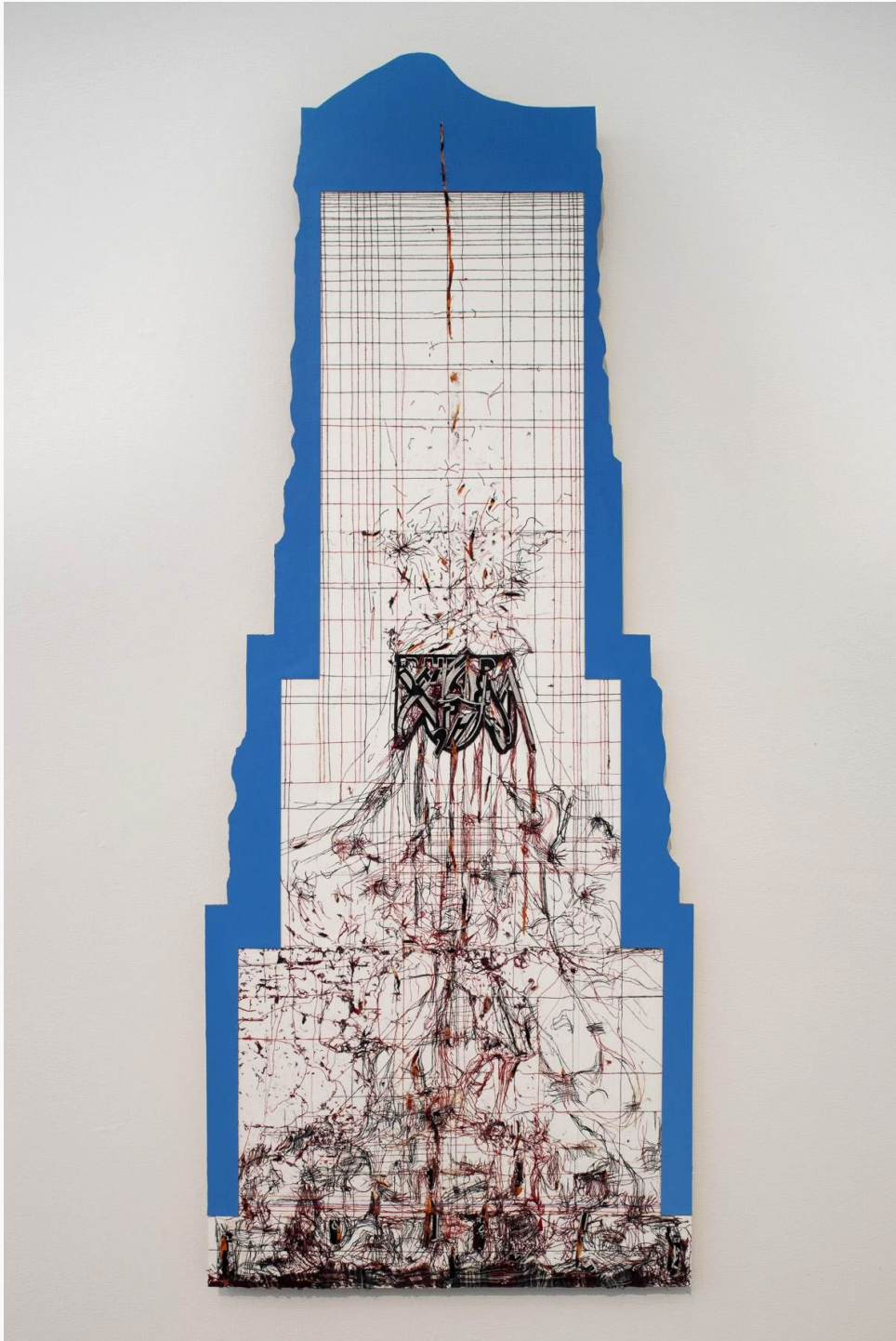


*RAF's Karmic Profile, 2021*

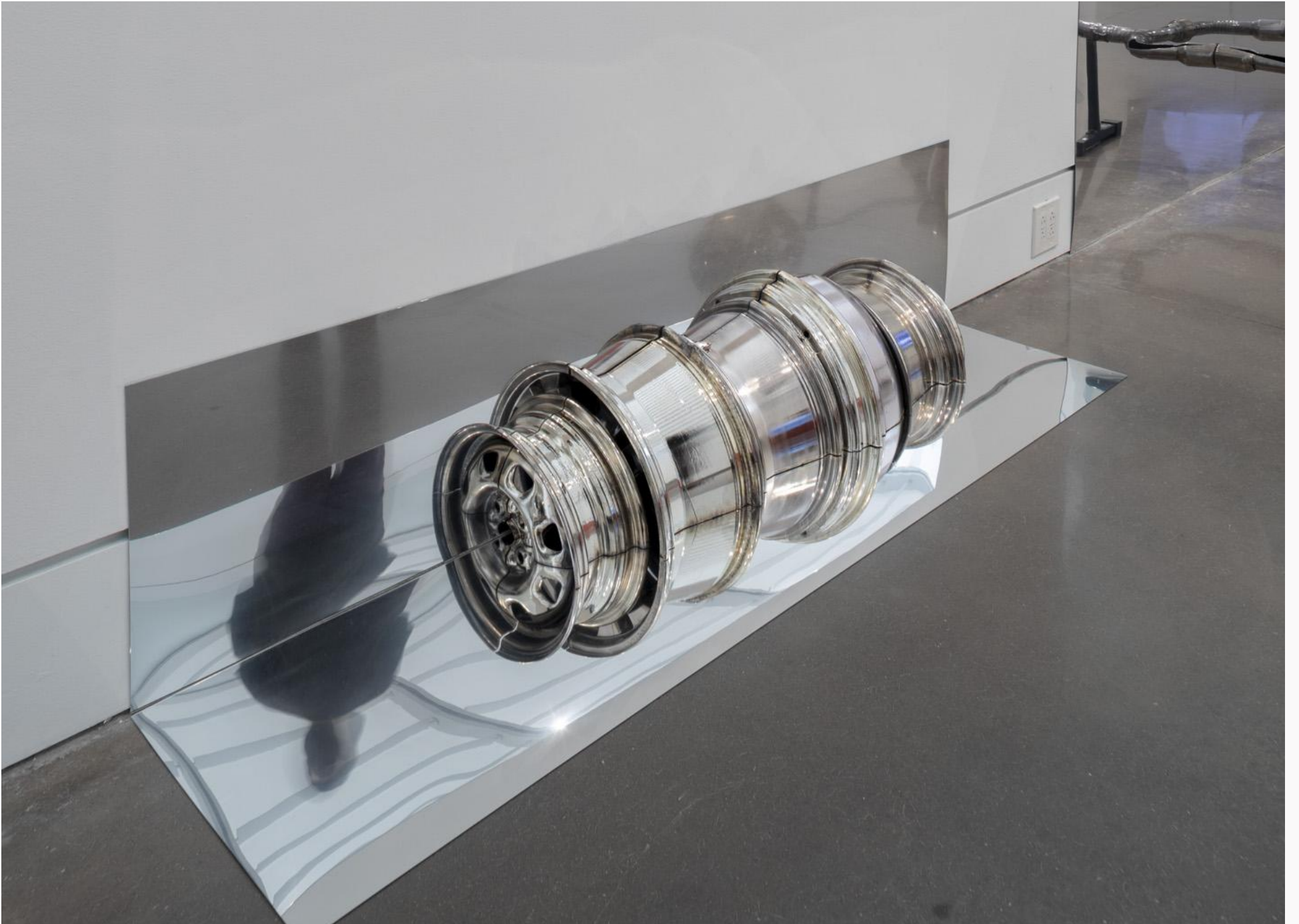
Forensic rulers, separated plaid fabric, surveillance video stills, eyewitness report, *Hot Rod Magazine*, hair, clear tape, ink, and thread

The repeated black and white patterning of the forensic ruler creates a flowing, glitch-like structure that is cut, unraveled, and collaged back together with materials used to identify RAF. The spiral shape created assumes the form of karmic process, where the deductive act of investigation and surreal mythmaking becomes a therapeutic method for the artist.











Asif Mian  
RAF: Prosthetic  
Location

Asif Mian  
RAF: Ubicación  
ortopédica





*Chop Shop (Narcissistic Personality Disorder) 2021*

Chromed junkyard car parts and weight lifting equipment, hardware, tshirt, handcuffs, medallion, knife, and gold chains

RAF's truck is reconstructed as a ghostly reflection made from cuts of weight lifting equipment welded together with car stands, rims, and an exhaust system. The slickly chromed, hybrid sculpture appears to extend out of the space, recalling both a weight bench in a mirror-filled high school gym or the type of hazy hot road mirage one might see at the highway scene of RAF's crime.















*Shapeshifter*, 2021

Galvanized steel duct, silver nitrate chroming, and mixed media

Taking cues from depictions of aliens in science fiction films, *Shapeshifter* is a manifestation of RAF as a non-human and undetectable force invading the psyche of its host. Visually similar to the elongated, twisting depiction of RAF-as-Djinn in other works on view, here it has taken the form of a chromed liquid metal bursting through an overhead air vent. While science fiction may present dystopian narratives and otherworldly creatures that cause harm, in reality the tendency towards violence is already living within and around us.

## ***Nothingness & Specter***

The *Nothingness & Specter* series of infra-red thermal camera videos and installations use an invasive, 'alien' vision to reveal with heat sensing, rather than light exposure.

Thermal imaging operates on the infrared spectrum (IR) and is bound by different constraints; understanding these constraints allow for developing specific materials and methods for video imaging and narratives.





*Nothingness & Specter, 2018*

Mixed media sculpture (polyethylene plastic bags, clear acrylic, chromed steel, heat guns, Arduinos) and live camera feed from FLIR thermal camera onto flatscreen.

Pictured in the *QI: Volumes - Queens International Biennial 2018* at Queens Museum





"Asif Mian explores issues of surveillance and the government's ability to track and control individuals, in public and private. For *Nothingness & Specter*, Mian gathered plastic shopping bags from stores in Queens neighborhoods where many immigrants and people of color live. He heat sealed the bags together into tunics which, when inflated with hot air, appear inhabited by bodies. A thermal (IR) imaging camera mounted on the wall converts the heat from these forms into ghostly (or "specter"-like) digital images, which can be seen on the wall-mounted flatscreen. The images disappear when the air cools. First used by the U.S. military for unmanned drone surveillance in the Middle East, thermal technology is also now used to surveil and police people in the United States. Mian sees this work as subverting the camera's ability to see, and therefore to track and control." (QI: *Volumes* exhibit catalog)

[View Installation at Queens Museum](#)





*Sweetpass Sculpture Park, Dallas, TX*

*Breath Ascent Reveal, 2020*

Video Projection on Steel Structure with Reflecting Pool

[View Installation](#)



*Breath Ascent Reveal*  
2020

The featureless, raceless body roams through institutional hallways under the gaze of a robotic, thermal sensing IR camera. He becomes a computer graphic: a hi contrast black and white image, easy to spot, easy to kill. His life force - his breath and infrared detected heat - keeps him a target. As the threat is separated visually, geographically, and psychologically, we happily watch him as a roaming object.

The simple cut to mobile phone footage takes us out of his thermal manipulation and slams us back into his reality: he is not an alien lurking in a black abyss but a real person hiding under a trash bag.

[View Installation at Sweetpass Sculpture Park](#)

[View \*Breath Ascent Reveal\* video](#)





### *Teenager*

2020

Conceived at the overlapping of the global COVID pandemic and the international Black Lives Matter protests, *Teenager* employs science fiction at the intersection of two seismic events. It recounts a dream in which humans' natural, bodily impulses threaten freedoms.

In this hyper-surveilled netherworld, spectral images caught by thermal cameras reveal brackish traces of suppressed desire. But why not choose defiance, over compliance—and wade into the unknown of embracing what terrifies us most?

[View \*Teenager\*](#)



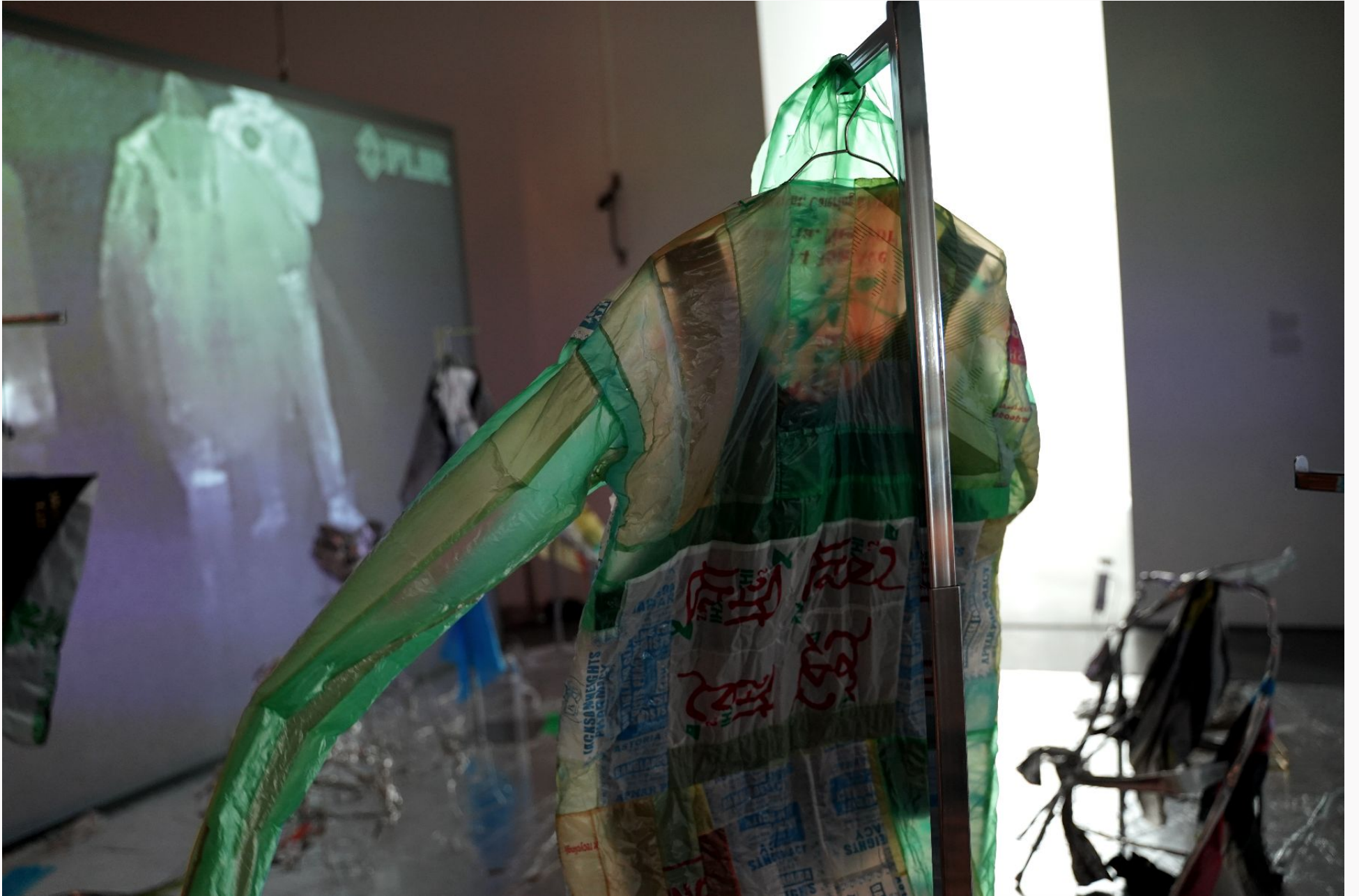
*Decoys in Varying Shades of Nothingness and Specter, 2019*  
15ft w x 18ft l x 10ft h installation

Mixed Media Installation (HVAC aluminum flashing, aluminum tape, duct tape, polyethylene plastic bags, 3M reflective sneaker fabric, humidifier, clothing steamer, thermal blankets, heat guns, oscillating fans, chromed steel clothing stands, wire chafing racks, clear acrylic, linoleum, motion sensors, Arduino, amplified sound, live camera feed from infra-red thermal cameras onto rear-projection screens.)

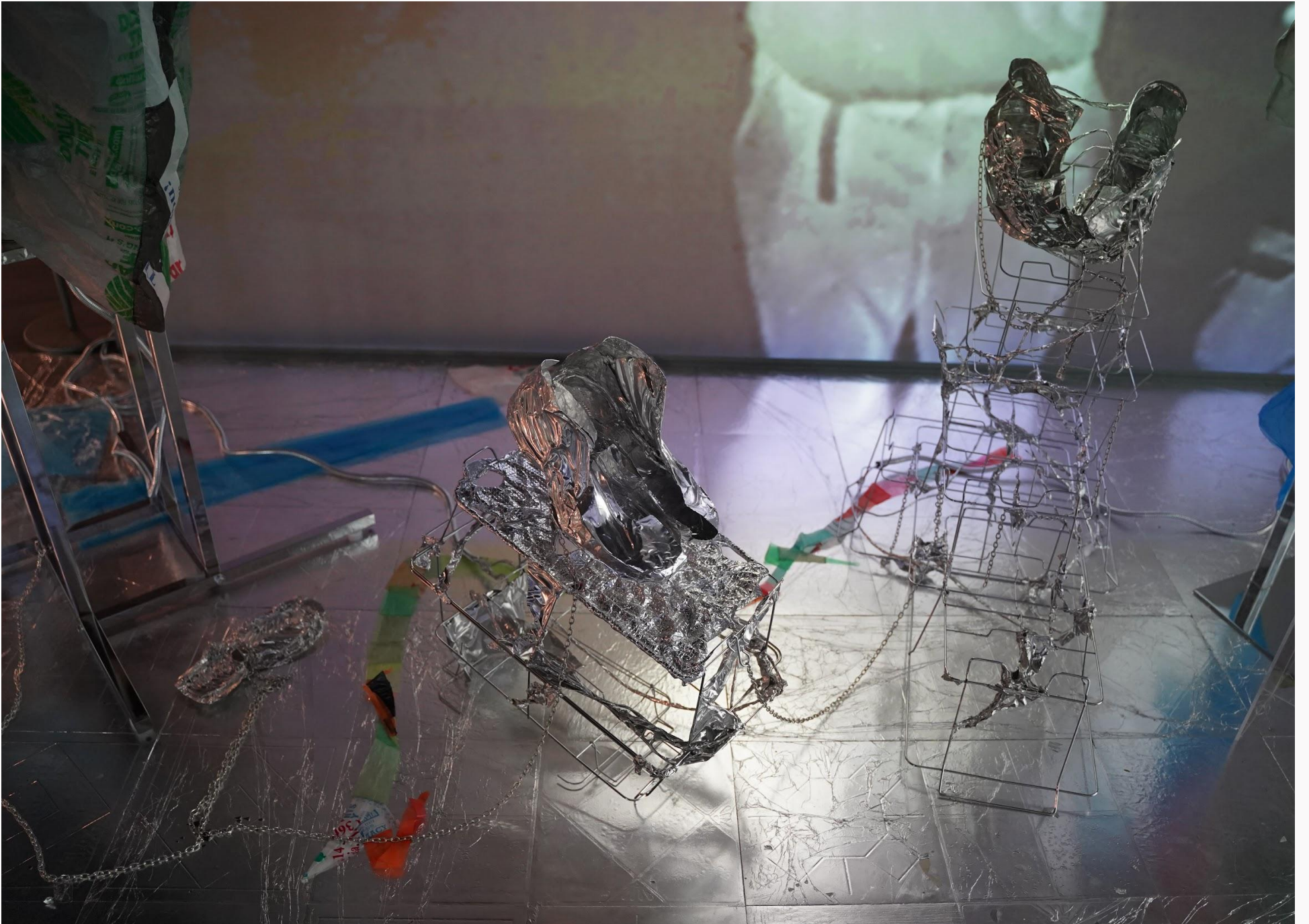
Pictured at *The Shed: Open Call*, The Shed, NY















Commissioned for *The Shed: Open Call* group exhibit at The Shed, NYC

"The mixed-media installation simulates the surveillance infrastructure in a sportswear store after hours. Two infrared thermal cameras project temperature variances of bodies and objects within the installation. Display racks hold plastic tunics clothing and aluminum footwear which have been materially altered to convey the shifting perspective between reality and virtuality. The haunting installation explores the duality of seen versus unseen; real versus virtual; and threat versus decoy."

(*The Shed: Open Call* exhibit catalog)

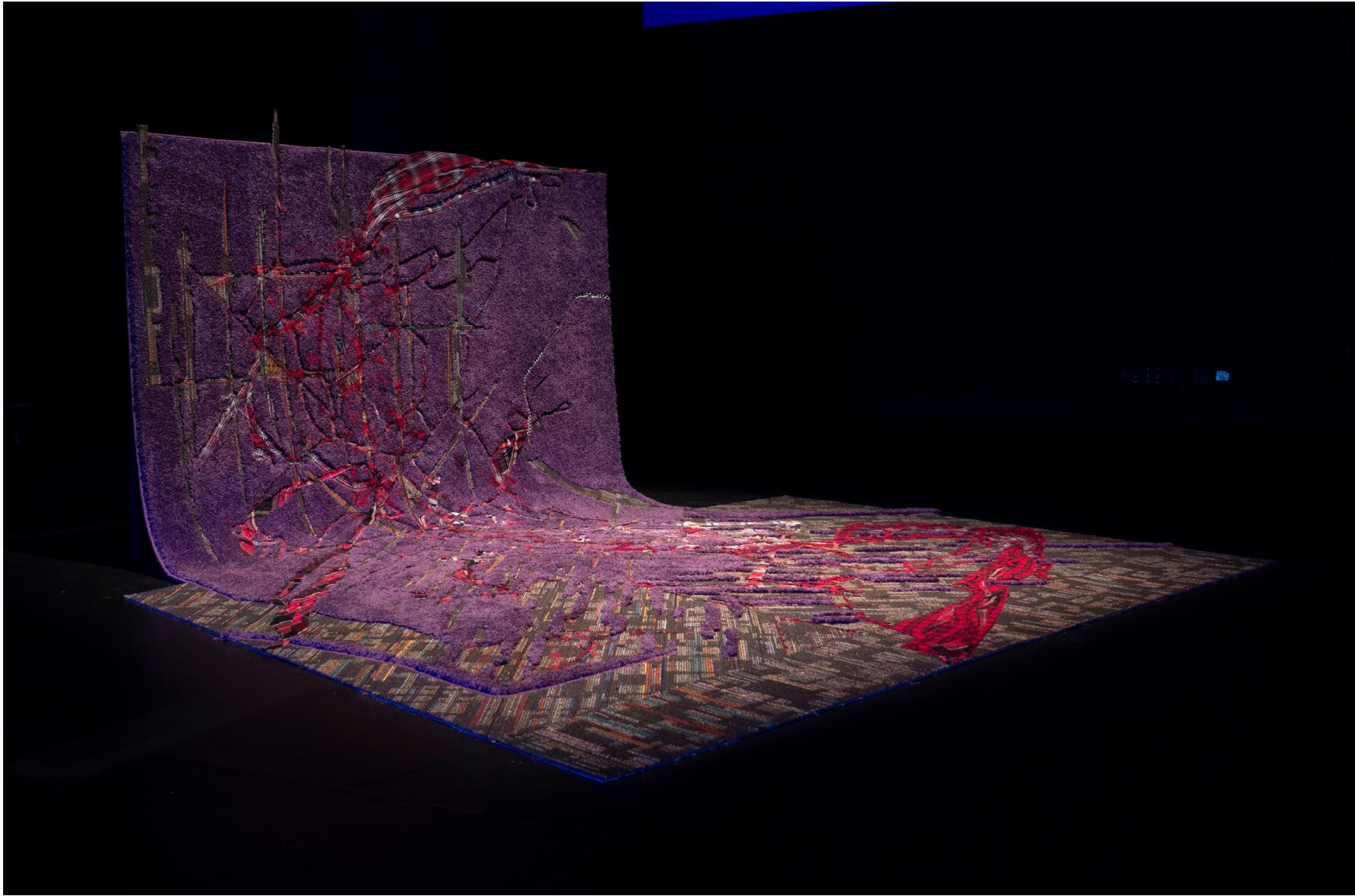
[View Installation at The Shed](#)



## *Event Sculpture*

Employing the model of genetic recombination (where two molecules of DNA swap genetic material), these rug works and installations use exchange and embedding to create hybrids.

These 'Event Sculptures' are defined by flux and merger; their markers of material and process are permanently preserved.



*Diffuse Ghostly, Sieve and Weave*

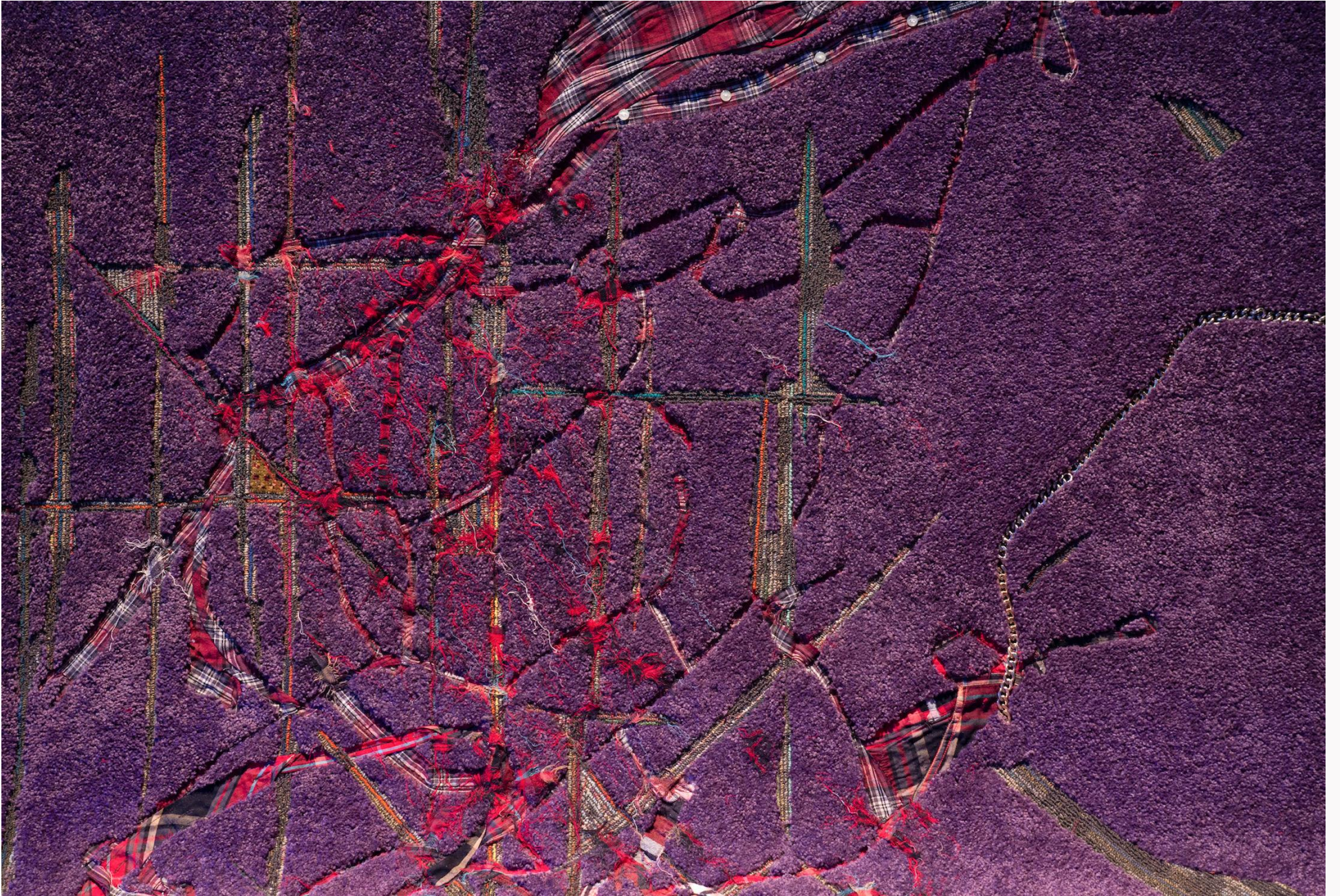
2019

Polyester fiber rug, carpet tiles, 4 red and black plaid shirts, neck chain, steel support

84 x 60 x 40 inches

The concept of hauntology and "the figure of the ghost as that which is neither present, nor absent, neither dead nor alive" via Mark Fisher's *Ghosts of My Life* is important in developing the rug works. The traces of an event - its material vestiges - are not swept up after disorder but rather dissected, embraced, and embedded. Shown here from The Whitney ISP curatorial show, *A.A.H.D.H.*, at The Kitchen.









*Chrysaloid Weight Bench (Anger Bound by Shame)*

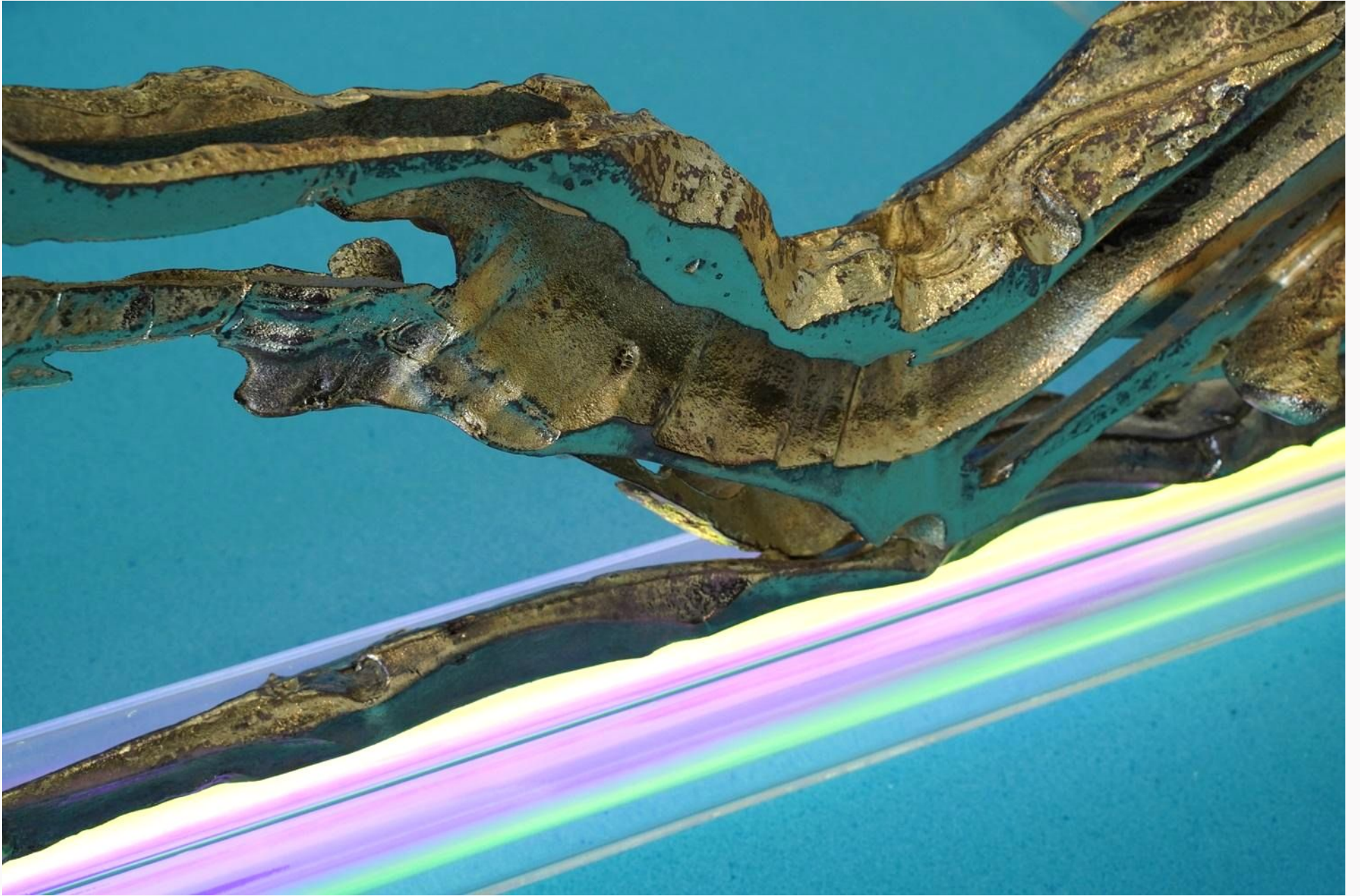
Clear Acrylic, Wrestling Trophies, Marble, EPS foam, Silver Nitrate Chroming, Urethane, Aluminum, LED Light, Iridescent Film, Memory Foam  
32 x 58 x 72 in

The vestiges of hypermasculine, jock culture are melded into a place for RAF's transformative puberty. Armed with physical and biochemical changes, toxic hypermasculinity is social aggressivity rooting from shame. Sociologist, Thomas Scheff, states, "the dysfunctional management of shame is to mask it with anger....denial of shame can result in a shame-anger loop of unlimited intensity and duration."













*Threat Value*

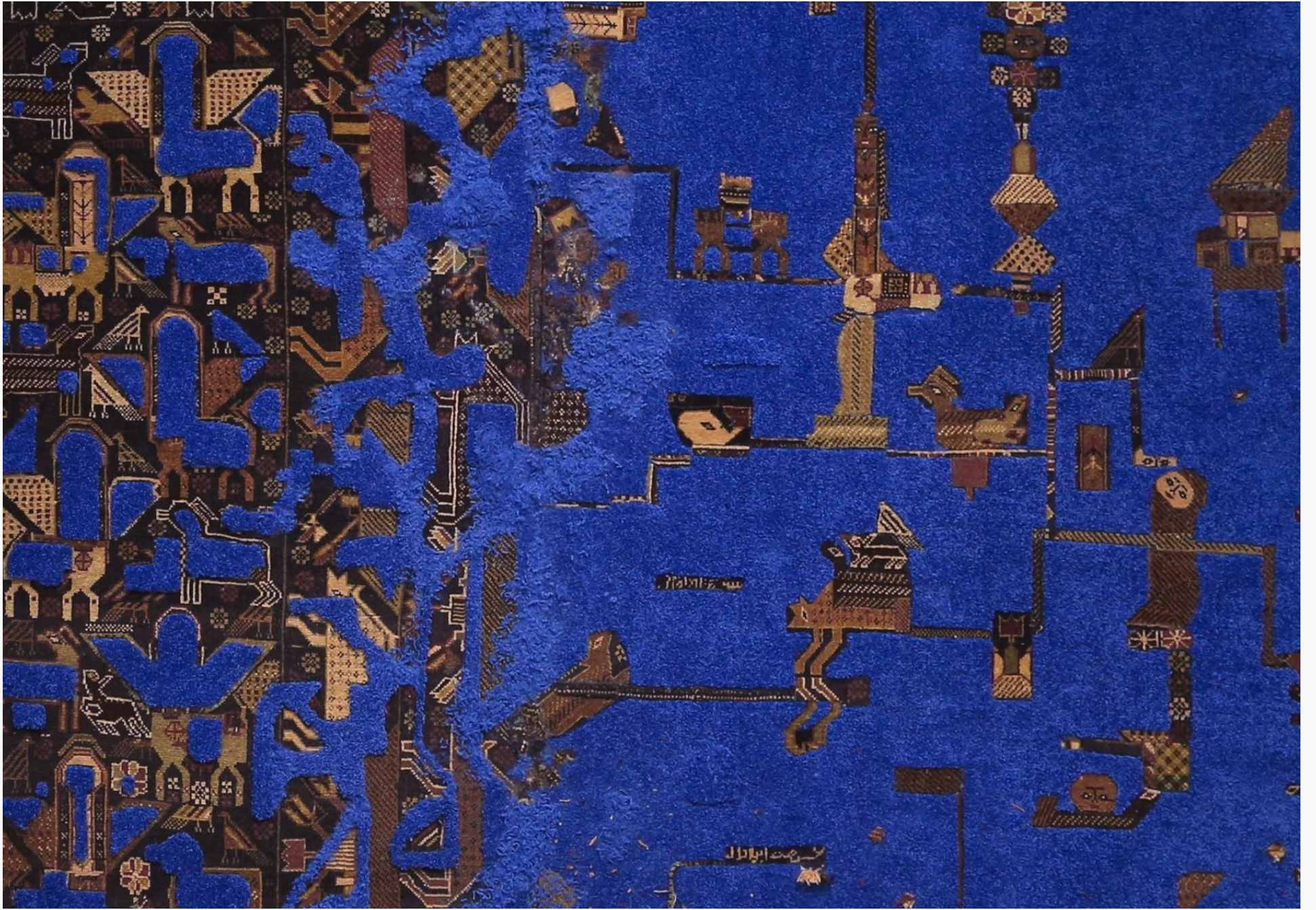
2018

Hand knotted wool Afghan rug, machine woven polypropylene rug, steel

144 x 108 inches

Employing the model of genetic recombination: (where two molecules of DNA swap genetic material), *Threat Value* crosses 2 rugs of different origins, surgically splicing and trading their material, 1 to 1. The importance of the swap comes from the sources of the rugs: one is a wool Afghan rug made in Pakistan, the other a synthetic area rug made in the US. The Afghan rug pieces are cut again, reorganized, and embedded into a vertical landscape. The visible trade and exchange, points to actions in colonialism, occupation, immigration, war, change, and advancement.









*A Disappearing Garden Of*

2019

Polyester fiber rugs, 4 red and black plaid shirts, thread, linoleum tile, steel, rubber epoxy

84 x 60 x 40 inches

The rug works continue the tradition of South Asian carpet making by considering the exact place where an event can occur: within the confines of a swath of carpet. The cutting and splicing of plaid fabric, thread, and carpet are derived from the actions of DNA recombination and permanently embedded into the carpet pile for preservation.









*Thank You*