

Chiffon THOMAS

Artforum,
Chiffon Thomas

July 2024

ARTFORUM

CRITICS' PICKS LOS ANGELES

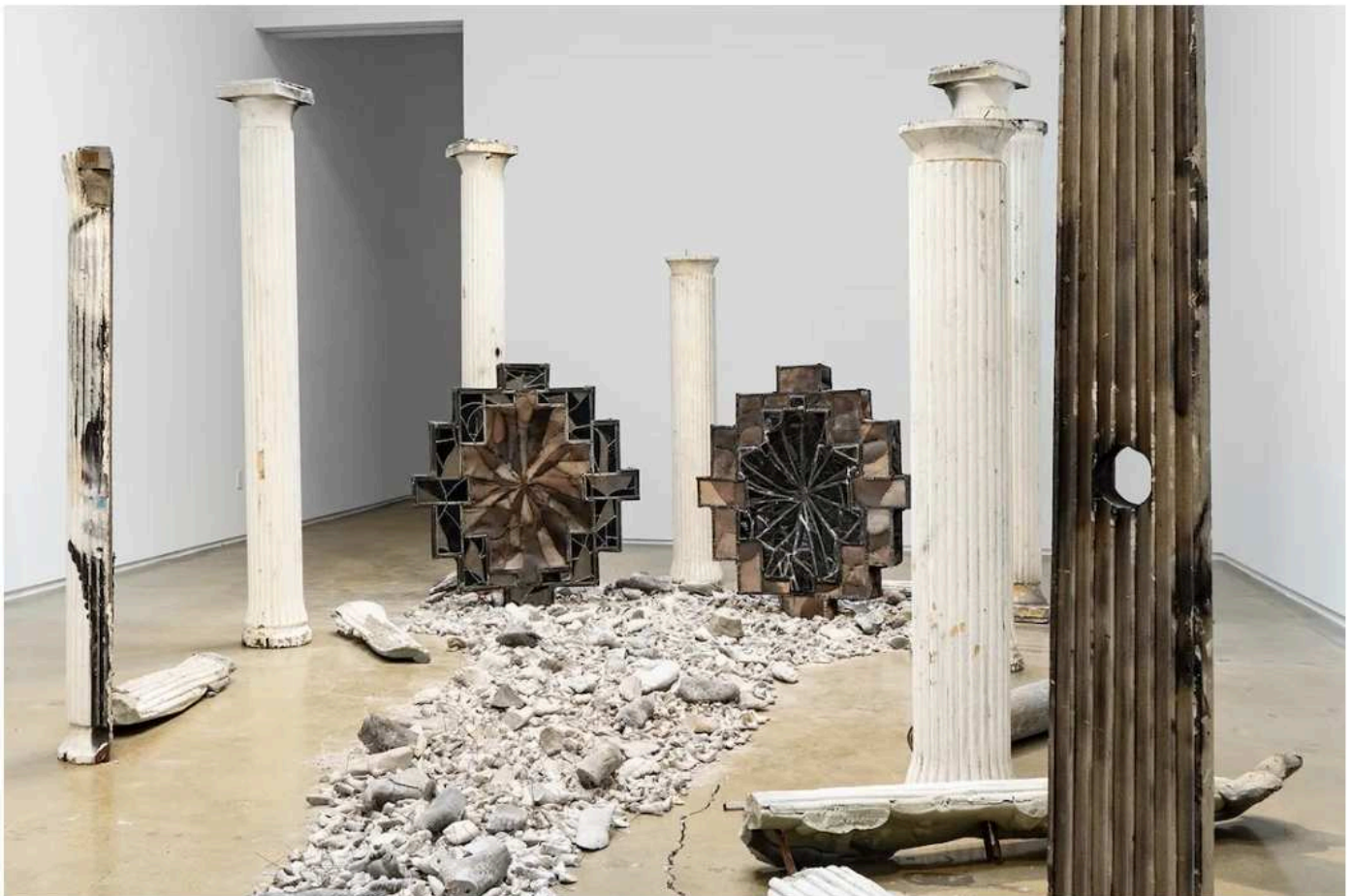
Chiffon Thomas

Michael Kohn Gallery | 1227 North Highland Avenue

June 20, 2024 - August 17, 2024

By Annabel Osberg 𐄂

July 17, 2024 2:11 pm



View of "Chiffon Thomas: Progeny," 2024.

PERROTIN

“Progeny,” Chiffon Thomas’s exhibition here, presents three installations in which peculiar juxtapositions of body parts and architectural forms become points of departure for considering how individual and collective identities evolve. Exuding a somber, dignified presence, Thomas’s sculptures and assemblages read as monuments to anonymous persons.

Visitors are greeted by an untitled piece (all works cited, 2024) resembling an inverted obelisk: Instead of pointing up toward the heavens, the triangular column’s apex is directed down to earth, where dozens of cast human feet are suspended above a single pair of feet serving as the sculpture’s base—an arrangement that evokes history, lineage, and bloodlines. The main pair’s toes are turned toward a sculpture of a slave ship piled with disembodied doll-like feet. Thomas’s emphasis on these burden-bearing appendages of the human body seem symbolic of grueling labor and the unrecognized people who were forced into it.

Legacies of colonial violence and racism are further suggested by a group of untitled sculptures in which cast bronze facial segments are amalgamated with pieces of steel and stained glass in configurations loosely recalling African or Indigenous masks. In one, a large round protuberance resembles the lip plates worn by some African tribes but, instead of existing within the mouth, Thomas’s excrescence obliterates it, leaving the face without a voice or a means of taking in sustenance. The Frankensteinian morbidity of the reconfigured parts contrasts with the funereal reverence of the sculptures’ display inside metal-wainscoted niches whose rust-brown surfaces fight

against the gallery's pristine white walls. Thomas identifies as a trans queer person of color raised in a religious environment; these works invoke the complexity of navigating a hybrid selfhood within sundry, and even oppositional, milieus.

Elsewhere is an untitled floor arrangement of variously sized tan, gray, and white human feet, ringed by battered Doric columns, that flow like a river from a fracture in the gallery wall, terminating in a duo of strangely shaped dark sculptures evoking futuristic sci-fi tablets. This installation—and the show overall—feels like a hidden world brought to light. What was lost in the building of this civilization, and what might its future hold?