

James Barron Art

*Ghost of a Dream: without a king,
everybody wants some heaven*



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Ghost of a Dream: without a king, everybody wants some heaven

Opens May 28, 2023

Ghost of a Dream is a collaborative artist duo (Lauren Was and Adam Eckstrom) whose work centers on the ephemera of people's hopes and dreams. Our exhibition reconceptualizes collages made from discarded lottery tickets, which they created for the oratorio of Santa Maria Della Vita in Bologna.

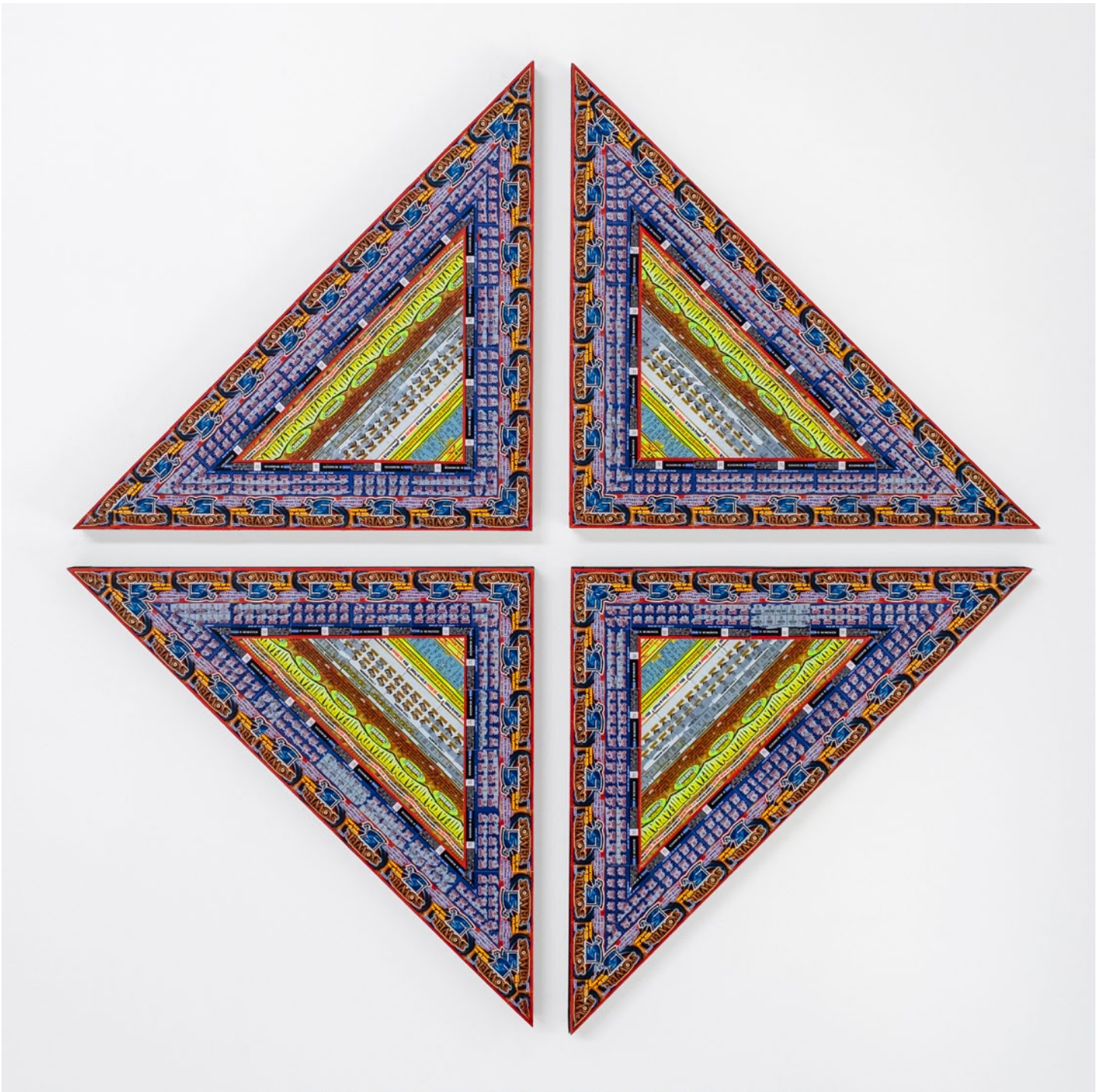
“As we were collecting [the lottery tickets], we started thinking about the people behind the tickets: whose hopes are these, and what do they want when they're scratching?”

Lauren Was, Ghost of a Dream



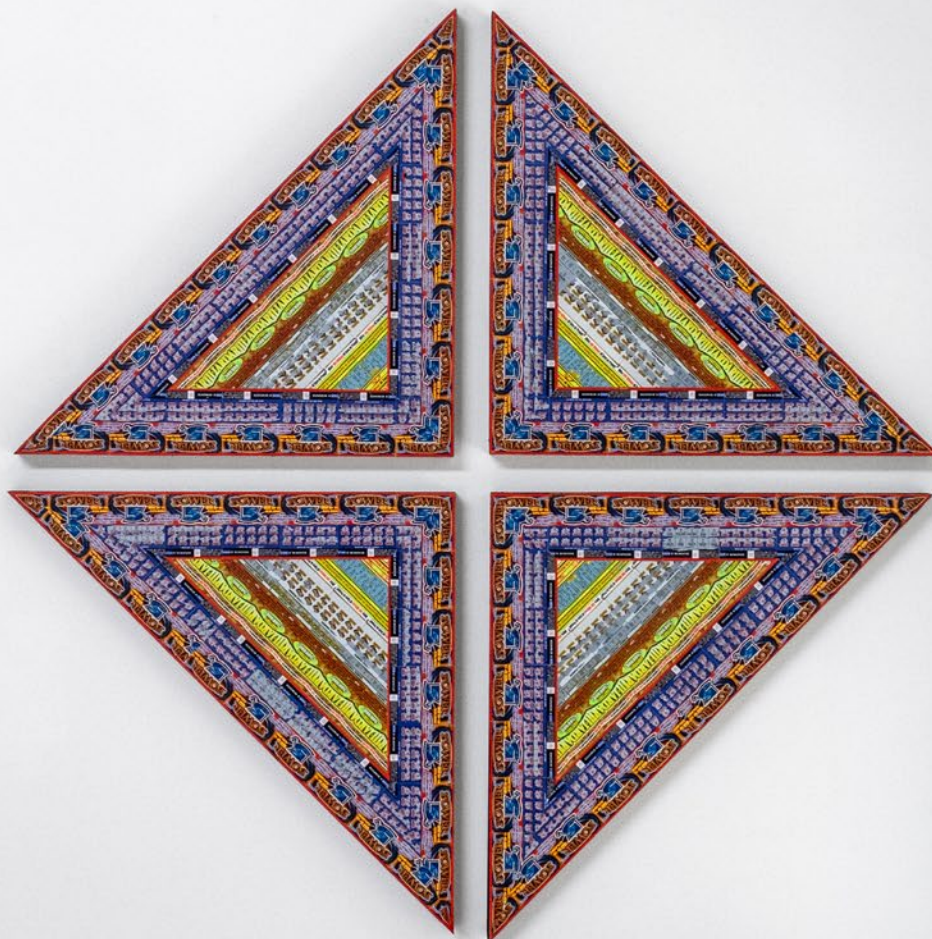
GHOST OF A DREAM

the critic with a grudge, 2011 - 2023
discarded lottery tickets on four panels with UV coat
55 1/2 x 55 1/2 x 2 inches (141 x 141 x 5.1 cm)



“Repetitive hope keeps people going... whether your faith is going to church on Sundays in search of an everlasting future, or whether it’s going to the bodega and spending five bucks every Friday at 5pm. Whatever your religion is, it’s about the hope that you’re going to win in the end.”

Adam Eckstrom, Ghost of a Dream





GHOST OF A DREAM

do you ever really wonder, 2011 - 2023
discarded lottery tickets on four panels with UV coat
134 x 134 x 2 inches (340.4 x 340.4 x 5.1 cm)





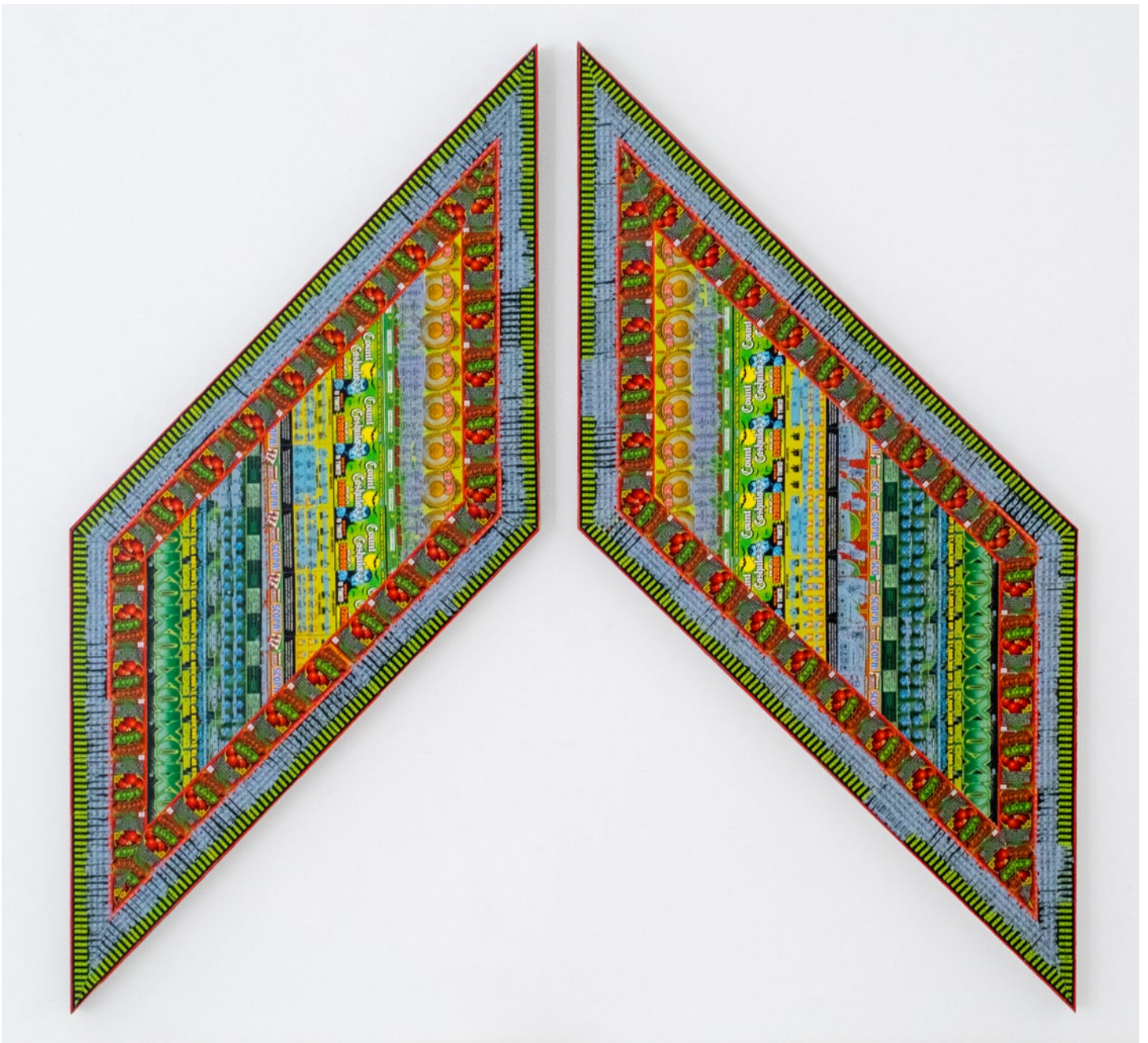
GHOST OF A DREAM

the profit and the fool, 2011 - 2023
discarded lottery tickets on eight panels with UV coat
72 x 72 x 2 inches (182.9 x 182.9 x 5.1 cm)



GHOST OF A DREAM

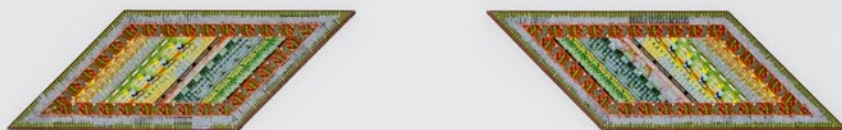
if there is such a thing, 2011 - 2023
discarded lottery tickets on eight panels with UV coat
52 1/2 x 50 1/2 x 2 inches (133.4 x 128.3 x 5.1 cm)



GHOST OF A DREAM

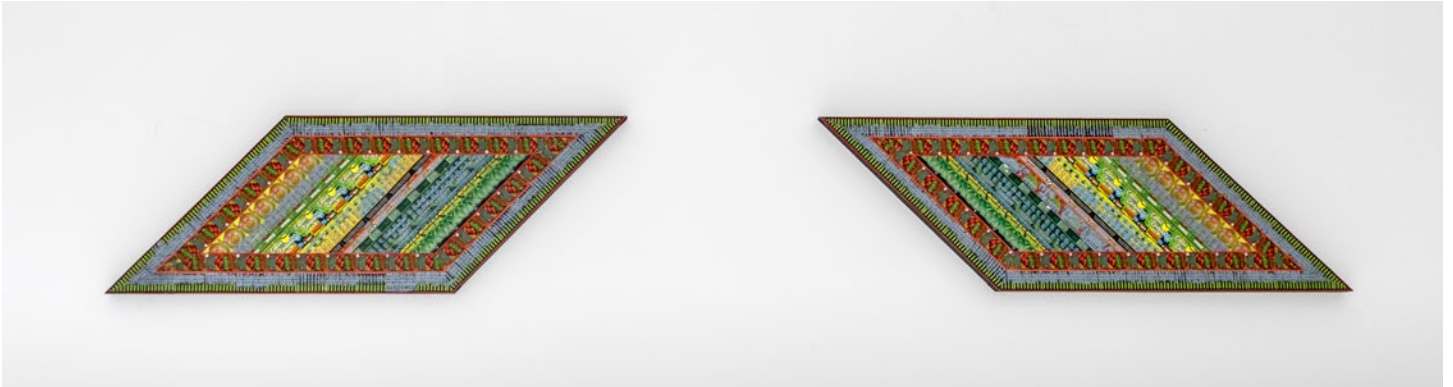
everybody wants some heaven, 2011 - 2023
discarded lottery tickets on eight panels with UV coat
116 x 111 1/2 x 2 inches (294.7 x 283.2 x 5.1 cm)



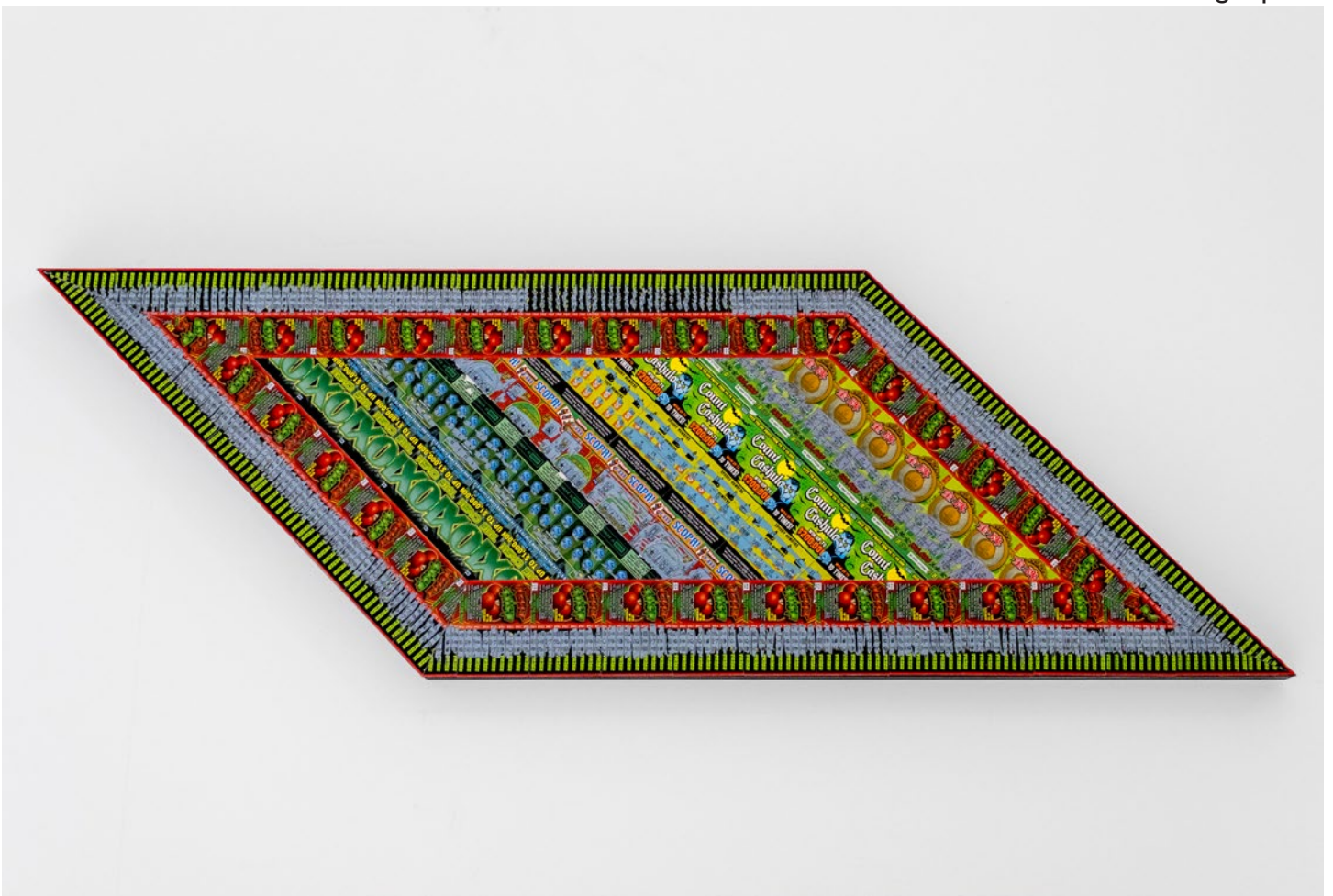


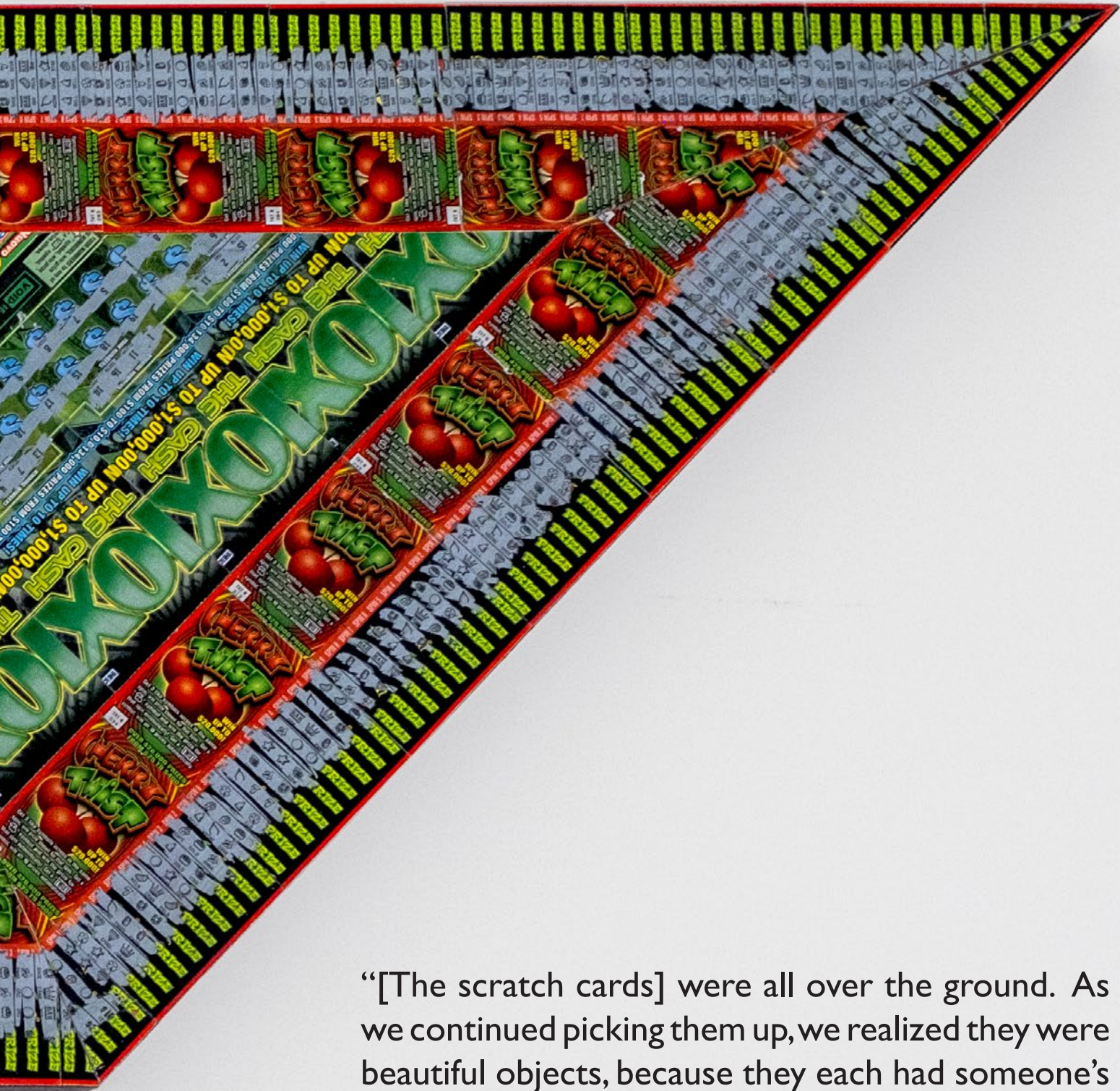
GHOST OF A DREAM

the prisoner and the judge, 2011 - 2023
discarded lottery tickets on four panels with UV coat
126 x 18 x 2 inches (320 x 45.7 x 5.1 cm)



Detail view, right panel





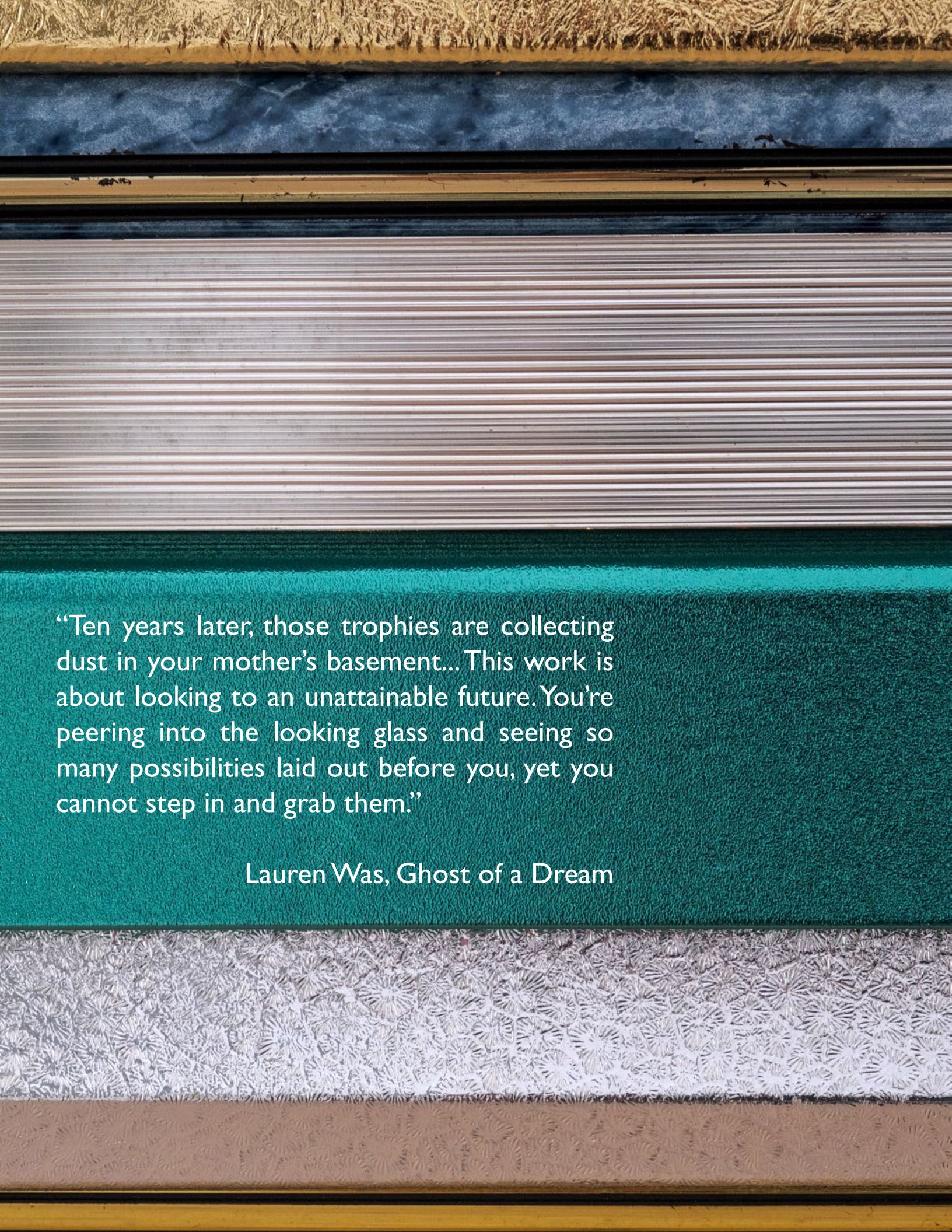
“[The scratch cards] were all over the ground. As we continued picking them up, we realized they were beautiful objects, because they each had someone’s signature. Everyone scratches them in a different way. Once you have amassed a collection, you start to recognize the same person’s ephemera.”

Adam Eckstrom, Ghost of a Dream

GHOST OF A DREAM

high against the sky, 2011 - 2023
winning trophy elements, ribbons,
two way mirror, frames, and lightbulbs
92 x 38 x 2 inches (233.7 x 96.5 x 5.1 cm)





“Ten years later, those trophies are collecting dust in your mother’s basement... This work is about looking to an unattainable future. You’re peering into the looking glass and seeing so many possibilities laid out before you, yet you cannot step in and grab them.”

Lauren Was, Ghost of a Dream

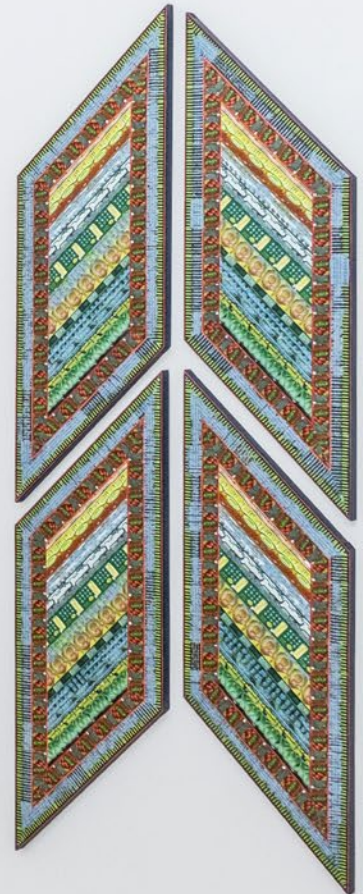
GHOST OF A DREAM

do you want to hear an angel, 2011 - 2023
discarded lottery tickets on four panels with UV coat
92 x 38 x 2 inches (233.7 x 96.5 x 5.1 cm)



“We’re also projecting when we imagine what people are hoping and dreaming about—we're putting our own confessions back into the work.”

Lauren Was, Ghost of a Dream



GHOST OF A DREAM

the rebel and the teacher, 2011
used lottery tickets collage on two panels with UV coat
72 x 72 x 2 inches
(182.9 x 182.9 x 5.1 cm)





“In China, Italy, the States, or anywhere really, the culture around these tickets is the same. You go up to a little kiosk with hope for your life to change.”

Lauren Was, Ghost of a Dream

Interview / Ghost of a Dream

May 2023

James Barron: How did you begin working together as Ghost of a Dream?

Adam Eckstrom: We met at RISD. I was a painting grad, and Lauren was a sculpture grad.

Lauren Was: We started dating about a year after Adam finished school, and he moved in with me into my loft in Ridgewood in 2007. We got married only a year after we started dating and began collaborating soon after that. We were all in from our first date.

AE: We shared a giant loft split down the middle between our two studios. I was making paintings about her sculptures, and she was making sculptures about my paintings. We were so in love and heavily influenced by each other's process.

LW: We started collecting lottery tickets that we found on the ground when we were out walking our dog Banana. We began wondering why people were buying these tickets and what kept their hopes up when we found so many losing tickets.

JB: The used lottery tickets are literally discarded dreams. The second your hope is squashed, you want to get rid of it. You throw it on the ground.

AE: They were all over the ground. As we continued picking them up, we realized they were beautiful objects, because they each had someone's signature. Everyone scratches them in a different way. Once you have amassed a collection, you start to recognize the same person's ephemera. You make the same walk with your dog every day, and that person buys the same card every day—two religious acts.

LW: We loved the idea of harvesting lost hopes. As we were collecting, we started thinking about the people behind the tickets: *whose hopes are these, and what do they want when they're scratching?*

JB: Did you ever stand at a kiosk or bodega and watch people scratch, or ask them about their faith in the scratch cards?

AE: We once did a project where we took \$100 to the bodega near us and saw how many cycles it took to go to zero. We put in \$100, and we got \$48 back. We used that money to buy another round. We got \$27. We went to zero in the next round.

LW: We spent a lot of time at those stores trying to take their garbage.

AE: We met bodega owners, like the place between 24th and 25th on the east side of 10th Ave. That bodega collected a lot for us; I worked at Marianne Boesky at the time, and I became friends with the owner as I went in for my daily Diet Coke.

When we were making our first big project, *Dream Ride*, we went to a place on the Massachusetts border called Bets & Butts. They only sell lottery tickets and cigs. They collected for us for a while until they decided they wanted to stop. Then we moved to looking through their dumpsters while they chased us away!

LW: (laughing) So gross. We were sorting through trash that was filled with popcorn, cigarette butts, coffee cups and lottery tickets.

JB: People often buy these tickets at gas stations. Sometimes when I'm getting gas, I'll watch someone buy a ticket and then come outside to their car to scratch. Before they win a small amount of money, or lose, there's a moment where they're saying: "I'm going to test this hope again." It seems like a very human trait—it's Great Gatsby-esque. That's one of the core ideas of your work, right?

LW: Exactly. We never want to say, "Oh, this is gambling and gambling is bad." It's about our blind faith that it's all going to work out in the end.

AE: We're not making a judgment. Repetitive hope keeps people going. For our project *Everybody Wants Some Heaven*, it's all about repetitive hope, whether your faith is going to church on Sundays in search of an everlasting future, or whether it's going to the bodega and spending five bucks every Friday at 5pm. Whatever your religion is, it's about the hope that you're going to win in the end.



JB: Faith is really, in a way, the subject of your work. Hope and faith.

AE: It's one of the main driving forces.

JB: You also expanded the idea and collected lottery tickets internationally. Do you see a common bond across cultures in these lottery tickets?

LW: That was an interesting experience. In China, Italy, the States, or anywhere really, the culture around these tickets is the same. You go up to a little kiosk with hope for your life to change.

JB: The works in our show were part of your installation *Everybody Wants Some Heaven* in Bologna.

LW: There was a program called Art First in Bologna that opened during Arte Fiera, which is the biggest fair in Italy.

AE: Julia Draganovic, the curator of Art First, saw our work with Cynthia Corbett at Volta in 2010 with a few other curators. They invited us to do a project in Bologna. At the time, we were living in Berlin working on an exhibition, so we went down to Bologna for a site visit. They showed us all these amazing historical sites to choose from.

LW: Draganovic was also one of the founders of No Longer Empty, and the project had that sort of feeling to it too: taking over a space that had a historical component and wasn't necessarily empty, but where we could insert art. One of the sites was the cavernous oratorio of Santa Maria Della Vita.

AE: As soon as we walked in, we both knew it was right for us. It's a beautiful space, but we noticed that the floor was a little faded.

LW: It had this amazing tile work, with beautiful patterns throughout the whole floor of the church. We had never imagined installing our work in a church, but we had been thinking about the religion of the lottery. We realized this would be the perfect place to explore this idea, and that we could bring the patterns on the floor to life with our colorful collages.

JB: It's interesting, because people go to confession nearby. When people buy lottery tickets, it's also a type of confession. It's a confession about your aspirations and how you want to change your life—maybe to be a provider for a family.



Everybody Wants Some Heaven, 2011 (installation view)
Oratorio of Santa Maria Della Vita
Bologna, Italy

Everybody Wants Some Heaven, 2011 (installation view)
Oratorio of Santa Maria Della Vita
Bologna, Italy



LW: We're also projecting when we imagine what people are hoping and dreaming about—we're putting our own confessions back into the work.

JB: What's it like for you to see these paintings installed on walls, rather than the original installation in Bologna on the floor?

LW: It was so much fun to be able to play with different configurations of shapes and not have the constraint of following the pattern on the floor. To be able to move shapes around any way we wanted was really wonderful. So many of these pieces can take on different meaning depending on the way they are installed.

JB: It's not so much of a re-configuration, as it is a reconceptualization of the work itself.

LW: In the back of our mind, there is still the idea of repetition and pattern, and how people pursue their hopes and dreams. But there is a very different aura about it. Seeing it on the walls, you are struck with another feeling. There is a grandness to it; you're not looking down on it.

JB: Can you talk about the sculpture in the show? What was the intention with sculpture? Does it have a specific meaning to you?

LW: We are always collecting, thinking about different objects, and how they represent all the things we strive for and desire. We were interested in the idea of wanting to win a trophy, which for many of us begins in our youth. It's another thing people are trying to achieve, the next level of greatness: to run your best race, to be the fastest swimmer. Ten years later, those trophies are collecting dust in your mother's basement. We thought they were beautiful as objects, and the materials, such as Carrara marble, can be significant. This work is about looking to an unattainable future. You're peering into the looking glass and seeing so many possibilities laid out before you, yet you cannot step in and grab them.

JB: Obviously your work will be perceived differently in a gallery as opposed to a church, but do you feel that the hopes and dreams people invest in lottery tickets has changed since the first installation in 2011? Or does the work commemorate more of an eternal wish?

LW: It is very different from how it looked like in the church, but that essential idea of hopes and dreams is always going to stay the same.

AE: People's hope for easy money to fulfill their wildest dreams... I don't think this has ever changed. Eternally. But for us in the studio, our idea of hopes and dreams has changed over time. When we began collaborating, we made a lot of work about love and money, and recently we've made a lot of work about the environment and social justice. But money is still one of our central themes, because it continues to be a central theme for us and everyone around us, right?

LW: Money ties into every single problem. The environment, injustice—money is tied to all of that. It's exciting to revisit this work because we haven't worked with the lottery tickets in a while. We didn't want to be pigeonholed into one material; our practice is expansive, and our medium is dictated by the themes we are interested in. We've done a lot of work with video and photography, too, but it all comes back to the collage and the central idea of people's hopes and dreams.

JB: There is a certain temporality to dreams: they are fleeting, and when they are achieved, even that has a timespan and an inevitable element of decay.

LW: We always want that next best thing. It's important, as people, to stop and cherish when you have reached that goal, to take that moment to enjoy it. In a way, our projects are about ways to slow down and appreciate what we have in front of us.

JB: Even when shopping for clothes, I am thinking, *I'm going to get this suit, and it will solve a problem. I will go to an event and feel comfortable.* But the suit never looks as good as it did in the store. You still have your human foibles. That seems to be an undercurrent to your work: I will win the lottery, I will have all this money, and my problems will be solved. But your problems are never solved.

LW: We're all human, and we have to enjoy what we have while we've got it.

Everybody Wants Some Heaven, 2011 (installation view)
Oratorio of Santa Maria Della Vita
Bologna, Italy



Education / Lauren Was

- 2004 Rhode Island School of Design, MFA Sculpture with Honors
Brown University, Sheridan Collegiate Teaching Certificate
1999 The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, BFA Sculpture

Education / Adam Eckstrom

- 2005 Rhode Island School of Design, MFA Painting with Honors
Brown University, Sheridan Collegiate Teaching Certificate
1998 University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, BFA Sculpture and Photography

Solo Exhibitions

- 2022 *Aligned by the Sun (connections)*, Art at Amtrak, New York, NY
If this is paradise..., Geary Contemporary, Millerton, NY
2021 *Aligned by the Sun (through the revolution)*, Ackland Art Museum, Chapel Hill, NC through July 2023
2020 *Yesterday is Here*, MassArt Art Museum, Boston, MA, through February 2023
2018 *Statistics of Hope*, 601 Artspace, New York, NY
I'll be with you when the deal goes down, STANDARD SPACE, Sharon, CT
2017 *At a Loss, For Words*, LABspace, Hillsdale, NY
A Devil to Pay, CES Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
2016 *Falling From Paradise*, Satellite Art Show, Miami, FL
When the Smoke Clears: The Fair Housing Project, Smack Mellon, Brooklyn, NY
2015 *A Good Run of Bad Luck*, Rosefsky Gallery, Binghamton University, Binghamton, NY
Gone the Sun, Galerie Paris Beijing, Paris, France
2013 *Day is Done*, Galerie Paris-Beijing, Brussels, Belgium
Collapse of Promise, Zadok Gallery, Miami, Florida
2012 *Forever, Almost*, Davidson Contemporary, New York, NY
Remember When Tomorrow Came, Colorado Springs Fine Art Center Museum, Colorado Springs, CO
Sky's the Limit, Hunterdon Art Museum, Clinton, NJ
Our Favorite Pastimes, MCC Gallery, Omaha, NE
2011 *we spend our lives as we spend our days*, Gallerie Christoffer Egelund, Copenhagen, Denmark
Everybody Wants Some Heaven, Art First, Santa Maria Della Vita, Bologna, Italy, curated by Julia Draganovic
2010 *The Price of Happiness*, Galerie Paris-Beijing, Beijing, China
One in a Million, Vierter Stock Projektraum, Berlin, DE
Future Perfect, The Freedman Gallery at Albright College, Reading, PA
This is it, Volta 6 New York, Cynthia Corbett Gallery
2008 *Ghost of a Dream*, Space at Alice Rhode Island, Providence, RI

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2022 *Masked Vigilantes*, Poster House, New York, NY
2021 *shh, it's a secret*, Postmasters Roma, Rome, Italy
Imagining Data, Museum of Craft and Design, San Francisco, CA
Decoding, Visual Arts Center of New Jersey, curated by Mary Birmingham
Sunrise Sunset, Albany International Airport

Selected Group Exhibitions (continued)

- 2020 *MESS (Marker Emblem Symbol Signal)*, Standard Space Gallery, Sharon, CT
Coming Soon, Art Austerlitz, Austerlitz, NY
- 2019 *Mediums of Exchange*, Fiterman Art Center, Brooklyn, NY curated by Lisa Panzera
Division of Labor, The Art Gallery of York University, Toronto, Canada
Baseball Show, Tiger Strikes Astroid, New York, March 29- May 5th, 2019
Dot Conference, The Yard, Brooklyn, NY
- 2018 *Change of State*, The Wassaic Project, Wassaic, NY
Facebook acquisition and permanent installation, New York, NY
- 2017 *Vagabond Time Killers*, The Wassaic Project, Wassaic, NY
State of the Art, Frist Center for the Visual Arts, Nashville, Tennessee
State of the Art, Dixon Gallery and Gardens, Memphis, Tennessee
State of the Art, The Mint Museum in Charlotte, North Carolina
- 2016 *20th Anniversary exhibition*, Smack Mellon, Brooklyn, NY
The City & The City, Denny Gallery, NY, NY
Summertime, Galerie Paris-Beijing, Paris, France
State of the Art: Discovering American Art Now, Telfair Museum, Savannah, GA
State of the Art: Discovering American Art Now, Minneapolis Institute of Art, MN
Be My Guest, No Longer Empty, NY, NY
Sessions, Backslash Gallery, Paris, France
It's Funny Because It's True, Galerie Paris-Beijing, Paris, France
- 2015 *HERE THERE NOWHERE*, Galerie Paris-Beijing, Brussels Belgium
Makers Mark, Temporary Storage, Brooklyn, NY curated by Gingrow and Scoggins
And I feel Fine..., The ReInstitute, Millerton, NY
In Praise of Folly, NARS Foundation, Brooklyn, NY curated by Jin Hwang Coleman
Deep End, Wassaic Project, Wassaic, NY
The Ecstasy of Influence, Spring Break, NY, NY curated by Progress Report
- 2014 *State of Art*, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AK
Artist Ball, Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY
Summertime, Galleri Christoffer Egelund, Copenhagen, Denmark
- 2013 *SHINE*, Textile Museum of Canada, Toronto Ontario
Wish Meme, at Old School for The New Museum's Festival of Ideas, NY, NY
Homeward Found, Wassaic Project, Wassaic, NY
Debris Field, Castle Gallery, College of New Rochelle, New Rochelle, NY
Creative Time's Sandcastle Competition, Rockaway Beach, NY
- 2012 *How Much do I Owe You? No Longer Empty*, LIC, NY curated by Manon Slome
Summertime, Gallerie Christoffer Egelund, Copenhagen, Denmark
Return to Rattlesnake Mountain, Wassaic Project, Wassaic, NY
HOPELESS, DUMBO Arts Festival, DUMBO, NY
Trash Talk, Spattered Columns Art Connects, New York, NY
COME AND GET IT, Hendershot Gallery, New York, NY 2011
Art Prize, Urban Institute for Contemporary Arts, Grand Rapids, MI
A Strange Attraction, Hendershot Gallery NY, NY, curated by Maureen Sullivan
- 2010 *Exhibitionism-The Art of Display*, The Courtauld Institute, London, England
- 2009 *Fly By's*, Galleri Cristoffer Egelund, Copenhagen, Denmark
Young Masters, Cynthia Corbett Gallery, London, England
Will it Happen, Elga Wimmer Gallery, NY, NY
Word Up, Broadway Gallery, NY, NY