

CARL HOLMES

Wasted Cigarettes



DEPS ARTIST PROFILE SERIES

October 20–November 17, 2022

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Wasted Cigarettes is a multi-media photographic and sculptural series that brings awareness to one of the most commonly discarded wastes in the United States. According to a National Park Service 2021 report, 1.69 billion pounds of cigarette waste pollute the public each year. *Wasted Cigarettes* immerses the viewer in the vast expanse of litter around us and acknowledges the negative impact social smoking has on our public spaces.

Art is a universal language that speaks for **Carl Holmes** whenever they can't speak for themselves. Holmes wants people to think deeply about the topics they are talking about. Hopefully, it'll start a conversation, be relatable, hated, and/or make the audience learn more about the topic. Muted colors are purposefully chosen to create a serious atmosphere and to make it look pleasing to the eye. Any symbols or objects Holmes' portrayed are to give the audience the power to create their own assumption about the work before given the context.

Carl Holmes is a native of Chicago, Illinois, and produced works of art all their lives. They were introduced to photography at the age of 12 and fell in love with the medium. They continue to use photography along with other mediums such as painting, drawing, and crocheting. Holmes' work focuses on current social and political topics, as well as personal aspects of their life.

Instagram: @vintage_water and @cactusnamedcarl



In Bloom, 2021, digital photography



La Michoacana, 2022, digital photography



it takes two, 2022, digital photography



renaissance, 2022, digital photography



Untitled, 2022, digital photography



welcome to Bridgeport, digital photography

INTERVIEW WITH CARL HOLMES

Conducted by Mariana Belaval

Mariana Belaval: Can you talk about how you came to look at wasted cigarettes as a subject?

Carl Holmes: I was walking to the Harold Washington train station one afternoon, and the sidewalk I was walking on had one big strip down the middle filled with cigarettes. I saw how perfectly aligned they were; I followed the trail until I reached the end of the block. Later on, I had a typology assignment for a photography class, and I instantly knew what subject I would focus on. I liked the process so much that I expanded upon it for my final project.

MB: Cigarettes are very prominent in the art world. Different people use them for various reasons, due to a certain aesthetic, an act of pretention, or a vice. As an individual and an artist, what is your relationship to cigarettes?

CH: Cigarettes played a role in my childhood. I grew up secondhand smoking living with my nana. Whenever I used to see her with a cigarette, it was often accompanied by beer and at least 5 other people indulging in the same activity. When she converted to Islam, she decided to quit smoking and drinking. Although it did give her a better life, quitting smoking was difficult for her. In the end, smoking played a role in quickening her death, and that is why I have a distaste for cigarettes.

MB: As a native Chicagoan, how do you see cigarettes inhabiting the city, and where are they most prominent? What do you think the reasons are for those sites attracting cigarette smoking?

CH: Cigarette butts are something that most city people are used to seeing. We don't stop and take a second look when walking passed them. There's only so much one individual can do to help. The places I see cigarettes the

most are at gathering spots. I see them at Grant Skate Park, where teens, adults, and the homeless regularly appear. Cigarettes make up half the trash on Chicago beaches. I think one of the most common spots I come across with cigarette butts is in front of business buildings. The occasional smoke break or college students standing nearby, that's where I capture most of my photographs.

MB: The presence of cigarettes is evident in everyday life. Do you think it's because of generational vice, specifically nicotine addiction, or an aesthetic necessity?

CH: Smoking has become more of a social activity for younger generations. I think teens and young adults are aware of the health consequences of smoking cigarettes, but it doesn't stop them. I think most people's first experiences with cigarettes is in social gatherings. If I also consider aesthetics, smoking looks "cool" or a bit rebellious.

MB: What is the solution to the problem of cigarette waste? Is your act of capturing cigarette waste within your environment an effort to create a solution? If not, why do you do it?

CH: I cannot be naive enough to think there is a solution to ending cigarette waste. My work aims to bring awareness about toxic waste, which cigarettes are one of most prevalent. I am not telling people to stop smoking since that's easier said than done. I want them to properly discard cigarettes instead of littering. Repetition plays a key role in my messaging. Look at the cigarettes in the cracks, look at how many there are. When you leave my exhibition, you'll start to notice those cigarette butts that you never thought twice about.



THE DEPS ARTIST PROFILE SERIES

The DEPS Artist Profile Series presented by Columbia College Chicago's Department of Exhibitions, Performance and Student Spaces (DEPS), is a virtual publication on select artists involved with the DEPS Galleries and the Columbia College Chicago community. Our goal with this series is to connect artist and viewer on a deeper level, and to highlight the amazing works and thoughts of our featured artists through interviews, artist biographies, and catalogs of work. Art has always been a way to connect with others, no matter where one may physically be. We hope by presenting the creativity and insights of the people involved in the DEPS Artist Profile Series that viewers may have one more way to stay in touch with and support the arts community. The DEPS Artist Profile Series is managed by DEPS Exhibitions Assistant Mariana Belaval. Graphic design is managed by DEPS Exhibitions Assistant Gray Beyer. This program is partially supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council Agency.

Learn more at: colum.edu/deps

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C33 Gallery: 33 E. Ida B. Wells Dr., First Floor, Chicago, IL 60605

Gallery Hours: Monday–Friday, 9 a.m.–5 p.m.