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William Cordova, *Greatest Hits para Micasia Bastidas, Tom Wilson y Anna Mae Aquash* [detail], 2008.

RECORD RUNDOWN

Five fine artists let the vinyl speak

intro by **Dave Tompkins**

I was once going through a record collection and found two copies of "Nasty Rock" stuck together. Before humidity took all the credit, I discovered a tiny, flawlessly preserved lightning bug embossed onto one of the sleeves, its bulb intact, a summer imprint of what archeologists call "the fossil record." What other insect ghost can brag that its last buzz—or in this case, flash—was spent stuck on a record sleeve autographed, with a bow-tie and a smile, to Sweet Angie B? The dead bug, the grandmother Easter Sunday cursive on the sleeve, the synthetic monster claps produced in Fuquay-Varina, North Carolina—the memory gets more spins than the record itself.

The Record: Contemporary Art and Vinyl—an exhibition curated by Trevor Schoonmaker opening at the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University this fall—examines vinyl beyond the listening object, through sculpture, collage, video, photography, painting, performance, and, in the case of Dario Robleto, buttons. A conceptual artist from San Antonio, Robleto ground his favorite Billie Holiday records into magic dust and recast them as buttons that were sewn onto thrift-store shirts and sold back into the secondhand marketplace—the recycling of "My Sweet Hunk of Trash," soon to pop off and become the next pair of teddy bear eyes. Robleto calls it *Sometimes Billie Is All That Holds Me Together*. Records by Tammy Wynette, Hank Williams, and Patsy Cline met a

similar powdered fate but were reincarnated as match heads and deposited at various honky-tonks around Texas, waiting their chance to "go up in flames." (Though I don't see rap collectors pulverizing their Mobstyle albums, there could be a grinding metaphor to seize upon here.) Sometimes, you have to destroy what you love.

Flintstones heads will be happy to see Jeroen Diepenmaat's bird-beak stylus in the groove, not prehistoric but taxidermy. Meanwhile, Germany's Gregor Hildebrandt managed to sneak an unintended cassette fetish in here by constructing a record from tape. If you can't make records from tape, there's always the cardboard discography of Mingering Mike, who proved that the best records are often the ones we imagine. (Consider how the thrill of hearing about a record often trumps the listening experience itself.) How nasty Big "D" and the Colts must have sounded inside the Mingering Mike brain.

Xavier Simmons used her photo essay of North Carolina back routes as a muse for limited-edition 12-inch vinyl with music by TV On the Radio's Tunde Adebimpe and others. Laurie Anderson's viophonograph could've been what Grandmixer DXT had in mind when he coined the term "turnfiddle." Christian Marclay's phonoguitar—as seen in his five-minute loop, *Ghost (I Don't Live Today)*—may have anticipated the one used by DJ M.Walk in the video for Tone-LoC's "Wild Thing." Marclay's *Record Players*—which features partygoers waving vinyl in hand and crunching it underfoot—suggests John O'Hara's *Appointment in Samarra*, in which the "drongk" Julian English pours himself a highball in a flower vase and dances on his copy of "Lady of the Evening," breaking it into pieces. (English's only recourse is death by carbon monoxide in the garage.) In his video piece, *Haunted by You*, Japanese artist Taiyo Kimura chooses to off himself by tying a noose to the revolving spindle. Come see where it takes him. ●

MINGERING MIKE

James Brown *Live at the Apollo, Vol. II* (Polydor) 1968

"All I could really afford in my younger days were 45s, so I didn't have a lot of LPs at first. In fact, the very first two albums I ever owned I got by winning a Radio WOOL/RC Cola radio contest. The winner got a six-pack of RC Cola and two James Brown albums: *Prisoner of Love* and *Think!* Both of which I played 'til the grooves turned gray and worn. But the JB album I remember most fondly is *Live at the Apollo, Vol. II*. I picked it up at Waxie Maxie's at Fourth and South Capitol Street SE in D.C., right after enjoying one of his matinee shows at the Howard Theatre. 'There Was a Time' was the song. Man, that was a groove that just *made you move!*"

Mingering Mike was born in Washington, D.C., in 1960 and continues to work and live there. From 1968 to 1977, Mike "released" more than fifty fictive albums, managed several of his own record labels, and played for imaginary sold-out audiences all over the world. The public first heard of him in 2003, when record collectors Dori Hadar and Frank Beylotte stumbled upon Mike's work in a flea market in Washington, D.C. It was soon discovered that Mike's career took place solely in his imagination and in the vast collection of intricately handcrafted cardboard records that he obsessed over for close to a decade. Mike's life and work are chronicled in the book *Mingering Mike: The Amazing Career of an Imaginary Soul Superstar* (2007).



Mingering Mike, *Mingering Mike, The Big 'D' & the Colts Band - "Super Gold" Greatest Hits*, (Ming'War Production), 1970. Fictive LP cover, mixed media on cardboard, 12 x 12 inches. Image courtesy of Mingering Mike, Inc. and Memphis Fine Arts, Washington, D.C.

WILLIAM CORDOVA

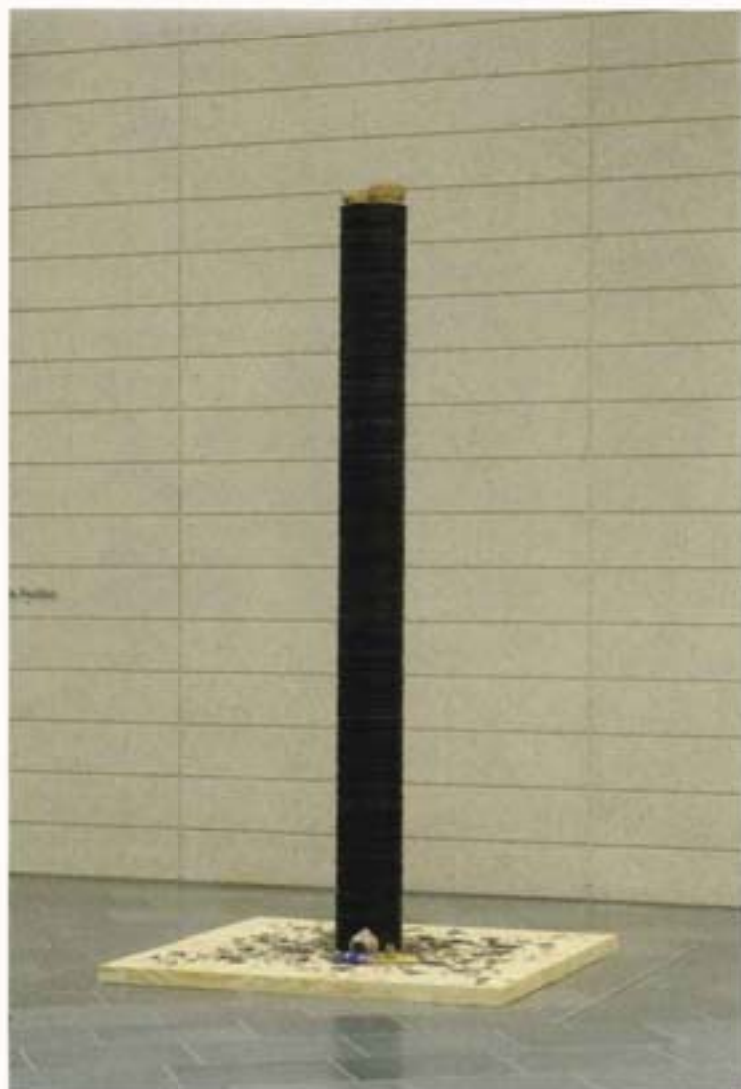


Various Artists April 24, 1970 Midnight Concert at the Apollo Theater, Harlem (label and year unknown)

"This live album came into my archive by chance, but not by accident. It was through direct awareness and relation to the social content of the material that led me to its existence. The concert captured the imagination of many young people all over the U.S. and influenced other music-oriented fundraising events by bringing together activists and musicians who were radically revolutionizing *activism* around the world: the Concert for Bangladesh, Concerts for the People of Kampuchea, Farm Aid. The concert was organized by the Young Lords, a Latino community organization based in New York City. The concert, featuring Joe Bataan and the Last Poets among others, appealed to a diverse audience through an eclectic lineup of music that included R&B, Latin avant-garde, rock, salsa, and poetry."

William Cordova was born in Lima, Peru, in 1971, raised in Miami, and currently lives and works in New York and Miami. He earned his BFA from the Art Institute of Chicago in 1996 and his MFA from Yale University in 2004.

William Cordova, *Greatest Hits* (with Micaela Bastidas, Tom Wilson, Anna Mbe Aquash), 2008. Column of three thousand reclaimed vinyl records, Peruvian gourds, VHS tape, cigar, pennies, candle, record sleeves, and wooden base. Collection of the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University. Gift of Marjorie and Michael Levine (T '84). Photo by Peter Paul Geoffroy.



DAVE MULLER

Les Dogon *Les Chants de la Vie/Le Rituel Funéraire*

(Radiodiffusion de la France D'Outre-Mer) 1958

"For me, the single most reliable source of wonder is the French label Ocora. Their catalog contains field recordings of indigenous cultures from Africa to the Arctic. Sounds made not because someone wanted to make them, but because they had to make them, or because making music was as much a part of life as breathing. Before Ocora existed, Radiodiffusion de la France D'Outre-Mer released this double 10-inch in 1958. The Dogon, who live in the central plateau region of Mali, are documented from *Les Chants de la Vie* to *Le Rituel Funéraire*. Life and death are rendered on the stunning front cover. Bound with a plastic comb, the package contains sixteen pages of photos and detailed notes. And it's all in French, adding to the mystery."



Dave Muller was born in San Francisco in 1964 and currently lives and works in Los Angeles. He earned his BAS at the University of California, Davis, and his MFA from the California Institute of the Arts.



Dave Muller, *Dave's Top Ten*
(20/23/09: Muller Family Favorites),
2009. Acrylic on paper, framed, 80.5
x 38.5 inches. Courtesy of the artist
and Blum & Poe, Los Angeles.

XAVIERA SIMMONS



Metallica ...And Justice for All (Elektra) 1988

"I live in New York City, so almost all of my friends produce brilliant music, and I love their records. Especially TV on the Radio, whose *Dear Science* would have been my top choice had I not been having a heavy-metal moment. Right now, I am excited about Metallica's ...*And Justice for All*. Metallica is all I listen to while working in my studio lately. Well, besides D'Angelo's *Voodoo* and any records by Grace Jones, Cat Power, OutKast, Black Sabbath, Marvin Gaye, Bob Dylan, Rufus and Chaka Khan, Lenny Kravitz, My Morning Jacket, Max Roach (*Percussion Bitter Sweet*), A Tribe Called Quest, and the *Éthiopiquest* collections. I love Metallica's in-your-face fierceness. Their music is restless, angsty, inspiring, frustrated, angry, perfectionist, and made-in-America soulful."

Xaviera Simmons was born in New York in 1974 and currently lives and works in Brooklyn. She earned her BFA in photography from Bard College in 2004 and completed the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program in 2005. She was the 2006 winner of the David C. Driskell Prize.

Xaviera Simmons, "Session One: Around the Y" from *Thundersnow Road*, North Carolina, 2010. Color photograph. Commissioned by the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University. Courtesy of the artist.



DARIO ROBLETO

The Smiths *Meat Is Murder* (Rough Trade) 1985

"There are certain advantages to melancholy. A particular *creative potential* of melancholy. Every artist worth their weight must learn to harness that while knowing they will be pulled under but always, undoubtedly, pulled back up too. It's when you break the surface that you better have the tools to shout what your heart's telling you. I first vaguely sensed this in the unlikelyst of places and seasons: Texas, summer, 1985, with the release of the Smiths' *Meat Is Murder*. It has now been twenty-five years of sorting out the ramifications of that day and every Smiths and Morrissey release since. *Meat Is Murder* is part of an unbroken whole that extends back millennia from Sappho, Rilke, Wilde, Dickinson, Holiday, and Cline."

Dario Robleto was born in San Antonio in 1972 and currently lives and works in Houston. He received his BFA from the University of Texas, San Antonio, in 1997 and in 1996 attended the Summer School of Music and Art at Yale University.



Dario Robleto, *Sometimes Billie Is All That Holds Me Together*, 1998-1999. Hand-ground and melted vinyl records, various clothing, acrylic, spray paint. Several new buttons were crafted from melted Billie Holiday records to replace missing buttons on found, abandoned, or thrift-store clothing. After the discarded clothing was made whole again, it was re-donated to the thrift stores or placed back where it was originally found. Dimensions variable. Collection of Rebecca and Alexander Stewart. Image courtesy of the artist and Kerry Inman Gallery, Houston. Photo by Ansen Seals.