

**ALISON
SAAR**
**SILT, SOOT
AND SMUT**



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SILT, SOOT AND SMUT

25 MAY–1 JULY 2016

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VENICE, CALIFORNIA
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Flood of 1927

Photograph courtesy U.S. Army Corps of Engineers / St. Louis District

Backwater blues
done call me to pack
my things and go

'Cause my house fell
down and I can't live
there no more

"Back Water Blues," Bessie Smith, 1927

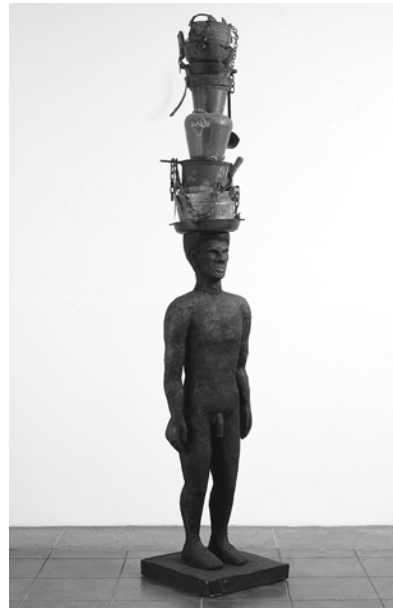




Cool Mama, 2001
(Private Collection)



Coup, 2006
(Collection of the San Jose
Museum of Art, CA)



Smokin' Papa Chaud, 2001



Breach (large figure on raft), 2016
wood, ceiling tin, found trunks,
washtubs and misc objects
148×51×40 in.
(375.9×129.5×101.6 cm)



Breach, 2016
charcoal, chalk and acrylic on
found steamer trunk drawer
29 1/5 x 15 1/2 x 4 in.
(74.2 x 39.4 x 10.2 cm)



Lethe, 2016
charcoal and acrylic on
found trunk drawer
19×10×4in. (48.3×25.4×10.2cm)

it's over

struggle

it burns

remember

drink

forget

how quickly you laugh

forget

the absurdity of living

by my apple

i promise

nothing

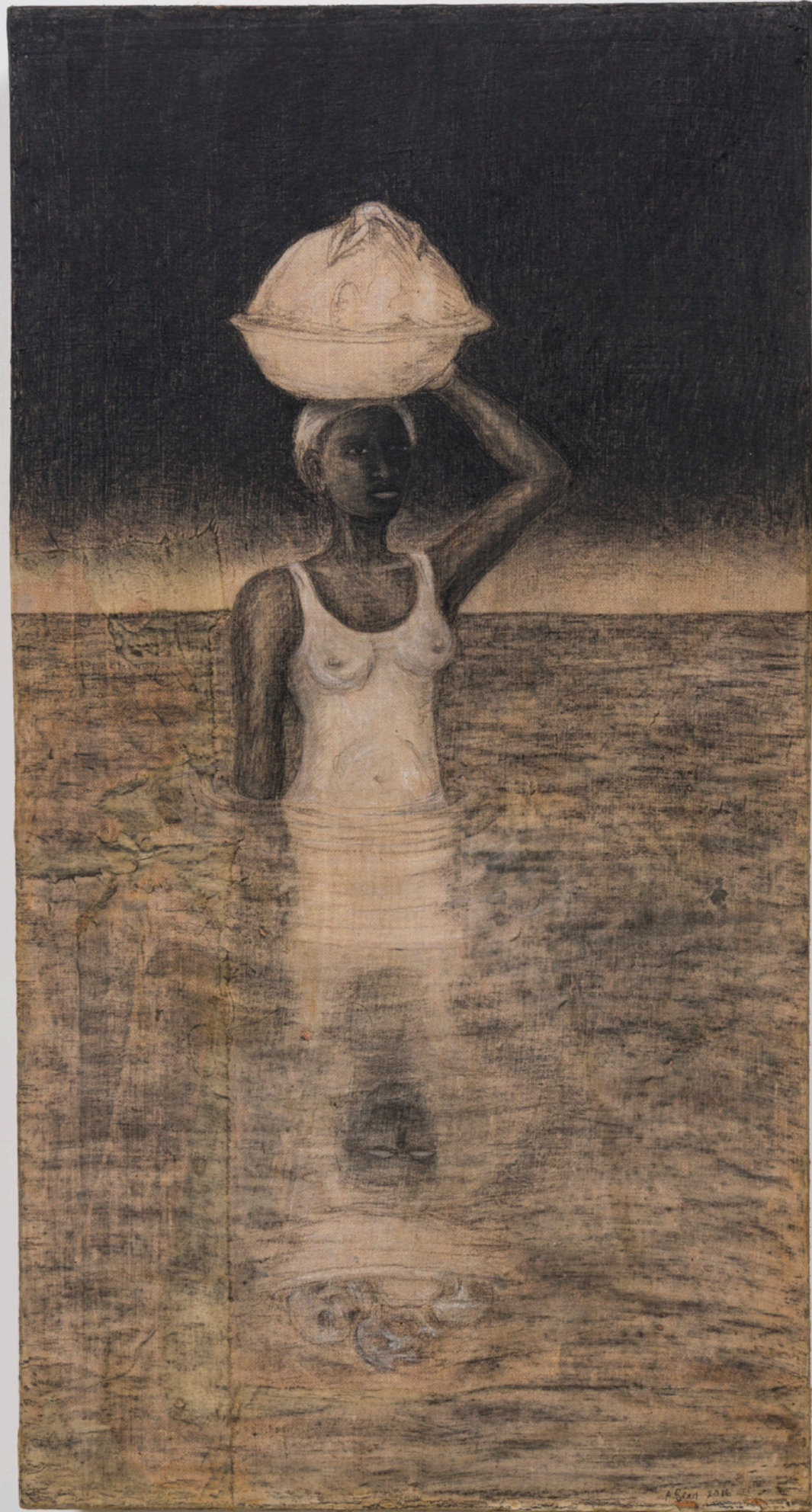
i promise

nothing

i promise

no—

"Lethe—Forgetfulness (oblivion/concealment/
unmindedness/induces drowsiness)"
Samiya Bashir, 2016



Acheron, 2016
charcoal and chalk on found
trunk drawer and sugar sacks
30×6×4in. (76.2×15.2×10.2cm)



Sootfoot Sally, 2016
soot, ash, charcoal, acrylic on
found steamer trunk drawer
and sugar sacks
36 1/2 x 19 1/2 x 4 in.
(92.7 x 49.5 x 10.2 cm)




The Alluvial Valley of the Lower Mississippi River
Harold Fisk, 1944
Courtesy of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

I've known rivers:

I've known rivers
ancient as the world
and older than the
flow of human blood
in human veins.

My soul has grown
deep like the rivers

"The Negro Speaks of Rivers" 
Langston Hughes, 1921



Backwater Blues
(sugar sack shroud series), 2013
(Private Collection)



Silttown Shimmy, 2015
acrylic on found
sugar sacks and linens
50×25in. (127×63.5cm)



Black Bottom Stomp, 2015
acrylic, gesso and charcoal on
found and dyed denim, sugar
sacks and linens
53×26in. (134.6×66cm)



Sleufoot Slide, 2015
acrylic, gesso and charcoal on
found sugar sacks and linens
53×26 1/2in. (134.6×67.3cm)



Flood of 1927

Photography courtesy of the National Archives

Lord, Lord, Lord, I'm so blue,
my house got washed away,
And I'm crying "how long for
another pay day," That's why I'm
crying Mississippi heavy water blues.

I'm sitting here looking, at all
of this mud,

And my girl got washed away
in that Mississippi flood...

Listen here you men, one more
thing I'd like to say,

Ain't no womens out here, for
they all got washed away

That's why I'm crying the
Mississippi heavy water blues.

"Mississippi Heavy Water Blues," Robert Hicks, 1928 



Swampside Shag, 2015
 acrylic, gesso and charcoal on
 found and dyed denim, sugar
 sacks and linens
 48×27in. (121.9×68.6cm)



Quagmire Quiver, 2015
 acrylic, gesso and charcoal on found and
 dyed denim, sugar sacks and linens
 47×24in. (119.4×61cm)



Darktown Strut, 2015
acrylic, gesso and charcoal on found
sugar sacks and linens
53×26 1/2in. (134.6×67.3cm)



Backwater Boogie, 2015
acrylic, gesso and charcoal on found
sugar sacks and linens
50×27in. (127×68.6cm)

is that you, mami, wrapped in that soft
white fleece, casting that cold, hard glance

in all directions? Is that your spray swirling,
stinging, in the bitter wind, your blue bosom

glittering with diamonds thick as ice floes?
i recognize your excess in this, your muscle,

but miss the wildness of your free: rushing
mirror-gray green golden muddy into every

crevice, trailing delta silt in cool deadly
fingers as long as your *nom de guerre*—miss-

issippi—over every surface, swallowing
what you will. miss. fear. yearn to possess.

"mami wata (or, how to know a goddess when you see one),"
Evie Shockley, 2016



Mississippi Mama, 2015
acrylic, gesso and charcoal on found
and dyed denim, sugar sacks and linens
51×25 in. (129.5×63.5cm)



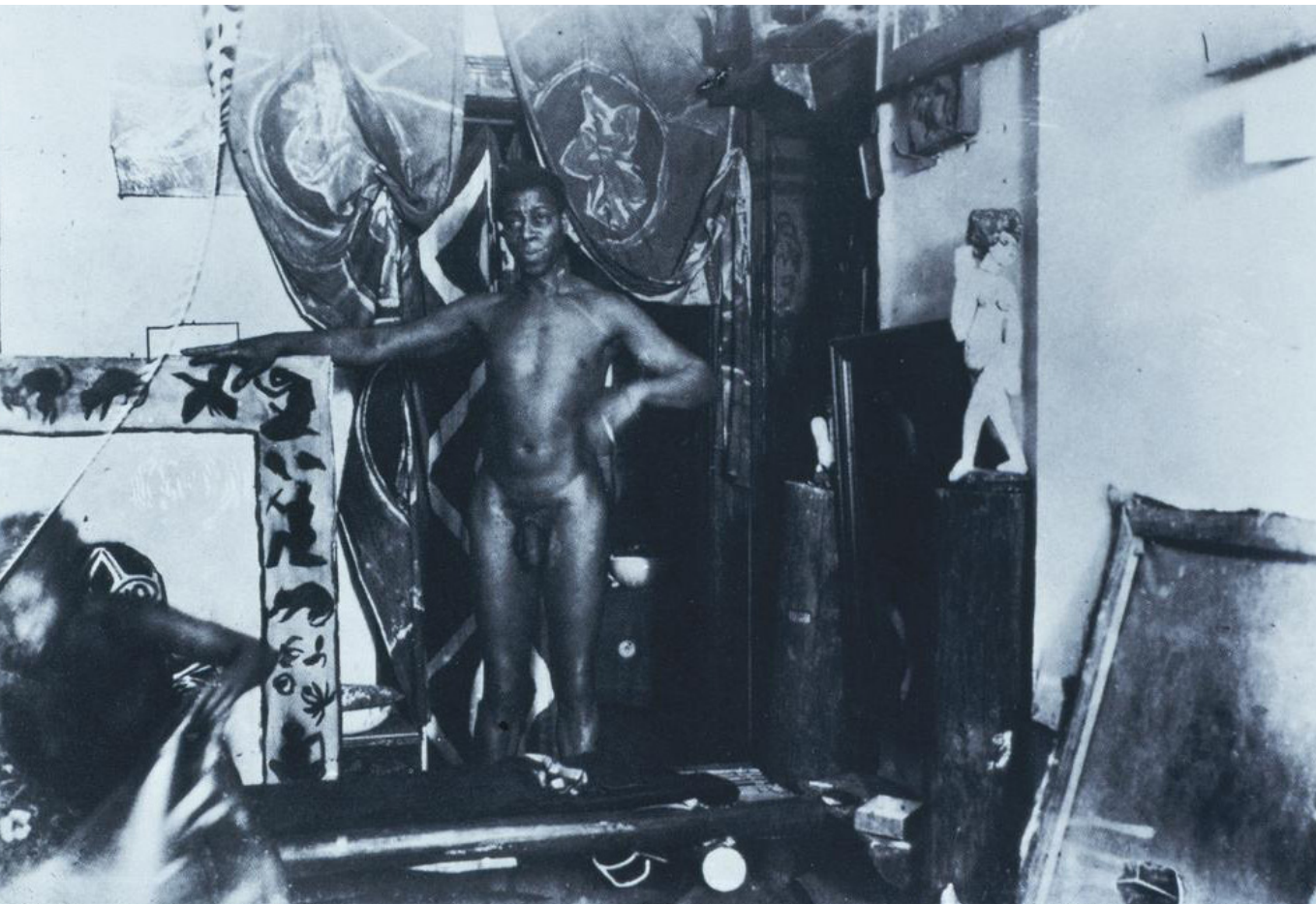
Deluge, 2016
acrylic, gesso and charcoal on
found and dyed denim,
sugar sacks and linens
48×25 in. (121.9×63.5cm)



Undertow, 2004
(Private Collection)



Deluge, 2016
wood, ceiling tin wire and cast iron
66×30×30in. (167.6×76.2×76.2cm)



Ernst Ludwig Kirchner Dresden Studio, c. 1910
Source unknown



Silttown Shimmy
(red dancer sculpture with silt), 2016
wood, ceiling tin, enamel paint, tar and silt
28×8 1/2×5 1/2in. (71.1×21.6×14cm)

Silted Brow, 2016
wood, acrylic, tar, silt
7 1/4×27×7 1/2in. (18.4×68.6×19.1cm)



If you'd like to be a jitterbug, first
thing you must do is get a jug.

Put whiskey, wine and gin within,
and shake it all up and then begin,

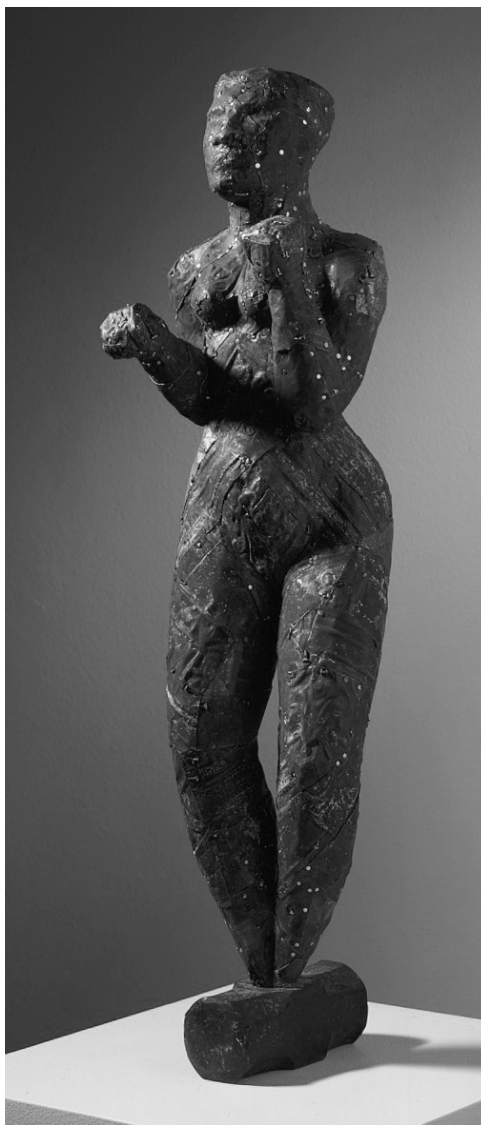
Grab a cup and start to toss, you
are drinking jitter sauce!

Don't you worry, you just mug,
and then you'll be a jitterbug!

"Jitterbug," Cab Calloway, 1934 



Sweeping Beauty, 1997
(Collection of the Metropolitan
Museum of Art, NY)



Sledge Hammer Mamma, 1996
(Collection of LACMA)



Hooch n' Hoochie Coochie, 2016
wood, acrylic, ash, tar and wax
and found ceramic jug
25×8×8in. (63.5×20.3×20.3cm)



Juke Joint Djinn, 2016
 wood, acrylic, ash, tar and wax
 and found ceramic jug
 30 × 8 3/4 × 8 3/4 in.
 (76.2 × 22.2 × 22.2 cm)



Jitterbug Djinn, 2016
 wood, acrylic, ash, tar and
 wax and found ceramic jug
 35 1/2 × 8 3/4 × 8 3/4 in.
 (90.2 × 22.2 × 22.2 cm)



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