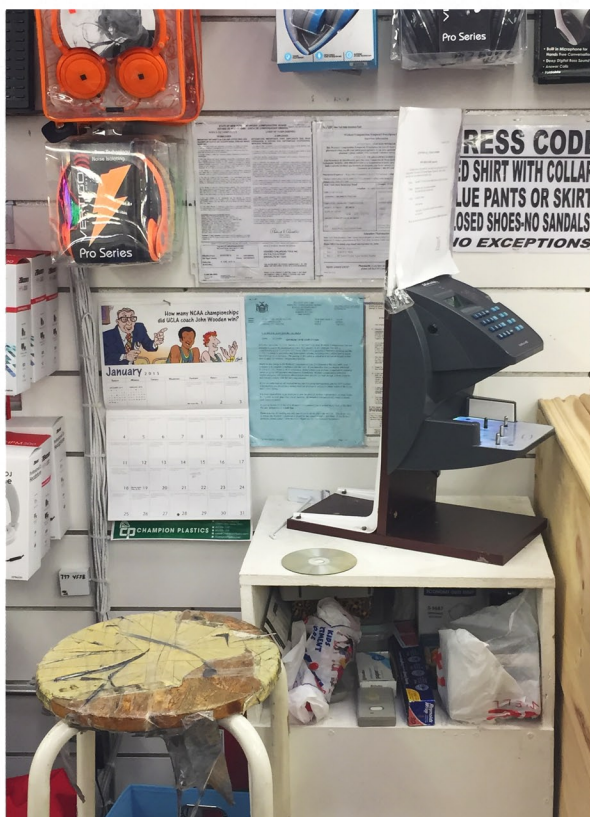


## FIRST LOOK



Cameron Rowland:  
*Handpunch*, 2015,  
photograph, 14 by  
10 inches. Courtesy  
Essex Street, New York.

In businesses where employees' time is one of the most valuable assets, the Handpunch time clock secures this time. Manufactured by Schlage (the American lock company) the Handpunch uses a biometric reading of an employee's right hand to inhibit false clock-ins and payment for false hours. Biometric recognition was developed to replace photography as a superior form of criminal indexing.

—Cameron Rowland

# Cameron Rowland

by Linda Mai Green

CAMERON ROWLAND'S works are bleak statements on the persistent racism and structural inequality in the United States. In his hands, office furniture, cleaning supplies and innocuous-looking stacks of paperwork become disturbing metonyms of a system rigged to rip off and perpetuate an underclass. *Loot* (2014) is a heap of copper piping from a scrap yard displayed in a tattered plastic U.S. Postal Service box. Culled from the fringes of the free market, where useful infrastructure like piping is dismantled piecemeal and sold off for short-sighted profits while public services like the mail are scaled back and privatized, the work indicts an increasingly predatory economy. The deadpan *49-51 Chambers Street-Basement New York, NY 10007* (2014) is a sturdy wood table from the former mayoral office building, which was sold and had its contents put up for auction by Public Surplus, a company that sells government property on commission. *Bait Inc.* (2014) comprises a selection of documents displayed in a wire organizer. These papers outline the specialized legal entity that Rowland founded, a corporation that could take advantage of the New Markets tax credit. That national initiative incentivizes economic speculation in poor communities to offset the withdrawal of social services.

The nature of private property comes up often in Rowland's work. Born in 1988, he is influenced by Conceptual artists like Renée Green and by Critical Race Theory, a school of legal thought positing that racism is irrevocably woven into the American social fabric despite efforts to outlaw discrimination. For Rowland, the legacy of slavery in the U.S. is still evident today and can be manifest in the design of everyday objects and materials.

Rowland isolates devices by which our society controls the lives of its poor and marginalized, often by preemptively criminalizing them. The installation *7.5'* (2014) is a measuring strip of the type usually placed next to the doors of gas stations, delis and fast-food restaurants in down-market areas so that surveillance cameras can record the heights of criminals as they exit. Mounted in an art-world context, the strip implicitly likens gallerygoers to stick-up artists. The photographic series "Handpunch" (2014-15) depicts biometric time clocks that read employees' hands to deter false clock-ins. In one photo, the machine is nestled on a bodega shelf amid baby formula, toothpaste and packages of bouillon cubes.

Despite the despair evident in Rowland's work, there are flashes of utopianism in his thinking. When asked recently what he would do if he magically became the supreme legislator, Rowland replied that he would write a new Constitution. ○

COMING SOON  
Work by Rowland  
in "Greater New York  
2015," at MoMA  
P.S.1, Long Island  
City, N.Y., opening  
Oct. 11.

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