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An Afterall Book
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Beverley Buchanan
Marsh Ruins

Amelia Groom

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Roadside Attraction

I'm here, but I can't find them. Overlook Park, at the Marshes of Glynn, in Brunswick, on the coast of Georgia, in the southeast of the US, just off Highway 17. I know that Beverly Buchanan's *Marsh Ruins* (1981) are supposed to be here somewhere, but I've done several laps of the park and I still can't see where.

The *Marsh Ruins* were erected as three big, solid mounds of cement and shell-encrusted 'tabby' concrete, and yet their presence has always been elusive. They're hiding among tall saltmarsh grasses, in the liminal wetlands, where the ground is forever unstable. There's an average tidal range of six to eight feet here, so the land is always soggy and somewhere on its way to submersion, while the brackish waters always have bits of solid earth emerging out of them.

When I do eventually locate the *Ruins*, they don't loudly announce themselves as a work of public art, nor as an historical monument, nor as any sort of clearly delineated, intentionally erected image. One might, at first sight, assume they were simply geological formations in the landscape. After several decades in the marshes, the mounds are now severely weathered and broken, and could also register for some viewers as part of the debris that the storms and high tides often leave behind (fig.6). Or they might appear as forgotten architectural ruins, recalling the shell-based tabby remnants one finds scattered all through this part of the American southeast as persistent reminders of the plantation era.

Buchanan referred to the work as an 'environmental sculpture'. Part of what this meant was that the shifting rhythms of light, season, weather and climate would determine how it appeared at any point in time. Making sculpture environmentally also implied a foregrounding of material vulnerability; the *Marsh Ruins* are continually decomposing through their ongoing exposure to sun, salt, heat, humidity, storms, tides and currents - not to mention the area's increasingly extreme occurrences of hurricanes and flooding. There are also the material additions and subtractions brought on by the local birds, plants, insects, crabs and fish - and then there's gravity, which is constantly at work on the sculpture. The largest of the three mounds once stood close to five feet tall, but after years of sinking into the mud, with its outer surface gradually eroding, the highest point is now barely four feet above the ground at low tide.

Visitors who spend enough time with the *Ruins* may come across the unobtrusive marker that Buchanan left on the ground, several metres from the mounds, with the title and date of the work, along with the artist's signature, inscribed into a lump of cement (fig.8). When I was there in April 2019, the space around the marker was clear of vegetation, suggesting that it is occasionally tended to (see cover image). But this lingering presence of the artist's inscription could easily be overlooked, and, indeed, everyone I spoke to in the area (people fishing on the pier, the hosts at the guesthouse where I stayed, council workers in the park) was completely unaware that the broken stone mounds were in fact built here as an artwork.

To a certain extent, this is in keeping with Buchanan's intentions. In September 1980 she wrote, in a letter to her friend Lucy Lippard, about her plans to build the work that would become the *Marsh Ruins*. 'I don't want to be part of a tourist attraction syndrome', she explained. 'You know, "put it where lots of people can see it"'. In characteristically comedic mode, Buchanan then gets carried away with a tongue-in-cheek description of the sort of scene she imagined: 'yessir folks, step right up – real close now and, don't push, there's room for all – see this magnificent WORK OF ART that The LORD helped one of our Ladies put here for all to see'.¹

The idea of the *Marsh Ruins* as a tourist destination became a sort of running joke for Buchanan. In an undated sketch, titled *Roadside Attraction*, she depicts the work with a big flashing sign above it, competing for attention with a McDonald's restaurant and a SEARS department store further down the road (fig.7). Buchanan herself is drawn in next to the sign, in a T-shirt that clearly identifies her as ARTIST, helping to point people in the direction of the *Ruins*. It's a cartoonish rendering of the economy of hyper-visibility, which throws into relief the fact that Buchanan's work simply did not, and does not, operate in any such register. Far from trying to compete for attention, her *Ruins* demand a completely different mode of looking, as they retreat from view, hiding among the vegetation, blurring with their surrounds, gradually crumbling back into the wet, unstable ground, and always evading easy legibility.



Buchanan completed the *Marsh Ruins* with the funding she had received from a John Simon Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship in 1980. In order to get permission to build the work in the marshes, and to leave it permanently installed there, she spent several months liaising with The City of Brunswick and The Department of Natural Resources. Once she had convinced them that the sculpture would, as she put it, 'be in harmony with the natural aesthetic and ecological life of the coastal area of which it will be a part',² The Coastal Marshlands Protection Committee issued a permit for 'Construction of a partially buried sculpture of tabby over concrete to achieve a look of ancient ruins'.³

The *Ruins* were then constructed over two hot days in mid-July, with help from a small crew of contractors. Buchanan documented the process with photographs, and she later compiled these, with personal annotations, in a report document.⁴ On the first day there was a cement mixer on site, and wet cement was wheelbarrowed through the grasses to a clearing at the edge of the water, where the mounds were built up in layers. On the second day, the outer surface of oyster-shell tabby mixture was applied. Buchanan later returned to the site to coat the three mounds with an acrylic brown stain, which has since weathered away (fig.2-3).

Autumn brings extra high tidal swells in this area, and on one morning in November 1981 the two smallest mounds and the inscribed marker were completely submerged, with only the top of the largest mound remaining above water (fig.1). Buchanan included a series of photographs from this first instance of near-total submersion in her report document, with a caption that read 'Dolphins must have had fun...', referring to some dolphins who had startled her when she was backing up into the water to take photographs during the construction of the *Ruins* several months earlier.



When she built the *Marsh Ruins* in the summer of 1981, Buchanan was living in Macon, a small town in central Georgia, about 300 kilometres from the Marshes of Glynn. She had moved there from New Jersey in 1977, when she was 37 years old, leaving behind a medical career in

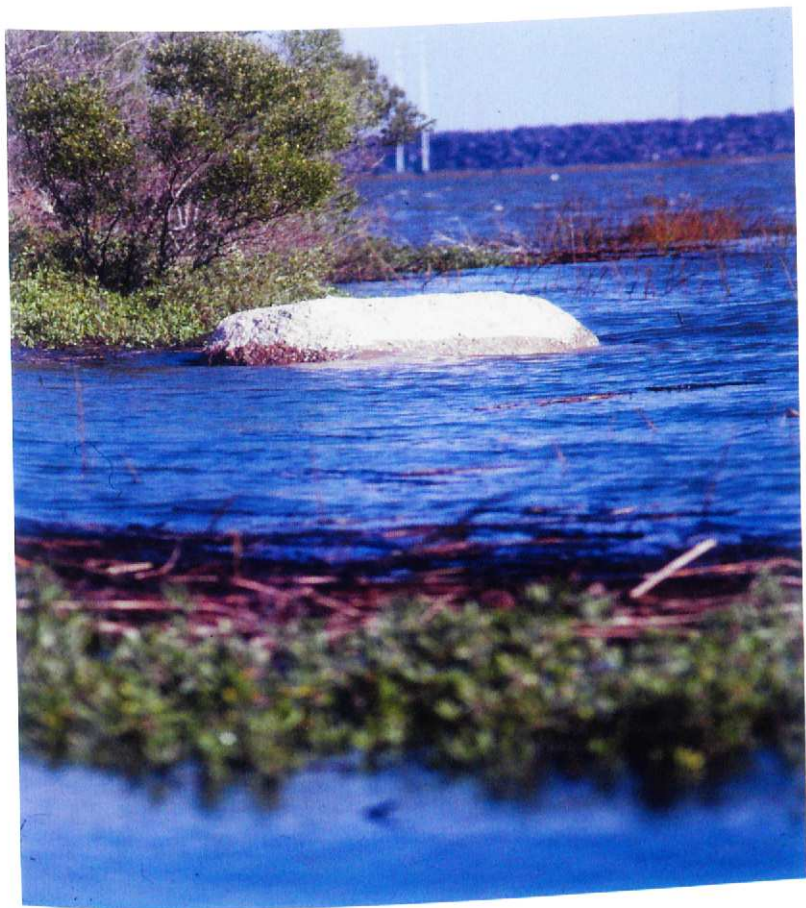
order to focus full-time on her art rather than become, in her own words, 'a doctor who paints'.⁵

By the late 1970s, Buchanan's work had moved from painting into sculpture, as she began devoting her time to investigations of found stone fragments and bits of rubble that she would salvage from demolition sites. Using pieces of brick and stone debris to form hollow moulds, she started producing concrete casts in different shapes and sizes, giving them dark, earthy tones by adding locally sourced clay and ground rock into the cement mixtures. She then used these cast pieces as units in sculptural assemblages, arranging them on the floor in stacks and clusters that evoked precision and precarity at the same time (fig.14 & 20).

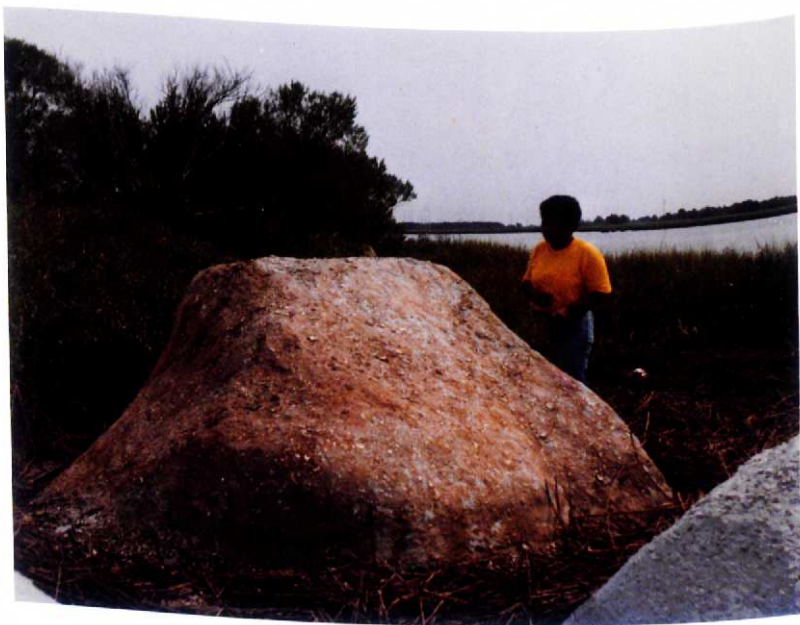
In 1978, Buchanan presented a series of these cast concrete assemblages in a solo show at Truman Gallery in New York. She wrote a one-page statement for the exhibition, describing her interest in the fragmentary forms that can be 'created' through architectural demolition. The 'state of demolition', she observed, 'presents a new type of "artificial" structural system piece that by itself (its undemolished state) would not exist'.⁶

Buchanan's first large-scale outdoor sculpture was *Ruins and Rituals*, which she completed in 1979 on the grounds of Macon's Museum of Arts and Sciences. While exploring abandoned areas around Macon, she had encountered a group of large concrete foundation blocks that were no longer serving a function, and had been left partially unearthed, after years in the ground (fig.15). She transported four of these, by truck, to a part of the wooded area around the museum. Working among the trees, she then performed modifications on the rugged blocks, subtly painting parts of their surfaces with 'blues, lavenders and rusts',⁷ and carving into them so that they came to resemble cubic sarcophagi with lids (fig.16-19).

When she was ready to install the blocks at her chosen location on the museum's grounds, she hired a crew with a crane so she could have each piece positioned with precision. Once they were in place, she added a selection of her smaller cast concrete pieces around the bases of the blocks, spending many hours assembling and reassembling them until she was happy with the overall arrangement. As she was completing the work, she was already thinking about its long-term existence in continuous dialogue with the elements. 'I like to think of vines curling up it, of leaves falling around it, or rain hitting it for years,' she said.⁸



1. Beverly Buchanan, *Marsh Ruins*, 1981
Photograph taken in November 1981
Beverly Buchanan papers, Archives of
American Art, Smithsonian Institution



2-3. Beverly Buchanan working on
Marsh Ruins, 1981. Collection of
Museum of Arts and Sciences, Macon





4-5. Beverly Buchanan, *Marsh Ruins*, 1981
Photographs: Amelia Groom, 2019





6. Beverly Buchanan, *Marsh Ruins*, 1981
Photograph: Amelia Groom, 2019



7. Beverly Buchanan, *Roadside Attraction*
date unknown, pen on paper sketch
Beverly Buchanan papers, Archives of
American Art, Smithsonian Institution



8. Beverly Buchanan, *Marsh Ruins*, 1981
detail of concrete marker
Photograph: Amelia Groom, 2019

In 1980, the same year that she received the Guggenheim Fellowship, Buchanan also received a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship. In July of that year, the International Festival of Women Artists was held at the NY Carlsberg Glyptotek Museum in Denmark, in conjunction with the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women. Along with around fifty other American artists, including Betye Saar and Barbara Hammer, as well as the poet Audre Lorde, Buchanan was invited to travel to Copenhagen and participate in the festival's program of talks, panel discussions and performances. She showed documentation of her *Ruins and Rituals* sculpture, and gave a panel presentation on 'Black Women Artists in the South'. While she was in Denmark she also made an ephemeral stone work on the beach behind Kronborg castle, about an hour north of Copenhagen.⁹

Later that summer, one of Buchanan's assemblages of cast concrete fragments was shown in the group show 'Dialectics of Isolation: An Exhibition of Third World Women Artists of the United States' at A.I.R. Gallery in New York. In January of 1981, Buchanan also had a solo exhibition at New York's Kornblee Gallery, where she presented assemblages of cast cement fragments alongside photographic documentation of some of her outdoor pieces.¹⁰ That September, after completing the *Marsh Ruins*, she would go on to present stone fragment works for a show at Heath Gallery in Atlanta. This exhibition featured an essay by Lowery Stokes Sims, who was then a curator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and had just led the acquisition of Buchanan's *Wall Column* (1980) – the assemblage that had been exhibited in the 'Dialectics' exhibition at A.I.R. – for the Met's permanent collection (fig.20).¹¹

While this was clearly a period of great energy and momentum for Buchanan's work, very little was published at the time in response to the stone fragments and environmental sculptures, and almost nothing was written about the *Marsh Ruins*. A profile on the artist appeared in Macon's local newspaper shortly after the *Marsh Ruins* were built,¹² and Lucy Lippard included a very brief entry on Buchanan's outdoor works in her 1983 book *Overlay: Contemporary Art and the Art of Prehistory*.¹³ One of the only other published texts from the time appears – oddly enough – in a 1982 guide to hiking and other outdoor activities in Georgia.

Under a photograph of the artist abandoning some of her stones in

the local landscape, the brief profile explains that Buchanan was 'especially gifted at hiding her work from public view'. One of her pieces is 'located in the woods west of Macon in a spot known only to a few friends,' the guidebook reports. 'Next time you're in Brunswick', it suggests, 'keep an eye out on the seaward side of U.S. 17 in the Marshes of Glynn for another Buchanan piece whose visibility depends on the rising and falling of the tides'.¹⁴

Elusiveness was certainly an essential component of the work, but it would be wrong to infer from this that Buchanan herself wanted to be invisible. She struggled with health and (interrelated) money problems, and in a 1983 letter to the artist Ana Mendieta, Buchanan wrote that her gallery hadn't sold a single thing and that, as a result, she was having to put her art aside in order to work to meet household expenses. She mentioned that she had been in and out of hospital, before ending the letter by quipping, with devastating accuracy, that if she had died it probably 'would have been a good career move'.¹⁵

Following *Ruins and Rituals* and *Marsh Ruins*, Buchanan went on to make a number of other large-scale outdoor works with concrete and stone. While she was artist-in-residence at Macon's Museum of Arts and Sciences in 1983, she made her second site-specific work for the city, *Unity Stones*, with an arrangement of dyed concrete mounds and black granite blocks outside the Booker T. Washington Community Center. In 1984 she made *Garden Ruins*, with three huge blocks of pink granite, on the grounds of Winston-Salem State University in North Carolina. The last major stone piece she made was *Blue Station Stones* (1986), which comprises large blocks of cast concrete dyed with cobalt blue pigment, arranged among the trees at the entrance to Earlington Heights Metrorail Station in Miami.

In 1985 (or thereabouts), Buchanan produced a folding poster/booklet which gives an overview of many of her concrete fragment works and environmental stone sculptures (fig. 22-23). By the time she relocated from Macon to Atlanta, GA (and then to Athens, GA) in the mid-1980s, the stone pieces had started to evolve into her more figurative 'shack' sculptures, which would become the primary occupation of her later years, and for which she would be best known.

While her practice moved away from stones, the *Marsh Ruins* always held a special place in Buchanan's heart. According to Jane Bridges, her

partner later in life, Buchanan considered it to be her most significant work. In 2003, the two of them travelled from their home in Ann Arbor, Michigan, to Brunswick and the Golden Isles, so that Buchanan could visit the *Ruins* for the first time in about a decade. It would also be the last time she ever saw the work. According to Bridges, Buchanan was so excited as they were approaching the site that she started jumping out of the car before Bridges had even stopped driving. 'She stood there looking for a long, long time', Bridges recalls. 'It was like she was being reunited with a long-lost love'.¹⁶



For far too long, there was a serious lack of in-depth critical or scholarly attention given to the work that Buchanan made during her Macon years. Thankfully, this has recently started to be rectified; shortly before Buchanan passed away in 2015, artist Park McArthur and curator Jennifer Burris published their book *Beverly Buchanan 1978-1981*, which focuses on the stone fragments and the *Marsh Ruins*. It was through this publication that many, myself included, would first encounter these then-little-known works, and McArthur and Burris went on to curate the exhibition 'Beverly Buchanan - Ruins and Rituals' (2016-17) at the Brooklyn Museum, which presented many of these pieces publicly for the first time in decades (the exhibition also travelled, in an adapted version, to the Spelman College Museum of Fine Art in Atlanta in 2017).

Buchanan's personal papers have since been acquired by the Archives of American Art at the Smithsonian Institution. While I never had the opportunity to meet her, I have had the honour of spending time with the archive, and the many unpublished notes, journal entries and letters that Buchanan wrote during the 1970s and '80s - which she kept carefully filed away over the years - have been an indispensable resource in preparing this book.

DON'T TRY TO FLATTER
THE DEALER. IT MEANS
YOU HAVE NO MONEY



MAD DEALERS ARE DANGEROUS.

Surroundings

By the late 1970s, the term 'environmental art' had been around for a while, and could be used more or less interchangeably with other terms like 'earthworks' and 'Land art'. In Buchanan's case, her own designation of her outdoor works as 'environmental sculptures' does not distance them from immediate social and historical significance. To the contrary, it affirms that the works are inextricably intertwined with their situated contexts, which means that there is no way to experience them without also having to deal with their surrounding conditions – conditions which are elemental and ecological as well as sociohistorical.

Consider Buchanan's choice of shell-encrusted 'tabby' concrete for the outer layer of the *Marsh Ruins*. Tabby is a type of concrete where the lime, which is an essential binding agent, is extracted directly from shells, rather than from deposits in the ground. The oyster shells Buchanan used in her cement mixture were locally sourced, thereby folding physical components of the surrounding marshlands into the sculpture's materiality. At the same time, the material clearly references the antebellum tabby ruins of the region, and thus transmits the ongoing presence of the site's colonial and genocidal histories.

In the absence of natural limestone deposits, European colonisers on Georgia's southeast coast instead helped themselves to the great Native American oyster shell middens. These were large mounds of shells that had built up over centuries or millennia at sites where people would harvest and eat shellfish – the dietary staple of the indigenous peoples of the area, including the Mocama Timucuas and the Guale peoples.

The word 'midden' means simply 'refuse pile', but these shell mounds – which have been found in coastal regions all over the world – should really be understood as material archives, which always marked sites of social and ceremonial gathering.²⁸ Working within the context of Australia's settler colonial history, Quandamooka artist Megan Cope has emphasised the significance of Aboriginal middens as architectural structures. She creates sculptural installations with thousands of cast-concrete oyster shells in meticulously arranged mounds, evoking the ancient middens that were desecrated for use in concrete production. Some of these installations have also deployed copper slag – a glittery black sand that arises as a by-product of industrial copper extraction – pointing to the

continuing destruction of sacred Aboriginal sites through contemporary mining practices in Australia.

In one of these works, *RE FORMATION Part 3 (Dubbagullee)* (2017) (fig. 25), Cope references the enormous mollusc shell midden (said to have been over 10 metres high and 100 metres in diameter) that once stood at Dubbagullee, which is now the site of the Sydney Opera House. Early colonists came to refer to this area along the harbour as 'Limeburner's Point', as they set up kilns and burned away all the shells to extract lime for the construction of buildings. Some of these buildings are still standing today in the city of Sydney (which is where I grew up, as a white person on un-ceded Gadigal land). This continuing but invisibilised presence of ancient midden materials is a stark illustration of the extent to which the construction of the colonial city directly coincides with the colonial project of erasing the land's histories of Aboriginal life. For Cope, the 're-formation' of middens thus involves dismantling the British legal fiction which said that Australia had been *terra nullius* ('nobody's land').



The first photograph in the report that Buchanan compiled to document the construction of the *Marsh Ruins* shows the artist standing in the marsh grasses on 14 July 1981, one day before she and her crew started building.²⁹ 'Day before work begins', her caption reads, 'Site is "empty"'. The scare quotes around the word 'empty' are key, because while there were not yet any of her sculptures sitting among the lush vegetation, the site was clearly not empty. While a colonialist logic persists in the way some Land artists have ignored or erased the existing realities of the sites that they have arrived at,³⁰ Buchanan's *Marsh Ruins* were consciously bound up with their historically loaded setting – to the extent that the work's surrounding context would always be inseparable from its content.

As Park McArthur and Jennifer Burriss have observed, Buchanan's use of tabby embeds the work with a direct material link to the site's histories of slavery.³¹ To make tabby, enslaved peoples were tasked with cleaning and then crushing and burning huge quantities of shells in extremely hot fire pits. This would create quicklime particles, which were then mixed with sand, ash, water and more broken shells. The wet mixture could then be

poured into moulds to make bricks for the construction of slave cabins and other structures on plantations. It was also used to manufacture equipment, like indigo dye vats. The production of tabby was an arduous process, but for slave owners it was a cheap technique, which made use of local ingredients that were available in abundance.

While many of the tabby ruins that have survived along the Georgian coast are well-established tourist destinations, there hasn't always been consensus about their origins. In 1936, Walker Evans took a series of photographs of abandoned tabby ruins at St Mary's, an area just south of Brunswick, as part of his work for the Farm Security Administration photography project (fig.28). At the time, these ruins were believed to be the old remnants of a seventeenth-century Spanish mission, but this popular theory was debunked in a study published in 1937, which showed conclusively that the area's tabby ruins all came from antebellum plantation structures.³² It turned out that the ruins in Evans's photographs are from a nineteenth-century sugar mill on what had been the New Canaan Plantation.

While she was conceptualising her *Marsh Ruins* sculpture, Buchanan was deeply affected by the tabby ruins that she encountered during her explorations of this coastal area. In a hand-written note dated 5 June 1981 – six weeks before she began construction on the *Ruins* – she described encountering the overgrown tabby ruins of a former slave hospital (probably the one that can still be seen on the Retreat Plantation grounds at St. Simons Island). She was so moved by the experience, she wrote, that she immediately revised her plans for 'the sculpture to be placed in the marsh'. In her description, the ruin relates to a sense of loss and unknowability – affirming the incompleteness of the historical record – while also evoking strength and endurance:

*The hospital was for ill slaves. What was such a thing? Who was in charge, who ran it – who was 'doctor'? [...] I stood and looked long and walked slowly and imagined and – waited. I said aloud to the walls – what the hell do I think I'm doing? [...] I thought – stronger. It [the marsh sculpture] has to be strong, like all these magnificent ruins around here.*³³

The location Buchanan chose for the *Marsh Ruins* is at the edge of the coastal salt marshes of Glynn county. On one side of these marshes is the hard land of the continent, on the other side is the Golden Isles, part of Georgia's chain of lush barrier islands, and beyond those islands is the Atlantic. Following European invasion, this area was home to many extremely lucrative cotton, indigo, sugar and rice plantations, whose operations were wholly dependent on the catastrophic brutality of chattel slavery.

Despite an initial ban on African slavery in the colony of Georgia after it was founded in 1732, slavery's legalisation in 1751 only granted an official sanction to what was by then already a pervasive reality. The importation of slaves also continued here for decades after it was officially banned by Congress in 1807; as late as 1858, the owners of a converted racing yacht called *The Wanderer* smuggled more than four hundred enslaved Africans onto Jekyll Island – one of the Golden Isles across from the Marshes of Glynn, just south of where the *Marsh Ruins* sit. The ship owners had collaborated with the plantation managers of Jekyll Island, and while they would all be charged with crimes related to illegal slavery, they managed to escape all prosecution, and still profit enormously from the operation.

Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a distinctive culture known as Gullah Geechee developed among the enslaved Africans and their descendants on the southeast coast. Because of the location's remoteness from cosmopolitan centres, and because the heat, humidity and mosquitoes meant that plantation masters tended to minimise the time they spent there, these communities were often relatively isolated. This allowed them to maintain cultural practices with connections to different West and Central African traditions, and to develop the only distinctly African American creole language in the United States.³⁴ After the Civil War, successive generations of Gullahs continued to live on Georgia's barrier islands, with relatively limited outside influence.³⁵

In the late nineteenth century, The Jekyll Island Club was founded. This was an elite resort club whose membership included some of the world's wealthiest families, such as the Morgans, Vanderbilts, Astors, Whitneys, Goodyears and Rockefellers. The facilities were staffed mostly by members of the Gullah community, who would be left alone there for extended

periods, since the guests tended to come only for the winter months.³⁶ Dubbed 'the richest, the most exclusive, the most inaccessible club in the world', The Jekyll Island Club is remembered as the site of a secret meeting, held in 1910, in which Senator Nelson W. Aldrich and a group of private bankers came up with the legislative blueprint for what would later become the Federal Reserve System.

Just north of Jekyll Island – directly across the channel from the *Marsh Ruins* – is St. Simons Island, which was once almost entirely covered in large-scale plantations dedicated to the production of Sea Island Cotton, an internationally coveted and highly profitable crop. The largest of the Golden Isles, St. Simons would become an important centre for Gullah Geechee culture in the years after the Civil War, and the island is still home to the Georgia Sea Islands Festival, an annual celebration of Gullah heritage that was first organised in 1977 by the singer Bessie Jones and other members of The Georgia Sea Island Singers. Their music was an important part of Buchanan's relationship with the place, and in the months before she built the *Marsh Ruins* she had sent mixtapes to friends, with Alan Lomax recordings of Jones and The Georgia Sea Island Singers.³⁷

As with other barrier islands along Georgia's southeast coast, St. Simons has become an increasingly affluent holiday and retirement destination in recent decades, with the older communities being gradually displaced through racist policies and practices including the strategic imposition of impossibly high property taxes.³⁸ While the inhabitants of St. Simons were once predominantly Black, the residential population is now almost exclusively white. Traces of Gullah burial grounds and the tabby ruins of old slave dwellings now sit alongside luxury golf courses, gated communities, waterfront resorts and retirement villas. 2019 saw the reopening of an exclusive golf course that is fondly named The Plantation; elsewhere on the island, The Tabby House is the name of a boutique store for gifts and homewares, which operates out of a restored tabby slave cabin.

St. Simons Island is also the site of Igbo Landing, where, in 1803, a group of captive Igbo people (from modern-day Nigeria), having survived the Middle Passage, turned around and walked into the water, chained together, choosing death over a life of slavery. In a note written in Brunswick on 2 July 1981, less than two weeks before construction of the *Marsh Ruins*

commenced, Buchanan describes finding the sacred site, which does not have a sign and is not marked on local maps. 'Black policeman (Nathaniel) helped me find it,' she wrote. 'He'd never heard the true story of slaves chained together [who] walked into the water and drowned while singing, "The water has brought us, the water will take us away".'³⁹

This historic act of resistance has long held symbolic importance in African American oral and literary histories.⁴⁰ Julie Dash's 1991 film *Daughters of the Dust*, which tells the story of several generations of Gullah women at the turn of the twentieth century, is set at the site of Igbo Landing, and different versions of the story are shared throughout the film (fig.32). More recently, Beyoncé's Dash-inspired visual album *Lemonade* (2016) referenced the event.

While the site of Igbo Landing still has no historical marker present to commemorate it, the *Marsh Ruins* are situated in close proximity to a live oak tree which has been designated as a memorial to the poet and Confederate soldier Sidney Lanier.⁴¹ According to the Georgia Historical Commission's official sign, Lanier sat under the tree as he drew inspiration for his famous lyrical poem about the surrounding marshlands, *The Marshes of Glynn* (1878). Over the years, Lanier has had a football stadium, a bathhouse, an island, a shopping centre, several roads and a major bridge named after him in the area. Numerous public plaques were also erected in his honour in and around Brunswick, and the oak tree near the *Marsh Ruins* is formally designated as *Lanier's Oak*.

Reporting in 2019, The Southern Poverty Law Centre found that there are 114 Confederate monuments on public property throughout Georgia, which is more than any other state in the country.⁴² The use of Confederate names and iconography also continues to run strong; for instance, there are still two active US Army bases in Georgia that are proudly named after Confederate generals; Fort Benning honours one of Georgia's most zealous advocates for slavery and Southern succession, while Fort Gordon honours a Confederate officer who was also the reputed head of the Ku Klux Klan in Georgia after the Civil War.

The most ambitious and imposing of all Confederate monuments is undoubtedly the one at Stone Mountain, just outside Atlanta (Georgia's capital city). Depicting Southern Civil War leaders on horseback, this carving stretches across three acres in the side of a granite mountain, constituting

the largest bas-relief sculpture in the world. The idea for the memorial was first proposed in 1914; the following year, Stone Mountain was the site of a cross-burning ceremony that marked the rebirth of the Ku Klux Klan after a period of dormancy. Work on the carving started in 1923, but the project was abandoned before completion. In 1958, during the civil rights movement, the state of Georgia bought the land and created an association to oversee the monument's completion. It is still owned and maintained by the state, and remains protected by state law.⁴³

In Macon, the town in Georgia where Buchanan lived, publicly inscribed reminders of white supremacy are similarly inescapable. As Andy Campbell has observed in his article on Buchanan's stone sculptures, when the artist installed her *Ruins and Rituals* on the grounds of The Museum of Arts and Sciences in 1979, the garden area where she placed the work was still named after the Macon writer Harry Stillwell Edwards, who is best known as the author of *Eneas Africanus* (1919), an enormously popular and widely translated work of pro-slavery propaganda, which tells the tale of a contented, loyal slave who refuses freedom and voluntarily returns to his master after abolition. In 1964, Edwards's original writing hut was brought to the museum grounds as a memorial. Although the area has since been renamed, the restored hut is still standing, right behind Buchanan's *Ruins and Rituals*.⁴⁴

In the double-sided poster that Buchanan produced in the mid-1980s to chronicle her various stone pieces, she referred to them as 'monuments' (fig. 22–23), but in their transient materiality and abstract formation, the Marsh Ruins are about as anti-monumental as a monument could be. They don't transmit any predetermined narrative content or legible demonstration of facts. They don't invite visitors to remember something that once happened and is now over; while they are dense with situated historical significance, they exist in the present tense as ever-evolving forms, which remain spatially and temporally unbounded.

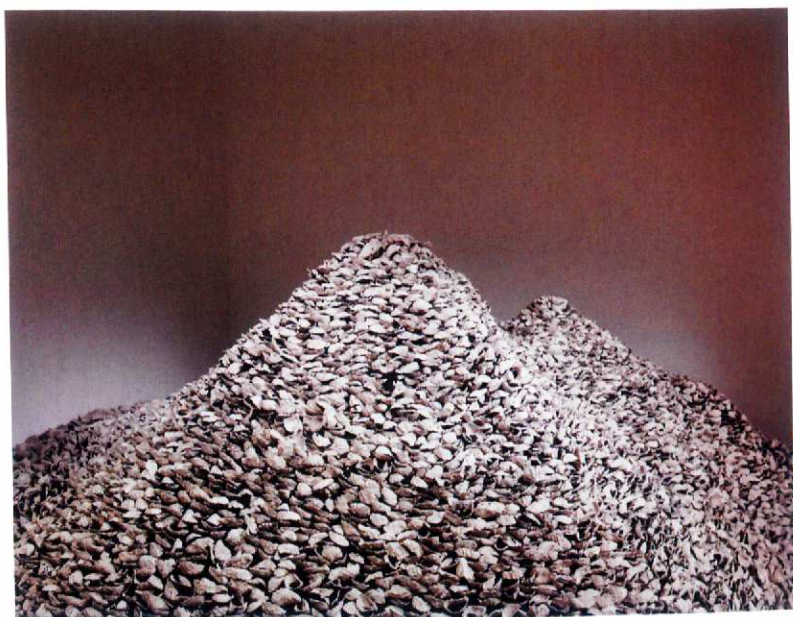


The public park where Buchanan built the *Marsh Ruins* is called Overlook Park, a generic name which can be found across the US where parks have been designated as observation points for surveying the wider landscape.

Besides referring to a scenic viewpoint, however, the word 'overlook' can also mean *failing to notice*, or *deliberately ignoring* (as in, 'we're willing to overlook that'). Given that Buchanan's work was so closely attuned to the unnoticed and the disregarded (not to mention that she herself was so overlooked by the major narratives of twentieth-century art in America), this particular convergence of meanings in the name of the site for the *Marsh Ruins* carries ironic resonance.

The artist Park McArthur plays on the multiple meanings of the word 'overlook' in her work *Overlook Park 1-5* (2017), a set of five photographs taken around a wooden picnic table in the park next to the *Marsh Ruins*. As images that are *adjacent to* rather than *of* Buchanan's *Ruins*, these photos relate to the work's relationality, through its surrounding conditions – recalling Trinh T. Minh-ha's affirmation of 'speaking nearby' instead of 'speaking about'.⁴⁵

The pictures were captured with a camera placed on McArthur's lap as she moved around the picnic table in her wheelchair. As such, the range is close and the angles low, showing us details of textures under the seats and abstract patterns of shadows on the ground below. They're anti-panoramic images, offering no horizon, no surveyed landscape and no purported overview of the site. Rather, they index an embodied perspective, which is deliberately incomplete and which affirms a way of looking that is attuned to questions about what's missing from view – and what might be hiding in plain sight.



25. Megan Cope, *REFORMATION PART 3 (Dubbagutlee)*, 2017, cast concrete, Sydney rock oysters, copper slag
Installation detail, The National Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2017
© Megan Cope. Courtesy the artist
And Milani Gallery, Brisbane