

The Bottom Line

2012 | Mid-twentieth century Czech suitcase: 71 x 40 x 21cm | Share and bond certificates, 90 Mexican mould-made black ceramic skulls, brass rods



The piece consists of a suitcase of a type used around the end of the Second World War, perhaps by someone escaping from the Eastern European block. It is plastered with share and bond certificates, calling to mind old-fashioned steamer trunk stickers but twisting the meaning to emphasise the right of capital to find its “place in the sun” (preferably tax-free, offshore) over the personal freedoms of travel and migration. Capitalist enterprise, based as it is on extracting the highest amount of short-term profit for the lowest investment means that it is inherent to the system that the health and welfare of workers is converted into bottom-line profitability by the (corrupt) non-implementation of safety measures (Union Carbide, Anaconda Copper, United Fruit etc.) In addition, extractive industries always leave behind major ecological clean-up problems for which the companies only accept responsibility under extreme pressure. This is the destructive “bottom line” of business and it extends from the extractive industries and agri-business global players to the financial “games” of recent years with interest rate fixing, irresponsible mortgage activities, land-grabbing and the many forms of gaming the system which have been so detrimental to “normal” investors.