

SUBVERSIVE WHITE



Subversive White

Exhibition

March 2 - April 27, 2019

Opening

Saturday, March 2, 2019

7:00 pm - 9:00 pm

LISA SETTE GALLERY

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Gallery Hours: Tuesday - Friday 10am - 5pm | Saturday 12-5pm | or by appt.

White contains all wavelengths of visible light, and in turn humans have deposited within it our multitudes of meanings, reflecting opposing and essential facets of human experience. Inspired in part by James Baldwin's observation that "Color is not a human or a personal reality; it is a political reality," Subversive White presents a response to a specific strain of white that has permeated our national dialogue: the ugly, enduring premise of white supremacy and the host of oppressive systems that it engenders and enables. The artists included in Subversive White pull at the veil of whiteness, investigate the tendency of white to imply both beauty and menace, take aim at the false notions of ethnicity and biology, and the presumed opacity of white and its ability to cover, obscure, or erase. Throughout the show, white reemerges as a purifying flash of light and heat, a conflagration with the potential to reveal the phantasms within.

The painter **Claudio Dicochea** employs the format of 18th century Latin American *Casta* paintings—diagrammatic schemes depicting Colonial family units, from the palest-complected to darkest—but substitutes archetypal figures from comics, science fiction, cinema and popular culture in a riot of associations connecting us all in a common generative flux. Dicochea's *081217* is stark and wraithlike, referencing the date of the 2017 "Unite the Right" white supremacist rally held in Charlottesville, Virginia. Dicochea cross-breeds three iconic automobiles: the 1917 Ford Model T, 1969 Dodge Charger, 2010 Dodge Challenger, and explains his haunting family portrait in this way: "The bottom portion is the vertically compressed 2010 Dodge Challenger, after it was used to maul peaceful demonstrators at the Charlottesville rally. The driver injured 19 people and killed 32-year-old Heather D. Heyer. The Dodge Challenger is the updated version of the Dodge Charger, which was a model made famous by the television series *The Dukes of Hazzard*, which ran on CBS from 1979 to 1985. The vehicle is more famously known as the "General Lee," an enduring symbol of Confederate pride. It is named after general Robert E. Lee, who himself was born less than two hours from Charlottesville. The top is a Ford Model T, which was produced on August 12, 1908. This was the first automobile to make full use of Henry Ford's famous factory line production method

and was intended to generate a mass consumer market for automobiles in the US." Dicochea depicts the embrace of American consumerism and American racism, an intertwined history of violence and coercion that has given rise to this ghastly present-day progeny.

The photographer **Fiona Pardington** addresses generations of racist pseudoscience in *Phrenology Head, Le Kremlin-Bicêtre Hospital, Paris 2011* (With thanks Musée de l'Homme (Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle), Paris), a striking portrait of a 19th Century phrenological bust. A system of cranial measurement that supposedly corresponded to character traits, or "mind organs," phrenology was primarily a method to justify pervasive and immoral notions of ethnic superiority. Pardington, a native of New Zealand who scours cultural institutions for these obsolete medical models, found this pale, mustachioed visage abandoned "in the car park storage of Paris's Kremlin-Bicêtre Hospital, along with a group of other casts; they've basically been forgotten." While the models have been discarded, the pernicious habit of generating scientific facts as a rationale for existing biases reaches deeply into our present moment. It's a form of delusion that is aptly represented in the unblinking eyes and methodically gouged, segmented cranium of the Kremlin-Bicêtre man.

Rob Kinmonth's eerie, intriguing photograph of George Washington's dentures on display at Mount Vernon, are similarly representative of a nightmarish moral schema that yet permeates our contemporary discourse. The dentures—a tortured and weathered shade of ivory, screwed into a brass structure—are conjectured to have been made from teeth pulled from the mouths of slaves on Washington's plantation. Remarks Kinmonth, "Over the years, people have recreated Washington in many different forms to satisfy their own purposes and desires. Our collective memory of him, real and imagined, is forever entwined with our lives as Americans."

Examining the present-day structures of our national bureaucracies, and the way they perpetuate this legacy of oppression, **Ben Durham's** *Chain-link Fence Portrait (John)* portrays one of the artist's adolescent acquaintances whose mugshot ended up in the public domain. The subject's likeness is

executed in undulations of handwritten text on handmade paper, and the entire composition is systematically contorted by an underlay of chain-link fence. Durham describes the person he once knew with a series of associative memories, his words the only delineating line. “I strive to find some way to tell the subject’s story and yet I know I will fail to do so,” says Durham. “Whiteness in painting and drawing is not neutral or a blank slate but always for me an absence, a record of what we can or cannot see. This balance and the question of who deserves visibility and attention and what attentions are valued and facilitated by our culture is at the center of my ongoing inquiry into memory, representation, and the criminal justice system.”

Hank Willis Thomas’ lenticular work, *Le Blanc Imite Le Noir*, requires that its viewers alter their location and vantage point in order to perceive the work, as the image shifts and the text changes. The piece is simple at first glance—black text on a white background. Yet no single view grants access to the sum of the composition; its simplicity is a riddle, and the message contained within and projecting from its white lenses is in a constant state of flux.

From the insistent protuberance pushing beneath the skin-like surface of **Julianne Swartz’s** *Stretch Drawing (Thick Jut)*, to *The Gaze*, **Carrie Marill’s** still-life in which a chalky, stolid embankment is fractured by blasts of organic growth, white becomes a method of resistance and a cipher; a place where meanings may turn radically below the surface. In her *Proof-Reading* series, **Ann Morton’s** white handkerchiefs include a disclaimer: a careful inspection will reveal the false claims of purity permeating our current conversation, from the bleached dentition of so-called leaders to the straightjacket of our criminal justice system.

Taking aim at the repressive gendered iconography of white communion and bridal dresses, **Mark Mitchell** instead honors the unsung work of those who counter such prescriptive notions, often through the very fact of their existence. Wrapped in white silk and sweetly embroidered, with a braided cotton fuse, Mitchell delivers a bomb from the past in *Cracker Party*. Remarks Mitchell, the piece is “a tribute sculpture to the George Jackson

Brigade, an intersectional armed resistance group of the late 60’s and early 70’s active in the Pacific Northwest. They were comprised of two gay ex-cons, two lesbians, a sex worker and a Black Panther. I made this bomb to celebrate their legacy.”

With similarly delicate sensibility and explosive implications, **Trina McKillen’s** *The Children (Communion Dress)* is a souvenir of the generations of sexual abuse committed by the Catholic Church, the garment’s symbolic childlike innocence forever connected to the immense perversions of patriarchal power. In *Subversive White* these ritual objects reverse the dynamic of repression and themselves become powerful storytelling objects. **Angela Ellsworth’s** intricately patterned *Seer Bonnets*, head-coverings comprised entirely of pearl-tipped corsage pins, recall the transcendental gatherings of the plural wives of Ellsworth’s traditional Mormon heritage. Beyond the censored and officially-sanctioned accounts of history and religion, secret stories are pulsing, forging new forms from the rituals of the past.

Textile and performance artist **Sonya Clark** tests the interactions between elementary human materials: textiles and text, storytelling and symbols such as flags, beads and human hair, and fuses stories both universal and personal. In *Whitewashed*, tones of Sherman Williams paint (titled with the actual paint colors: Incredible White, Storyteller, and Natural Choice) create the ghostly impression of an American flag, a symbol rendered nearly invisible. The work is remade in each exhibition setting, a continuous bodily investment in this pale version of our country’s banner.

Craft as an iterative function of the American experience is integral to Clark’s experience as a first-generation immigrant—raised in Washington DC by a Jamaican mother and father from Trinidad and Barbados, Clark’s distant ancestors had in turn, survived the carriage from West Africa on a slaver’s ship; a Scottish great-grandfather connected the family to Europe. Clark’s *Octaroon* is a rectangular, flag-like juxtaposition of African braids; the piece’s title refers to Clark’s 1/8 Scottish heritage, just as in the context of human slavery the term “Quadroon” was once used to describe persons of African heritage. Clark’s *Slave Collar* addresses the legacy of slavery

with an unflinching look at its historical origins. Words that encapsulate the practice of dehumanization and slavery are inscribed by a series of punctures through handmade cotton Khadi paper. Clark explains that these works, “are based on the parallel legacies of Empire building through slave labor in the Roman Empire and in the USA. Many of the enslavement practices of ancient Rome were employed in the Americas, including things like slave collars. ‘Tenemefugiafugio’ is text directly taken from an Ancient Roman slave collar. It translates from Latin as ‘Keep me so I do not flee.’” For Clark, addressing the violence and iniquities borne by African-Americans in our society is only the first sentence in the story. “Anger is justified, and then what? Because anger is simply an emotion. I’m much more interested in what happens next. How do we move forward? And how far have we moved forward?”

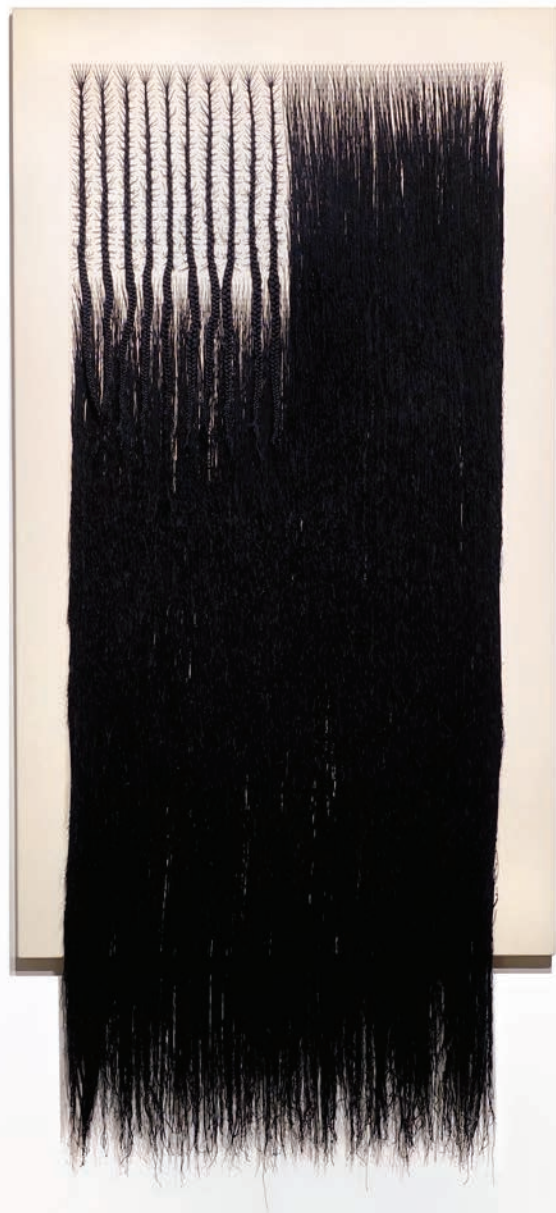
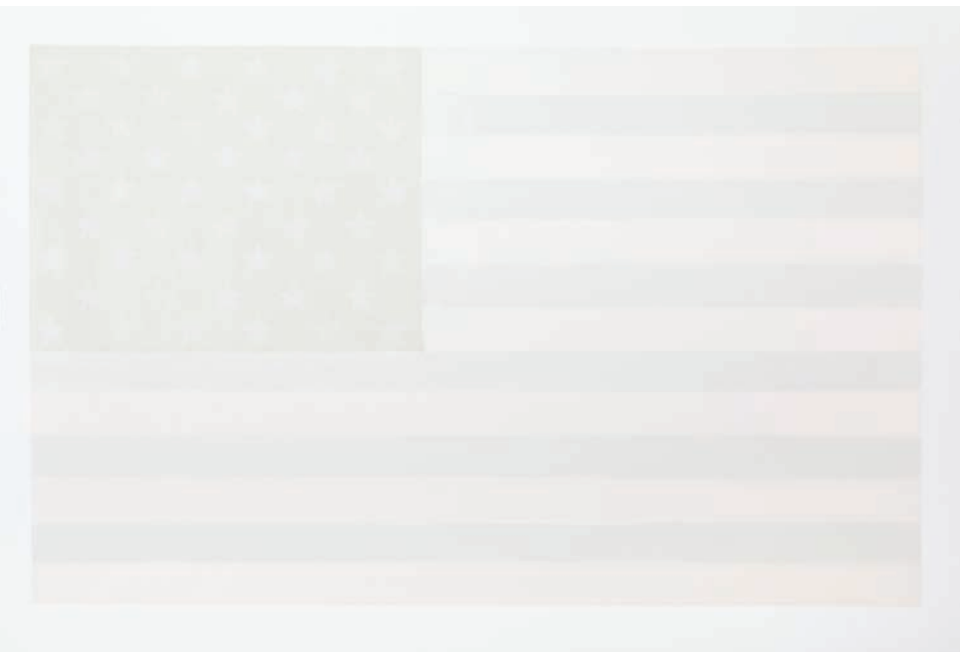
Enrique Chagoya seeks a template for change in a reflection upon our disparate human narratives and our shared human experience. His accordion-folded painting *Aliens in Borderlandia* borrows its shape from pre-Columbian codices, prehistoric Mayan and Aztec books in which figures and events are depicted in graphic, nonlinear form. This compositional strategy, and the tongue-in-cheek “everyperson” stereotypes populating Chagoya’s bright unfurling of pale handmade Amate bark paper, present the possibility of cultural retelling and remaking through our shared stories. Chagoya remarks: “When we live within borders, everyone is a stereotypical alien at either side of a border. In this codex I diluted ethnic/ gender stereotypes from many places (Africa, Europe, Asia, Latin America)... Walls dehumanize us with stereotypes. However, the fact is that we are all coming from the same genome, and we are the same species. Our differences enrich our life and in history, when those differences mix and integrate, they create new cultural legacies.”

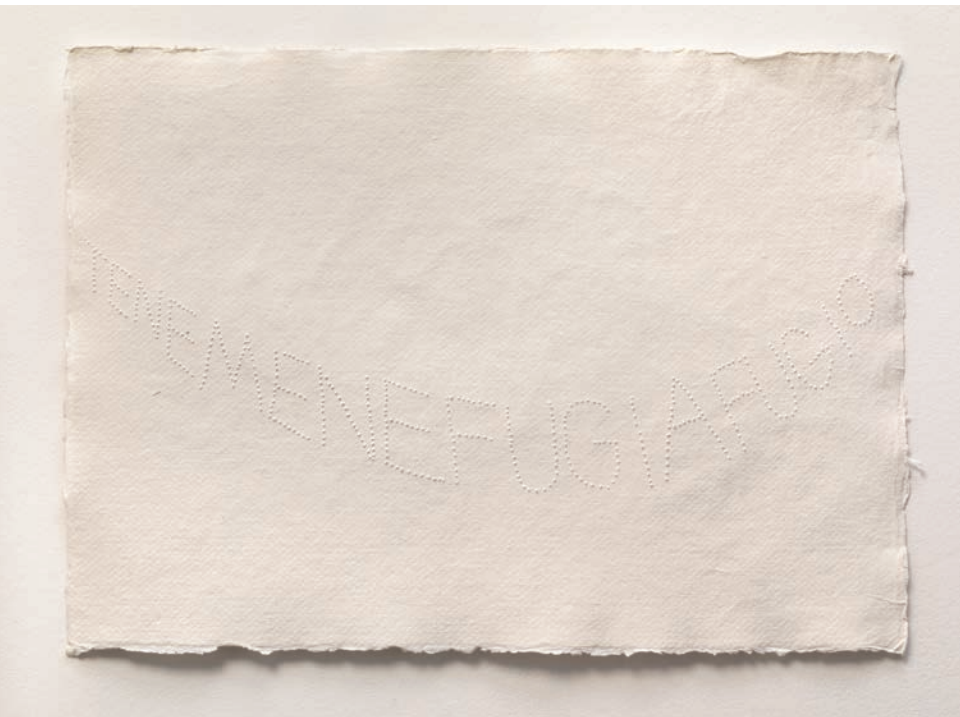
Despite our various cultural precepts, ultimately concepts of whiteness and darkness are subsumed in the interplay of elements and electricity, sensation and understanding, that underpin our shared human experience. **Ato Ribeiro’s** works, like the early African-American quilts that influence them, contain forms that shift and expand as our eyes adjust to repeating variations in line and shape. As a Ghanaian-American artist, Ribeiro’s

artwork embodies a vocabulary of histories and materials compiled across continents and cultures. Ribeiro’s marquetted geometrical forms, hand-fashioned entirely of found and discarded wood, present a coded language, contemporary evidence of a shared heritage that is independent of words and has existed for centuries. *Between You and Me*, Ribeiro’s work for Subversive White, was, remarks the artist, “designed by blending a series of communicators inspired by African American quilts from the Antebellum South, Kente Cloth, and a hybrid fusion of the two... Through collecting, joining and refining salvaged pieces of wood, the work’s composition has been organized by separating woods that resemble specific skin tones. Darker pieces of wood are totally surrounded by lighter woods and framed by a fusion of the two to reveal a message communicated through an Adinkra Symbol entitled ‘Nea Onnim No Sua A, Ohu’—‘One who does not know can know from learning.’ Though I understand that all human beings are created in the same manner; by piecing various histories together, our current political climate reflects a desperate need to be reminded once again. *Between You and Me* remains optimistic, focusing on how bodies of color have and will continue to overcome dealing with various forms of quotidian violence. We should never feel the need to justify why we are who we are; simply being will always be enough.”

“Color is not a human or a personal reality; it is a political reality.”

– James Baldwin







... FROM ... SUNDAY MORNING ... THAT HE HAD ... UNITS OF DRUGS ... DURING THE ...
... AS PART OF THE ... (HE) SPENT SATURDAY EVENING ... EARLY ... WITH HIS FRIEND WITH ...
... IN A VARIETY OF INTOXICATING SUBSTANCES WITH FRIENDS ... HE ... IN THE NIGHT ...
... HE WENT TO ... IN LEXINGTON, AT AROUND 2:00AM, ANOTHER ... FRIEND PICKED ... FROM THE ...
... PROVE THEM ... THE FIRST FRIEND ... HOME) THROUGHOUT THE ... THEY DRANK ... SMOKED ...
... ANALISED COCAINE AND TOOK PRESCRIPTION PILLS INCLUDING ... ONOPIN SHORTLY AFTER ARRIVING ... HE ...
... WHO LIVED IN A HEDGEWOOD COURT APARTMENT ... IN THE WOODHILL ... DIVISION, HE ... TO GET ...
... (SOMEONE) TO ... INTO HEDGEWOOD COURT BUT BOTH DECLINED. (HIS FRIEND) ... A KALON ... AND FELL ...
... ASLEEP SHORTLY THEREAFTER. HETHEN CALLED FOR A CAB ... FROM YELLOWCAB OF LEXINGTON ... L' WAS ...
... DISPATCHED AND ARRIVED AT THE RESIDENCE TO PICK HIM ... AT 3:09AM AT ... M. THE TAXI ... INTO THE H ...
... EDGEWOOD COURT PARKING LOT. DUE TO INCONSISTENCIES BETWEEN HIS STATEMENTS TO POLICE AND TESTIMONY AT ...
... RIAL, WHAT HAPPENED NEXT IS UNCLEAR, BUT IT IS UNDISPUTED THAT HE ... KILLED ... BY SHOOTING ... IN THE BACK OF ...
... THE HEAD ... 38 CALIBER ... REVOLVER THAT BELONGED TO (HIS FRIEND) ... AROUND 3:20 AM ... SHOT OF HEDGEWOOD ...
... COURTHOUSE ... GUNSHOT ... FOLLOVED BY AN ENGINE ACCELERATING, SURVEILLANCE FOOTAGE AT ... AM (HIS) FLIGHT ...
... FROM HEDGEWOOD COURT ... ACROSS SOME BASKETBALL COURTS TOWARD OSAGE COURT ... AT ... AM (HIS) FLIGHT ...
... FROM THE SCENE FIRST ... HIM TO A FRIEND'S HOUSE NEARBY. THE FRIEND WAS UNHAPPY WITH (HIM) FOR COMING T ...
... ON HIS USE AND KNOCKING ON HIS DOOR AT THAT HOUR AND (HE) WAS FORCED TO LEAVE ... RTLY AFTER ARRIVIN ...
... AT 3:40AM (HE) ... (HIS FRIEND) WHO ALSO LIVED NEARBY ON OSAGE COURT ... HIS FRIEND ... NOT ANSW ...
... ER SHORTLY AFTER ... MAKING THIS CALL (HE) MET UP WITH ANOTHER FRIEND, 'AK'. ... CAUSE (HE) ... NOT GET IN ...
... TOUCH WITH (HIS FRIEND). HE ASKED 'AK' TO WALK TO 'RP'S' HOUSE AND TELL 'RP' TO COME PICK HIM UP AND DRIVE HIM B ...
... ACK TO 'MM'S' APARTMENT SHORTLY THEREAFTER. 'RP' PICKED HIM UP AND DROVE HIM BACK TO 'MM'S' RESIDENCE. DUR ...
... ING THE DRIVE, ... SHAKEN AND SCARED. HE TOLD 'RP' THAT HE COULD NOT BELIEVE WHAT HE HAD DONE BU ...
... THE WOULD ... TELL HIM WHAT HAD HAPPENED. (HE) PLACED A CALL TO HIS GIRLFRIEND, 'DB' AT ... AM AND ASKED ...
... TO COME ... HIM AT 'MM'S' HOUSE AND DRIVE HIM TO HER APARTMENT. IT IS UNCLEAR AT ... TIME (HE) ...
... AT 'M ... 'S' APARTMENT BUT WHEN THEY ARRIVED HEARD 'RP' SMOKED MARIJUANA. THEN 'RP' DROVE ... HOME ALSO ...
... 'MM'S' TO PICK ... HIM UP AT WHICH ... TIME SHE SAW HIM SNORTING COCAINE. THEY THEN DROVE TO HER APARTMENT AN ...
... NSUED ... THE CARRIAGE AND ONCE INSIDE (HER) APARTMENT, (HE) FIRED A SHOT IN HER ...
... LEAD ... THROUGH THE WALL ... BECAME LODGED IN A KITCHEN CABINET IN THE ADJACENT APARTMENT. THE ... LEFT HER AP ...
... APARTMENT FOR FEAR OF THE POLICE COMING AND INITIALLY DROVE TO (HIS) GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE. SHE ... NOT HOME SO ...
... HEY HEADED TO (HIS) OTHER'S HOUSE WHICH WAS ... OUT IN THE COUNTRY. SOME DISTANCE AWAY DURING THIS TIME THEY CON ...
... TINUED TO ARGUE. ON THE WAY TO HIS MOTHER'S HOUSE, (HE) TOLD HIM SHE NEEDED GAS SO THEY PULLED INTO A MARATHON GAS STA ...
... TION AT AROUND 7:45 AM. WHEN (HE) GOT OUT OF THE VEHICLE (SHE) SHUT THE DOORS AND DROVE ... (HE) CHASED AFT ...
... R HER, PULLING HIS GUN AND POINTING IT AT THE FLEEING VEHICLE. A BYSTANDER 'JT' ... EN GETTING GAS AT ...
... THE MARATHON ... ION AND WITNESSED WHAT OCCURRED. STILL HOLDING HIS HANDGUN, (HE) ... ROACHED AND ...
... DRIVE HIM TO WAL-MART ONCE (HE) LEFT HIS VEHICLE, 'JT' CALLED THE POLICE. AT 8:15AM, (HE) ENTERED WAL-MART AND ...
... PROCEEDED TOWARD THE SPORTING GOODS DEPARTMENT. HE SPOKE ON THE PHONE WITH HIS MOTHER WHILE WALKING THROU ...
... GH THE STORE AND AN EMPLOYEE OVER HEARD HIM SAY, "LOVE HER. SHE LEFT ME. I'M GONNA KILL HER." BEFORE THE ENPL ...
... ONE ... COULD CALL AND ... WARN THE EMPLOYEE IN SPORTING GOODS OF HER CONCERN. (HE) ARRIVED AT THE SPORTING ...
... DS DESK AND PURCHASED .45-CALIBER AMMUNITION. HETHEN PULLED HIS HANDGUN FROM BEHIND THE DESK A ...
... ND BEGAN LOADING IT. THE EMPLOYEE AT THE SPORTING GOODS REGISTER TOLD (HIM) HE COULD NOT LOAD THE ... IN INSIDE T ...
... HE STORE SO (HE) TUCKED THE GUN INTO HIS WAISTBAND AND EXITED THE STORE. EMPLOYEES AT WAL-MART ALSO C ...
... ALLED POLICE OUTSIDE WAL-MART. (HE) WALKED TO AN ADJACENT MCDONALD'S PARKING LOT AT WHICH TIME HE WA ...
... SPOTTED BY OFFICER MATTHEW SMITH WHO CONFIRMED (HE) MATCHED THE DESCRIPTION PROVIDED BY DISPATCH ...
... H OFFICERS ... WITH EXITED HIS SQUAD CAR, DREW HIS WEAPON, AND ORDERED (HIM) TO THE GROUND. (HIS) RECENT ...
... ING OFFICER SMITH'S COMMANDS, (HE) DROPPED THE WAL-MART BAG CONTAINING THE ... RECENT ...
... Y PURCHASED AMMUNITION AND REACHED FOR HIS GUN. THE OFFICER TOOK COVER BE ...
... HIND HIS VEHICLE AND CONTINUED GIVING (HIM) VERBAL COMMANDS, WHICH WERE IGNORE BE ...
... D. (HE) EVENTUALLY DROPPED HIS WEAPON AND OFFICER SMITH HANDCLIFFED HIM SHORTLY ...
... HEREAFTER, OFFICER JERRY PARSONS ARRIVED ON THE SCENE AND PLACED (HIM) IN THE BACKS ...
... EAT OF HIS CRUISER. A SEARCH INCIDENT TO ARREST UNCOVERED VARIOUS DRUGS AND CASH ...
... IN HIS POCKETS. OFFICER PARSONS TRANSPORTED (HIM) TO JAIL AND INTERVIEWED HIM REG ...
... R DURING THE PILLS. 'DB', 'JT' AND WAL-MART THAT MORNING, 'AL'S' BODY WAS DISCOVERED ...
... IN HIS TAXI AT HEDGEWOOD COURT. OFFICER BJ BLANK WAS THE FIRST TO ARRIVE ON THE ...
... SCENE AND HE NOTICED THAT THE FRONT WHEELS OF THE CAB HAD JUMPED THE PARKING ...
... URB. THE TAXI WAS IN PARK AND THE IGNITION TURNED OFF. OFFICER BLANK FOUND ... L ...
... BODY SLUMPED ... IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT WITH THE SEAT BELT FASTENED AND ...



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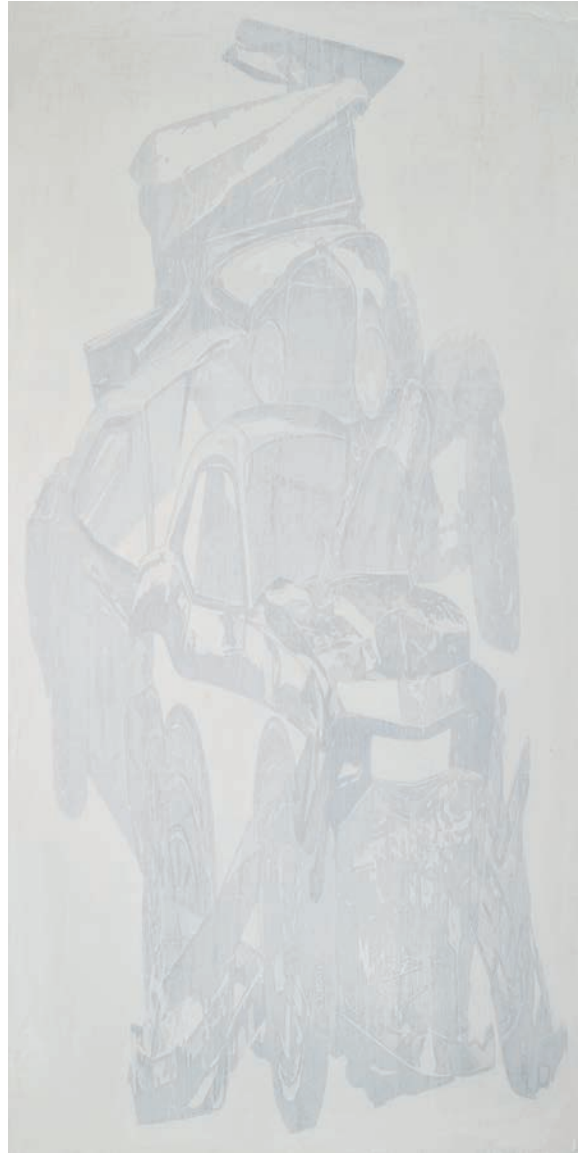
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Subversive White

Front cover:

Mark Mitchell

This Lipsync Kills Fascists, 2019, reed, cotton, wool, silk, Lumerian crystals, Black African ostrich feathers 7.75" x 11" x 9" (not incl. fuse)

Inside front & back cover:

Ben Durham

Chain-link Fence Portrait (John), (detail), 2017 graphite text on handmade paper and steel chain-link fence, 65.26" x 49.5" framed

Sonya Clark

Whitewashed, 2017 painted directly on wall, made up of Sherwin Williams paint colors: "Incredible White, Storyteller, Natural Choice" (actual paint color names) 44" x 82" Edition of 10

Sonya Clark

Octaroon, 2018 canvas and thread 83" x 38.25"

Sonya Clark

Slave Collar, 2017 pricked Khadi cotton paper 11" x 16" unframed 13" x 17.5" framed

Julianne Swartz

Stretch Drawing (Thick Jut), 2013, wood, rocks, paper 12" x 10" x 6.5"

Ben Durham

(He) grew up, 2018 graphite text on handmade paper, hand-dug clay, and steel chain-link fence 35" x 26" unframed

Ben Durham

(He) is in the prison now, 2018, graphite text on handmade paper, hand-dug clay, and steel chain-link fence 35" x 26" unframed

Ben Durham

(He) is in the prison now, (detail), 2018

Ben Durham

Chain-link Fence Portrait (John), 2017, graphite text on handmade paper and steel chain-link fence, 65.25" x 49.5" framed

Trina McKillen

The Children (Communion Dress), 2015-2018, Irish linen, thread, gold leaf, 25.5" x 16.5"

Hank Willis Thomas

Le Blanc Imite Le Noir (shown from three angles), 2010 lenticular, 40 5/8" x 30 3/4" x 1 3/8" framed, Edition of 5

Mark Mitchell

Fragility, 2019, reed, cotton, wool, silk, wood 7.75" x 11" x 9"

Mark Mitchell

Cracker Party, 2017 silk floss embroidery, silk taffeta, cotton buckram and reed, 9" x 6" x 6" (not including fuse)

Enrique Chagoya

Aliens in Borderlandia, 2019 acrylic, water based oil, glass eyes, pencil, solvent transfers, decals, acrylic varnish, wood on handmade Amate paper 11.5" x 108.5" unframed

Ann Morton

Proof-Reading #2 (shithole), 2018, handmade handkerchief with embroidery, 12" x 12", hanging dimensions 4" x 15" x 3", Edition of 7

Ann Morton

Proof-Reading #3 (collusion), 2018, handmade handkerchief with embroidery, 12" x 12", hanging dimensions 4" x 15" x 3", Edition of 7

Ann Morton

Proof-Reading #4 (fake news), 2018, handmade handkerchief with embroidery, 12" x 12", hanging dimensions 4" x 15" x 3", Edition of 7

Ann Morton

Proof-Reading #5 (...wouldn't...shouldn't), 2018, handmade handkerchief with embroidery, 12" x 12", hanging dimensions 4" x 15" x 3", Edition of 7

Carrie Marill

The Gaze, 2019, acrylic on linen, 44" x 94"

Angela Ellsworth

Seer Bonnet XXIV (Sister Sarah) and Seer Bonnet XXV (Sister Maria), 2016 33,407 pearl corsage pins,

fabric, steel, 65" x 48" x 24" (base 48" x 24" x 4")

Claudio Dicochea

081217, 2018 acrylic, graphite, charcoal, transfer on wood 48" x 24" x 2"

Rob Kinmonth

George Washington's Dentures, Mount Vernon, Virginia, 2016, c-print 16" x 20" unframed Edition of 5

copy: megan bates / design: ps:studios / printing: ben franklin press

Ato Ribeiro

Between You and Me, 2018 repurposed wood, wood glue, 72" x 48" x 1.25"

Back cover:

Fiona Pardington

Phrenology Head, Le Kremlin-Bicêtre Hospital, Paris 2011 (With thanks Musée de l'Homme (Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle), Paris), 2018, archival photographic print on Hahnemuhle paper 52.75" x 41.75" framed Edition of 10



