Curated by For Freedoms, the 2017 Aperture Summer Open exhibition, *On Freedom*, offers a photographic response to Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Four Freedoms: freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom from want, and freedom from fear.

The photographers and image-makers selected for inclusion each address these issues in their work in varying ways. By bringing them together, we aim to open up a dialogue about the nature and necessity of political action, the language and means by which we critique and produce avenues for sustainable change, and the relationship of photography to these issues.

In the hands of some of the photographers presented in this exhibition, the camera serves as a mirror, reflecting on the stark limitations that make social inequality visible. In others, the camera serves as a tool of liberation—for the body and the mind, and from personal and ecological danger, social constructs, and political limitations. The selection demonstrates how the democratic nature of photography can serve as a vehicle for diverse perspectives to visualize social problems, spark dialogue, and transform assumptions. For many, freedom may be an illusion, but the photographers here are committed to mapping new aspects of this critical terrain—identifying a trail, pointing out dangers along the way—and ever aiming toward the light.

—For Freedoms
DEBI COWRALL
BEYOND GITMO

In the fifteen years since the U.S. Naval Station in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba (“Gitmo”) opened its first offshore “War on Terror” prisons, 780 Muslim men have been held there, the vast majority without charge or trial of any kind. 41 remain as, essentially, forever prisoners. In this series, Beyond Gitmo, I make collaborative environmental portraits with fourteen men once held as accused terrorists, after they have been cleared and freed, in nine countries. Some returned home, but others were transferred to third countries where they did not speak the language. Each portrait replicates, in the free world, the military-imposed conditions for making photographs at Guantánamo Bay: no faces are shown. Their bodies may be free, but the trauma remains. Guantánamo will always mark them.

In my forthcoming book, Welcome to Camp-America (Radius, 2017), I investigate the cost of freedom in the post-9/11 era by juxtaposing photographs, archival material, and first-person texts in Arabic and English.

JASMINE CLARK
AFTER EISENHOWER

After Eisenhower is directly shaped by my upbringing in a conservative military community in Twentynine Palms, California. My parents both joined the United States Marines Corps at eighteen. The embedded framework of American patriotism is inseparable from and in service to the systemic cultural narrative that dark skin (one instance) is a negative. Protection of others, protection of the flag, and patriotism are the ideals that persist. Patriotism manifests in symbols, for example, the National Anthem, the American flag, and the separation of church and state. As an African American female who identifies as queer, my conflicted views of the military spurred my curiosity about its role in American life. Military is intertwined in the established patriotic, national, and Christian identity. How is patriotism attained without any familial military relationship or in a society that oppresses any aspect of your identity? President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s 1961 Farewell Address warned about the implications of military power and its impact on American culture. My work probes how American patriotic identity manifests when its symbols are conflated with complex and polarizing issues such as religion, race, class, nationalism, and the Second Amendment. The saturation of these oversimplified messages is disconcerting. They are meant to have clear meanings. However, these places and artifacts suggest more problematic truths about American life and our relationship to our military.

MARCUS DESIENO
SURVEILLANCE LANDSCAPES

In our increasingly intrusive electronic culture, how do we delineate the boundaries between public and private? Surveillance Landscapes is a body of work that interrogates how surveillance technology has changed our relationship to—and understanding of—landscape and place. These landscape photographs act as a larger metaphor for the totalizing vision of the global surveillance state. To produce this work, I hack or tap into surveillance cameras, CCTV feeds, and public webcams in pursuit of the “classical” picturesque landscape and the sublime. The resulting visual product becomes dislocated from its automated origins and leads to an investigation of land, of borders, and power. The very act of surveying a site through these photographic systems implies a dominating relationship between man and nature.

DAESHA DEVÓN HARRIS
JUST BEYOND THE RIVER

My work explores the concept of “home” as it relates to the African American experience, particularly in achieving the American Dream and the realization of full, unfettered citizenship. The selections from Just Beyond the River are inspired by Negro Folklore, Slave Narratives and the Harlem Renaissance poets. This work aims to illuminate America’s enduring legacies of colonialism and systemic racism that define our nation’s history, while reiterating the central narrative that emerges from the referenced memoirs—the ongoing struggle for Freedom. By combining powerful words with found images of unidentified ancestors drifting through aquatic landscapes, this work seeks to acknowledge the courage and sacrifice of our ancestors, reclaim their presence, and link them to a sense of place, especially those who have been excluded and displaced. The bodies of water in which I photograph are deeply significant to my both personally and historically. They include places where memories of joy, sorrow, love, loss, and liberation continue to reside.

Chain of Command, Chicago, 2015; from the series After Eisenhower. Archival pigment print.

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CAESURA; THE DURATION OF A SIGH

CAESURA is a collection of photographs about the transitory state of refugees and migrants entering Greece, after crossing the Aegean Sea on their way to Europe.

Typically, caesura manifests as a silent pause in a verse or a musical phrase, here used as a metaphor for a break amid two loud, violent periods.

CAESURA’s characters stand before the camera in a state of transition and uncertainty, on the verge of name and anonymity, transmitting an ambiguous feeling of restlessness and tranquility, while the surrounding space remains reclusive and undisclosed.

However, behind the stereotypical nameless mask of the “refugee,” CAESURA’s characters are the new citizens of Europe. They show their determination to place themselves in the new global reality and negate the anonymity of History.

CAESURA does not attempt to provide answers or simply make a historic statement by exposing the human agony but it rather raises questions about human condition and identity.
If It Rained An Ocean
This body of work, titled If It Rained an Ocean, is a series of pictures of my immediate family and friends from my neighborhood in New Jersey. It explores themes of class, addiction, mental illness, and my particular view as an observer and member of this family. It is a story about the struggle of the working class in America, and the cyclic nature of socio-economic trappings.

Debt is publicly enforced and highly stigmatized, but is almost always privately experienced. It is an abstract form without material weight or structure, yet with heavy physicality and burden in a person’s everyday life.

A Glorious Victory is a collaborative project that explores the relationship between history, power, and freedom as it is evidenced in the people and the landscape of Petersburg, Virginia and its immediate surroundings. This project records how the people of Petersburg endure the tangible consequences preceding ideological conflicts, outside the theatrical abstractions presented by contemporary media and political discourse. Through a sustained engagement with its citizens, we have observed Freedom as history, as a right, as stolen, as lost, in acts of joy, desperation, and violence, and as a continuum ever shifted by struggle.

Petersburg has played a pivotal role in our shared national narratives of subjugation and freedom: Native American displacement, the Revolutionary and Civil Wars, Free Black settlements, and the Civil Rights movement, amongst many others. If Petersburg literally holds within its borders so many significant passages from our American narrative, what does this reveal about the realities of America’s Dream, Exceptionalism, and Freedom?

Debts Portrait #12, Richmond, California, 2013; from the series The Debt Project. Archival pigment print

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WE THE PEOPLE #12, Louisiana, 2016
from the series WE THE PEOPLE. Archival pigment print.

INBAL ABERGIL
N.O.K. – Next Of Kin examines the ways in which American families memorialize their loved ones who were not killed in military conflict. I traveled throughout the U.S. to meet with relatives of fallen soldiers and to document their methods of coping through the preservation of personal effects. Small, private monuments exist in garages, basements, and storage lockers across the U.S. Families must decide which objects to keep, what to take with them or let go of when they move or if time passes. Through images and testimonials, my project honors the dead while at the same time giving voice to a community of survivors who keep memory alive as they strive to rebuild their lives in the aftermath of loss.

CORTES
“The two shirts and the pillow came back, so I kept this. And that’s how I sleep with them. I pretend that it’s him. But it’s not him but I pretend.”


SUZAN BARNETT
In Not Your Face, the t-shirt is starkly evident but these photographs are not about the t-shirt par se. They are about identity, validation, and judgment. These individuals stand out by the choice of the message on their back.

The personalities create their own iconography that explores the cultural, political, and social issues that have an impact on our lives. In this topology, the images demonstrate how individuals wear a kind of badge of honor or trophy that says, “I belong to this group, not the other.” Each one of these people reveals a part of themselves that advertises their hopes, ideals, likes, dislikes, political views, and personal manners.

By photographing from the back, I explore the time-honored tradition of the portrait being of the face and test whether body, dress, and demeanor can tell us just as much as a facial expression might.


CLAIRe BECKETT
The Converts explores the experiences of individual Americans who have converted to Islam. Included in the series are converts who were born into Muslim families but who have themselves embraced the faith. In a society that, until recently, falsely constructs “American” and “Muslim” as diametrical opposites, what is the experience of people who have traversed this imagined line? In this project, I explore how converts understand themselves, as well as the relationships that they have with their birth and adopted religions, families, and communities.

Although I am not Muslim, the origins of this project are rooted in personal experience. As a young adult I was compelled to respond to the anti-Muslim backlash in post-9/11 America. At the same time, I joined the Peace Corps and worked in Benin, West Africa. There I lived in a village of conjoined Muslims, Christians, and practitioners of the local traditional faith, Vodou. In stark contrast to what I’d known in the U.S., these groups lived together in peaceful cooperation. With these photographs I hope to open up space for viewers to examine their own assumptions about what it means to be an American, Muslim, or otherwise.

Lisa k. Blatt
This Chilean lake is a ground zero site for global warming with one of the fastest melting glaciers. I used a heat sensitive scientific camera to measure the landscape’s heat (a type of light).

I camped here for a month with NASA and collaborating international scientists. NASA was testing the Planetary Lander, which it plans to send to Titan, a moon of Saturn. Scientists also studied a one-celled organism which defies ultraviolet radiation, which is extremely high here (at times, any exposed skin would burn immediately). Here, there is the dichotomy of the light, which is beautiful and horrifying, and of fear and hope, extremely high and universal and international scientific collaboration, and hope in the one-celled UV organism and for life on other planets.

Corinne May botz
The images in Bedside Manner were taken at medical training facilities and explore standardized patient simulations. Standardized patients (SPs) are professional medical actors who present particular symptoms to help medical students improve their skills and bedside manner. Bedside Manner is particularly relevant in light of current conversations about illness and empathy. Healthcare is important for all citizens and a contentious political debate. The task of recognizing the suffering of others feels antithetical to this debate and is arguably the highest form of attention. The photographs simultaneously elicit and circumscribe an emotional response, as viewers are forced to contemplate their reactions not just to sickness, injury, and hospitals, but also to the innumerable images of human suffering we are confronted with on a daily basis.

The photographs document the power of the scene by drawing the line between fact and fiction. Bedside Manner prompts larger questions about authenticity, representation, and empathy.


Ornitographies arises from my personal concern for capturing unobscured moments and from my interest in questioning the limits of human perception. I focus on birds, my great passion, in order to capture in a single time-frame the shapes they generate when flying, and to make the invisible visible. Unlike other motion studies that preceded it, Ornitographies moves away from the scientific approach of chronophotography employed by photographers like Edward Muybridge and Étienne-Jules Marey.

In Ornitographies, the skill of flying—man’s long-lasting yearning—is presented before us, challenging and extending our visual perception. Art and science walk hand in hand to create images that are no longer a single portrait of reality but instead the witnesses of a sequence of instants that embody all at once past, present, and future. Ornitographies provides a balance between art and science; it is a nature-based dissemination project and a visual poetry exercise; above all, it is an invitation to perceive the world with the same curious and innocent look of the child we once were.

Ornitography #12, Barcelona, Spain, 2016, from the series Ornitographies. Archival pigment print on Canson Baryta paper.

Xavi Bou
Tahrir Square, where the massive protests in 2011 were met with violence from authorities, is now a symbol of the Egyptian Revolution. In order to pay tribute to the people who fought there, I silently filmed some of them, asking them to replay their most emotional memories of the events.

Social media’s predominant role allowed for simultaneous reporting and organizing, to invent a new paradigm of activism. I collected incredible—sometimes shocking—scenes of personal courage, extreme violence, and collective rage shared online.

Then, I filmed Tahrir Square on a normal day—a vacant lot surrounded by incessant and noisy traffic. An employee was dutifully watering the battered ground, as if trying to grow something out of that aborted revolution. The silent portraits, the draining of protest and an ordinary day at Tahrir Square shown simultaneously as a meditation on the relationship between memories and documents, between the individual stories and history, between drama and time, which erases everything.

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In March 2016, the border in northern Greece closed, blocking the migration route of refugees from the Middle East, notably Syria, who had fled to Europe seeking freedom and sanctuary. Fifty thousand refugees, most destined for northern Europe, remained trapped in declining Greece and were hastily forced into makeshift camps. They had spent savings on smugglers, traversed mountain ranges of Turkey, and crossed the Aegean Sea on flimsy rafts, afraid to never reach the shoreline. They raised their lives, only to find themselves living in tents in deplorable, isolated conditions.

They now wonder when the EU borders will open, when they will receive asylum, when the EU will admit them. It is a lifestyle conditioned and enriched by the water. There is an existential tautness and sense of freedom that comes from living near the ocean that is in direct opposition to the reality.

As the effects of climate change shake this delicate balance between the community and the natural environment, the residents have been confronted with the reality that the place they love may not be secure.

I began documenting Broad Channel in 2012, months before Hurricane Sandy imputed the project with unforeseen turmoil. Flooding devastated the area; many lost homes and possessions. The arduous recovery underscores the conflict of living close to the water, especially when eaten by them, is not an option.

I am particularly drawn to the young girls and teenagers in Broad Channel because, like their environment, they are in a transitional place with an uncertain future. There is a subtle border between defiance and vulnerability. The fragile state between adolescence and adulthood mirrors the changing environment that is affecting this island community.

A Syrian Kurdish Boy, Ritsona Refugee Camp, Greece, 2016; by GARY BURNLEY

In adulthood, mirrors the changing personas, and form and advantage of. Fear and the need for equality play a role in this project since these communities are commonly avoided or stereotyped by outsiders. Suburban communities near the areas where I photograph have historically neglected at-risk youth due to misunderstandings and prejudices. My work gives a voice to the residents in places that have historically neglected at-risk youth.

The immediacy of poses struck, defiance, and emancipation—a fabric we find self-respect, modeling, re-purposing the design to reclaim one’s identity. While the splendor is DIY at its core, it’s edged in sophistication, inspired by Alexander McQueen and Yayoi Kusama. Drawing back, CHANGELINGS is a celebration of a youthful New York community, rising out of prejudice to find its soul and sense of ownership in the city.

When the people of South Korea discovered the Tozawa news that President Park Geun-hye kept secret council with Choi Soon-sil, the daughter of a shamanistic cult leader who used their relationship to commit acts of extortion, a series of continuous protests erupted in Seoul. The anti-Park protests began in October 2016 and were held every Saturday until March 2017, when the Constitutional Court announced it would uphold the National Assembly’s impeachment vote. As a Korean American based in Seoul, I felt the need to capture the emotions and energy surrounding these historic protests that led to President Park Geun-hye’s eventual impeachment.

Young Blood documents children, teenagers, and young adults raised amidst a backdrop of economic decomposition in the neighborhoods of Michigan’s auto towns. Adolescence and early adulthood are characterized by both fragile uncertainty and exciting potential. I see these same characteristics reflected in the rebuilding process of the region. This project focuses on multiple cities, including my hometown Saginaw, Flint, Lansing, Ypsilanti, and the Detroit metropolitan area.

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The immediacy of poses struck, changing personas, and form and advantage of. While the splendor is DIY at its core, it’s edged in sophistication, inspired by Alexander McQueen and Yayoi Kusama. Drawing back, CHANGELINGS is a celebration of a youthful New York community, rising out of prejudice to find its soul and sense of ownership in the city.
The Murder of Michael Brown,
Ferguson, Missouri, 2014; from the series A Bleak Reality. Archival pigment print
Sharmane and Gilligan, 2016; from the series Gymnosophy. Archival pigment print
Howard Beach, Queens, 2014; from the series Surface Tensions. Archival pigment print
Milton Reats In a Division of Cook County Jail Reserved Life line, Ilulissat, Greenland, 2016; from the series Uprooted. Archival pigment print

Matthew Hamon
GYMNOSOPHY: Our word gymnasia comes from a Greek root meaning “place to be naked.” The adjective was gymnastic, “naked.” In the early 20th century, the term gymnosophy was appropriated by several groups to denote a broad philosophy that promoted the naked human body as a natural condition and should be normalized for the betterment of society.
This series of portraits was made during a ten-day stay at a naturists’ community in Ontario, Canada. I comingle aesthetics and techniques associated with both journalism and formal portraiture to capture authentic, narrative images of this culture.

Lilli Holzer-Glier
This photograph of Milton, an inmate struggling with mental illness, is part of a multimedia piece published in partnership with The Human Toll of Jail, a storytelling project from the Vera Institute of Justice, and Narratively Creative, that was supported by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation’s Safety and Justice Challenge.
A man bound hand and foot struggles to sit upright and hollers, “This is inhumane!” Another man pulls his knees to his chest, and, wide-eyed, whispers about telekinesis and the CIA. “Someone cut off all my toes,” a man says. “I’m finally in the hospital.” “Someone cut off all my toes,” a man says. “I’m finally in the hospital.”

Michael Joseph
Lost and Found is a portrait series examining the souls of lost youth who abandon home to travel the country by hitchhiking and freight train hopping, living on the fringes of society. Driven by wanderlust, they look to escape a societal construct and a predetermined, prescribed life. In their new-found freedom they find a new family of traveling friends. They are photographed on public streets using natural light, in the space in which they are found.

Stephen Joyce
Where I Once Stood is a story of a boy who is trapped in the landscape without the love of his life. He doesn’t want to be there, but he doesn’t want to leave either. He likes the pain. It’s a good thing that he is sad because he was having trouble adjusting to being happy. Eighteen years reduced to one moment, when the man asked his son to kill him. He’s been living inside the fragility of that room ever since. This is a glimse inside the world that the boy has created for himself. He has created a realm that attempts to put together the broken pieces of his memory. Grabbing at words that reveal themselves, he uses them because they linger for too long. This was constructed in the city that he once shared with the man, so the boy can leave that painful place in his darkest dreams, as if it’s a room in the back of his house.

Rhea Karam
The series Déraciné (Uprooted) consists of trees I have photographed in New York, and then printed, painted, transported, and “replanted” onto public walls in Beirut through the process of wheat pasting as a method of questioning both environmental and sociopolitical issues. The project initiated from the closure of the main landfill in Lebanon in 2015, where garbage was being dumped and processed, resulting in a trash crisis that has been ongoing and flooding the streets with waste and debris. This physical intervention alters the urban landscape and tackles the theme of identity and its relationship to the urban environment by the symbolic gesture of being uprooted from one country to another.

Kevin Charity Fair
Tuurnaq was originally a rather benevolent spirit that the Inuit from Greenland could call upon when in need. With Christianity, this spirit, freed from its original role, was assimilated to a demon. Life line is one of the 15 photos of the Tuurnaq Project, a search for the traces left by this spirit promoted to the rank of a demon. This project is a naive effort to illustrate the impact of freedom on the contemporary Inuit society of Greenland and as a parallel, how freedom (here freedom from want), like Tuurnaq, at first desirable, may become malignent. This image attempts to document the price associated with such a freedom obtained at the expense of Nature herself. Never can we free ourselves from Nature that surrounds us, we can only adapt or withstand as long as we can. Considering the lightness with which many of us are responding to the challenges we face, Greenland will inevitably be stripped to stones and rocks, letting centuries of repressed liberties flow towards us.
that I am constantly fighting for. These self-portraits, illustrating coping with loss was to create freedom, of home. My way of me, different kinds of losses. Each role, I lose a bit of myself. Wife, a sister, a divorcee. With mother, a daughter, a lover, a someone else. I have been a times we change roles to become shed our skin like the snakes? noticed. But what if we were able shed our skins too but it is an an activity will be carried out in the phase of the member's daily aspects of life are conducted do not change. This is a world prisoners function in a monot- endeavors, backpackers, wearing no protective clothing; trainers at a wolf sanctuary; and cattish “moochers,” capturing seventy-pound fish with their bare hands. The title Bare Handed refers to this manual approach to work that resembles a form of meditation, where there is a delicate balance between dominance and surrender. I often photograph vanishing industries and explore how historical events helped to determine local industry and pastimes. These images aim to preserve the legacy of rapidly disappearing agrarian traditions while highlighting the current landscape. This has formed a portrait of the ways in which Americans’ relationship to nature continues in the face of an increasingly technological world. In contrast to the images of rural hardship created by WPA photographers, Bare Handed celebrates the spiritual conviction and resistance of the trend towards mechanization that these heroic individuals possess.

Sultan Malik was born in Bed-Stuy, Brooklyn and was detained at 18 for armed robbery. He spent 14 years in a maximum-security prison—seven years in solitary confinement for resisting racist abuses. “Did my older inmates warn you against rising up to provocateurs?” I asked him. He smiled. “Of course, but those who warn you are also the first to react.” His body is covered in scars from fights, stab wounds, bullet wounds, beatings. A federal jury recently awarded him $400K after correction officers beat him while fully restrained. He says he survived prison thanks to his mother who visited whenever possible and thanks to his mind over matter attitude. For the past two years he has been a successful trainer at Cowboy, the Chiricahua bootcamp that hires only ex-convicts. On this night, I waited while he trained by himself after everyone left the gym. He dimmed the light and used a very small portion of the room, and that made me think of his old cell.

Sultan’s Room, 2016; from the series Sultan’s Sense of Space. Dye sublimation on aluminum

SeemUnseen explores—in image, text, and public installation—which means its work in our society to be both seen and unseen. How is it determined who is seen and who remains invisible? What are the effects of being seen one way by one’s inner circle, but publicly seen differently? How do we account for what we think we see when we encounter another? With portraiture, I explore the possibility of connection between strangers. On my SeemUnseen blog, I write about the people I meet, the process of trying to represent them, and the preconceptions that arise in me. In mounting the portraits in the communities in which they were made, I am urging viewers to consider these questions. “Bidur” represents a woman living in Providence who fled the war in Syria. It was printed on 30’x20’ vinyl and installed in the city’s downtown icons, in a ceremony shown in this exhibition. Installation photo courtesy of Scott Lapham

For the past year, I’ve been corresponding with Ashleigh Dye, a former high school classmate of mine who is currently in prison for killing her mother at the age of seventeen.

In an effort to understand Ashleigh’s life, I’ve been constructing a narrative through photographs and written letters between her and I. Once a week, we speak on the phone; at the end of each call she gives me a request; for example to eat a meal she can no longer enjoy or to track down an ex-boyfriend that she misses. Through these acts, I can better understand her life and situation, while also providing her a link to the world outside her incarceration. When I visited our hometown of Fredericksburg, Virginia, Ashleigh gave me a list of things to do. The first thing on the list was to go to the pharmacy/soda fountain downtown and order a Cherry Coke, her favorite drink.
JOAQUIN PALTING
Demarcation explores the social, psychological, and philosophical ramifications of the increased infrastructure along the border between the United States and Mexico. History has repeatedly shown the futility of putting these types of physical barriers between humans, yet we continue to do so to the point of irrationality. The very idea is contradictory to the fact that we are social by nature. This series of photographs touches upon common themes which are found of photographs touches upon social by nature. This series continues to do so to the point between the United States and Mexico. History has repeatedly suspended and eternal. It was a southern province of China, a city as young as me, where everything seems suspended and eternal. It was the first place I had ever been in the world. I also turn to the place I grew up, Shenzhen, where I schemes of change, and people stroll toward freedom. One example is in Des Moines, Iowa, where the public school district educates students from 100 different nations, and more than a quarter of its students are English Language Learners. Ten days of its students are English Language Learners. Ten days of its students are English Language Learners.

KE PENG
“The place where light never changes, and people stroll through the dust, where a thousand miles of river are hidden in the fog. To the first place I have been, but don’t know much about.”

I tried to reconnect with Hunan, a southern province of China, where everything seems suspended and eternal. It was the first place I had ever been in the world. I also turn to the place I grew up, Shenzhen, a city as young as me, where everything is marked by perpetual movement and rapid change. The population of Shenzhen grew from 30,000 to 15,000,000 in the span of thirty years, which made me curious about and aware of the relationship between the limitations of space and the sudden expansion of the city. I looked into both the new and the old in modern China by photographing between those two places. I am particularly interested in how human experiences can be simultaneously distinct and yet are often connected.

HECTOR RENE
After serving in Iraq, I became interested in the power structures found throughout the History of Art, e.g., The Church, the state, the monarchy, bankers, etc. I collaborate with veterans in my community, combining their personal history, our shared histories, and their personal belongings (iconography) from service. This process is a group effort. We share experiences that are familiar to us yet foreign to many around us, especially for those of us who were recently home from deployment. It is important for me to make work around that experience with people who understand it.

The method of juxtaposing motifs and narratives from the History of Art with contemporary military culture is a vehicle to look at American Patriotism through the luxury and burden of time. This is both an aesthetic and critical decision as painting and photography have been manipulated, historically, to perpetaulize idealized narratives of political “Truths.”

JORDAN REZNICK
A sense of rightness and strength results from unchaining one’s visible appearance from the restrictive norms of an unchosen gender assigned at birth. It is a feeling of freedom necessary to living one’s life. It is a feeling that does not necessarily result from simply swapping a normative male gender ideal for a female one, or vice versa.

Queen Babes celebrates the complex identities of queer and transgender people. The project shows off many possibilities for gendered life. It takes pleasure in queer forms of beauty that challenge mainstream notions of what desirable looks like. It is an adoring archive of contemporary forms of queer identity that captures fleeting myths about trans people by picturing dignified embodiments of selfhood.

DANIEL EVAN RODRIGUEZ
The Vernon C. Bain Center is an 800-bed medium and maximum security Rikers Island processing facility serving all five New York City boroughs. Nicknamed “The Boat,” the purpose-built jail barge has been permanently docked at the southeastern tip of Hunts Point in the South Bronx since 1992. It is currently the largest prison ship in the world. The route to get there cuts directly through the center of the neighborhood, from the intersection of Halteck Street, and finally to The Boat.

Bain is a series about how the incarceration complex (both structurally and psychologically) echoes through the environment of Hunts Point—a historically stigmatized and marginalized neighborhood—as seen from a single road.

PHIL ROEDER
At a time when the world has the highest number of displaced persons ever—and photogamers capture iconic images of people making transitional journeys to new lives—the Trump Administration attempts to turn United States policy against refugees and immigrants. Yet, cards of restarce around the nation are finding ways to become safe havens in support of people on a journey to freedom.

One example is in Des Moines, Iowa, where the public school district educates students from 100 different nations, and more than a quarter of its students are English Language Learners. Ten days of its students are English Language Learners.

The neighborhoods and covered tracks of Hunts Point—a historically stigmatized and marginalized neighborhood—are representations of transient lives as new immigrants merge languages, cultures, and daily lives creating a layered density. This for me is a site of freedom that should be celebrated, and is becoming more threatened under the current political administration. The neighborhoods and sites that flank the 7 train are often considered peripheral, and contain an ever-shifting landscape of objects, and situations to which I have been drawn. These sites have provided a fertile landscape to a photograph that is simultaneously realist and abstract as cultural identities merge and new meaning is inscribed.

MARA SÁNCHEZ-REÑERO
The Nahua word topatzl means “what is our possession, what we must preserve.” This concept speaks of a conscience that had the ancient civilizations of Mexico as bearers of a legacy that had to be preserved in favor of the descendants. This legacy contains the foundations that constructed its identity.

In the Nahua language, Iluikak means “in the sky.” The Zoñgeloca mountain range in Veracruz is characterized by its high altitude and clouds, an essential part of its creative unconscious. The Nahua community living in the sierra still hold on to beliefs in which ancestral traditions that keep them connected to nature remain an important part of their particular identity.

Iluikak is an attempt to breach the conventions of an assumed identity. It is only at the limits of both the evident and the concealed—in isolating men and women from their everyday contexts and instead portraying them within the space of their imaginations, the space of their mythical existence—that we can witness the dissolution of constructed identity and thus confront the true uncertainty of human nature.

Terminus, Imperial Beach, California, 2016; from the series Demarcation. Archival pigment print

The Creation of US, New York City, 2015; from the series Hegemony or Survival. Archival pigment print

Untitled, Shenzen, China; from the series Primal Planet. Archival pigment print

Eric, San Francisco, California, 2016; from the series Queen Babes. Archival pigment print

Hunts Point, The Bronx, 2016; from the series Bain. Digital C-print

Untitled, Des Moines, Iowa, 2017; from the series The New American. Archival pigment print

Yellow Flowers (Jackson Heights, New York), 2016; from the series Covered Tracks. Digital C-print

El balle del guajolote (Dance of the turkey), 2016; from the series Iluikak. Archival pigment print

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HAMMER, a tool that delivers a blow to another object.

In January 2015, I interviewed a retired Detroit Police officer in his home, located in the metro Detroit area. This officer, whose identity will remain anonymous but is referred to as HAMMER, granted me permission to photograph his collection of objects and images that he kept during his time on the police force. His collection consisted of photographs and a variety of confiscated objects.

After photographing HAMMER’s collection, he became inscrutable and disturbed with how the images revealed a dark and uneasy representation. HAMMER demanded that I abandon my photographic investigation. Our last correspondence was via a letter that was sent over the mail due to the sequence of questions and answers leading to a high level of suspicion, HAMMER refused to address the interdependence of religious, moral, and legal frameworks for this exhibition.

This photograph depicts confiscated drug packages from impounded cars and suspects on the streets of Detroit, Michigan during the 1980s.

In 2015, I began Stranger Shines the Light Inside, a project that uses photographs and interviews to illuminate the complex experience of refugee resettlement in America. Of the 65 million displaced people worldwide, only 1 percent of refugees will be resettled in a host country and of those, each has endured a long and grueling screening process, often spanning years. For many, they leave behind a life of hardship and loss only to find that resettlement in America is a different kind of struggle.

This piece attempts to confront this nation’s history through two interlinking symbols of American masculinity. In their combination into the form of a diptych to which each of us has contributed equally, we are attempting to confront the interdependence of binary oppositions, and to address the incipient antagonisms that are continually unchained in the political assertion of ownership over the identity of this nation. Thus, our piece sets out to create an interface through or in which a set of questions might be distilled in direct relation to the thematic framework for this exhibition.

These are paroxysms and I fear for the futures of my grandchildren. There are powerful agents working to rip apart the fabric of our society. They seek to turn long-held values, and laws, and even freedoms, topsy-turvy. And not just here in America. There is more hatred, more fear, more division, than at any time since the Vietnam War in the 1960s and 1970s. Although, what is happening today makes those days seem timid, almost carefree, in comparison. This photograph, Flag and Brothers at the Window, Williamsport, Pennsylvania, 1960, reflects on the familiar sentiment that the political climate today holds to those troubled times of the late ’60s.

West is the American dream. Go west; west is freedom. West is the fleeting and radiant sunset that holds the promise of a new and better tomorrow.

Barbara & Jessy, San Francisco, 2016; from the series SHE/HEY Archival pigment print

I met Barbara and Jessy in a gender-neutral bathroom while they were shopping for a queer fashion show. The couple lives in the large LGBTQ community in San Francisco and plan to get married after a few years of companionship. They graciously allowed me to take a few spontaneous shots, without staging and in natural lighting.

This image of Barbara and Jessy is a part of the SHE/HEY series of candid and intimate portraits of both women and gender-fluid people. These photographs seek to illuminate the dynamic and complex perceptions of tradition, love, identity, and ideals in life. At the same time, this work demonstrates how both women and gender-fluid people inhabit diverse bodies and express complex forms of self-determination. I incorporate “they,” in addition to the pronoun “she,” in my title to acknowledge the range of gender identities among the people featured in the photographs.
By merging multiple images of bombed and destroyed buildings in Syria, Weistra has created five collages inspired by and referring to Giovanni Battista Piranesi’s sixteen famous prison etchings, Carceri d’invenzione (Imaginary Prisons), fantastical aggregations of structures that did not exist in real life. Based on found footage, Weistra constructed contemporary “aggregations of structures.” These compilations and assemblages of bombed buildings symbolize how Syrian civilians, unable to leave their cities under attack, take the freedom to utilize these “carceri” to continue their life.

Carceri I, Aleppo, Syria, 2017; from the series Carceri dei Danni Collaterali (Prisons of Collateral Damage). Archival pigment print

The series Liquify examines the complexity of an individual’s gender fluidity. The images have two intertwining threads: one that might be thought of as storytelling, and the other as a kind of meta-commentary about the medium of photography itself.

Raised by a single mother, I was told that I should not limit my dreams and potential based on my being a woman. However, the gendered stereotypes promoted by mass media have been pervasive in China. The contradiction of my mother’s promises and the reality that mass media promotes, has compelled me to focus on the illusion of the gender binary. I have learned that a person cannot be easily categorized into a binary. To me, that failure of categorization presents us with the possibility of multiple readings.

Liquify seeks to reflect this ambiguity of gender through an objectification of each of the subjects and the blurring that occurs between the photographs and reality.

Present, 2015; from the series Liquify. Archival pigment print