

# REDACTED

## ISLIP ART MUSEUM

APRIL 13 – JUNE 1 2014

curated by Janet Goleas

**REDACTED** is an exploration of the way contemporary artists amend and transform original content through alterations, erasures, reductions and cutaways in the visual experience. The Oxford English Dictionary defines the word *redact* as “to edit”, as in preparing a document for publication. But the term has acquired broader meaning since the 20<sup>th</sup> century, inferring acts, often political, of obfuscation, disinformation, censorship and conspiracy.

Today, the word “redacted” has implications that stretch beyond blacked out C.I.A. documents. Deletions or disinformation – *redactions* – in nonfiction can have the effect of turning truth into fantasy and excision or concealment in written, auditory, or film and video material might alter history, obscure entire hypotheses or convert, disguise or transform content. In the visual brain, imagery can be eclipsed by ocular migraines or sun blindness resulting in a redacted visual field, and in psychology, trauma can result in whole areas of memory that cease to be accessible. But since 1953, when Robert Rauschenberg spent that long month erasing one of Willem de Kooning’s favorite drawings, the idea of redaction has been central to the concept of altered content in visual art. It is in this



spirit that Islip Art Museum is pleased to explore a range of works by contemporary artists including **Josh Blackwell, Sharon Butler, Jonathan Callan, Eric Dever, Stacy Fisher, Brian Gaman, Jim Lee, Lauren Luloff, Stefana McClure, Linda Miller, Bonnie Rychlak, Mathias Schmeid, Tim Spelios, Ryan Steadman, Ryan Wallace, Ross Watts** and **Letha Wilson**. The exhibition was organized by **Janet Goleas**.

The act of erasing, transmuting or removing subject matter is something that comes naturally to the visual artist -- one might even posit that it is an inevitable part of the creative process. Josh Blackwell transforms the lowly plastic bag into luscious, fetishized objects – repositories, if you will, that revitalize some of our most ubiquitous cultural scraps. A native of Louisiana, Blackwell was witness to Katrina as well as the massive debris field left in its wake, and the experience caused a shift in his thinking. Enter the plastic bag, so vilified in modern culture yet so indispensable to commerce, reanimated with sumptuous fields of ornamentation.

Lauren Luloff employs a similar resourcefulness in the use of recycled bed sheets that serve as her blank canvasses. Her study of textile design and block printing in India come full circle here, manifest in patchwork paintings that are variously stretched over frames or hung from the ceiling. The artist paints in oils or with a bleached composite, selectively removing pigment in splashy, reflexive drawings that are assembled in compositions of bold pastiches, translucent scrim and gossamer swathes of fabric.

Eric Dever’s serial paintings examine strict color equations. Elemental and exacting, Dever limits his color use to fixed degrees of Naphthol scarlet, Titanium white and Ivory black. The color range – stupefying in its expansiveness – pulses in fields of geometric precision. Linda Miller explores negative space in a series of graphite bowls that act as surrogates for corporeality, identity, presence and absence. In Brian Gaman’s *Untitled*, the visual field is so deeply in focus that sight itself is recalibrated to the infinite. Stacy Fisher conceals the objecthood within her sculpture to such a degree it seems whole concepts might be buried within her inky, bulging forms.

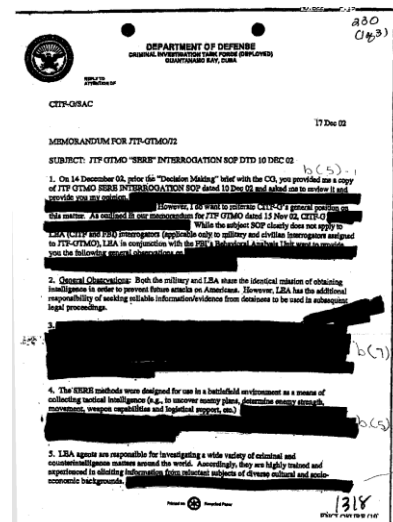
In Ryan Wallace's *Redactor* series, the vestiges of earlier works assemble like DNA strands as they form a wholly new but relational family of paintings in which studio scraps accumulate across the painting surface like glacial striations. Bonnie Rychlak's use of recycled wax is also regenerative. As a raw material wax is distinctively malleable, and here it retains the evidence of former works in composites of marbled color bands that shift from translucent sea foam to jade green.

Sharon Butler's paintings are an ode to *the new casualism* (a term she coined) – a concept linked aesthetically to *wabi sabi* – the Japanese embracement of imperfection or impermanence. Butler paints on unstretched or partially stretched raw canvas that is often a helter skelter of staples, bare stretcher bars and loose threads. But her imagery, at once highly specific and at the same time largely unidentifiable, asserts a structural, even architectural level of observation that charges the pictorial space with positive and negative visual data. Jim Lee's paintings assume a somewhat parallel process, with imagery that is inseparable from action. Defining the picture field and its content with a frankness that is physical, experimental and utterly unique in form, Lee's works examine the formal aspects of painting and sculpture while serving to overthrow them.

In Jonathan Callan's arresting work, *Zurbaran's Color Plates*, the artist transfigures the book form into a revelation of component parts, chiseling away at its original content until it is transformed into his own, in an act of both insolence and intellectual finesse. Likewise, Ross Watts has mined the written word in *Journey to the East* in which eleven Hermann Hesse novels are imbedded in concrete bricks of beach sand collected from the shoreline of his Long Island home. For Watts, the process is a conundrum that places both his art as well as Hesse's content, in peril. Ryan Steadman's ersatz book forms act as painterly doppelgangers -- proxies for the written word. At first glance the paintings look like collectibles in book form but there are few, if any, visible words -- no title, no author and no publisher – only the form itself. Steadman's paintings offer a whimsical departure from the information overload of our time.

Stefana McClure fragments aspects of language in knitted compositions made from surreptitious reportings such as shredded CIA documents. The declassified papers, heavily redacted, detail the use of "enhanced interrogation techniques," one of this country's most disturbing and clandestine episodes. Her interventions are both beguiling and unnerving. In *Background*, Mathias Schmeid explores another media form altogether – the adult magazine. His facile knife work transfigures the imagery and its controversial nature into a delicate waterfall of cascading lines. Tim Spelios reorders the history of art in collages that deftly rearrange the visual information and the context held within in some of the most celebrated paintings of the western world.

And Letha Wilson's photographic works of the American west reveal the majesty of our geologic past while fracturing it with fierce, tactical interdiction. Her use of poured concrete, slices of lumber and sharp cutaways lend a raw physicality to the artist's travel photos, as if they have actually been morphed into a gorge along the Colorado River.



Janet Goleas, curator

## REDACTED

April 13 – June 1, 2014

Reception for the artists on Sunday, May 4, from 1 – 4pm

Islip Art Museum 50 Irish Lane East Islip New York 11730  
tel: 631.224.5402 www.islipartmuseum.org