

FAMILIAR BEAUTY by Lisa J. Sutcliffe

At the onset of the COVID 19 pandemic I took heart in the letter George Saunders sent to his students: *"We are (and especially you are) the generation that is going to have to help us make sense of this and recover afterward. What new forms might you invent, to fictionalize an event like this, where all of the drama is happening in private, essentially? Are you keeping records of the e-mails and texts you're getting, the thoughts you're having, the way your hearts and minds are reacting to this strange new way of living?"*

I thought about the pictures we might be taking (or not taking) as a result of the pandemic. What small acts of poetry and large acts of history must we observe and record? What kind of shifts in perspective might we expect as a result? In the wake of a worldwide examination of structural racism, whose narratives do we most need to see? And in the midst of an economic crisis who can afford to make pictures?

For *The Neighbors*, Christian Viveros-Fauné invited a group of U.S.-based photographers to offer an interpretation of our moment, of the Americans who might otherwise go unseen. The exhibition's title suggests a gathering of familiar people, but who are hazily defined; together they make a community, a society, a country. These photographs provide sketches, diaries, and snapshots offering fresh perspectives and providing a richer and more complex depiction of American life. Observing is an important form of listening, of understanding. These sequences of images are an invitation to recognize and appreciate the ways in which a diverse set of hearts and minds have reacted to and reflected upon our common society at this unusual time.

The invitation to photograph unseen Americans inspired **Widline Cadet**, a Haitian born artist, to look to her own family, many of whom have emigrated and become naturalized citizens. Her pictures memorialize the immigrant experience and mark her awareness of what a family may gain or lose in the process of becoming American. Sensitive to her own lack of historical family snapshots, Cadet began photographing her family five years ago to preserve a record of her generation for the future. At a time when the immigrant experience is vilified for political gain, it is heartening to see personal stories that challenge and disrupt this rhetoric. Many of these pictures could be taken from any family albums—children celebrate in front of a Christmas tree, girls prepare for a night out by applying lipstick—and yet others record the unstructured chaos of family life. The joy of gathering together and constructing a future evident in the overflowing bowls of ripe fruit and vases of bright flowers that set these scenes.

Curran Hatleberg's pictures are rooted in rural America. He gathers and harvests images of life as it is being lived, finding beauty in the ordinary, much like William Eggleston. Hatleberg captures the peripheral moment, the in-between; not an event but a state of being; not the rainbow, but what happens in front of it. In an era when the majority of images we see are stage-managed for social media, his pictures feel loose, unscripted, not polished or market tested. His pictures of families and groups capture children and the adults they will turn into, pictures of the kind of everyday gatherings that are now out of reach. Though most of the figures gaze out of the frame, a man wearing headphones and filling a gas can regards the photographer with a defiant self-sufficiency. A child gazes into thin air, filled with the thrill of waiting for gravity to return a missive. In the photograph that starts his slideshow an American flag drapes and swaddles a man's head, as if he is befuddled, his vision obscured by the myth of America, the empty flagpole transformed into his cross to bear. The final picture, however—a photo of three friends brandishing a lit match and a bouquet of wildflowers—suggests a spark of hope, a future we may arrive at together.

New York's insular Hasidic community drew the attention of **Guy Greenberg**, who documents life on the street. In his photographs, Greenberg brings us close to his subjects, often at a low elevation, cutting the frame off at the periphery so that the world appears to extend in a chaotic jumble at its edges. This shallow perspective suggests that these pictures offer only a glimpse, just one frame of many dynamic moments in a bustling city. In one photograph two women huddle underneath a packed riser of bleachers. Their heads, brightly decorated with scarves, find comfort together against a sea of black pants and shoes, revealing the true strength of community bonds.



Zora J Murff, *From Exceptionalism as a belief system for erasing oneself*, 2020. Courtesy of the artist. Commissioned by USFCAM.

Many of the pictures focus on children, their outfits, uniforms, and costumes. Greenberg's pictures breathe life into the magical world they create from their imagination and the games that take shape on the streets.

Kathya Landeros' photographs describe a landscape, a place, an agriculture, a system. She focuses on the in-between spaces where suburbs and farmland disentangle from one another. Fences delineate the land within the pictures, serving as boundaries, as canvases for decoration, as a reminder that we are outsiders in this narrative, spying on another life, a child's game. In other pictures people present what they are growing, in a garden, a community, a neighborhood, a culture, all etched within the golden light and crystal clear Western air. A young woman wears a snake around her arm like a bangle, a modern day priestess offering us passage into the garden. One of Landeros' final images evokes an iconic picture made by Henri Cartier Bresson in 1938 of two couples picnicking on the banks of the Marne, a photograph that highlights the modern pleasures to be had in this everyday social ritual. Landeros' Eden is right here, in our backyards, where we make our homes and where there is bounty if we look for it.

The American flag acts as a motif throughout the sequence of photographs presented by **Zora J Murff**. It appears through a scrim of trees like a symbol we hope to reach—a reminder that democracy is something to strive toward, to achieve through daily practice. Interspersed throughout the sequence are vintage snapshots of the daily life of an African American family, portraits, a construction site dappled by light, a hand reaching through a flowering bush. Blurred found photographs that evoke the passage of time are followed by crisp portraits grounded in this moment. In one image, children crowd the lap of Detroit's James Scott memorial fountain. In the wake of a summer of protests in which monuments and the histories and legacies they memorialize were called into question and toppled, this photograph suggests a recalibration of the interpretation of our own histories and the pictures we made to memorialize them.

Would those children sit in that lap now? What do our family pictures tell us about the country in which we were raised, and the ideals and myths we carry with us?

EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

Widline Cadet
Selected works from the *Every Other Good Thing* series, 2013-Ongoing
Images courtesy of the artist.
Slideshow commissioned by USFCAM.

Guy Greenberg
Images in order in slide show:
Boy on BQE Overpass, 2016
Tailor, 2016
Rachel, 2019
Rebbe's Grave, 2019
Brothers, 2018
Purim Clowns, 2019
Three Chickens, 2018
Burning the Bread, 2018
Boy in Costume, 2018
Yellow Badge, 2020
Two Mothers, 2019
Ferry, 2019
Boys in Shul, 2018
Girl on Partition, 2019
Hallway with Rabbis, 2018
Chana and Mordechia, 2019
Pizza Party, 2019
770 Eastern Parkway, 2018
Barbershop, 2019
Boy Wrapped in Tallis, 2019
Images courtesy of Guy Greenberg.
Slideshow commissioned by USFCAM.

Curran Hatleberg
Images in order in slide show:
Untitled (Flag), 2017
Untitled (Front Porch), 2013
Untitled (Sparklers), 2020
Lost Coast (8), 2016
Lost Coast (41), 2016
Lost Coast (28), 2016
Lost Coast (36), 2016
Lost Coast (35), 2016
Lost Coast (34), 2016
Lost Coast (10), 2016
Untitled (Front Yard), 2017
Untitled (Picnic), 2017
Untitled (Back Porch), 2017
Untitled (Pool), 2020
Untitled (Rebuild), 2019
Untitled (Teenagers), 2018
Untitled (Last Light), 2017
Lost Coast (13), 2016
Untitled (Ice), 2020
Untitled (Stoop), 2015
Untitled (Event), 2015
Untitled (Sidewalk), 2015
Untitled (Mantis), 2018
Untitled (Morning), 2017
Untitled (Rainbow), 2014
Untitled (Front Porch), 2016
Lost Coast (7), 2016
Untitled (Mother), 2020
Untitled (Cowboy), 2020
Untitled (Kids), 2014

Untitled (Daylilies), 2020
Untitled (Brindle), 2020
Untitled (Dominoes), 2016
Untitled (Family), 2020
Untitled (Gathering), 2020
Untitled (Tear), 2013
Untitled (Circle), 2015
Untitled (Chainlink), 2020
Untitled (Azalea), 2014
Untitled (Flame), 2020
Images courtesy of the artist.
Slideshow commissioned by USFCAM.

Kathya Maria Landeros
Images in order in slide show:
Juan's family, Eastern Washington, 2012
Balthazar, Eastern Washington, 2012
Farm worker housing, Eastern Washington, 2012
Untitled (9th Street), Williams, California, 2019
Juan, Sacramento, California, 2011
Leslie with snake, Elk Grove, California, 2015
Untitled (off main street), Eastern Washington, 2012
Off E Street, Williams, California, 2013
El jugador, Eastern Washington, 2019
Natalie and Dino, Eastern Washington, 2019
Primera comunión (Flores), South Sacramento, California, 2013
Filgencia, Eastern Washington, 2019
Subsidized migrant farm worker housing, Williams, California, 2013
The Partida family, Clarksburg, California, 2011
The Hinojosas, Galt, California, 2011
Apple crates before the harvest, Eastern Washington, 2019
Overview of orchards, Eastern Washington, 2019
Sunday morning, Bridgeport, Washington, 2019
Cristián and Edgar, Elk Grove, California, 2012
Crystal, Eastern Washington, 2019
La jardinera mágica, Williams, California, 2013
5th Street, Arbuckle, California, 2014
Main street laundromat, Eastern Washington, 2012
Fourth of July parade, Eastern Washington, 2019
Wheatland, California, 2017
Hogar Contreras, Walnut Grove, California, 2011
Patricia, Arbuckle, California, 2014
Kimberly and Anali, Eastern Washington, 2019
Untitled (woman with lunch pail after work), Eastern Washington, 2012
Migrant farm worker housing, near Pateros, Eastern Washington, 2019
Nicanor, Courtland, California, 2011
Untitled farm landscape, Eastern Washington, 2019
Untitled (Ebodio's son), Eastern Washington, 2012
Untitled (Feather River), near Yuba City, California, 2013
Edgar's birthday party, Walnut Grove, California, 2017
Daniela and Kim, Elk Grove, California, 2012
Gloria, Elk Grove, California, 2013
B Street, Mabton, Washington, 2019
Quinceañera dress, Eastern Washington, 2019
Betty, Eastern Washington, 2019
Images courtesy of the artist.
Slideshow commissioned by USFCAM.

Zora J Murff
Exceptionalism as a belief system for erasing oneself, 2020
Artwork courtesy of the artist.
Commissioned by USFCAM.



Left: Widline Cadet, From the *Every Other Good Thing* series, 2013-Ongoing. Courtesy of the artist.

Top Left: Guy Greenberg, *Boy on BQE Overpass*, 2016. Courtesy of the artist.

Above: Kathya Maria Landeros, *Juan's family*, Eastern Washington, 2012. Courtesy of the artist.

Cover: Curran Hatleberg, *Untitled (Flag)*, 2017. Courtesy of the artist.



CONTEMPORARY ART MUSEUM | Institute for Research in Art

College of The Arts, University of South Florida
 4202 East Fowler Avenue, CAM101, Tampa, FL 33620-7360 USA
 Hours: By Appointment M-F 10am-5pm, Closed Saturday, Sunday, and USF Holidays
 cam.usf.edu // (813) 974-4133 // 24HR Info Line (813) 974-2849 // caminfo@usf.edu

@ irausf f USFCAMfan # usfcam



The USF Contemporary Art Museum is recognized by the State of Florida as a major cultural institution and receives funding through the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs, the Florida Council on Arts and Culture, and the National Endowment for the Arts. The USF Contemporary Art Museum is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums.



The Neighbors: Slide Shows for America
 August 24 - December 5, 2020 // USF Contemporary Art Museum

The Neighbors: Slide Shows for America, features photographic slideshows by artists Widline Cadet, Guy Greenberg, Curran Hatleberg, Kathya Maria Landeros, and Zora J Murff. Amid a polarizing 2020 election season and an evolving COVID-19 pandemic, each participating camera artist was commissioned to create a slideshow of underexposed communities in the United States. For this show, less is more: the photographic portfolios installed at the USF Contemporary Art Museum are displayed using traditional slide carousels, to evoke the intimacy of family and community slide shows of another age. Lisa J. Sutcliffe, Herzfeld Curator of Photography and Media Arts at the Milwaukee Art Museum, has contributed a curatorial essay.

Curated by Christian Viveros-Fauné; organized by USF Contemporary Art Museum; and made possible by Major Sponsor the Stanton Storer Embrace the Arts Foundation, and by grants from the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts and the Florida Department of State.