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Five years ago, after more than a decade in Chicago I moved back home to my hometown of Pittsburgh. I immediately fell back in love with this city and the creative community here. The artists I met embodied Pittsburgh to me; they were passionate, hard working, unpretentious, and beyond talented. They were also all in Pittsburgh because they were serious about creating a life that allowed them time, space and energy to create. ¶ I still saw plenty of my old friends from Chicago because they would stop and stay for the night on their way to New York, as Pittsburgh is nearly the exact halfway point on the pilgrimage from one art meca to the other. I loved hosting these visitors and sharing Pittsburgh with new and old friends. Everyone who came through was blown away by the small-and-mighty arts scene here. ¶ As I learned more about the regions surrounding Pittsburgh
I came to realize this attitude and work ethic stretched beyond South Western Pennsylvania, radiating throughout the Rust Belt, Appalachia, the Mid-Atlantic, and beyond. I learned this was a special place for artists but I also realized that this was a challenging place for artists; it simply did not have the concentration of jobs, collectors, galleries, critics, and breadth of opportunity that the giant art capitals did. This region was too often overlooked from a national perspective, and I desperately wanted the world to see the artists working here. It was this impulse, to help people discover and celebrate what is happening in photography around our region, that led us to develop Radial Survey. Our curatorial team decided to make it a biennial event so that it would be an ongoing conversation, and we drew the biggest circle we could around our little gallery (right up to the edge of those giant art capitals.)

This circle represents a funny, arbitrary, and real community. This show seeks to capture this moment in photography, in this part of the world. The artists selected for this inaugural survey live and work across this giant circle and beyond this geography they all possess an extraordinary vision for making images from this region. I am tremendously proud of this exhibition, and awed by the talent and creativity of these artists, and everyone involved in bringing Radial Survey to life. I hope this catalog continues the conversation that began with this exhibition, a conversation about what it means to be an artist working in a funny circle.
Within 300 miles of Pittsburgh: a large section of the Mid-Atlantic seaboard and upstate New York; the near Midwest; much of Appalachia; land along three of the Great Lakes. This region is firmly part of a larger social and political ecology. Here are cities and towns that grew with burgeoning American industry between the mid-19th and mid-20th centuries, that have been forced to reckon with globalization since the 1970s. The gravity of New York City, especially as a cultural nexus, is felt here, as are the effects of national events and conversations that shape both the region and the course of the country as a whole. But the region is also a place unto itself; within the area of this 300 mile radius we feel, each day, that our own destinies are becoming further entwined with the destiny of this place.

While Silver Eye’s *Radial Survey* brings together outstanding emerging and mid-career photo-based artists living and working within a 300-mile radius of Pittsburgh, the artists were not selected on the basis of a designated theme. The twelve artists in the inaugural *Radial Survey* live across this broad area and operate on their own trajectories with their own motivations, practices, and concerns. *Radial Survey* is conceived not as an effort to identify a regional style or movement, but as a proposition: that working in this region encourages artists to engage with logics, flows, histories, and mores that differ from those defining the faster-moving densities of very large cities, and to ask how this (admittedly large) area can be addressed as a place in and of itself.

And yet, despite the absence of a theme, shared sensibilities and concerns do emerge, when considering the work of Nando Alvarez-Perez, Morgan Ashcom, Nydia Blas, Melissa Catanese, Brendan Daniel, Worsham’s (p. 62) Bittersweet on Bostwick Lane also reconciles grief by actively engaging with it. Worsham links past and present through the figure of Margaret Daniel, Worsham’s oldest neighbor from the work of filmmaker David Lynch, whose work uses multiple complementary and overlapping narratives to question the notion of a single privileged reality. In her collage, Catanesne, who is based in Pittsburgh, brings together images and symbols—a closed eye, a fingerprint, a gold curtain—that in the context of new combinations destabilize easy readings and suggest previously unknown mysteries.

In *Who Was Changed and Who Was Dead*, Ahndraya Parlato’s (p. 72) photography project deals with her love for her young daughter in the face of grief. The fear of erasure informs this work: Parlato’s “Hidden Mother” portrait follows a Victorian child portrait convention in which a mother would hold her child while shrouded in cloth, rendering herself invisible. In Parlato’s awareness of this form, there is only a shrouded mother and no child. Parlato renders her own mother visible in the colorful photographs made by exposing photographic paper on which she placed her mother’s ashes.

She is only a shrouded mother and no child.

Parlato’s project deals with her love for her own terms. It can also be raised as criticism, or allow for a subject to be seen on their own terms. It is only a shrouded mother and no child.

Throughout the work of these artists there is a persistent engagement with the relationship between history and possibility. Each artist works grapples with the distance between what was and what could be, who we could be, and how we could be. These artists examine the overlaps of memory, mythology, and power. They look at place as it is experienced by inhabitants, both as it is lived and as it is desired, and explore the ways in which these tensions create the conditions for possibility and agency.

To unpack this: Our ability to invent ourselves is always in relation to the histories—personal, political, social—that we inherit. Departing from the narratives we have received requires an act of imagination powerful enough to break molds and to turn away from set paths. The artists in the *Radial Survey* invoke the magical, the mystical, and the surreal; they draw attention to the circumference and materiality of what is; they recognize the limits and illusions of rationality and modern order; they inhabit worlds on our own terms—or at least that we are given and what we want and need. In her collage, Catanesne, who is based in Pittsburgh, brings together images and symbols—a closed eye, a fingerprint, a gold curtain—that in the context of new combinations destabilize easy readings and suggest previously unknown mysteries.

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Several artists in the *Radial Survey* engage with possibility by exploring the relationship between visualization, identity, and the recognition of power. As a political act, representation can make visible what the artist or subject believes is possible, or allow for a subject to be recognized as such. Such a “physical and allegorical” approach, where black female photographers express their strength and vulnerability on their own terms as they support one another, is at the heart of Blas’ photography.

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We witness frozen moments in narratives that we do not know. As a political act, representation can make visible what the artist or subject believes is possible, or allow for a subject to be recognized as such. Such a “physical and allegorical” approach, where black female photographers express their strength and vulnerability on their own terms as they support one another, is at the heart of Blas’ photography.

The girls insist on being seen as themselves, even as they wear paper crowns or have stickpins smeared across their faces. Even O’Leary’s (p. 42) work also explores how social roles, especially gender roles, are shaped by social expectations. Her series *Happy Valley* deals with living in State College, Pennsylvania, State University, and describes an oppressive, sunlit delirium. Women reveal the masks that they wear, while men revel in their masculinity and power. With the gloss of advertising photography, O’Leary suggests that this social structure is both deeply embedded and focused on the superficial, and that what seems normal in reveals a quiet, sustained violence that touches everyone.

Nando Alvarez-Perez’s (p. 86) *Memorex Narcissus and the Angel of History*, is a dizzying, symbol-rich mashup of found and constructed imagery that draws attention to the ways in which mediated representations are inherently distortive. The keystone image in the piece is a photograph of a lettrist drawing on an inkjet print of an iPhone photo of a magic lantern slide of a Roman replica of a lost Greek sculpture of wrestlers. Through these transformations Buffalo-based Alvarez-Perez notes with humor and wit that historical narratives are passed on as iterative construction, and not according to any essential form.

Melissa Catanese’s work also reconcile grief by actively engaging with it. Worsham links past and present through the figure of Margaret Daniel, Worsham’s oldest neighbor from the work of filmmaker David Lynch, whose work uses multiple complementary and overlapping narratives to question the notion of a single privileged reality. In her collage, Catanesne, who is based in Pittsburgh, brings together images and symbols—a closed eye, a fingerprint, a gold curtain—that in the context of new combinations destabilize easy readings and suggest previously unknown mysteries.

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her childhood in Richmond, VA, and the last person to see her brother Russell alive before he committed suicide. “My memories become intertwined with hers as I rediscover my past through her stories,” writes Worsham. Margaret is both the photographer’s subject and her guide. Through conversations with Margaret, Worsham learns about her own family history which she materializes through her photography. Worthington is the primary subject in her muse Lynn, whose son Max could be read as representing the artist’s brother. The series is full of references to biology and botanics; a found box of specimen slides speaks to beauty and preservation.

In *What the Living Carry*, Morgan Ashcom’s (*p. 140*) similarly conjures a place which he is intimately familiar, though in this case the town of Hoy’s Fork is fictional, created by Ashcom through photographs and artifacts, a distillation of his memories of growing up in Free Union, VA. Hoy’s Fork is the center of its own world; Ashcom describes a community with a strong attachment to the land, with histories, Corine Vermeulen and Jared Thorne’s works are driven by the artists’ individual recycling narratives. Even as time has stopped. The figures in streets, and strip malls with their parking lots, rusting utility poles, and skeins of power lines. The clichés are not always obvious; some cannot be discerned in the photographs at all. Thorne’s series connects the political contests around Planned Parenthood with their everyday role in their communities as health service providers. “Planned Parenthood,” writes Thorne, “is at the forefront of providing women’s healthcare services to the underprivileged and the disadvantaged, who in Ohio are disproportionately African-American and Latino.”

Where Vermeulen’s and Thorne’s projects draw attention to how life is lived, Jacob Koestler (*p. 128*) materializes history as a suggestion in the transformation of a past weighing heavily on the present, even as time has stopped. The figures in the images could be characters in a folklore told repeatedly, fixed in slow, inevitable, recycling narratives. Where Parlato, Worsham, and Ashcom’s works are driven by the artists’ individual histories, Corine Vermeulen and Jared Thorne visualize place in a way that is defined by shared experiences and that informs future possibilities.

In *Your Town Tomorrow*, Corine Vermeulen (*p. 140*) presents Detroit as a place that continues to unroll its own history. A genre of imagery popularly known as “ruin porn” that commemorates the decay of once-grand buildings has emerged around post-industrial cities in general and Detroit in particular. In contrast, Vermeulen presents communities of people living their lives. Her photographs reveal in the specific, and, sometimes, the surreal. Her subjects, like the subjects of Panas and Blas’s photographs, look back at the viewer to assert their being, acknowledging each one’s unique circumstances.

Like Lee Friedlander’s *American Monuments*, Jared Thorne’s (*p. 128*) series *Planned Parenthood* highlights the relationship between politics, history, and social landscapes. Thorne draws attention to the ordinance of the forgettable landscapes surrounding each of Ohio’s Planned Parenthood Health Centers: industrial areas, residential subdivisions, back alleys, and the churches that are the places where the artists of the first Radial Survey exhibited their works written by Jessica Beck, Anna Lee, and curators, including several of the participating artists, convened in Pittsburgh to explore how working within the Radial Survey region informs artists’ work and lives. Certain topics floated to the top of the need to grapple with the place that you call home, whether you chose it or it was chosen for you; the link between memory and place; the desire to convey a love of landscape; and a connection to the land through photography, the aspiration, as Jared Thorne stated, “to make work about where I am and where the people that are in my community live only where we are. Being somewhere by our connections to other places and the embodied sense of being here and now. When we participate in making the places where we are, we bring our histories with us. Some places are so important to us that they never leave us and continue to shape our thinking and feeling after we’ve left and after time has passed.

In the future the dynamics that inform our present increasingly will feel fixed and inevitable. This is the reason that the Radial Survey will be a point in an increasingly large array over time, a time capsule of concerns and how we addressed them. We’ll forget that we had choices and that things weren’t ever all ‘just so’, and the decisions that we make today will congeal as history.

In this catalog, the reader can explore a representation of the work shown in this first Radial Survey, and also read reflections on the works written by Jessica Beck, Anna Lee, and Ash McNelis, who led the panels at the symposium. The works in this volume can inform how we arrive at that future; let them help you navigate your way there.

*Radial Survey* exhibition essay March 2019

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On the last weekend in May, 2019, at the close of the exhibition, forty-odd artists and curators, including several of the participating artists, convened in Pittsburgh to explore how working within the Radial Survey region informs artists’ work and lives. Certain topics floated to the top of the need to grapple with the place that you call home, whether you chose it or it was chosen for you; the link between memory and place; the desire to convey a love of landscape; and a connection to the land through photography, the aspiration, as Jared Thorne stated, “to make work about where I am and where the people that are in my community live only where we are. Being somewhere by our connections to other places and the embodied sense of being here and now. When we participate in making the places where we are, we bring our histories with us. Some places are so important to us that they never leave us and continue to shape our thinking and feeling after we’ve left and after time has passed.

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The Identity Trap
Jessica Beck

As I begin to write about a group of artists included in the Radial Survey show, and on the theme of the possibilities and complexities of identity, I stew on how to link their work together. Rather than attempt to create a shared narrative between these disparate artists, I am compelled to describe how each photographer is staging identity in different ways—through trick lighting, parameters of stillness, props and emulsions on the body, or cropping and shadowing. Each approach produces different results—some optimistic, others threatening. Identity in these images is staged and distorted, at times to an extreme; in some cases, whiteness is presented as fearful, femininity quaintly violent, friendship supernatural, and blackness rich with possibility for change.

Eva O’Leary’s series, Happy Valley, is a portrait of the artist’s hometown, which she says “was once an icon of white, middle class America.” It is a surreal world, with unnatural, blinding light, circus-like figures staged under a harsh lens, and mobs that speak to the growing threat of America’s homegrown fascism: white nationalism. At first glance, the crowd in Monument Climb (2016) looks like a single scene of white conformity. It is hard not to see this photograph through the veil of a rise in white nationalism, which has slowly gained public attention since 2016.

In other images, whiteness feels like a force that blinds and repels. In Spring Break (2018) an unsettling photograph, a young girl is held still while someone pours milk into her eyes. Streams of white fluid leak from her sockets like milky tears. With dramatic lighting halosing her face and a bodiless set of hands holding her still, it looks as if she’s being baptized into this white community. In Hurricane Hair, (2016) a young girl stands in a doorway as a bright light bleaches her pale skin and a threatening wind blows her hair into a fan. She looks ahead into the distance—or perhaps the future—with fear. Is there a hurricane approaching? Or is it the mob of white men from Monument Climb (2016) that is brewing outside her door? In Happy Valley, whiteness momentarily blinds, creates a sense of aggressive conformity, and feels like a circus cliché. O’Leary’s lens captures her hometown with the kind of distance that allows her to look back at these bizarre social norms as soft lighting highlights the suppleness of their porcelain skin. In Rebecca, Red Lipstick (2016), young girls are photographed in a studio against a stark black background, the suppleness of their porcelain skin. In Quinn, Paper Crown (2016), young girls are photographed in the studio against a stark black background, the suppleness of their porcelain skin. In Quinn, Paper Crown (2016), a small girl balances a small crown on her head as if the judgment that will follow and scrutinize her body as it matures into womanhood. In Panas’ images of young girls in the woods, their bodies appear eerie and unsettling to me, and suggestive of sexual innocence taken without permission. My mind wanders to the haunting photographs of Hans Bellmer of his ‘artificial girl,’ which he made in 1934 and photographed in many unsettling poses. In these staged photographs, the image its bair—identity can also—be about turning into one’s self without these pressures, without these debilitating constraints, and without these violent details, like smeared lipstick and the balance of inhabitable crowns. I ask again: can these girls blossom rather than wilt against the pressures of society?

While in Panas’ work, girlhood feels like a trap—like a small ballerina confined to a mirrored jewelry box, turning in endless circles to the sound of a slow, mechanical waltz—in Blas’s work, the female body appears like a site of wonderment and magical possibility. Here, young women look inward to a place where possibility may be limitless. Unlike the citizens of Happy Valley, where race is pictured as threatening, disarming, apocalyptic, in Nydia’s images blackness is staged with intimacy and vulnerability, and a sense of wonder and possibility. Figures are anointed with honey and glitter; bodily fluids like menstrual blood, which may elicit fear, disgust and, in some parts of the world, isolation, are pictured in Gold Legs, (2016) as a glittering stream of magic.

In the end, I wonder: can we keep challenging the constraints of femininity? Can we question and reimage the confines of race and sex and identity untethered from place? Photography can construct reality as image. But, it’s up to us to continue to confront photography in the wake of intractable reality—and construct identity from lived experience, rather than place our faith in the unending, destabilizing bombardment of images that consumes so much of modern life and that entices us to self-fashion according to societal demands. Identity can be a trap, and the image its bair—but identity can also be limitless, boundless and formed over time, an unfolding blossoming, a slow turn according to our own rhythm, to our own season.

3. Eva O’Leary, Happy Valley, (2016), young girls are photographed in a studio against a stark black background, the suppleness of their porcelain skin. In Quinn, Paper Crown (2016), young girls are photographed in the studio against a stark black background, the suppleness of their porcelain skin. In Quinn, Paper Crown (2016), a small girl balances a small crown on her head as if the judgment that will follow and scrutinize her body as it matures into womanhood. In Panas’ images of young girls in the woods, their bodies appear eerie and unsettling to me, and suggestive of sexual innocence taken without permission. My mind wanders to the haunting photographs of Hans Bellmer of his ‘artificial girl,’ which he made in 1934 and photographed in many unsettling poses. In these staged photographs, the image its bair—identity can also—be about turning into one’s self without these pressures, without these debilitating constraints, and without these violent details, like smeared lipstick and the balance of inhabitable crowns. I ask again: can these girls blossom rather than wilt against the pressures of society?

Becks and Rong—to break out of these illustrations, these staged confines of femininity? Can girlhood be pictured with more agency? As Clifton’s words so beautifully illustrate, the story of women can also—must also—be about turning into one’s self without these pressures, without these debilitating constraints, and without these violent details, like smeared lipstick and the balance of inhabitable crowns. I ask again: can these girls blossom rather than wilt against the pressures of society?
Eva O’Leary

*Happy Valley* (2014–2018)

b. 1989
State College, PA

“I grew up in a college town called Happy Valley. It’s an intoxicating place where naivete and recklessness collide with big money—a football town that was once an icon of white, middle class Americana, but is now best known for an international sex scandal. Happy Valley is where I had my first drink at 14, and where my best friend first shot heroin three years later. Mothers peel their daughters off the floors of cheap motel rooms, and old men get young girls blind drunk on acrid vodka. It’s a polarized place: some get BMW’s at 16 while others have babies. This work draws from my upbringing to explore the relationship between fantasy and power.”
In *Happy Valley*, Eva O’Leary grapples with a community’s cultural system whose core values are structured around a particular sense of masculinity. She explores society’s overwhelming pressures as expressed in advertising and the rituals that reinforce social roles in a college town obsessed with sports, both of which maintain norms for men and women that are ultimately alienating and toxic. For this series, O’Leary draws from her own experiences growing up and living in State College, PA, home of Penn State University.

O’Leary’s photographs evoke the uncomfortable tensions that defined her life in State College. Her pictures are characterized by clean forms and saturated colors—qualities often associated with commercial photography, yet their overall effect is one of unease. Some of the subjects in *Happy Valley* appear to be self-conscious of how they are being directed into social roles, while others are fixed in place, apparently lacking self-awareness. In these images, O’Leary recognizes the reassurances promised by surface appearances, while also suggesting how empty those promises may be.
“It isn’t about truth, nor is it about accuracy. It is about carrying the spirit of the memory. My photographs aren’t about realism and precision; they are about manipulating the medium in order to summon the spirits captured within.”
Brendan George Ko’s photographs shown here were made on Toronto Island, a small group of islands a short ferry ride from Toronto’s harbourfront, with peaceful beaches and access to the lake. “Toronto,” notes Ko, “is media-saturated, leaving less value for oral tradition. But it is the place I learned to use media to tell stories that come from oral tradition.”

Ko grew up in rural New Mexico and now shares his time between Hawai‘i and Toronto. Both New Mexico and Hawai‘i, each with their long traditions of oral history and story-telling, and the spiritual presence of the desert and the ocean, inform Ko’s sense of being in the world. In his photography, Ko creates diaristic, autobiographical scrapbooks which honor his experiences and the places and people in his life. In his photographs, he evokes the emotional and spiritual qualities of his memories, making pictures that visualize his feelings about specific places, as well as about his larger orientation to the world. His work evokes an appreciation of the natural world and the elements, and his subjects’ and his own grateful and humble self-awareness and joy to live in such a world.
Clockwise from top left: Infinite I, from Nada dey-way'stid, 2018; Mudfaced Faye, from Nada dey-way'stid, 2018; Fantastic Hair, from Nada dey-way'stid, 2018; More Ferns I, from Nada dey-way'stid, 2018; Caitlyn As a Noodle Princess, from strangerintwoworlds
Clockwise from left: Toronto Island, from Nada dey-vey’stid, 2018; Bright Shiny Diamond, from strangerinthesworlds, 2017; Sisters in Oka, from The Wandering Hobo, 2015; Marble Reflection, from strangerinthesworlds, 2017; To Cradle the Sun, from strangerinthesworlds, 2017; Mica White XII, from Nada dey-vey’stid, 2018
From left: The Day the Fungi Took Over, from strangerintwoworlds, 2017; Mark in the Lake, from strangerintwoworlds, 2017; The Beholder—The Arrival, from Nada dey-wey’sid, 2018

Brendan George Ko
Lydia Panas

b. 1958 Kutztown, PA

“I’m always exploring things that are sitting inside of me that I need to understand. I think that what I’m trying to do is create a space for a certain kind of empathy. I am capturing something that I am feeling, and it’s a very intimate place. What I’m hoping is that you as the viewer, whoever you are, you go into this place, where you connect with these images in whatever way you’re bringing yourself to them. I’m trying to tap into a place where we can all relate to a certain sense of human vulnerability, which can be a very uncomfortable place.”
Lydia Panas creates deeply intimate portraits from within the fields and woods of her farmland in Kutztown, Pennsylvania. Often focusing her lens on female subjects, Panas’ images in this exhibition powerfully contemplate the relationship between the photographer and her subjects. In each image, the young women Panas has photographed—stretched languidly in the grass, or precisely posed in the studio—appear still and controlled, assuming classical poses that suggest vulnerability. They look back at us directly, confronting us with purpose. As viewers, we contend with not only their gaze, but with the emotional energy that simmers below the surface of the image. This experience can be disquieting, as we grapple with images that seem to sense us as deeply as we sense them.

Panas’ strong, empathetic connection to her subjects is in part what creates the startling sense of connection we feel when looking at her images. She allows her subjects to look back at her, unguarded, and develops a deep sense of attentive engagement as she creates her images. Letting her subjects be seen and see her in equal measure, Panas invites us as viewers to seize upon the supremely human connection taking place.

Choosing to create these photographs from her home in Kutztown was intentional for Panas. As the child of immigrants, Panas speaks to her identity of double consciousness, split between her family’s roots in Greece and their home in the United States. This experience prompted her to seek out the camera as a tool for locating her identity, and to be tangibly seen and heard. In her portraits, she extends these feelings to the subjects she photographs. Working from the farmland she and her family live upon, Panas looks intently, and responds to her subjects with an intense care and consideration.
Nydia Blas

_The Girls Who Spun Gold_
(2016)

b. 1981
Ithaca, NY

“These photographs take something out of nothing. They take something out of the bare minimum that's been given, and they create something magical out of that.”
The women and girls in Nydia Blas’ photographs glow. The series they belong to, *The Girls Who Spun Gold*, takes its title from a book of the same name, an African-American adaptation of “Rumpelstiltskin”, about a woman who is chosen to become the wife of the ruler of the land, because of her ability to spin gold. Presented through a lens of Black femininity, Blas’ photographs spin tales rather than precious metal. Based in Ithaca, NY, Blas’s photographs create spaces that center on young, Black females, experiencing joy, dignity, pride, love, and vulnerability. Significantly, they do this on their own terms, and for their own pleasure. Created collaboratively with a group of young women Blas met through her work at the Southside Community Center in Ithaca, the series stresses notions of connection and support through female relationships.

These images are a glimpse into a world which sparkles with flecks of gold, revels in sumptuous fabrics, and exudes lush greenery. Blas’ work emphasizes the use of magic as a tool of resilience against societal pressures that communicate that Black female bodies are about other people’s pleasure, and not their own. Blas notes that while Ithaca is known as a progressive, liberal haven—complete with the tagline, “Ten Square Miles Surrounded by Reality”—the reality is that a great deal of segregation and socioeconomic divisions are still readily apparent to those who live there. Blas’ photographs look to the hardships and struggles Black women face in their day to day existence, yet through the alchemy of her camera, those circumstances are transformed. These women appear regal. They control their space and their bodies, regardless of the oppression they face when they leave the magic of the world they have created with Blas.
Susan Worsham, Ahndraya Parlato, and Nando Alvarez-Perez use photography to tell elliptical stories that have multiple points of view. Worsham’s and Parlato’s personal photographs are marked by death but filled with images that stubbornly persist. Alvarez-Perez’s work traces material histories replete with objects branded by symbols so mediated and remediated that they can be different, but filled with meaning. All three photographers tell stories so uncanny that we can’t help but feel, like Worsham, that it’s just a matter of time before they loop back again.

In *Bittersweet on Bolling Lane*, Susan Worsham gives herself the impossible task of photographing loss—in her case, a family that no longer exists. Unlike the photographs in a family album, Worsham’s are mostly unpeopled, save for the people of Worsham’s childhood neighbor, Margaret Daniel, whose stories help Worsham to recall details about her family’s history. Daniel’s interest in the natural world weaves threads through Worsham’s memories, helping her to make sense of phenomena she experienced as a child but now views as an adult. It comes as no surprise when Worsham discovers that her favorite light to make photographs comes through the windows in Margaret’s basement, where Worsham finds a series of photographs that she says have always been there. As Worsham begins to photograph the images, she discovers that her favorite light to make photographs is a weather vane in motion.

Parlato instead gives us images of babies’ faces obstructed by objects and an arched stem of orchids, double-exposed like a weather vane in motion. Parlato’s work is a meditation on the idea of self-definition and a fighting will to live. We might think of the title of Parlato’s piece as two separate questions: *Who was Changed? Who was Dead?*

Parlato uses elements from intergenerational stories to construct a portrait of herself. This self-portrait narrates how Parlato’s feeling of imminent disaster—shaped by the murder of her grandmother and her mother’s suicide—eventually turns into positive self-definition and a fighting will to live.

For Alvarez-Perez, these possibilities are informed by a keen view of how culture is consumed under capitalism. In *Memorix Narcissus and the Angel of History* (2018), for example, what looks like an innocuous pastel of two wrestlers is actually oil pastel on an inkjet photo of a magic lantern slide of a roman marble replica of two wrestlers.

From one point of view, Alvarez-Perez’s work seems to exist in an aesthetic universe that is worlds away from those occupied by Worsham and Parlato. Worsham’s work fits into genres like landscape, portrait, and still life, and compels representation by opening up specific spaces and light. Parlato’s photographs put themselves in dialogue with these same genres, primarily to reveal the limits of their representational capacities. Meanwhile, Alvarez-Perez’s work feels removed from personal representation altogether. His constructions are dense with symbols and a form of aesthetics made possible by the materiality of objects and their representative capacities. They are highly constructed, both on the level of individual images and as complete installations.

And yet, all three photographers situate their work at intersections of collective meaning-making. They all tell stories from neighbors, relatives, personal objects, and from our material histories, and create totems designed to radiate outward. Put simply, these photographs are designed to represent questions that they alone cannot answer.
"A black walnut branch falls to the ground and she picks it up and says ‘look at it, it’s a fungus, it’s a wood-rotter, it’s made especially for just that black walnut branch. To take it back to nature, it pulverizes it.’ Taking a walk with her, nobody else would notice that fallen branch or know that there’s a specific type of fungus that grows on that branch, that lives off that dead branch that takes it back to nature. Which means the soil is enriched and things can grow better, new things can grow. That, in a nutshell, is walking with Margaret, from one part of the yard to the next, and all of a sudden I realize that there’s a really big circle of life.”

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Susan Worsham

*Bittersweet on Bostwick Lane*
*(2009–2014)*

b. 1969
Richmond, VA
Susan Worsham’s series *Bittersweet on Bostwick Lane* is a rich interweaving of memory and mythology, color and metaphor, personal meaning and opaque mystery. Quiet and poetic, Worsham’s photographs gently navigate a “landscape of loss”. Her images are centered around her childhood home in Richmond, VA, where her brother committed suicide after he was badly injured in a motorcycle accident when the artist was a child. Working from the basis of her brother’s death, Worsham creates images about regeneration. With no family remaining in her childhood home, Worsham continues to probe her memories under the guidance of her former neighbor Margaret Daniel. Here, Daniel, who was close with Worsham’s brother, plays the multi-dimensional role of guide, mother, friend, historian, biologist, and philosopher, offering wisdoms and memories with which Worsham creates her images and finds meaning in the everyday. Time and tense blur the world along Bostwick Lane. The living and the dead exist in the same space, and the cycle of life is evident in every detail. The blood of tragedy is connected with the red-orange flesh of fruit and dried berries. A looming Camellia tree, reminiscent of one from her childhood, echoes Daniel’s arched back; a curvature hat reminds the artist of her brother’s spine.
Margaret with Giant Camellia Japonica, 2012
"Prior to the birth of my daughter, I had no conscious fear of my own mortality. Not being a religious person, I phrased death to myself as, ‘the time when I won't be here anymore.’ Though incomprehensible, this didn't seem scary or sad, just a simple fact. Additionally, having survived both the suicide of my mother and the murder of my grandmother, I also characterized myself as someone to whom bad things had already happened to. Fate, take note. ¶ After [my daughter’s] birth, I found myself on the other side of the spectrum. Suddenly death was everywhere, and I was scared. I wanted to be alive. I needed to be alive. I was scared of dying because Ava needed me."

Ahndraya Parlato

Who Was Changed and Who Was Dead
(2013–the present)

b. 1979
Rochester, NY
Ahndraya Parlato’s installation *Who Was Changed and Who Was Dead* lyrically examines feelings of love, anxiety, and grief that the artist experienced through life-changing events: the deaths of her grandmother and mother, and becoming a parent herself. Parlato conveys these overwhelming emotions in intimate and surprising ways. Photographs of her daughter are mixed with symbolic images, many of which are placed on the ground, overlapping and leaning against the wall. This installation obscures perspective, confuses narrative, and undermines the preciousness of the art object. Some photographs relate to a specific moment, like that of the blue orchid the artist’s mother once gave her during a visit. Other images are more general symbols, referencing shelter and the power of natural forces.

A grid of four colorful images dotted with specks of white are photograms, which Parlato made by placing her mother’s ashes on the surface of photographic paper. When the paper is exposed to light the shape of the ashes become a fixed ethereal presence in the image. Nearby these photograms, small handmade ceramic vessels surround a photograph of the artist’s infant daughter. These tiny vases and cups serve as a metaphor for the fragility, individuality, and unique beauty of each life. Ultimately, *Who Was Changed and Who Was Dead* is equal parts memorial for those who have passed, shrine to those who are most cherished, and reminder of the unbreakable connection between love and loss.
Some women disappear more easily than others.
Some go kicking and screaming, pulled by their hair.
Especially if it’s long.
Others have been disappearing since…
Maybe 6yrs old?
I’ll tell you after my daughter turns 6yrs old.
I can tell you; we were not born this way.

* 
I’m often asked how I turned out so “normal.” First of all, normalcy doesn’t exist. We all know that. What people mean is how I manage to function in the world, how I got an education and a husband and a job and am a mom and an artist, when you were mentally ill and we were poor and had no family to help us.

I always say it’s because you used large words and snuggled me. I was never talked down to and I always felt loved. But it was also because I knew you’d kill anyone who fucked with me. I’m only half joking. I’m also only half joking when I say that, despite not being mentally ill. I wouldn’t be unhappy if my children felt the same way.

* 
You’re the baby. Your name is Momma.
Abndraya Parlato  Who Was Changed and Who Was Dead

Unraveled, 2015

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Who Was Changed and Who Was Dead

Ahndraya Parlato
Ahndraya Parlato

Who Was Changed and Who Was Dead
Nando Alvarez Perez

Memorex Narcissus and the Angel of History (2018)

b. 1988
Buffalo, NY

“This piece is about how history collapses into objects that are both symbolic and kitsch, like an imploding star. Like how the Holy Grail of Arthurian legend becomes, over time, a Memorex video tape copy of Monty Python’s The Holy Grail.”
Nando Alvarez Perez's vibrant installations playfully explore big ideas about humanity's distant roots, and its many possible futures. Using photographs, sculpture, found objects, and performances, he shows how culture consumes and replicates itself, over and over, distorting itself as it repeats in ways that generate new ideas. Memorex Narcissus and the Angel of History illustrates this repetition over time by centering the installation around an image that has undergone several layers of processing: a photograph that the artist made of an oil pastel drawing, on an inkjet print, of an iPhone photo, of a magic lantern slide, of a Roman replica of a lost Greek sculpture of wrestlers. The image is surrounded by sci-fi novels and books of critical theory that inform Perez's visions for the future. Next to the large photo hangs an acrylic cutout, based on a drawing of the artists’ face. Everything is organized within an aluminum frame—a material that references the cheap temporary displays seen at trade shows or sci-fi conventions. Wallpaper created from photographs of Italian frescoes surrounds the installation, and a dozen or so other books, tapes, and seemingly random objects are scattered throughout. However, all of these objects and images reference time on scales that range from human to cosmic, and mythmaking that is both ordinary and epic.

Around the corner from the main installation hangs a large scale photograph of the tombstone of the legendary science fiction writer Philip K. Dick shares with his twin sister Jane, who died in infancy. The image is a memento mori, full of poignant and mysterious details. A toy race car sits on top of the headstone, fake flowers rest before it, and a cat's face is engraved between the names of the twins. This photograph, like the rest of Perez's installation, is brimming with monumental wit, wonder, and pathos.
Memores Narcissus and the Angel of History

From left to right: Artists’ scan of his face, mask pattern for installation, 2018
Installation view

Memorex Narcissus and the Angel of History

Nando Alvarez Perez
Simone Weil wrote that “Attention consists of suspending our thought, leaving it detached, empty, and ready to be penetrated by the object. It means holding in abeyance what we already know about this object.” Melissa Catanese’s work ‘holds in abeyance’ in this way, allowing us to ‘suspend’ what we think we know about, say, a foot, a light fixture, a branch. But if any object may be a valid object for contemplation, then what kind of theology is this?

In many museums are ritual objects which, in vitrines, on display, are in a sacrilegious position relative to the purposes for which they were originally created and intended. Learning the provenance of such sacred objects and returning them to where and whom they belong is part of the work of decolonizing museums.

And then there are works that seem to exist to remind us that our images, our things, our components, the accumulated storehouse of objects that have remained with us—even our bodies—all that has given us a sense of continuity over time—is the provenance, ultimately, of all that infinitely and indefinitely exceeds us. That we are ultimately dispersed into other bodies, human and nonhuman. That the ideas we have about our life come from the future as well as the past.

Such are Catanese’s images of unbecoming, of edge states. They form a metonymic constellation. The edge of a forest leads to the edge of a room leads to the edge of a body. There is warning here, taboo and delicacy, an ambiguous invitation to question: Why do senses of meaningfulness extend and recede, evade and then disclose, come forward and then dissipate? How can the same thing be both unfixed and pinned to a time; lost in space and yet imbued with a purposive stillness; at once exposed and secret, composed and entropic, ordinary and yet unrecognizable?
“Editing and sequencing is an intuitive process that’s tricky to articulate. I like to think of myself as a conduit, working in service of the images and their desires, but the fact is, I also have my own psychological motivations at stake, and that force is somewhat abstract. I’m creating a fiction by placing one photograph next to another in a sequence, and I try to get to a headspace where that fiction, or those new associations, can reveal themselves in the process. I think about formal and conceptual structures when I’m editing. I like repetition. I like dissonance. It sounds new-agey, but the connections are metaphysical.”
Melissa Catanese’s three paneled photographic collage *Apsis* relishes in the connections one makes when studying a group of images that initially seem to have little context or relationship. Rather than tell a specific story with her images, Catanese creates an enveloping atmosphere, full of mystery, tension, and wonder. Working from an inventory of images, including those made by the artist as well as anonymous found photographs, Catanese builds ambiguous narratives. By combining photographs from her own archive with found images, she questions the authorship and transparency of a photograph. Catanese creates meanings that drift away from the surface of the image into something personal, intuitive, and poetic. While she thinks of herself as a kind of conduit, “working in service of the images and their desires”, she readily admits that her own psychological ambitions are also at play in her work. Moving between these two modes of thought, Catanese’s work brings forth incredibly nuanced and provocative narrative potential from these images. *Apsis* draws its inspiration from the works of filmmaker David Lynch, and his surreal and ambiguous takes on the detective genre. Although it is impossible to solve, *Apsis* presents its images as evidence from a crime. In one part of the collage, an image of a fingerprint suggests a perpetrator; in another, a golden curtain brushing the carpeted floor of a room is perhaps a crime scene. The figures depicted in her images become potential victims of this imagined investigation. A wire curling along the ground lends a slightly ominous feeling. One can almost hear the faint buzz of the fluorescent light at the top of the frame.

The tension between the individual images contained within *Apsis* and their mysterious greater whole is central to Catanese’s work. The title itself refers to the extreme points of an elliptical planetary orbit. This cosmic reference is fitting, because *Apsis* reads like a map of constellations. One can choose to see it for its celestial whole, or one can focus on an individual image, a heavenly body.
The Destiny of This Place
Ashley McNelis

The land acts like a conduit for the stories and legacies that are linked to it. Of the artists in the Radial Survey exhibition, Morgan Ashcom, Jacob Koestler, Jared Thorne, and Corine Vermeulen most actively engage with the idea of a sense of place. Each of these four photographers and, in their own way, documenting a particular terrain. However, while their methodologies do not necessarily fall within the bounds of traditional landscape or documentary photography, in deviating from the genre, their approaches make their projects powerful. While their practices and projects are quite different, they all exemplify the shared experiences of uncertainty, as well as hope for the region's future.

Ashcom's inclusion of fictive elements in What the Living Carry is a clear break from the documentary tradition. The fictional town of Hoy's Fork consists of Ashcom's childhood memories of rural Virginia, common Southern tropes, and mythical elements. The subjects, with whom Ashcom collaborates, layer their own perspectives into the construction of the project. Together, these layers evoke a strange sense of uncertainty while evoking the sublime in the images. In another, a young Photograph, an elderly man reclines next to the fallen structure—whose rusted steel is complemented by the surrounding fall foliage—is one of the most visited sites within Kinzua Bridge State Park. In its current state, it is still awe-inspiring.

In Koestler's photographs, slippages—in the form of lens flares and light leak effects—cast an almost heavenly glow, magnifying the forlorn beauty of the landscape. Intentional or otherwise, these glitches or “interruptions” point to the failure of the camera as an apparatus, as well as the fallibility of our own perceptions. In attempting to determine what the future of this landscape looks like, Koestler reminds us that our memories, and the tools we have to remember them by, are not entirely effective. This lack of clarity, objectivity, and ability to be omniscient leaves the viewer with a sense of unease: about the sustainability of the region, and about what may transpire in the future.

Jared Thorne's project, 26 Planned Parenthood, in which he photographs reproductive healthcare centers and their surrounding environments in Ohio, furthers this anxiety while raising questions about power. At last count, there were only twenty-three remaining Planned Parenthood locations in Ohio that offered abortion services, and the number will likely continue to decrease. In his practice, Thorne grapples with accessibility; he also challenges the legacy of landscape photography and the genre's lack of work by or about women and people of color. This series is as a way to engage with a landscape new to him. Through the landscapes, he was looking to explore the region's underlying power structures and socioeconomic dynamics. Describing social distances by drawing attention to spatial distances, he comments on how these systems affect the lives of women, people of color, and underserved populations.

The project's typology is reminiscent of that of the New Topographics photographers who unromantically documented the built landscape of the American West in the 1970s. Thorne photographed sites that were once signs of progress but which now exemplify the decline of American industry. Nature has begun to reclaim what was once monumental in the region; in a way, this transformative act speaks to its resilience. Kinzua Bridge, Pennsylvania (2017/2019) is a prime example of nature's adaptive capability. The railroad bridge, once one of the tallest in the country, was destroyed by a tornado in 2003. Today, the fallen structure—whose rusted steel act speaks to its resilience.

Similarly, Vermeulen acknowledges the disquiet and wrenching emotions their work provokes. In Koestler's photographs, the Fall of Liberty depicts a lone figure—a woman with a blue and white “Trump for President” sign—reminding the viewer of the overarching sociopolitical context of the region. In foregrounding the quotidian nature of each series, however, and suggesting that the presence of Planned Parenthoods alongside other businesses should not be controversial. By focusing on such a contested subject, Vermeulen has discovered the potential in this liminal space. While looking back, Ashcom warns of the dangers of becoming stuck in the past. In the industrial rust belt, Koestler finds resilience and beauty in an unresolved moment. Similarly, Vermeulen acknowledges the persistence of humanity in an unpredictable situation. Thorne's examination of our precarity is timely. These four photographers recognize that they have captured their subjects within a state of transition. By fixing this precariously moment in time, the photographers ask us to hold onto it, and perhaps imagine the potential for a future in which Planned Parenthood locations are even more scarce, or even unavailable to the people who need them the most.

In her series Your Town Tomorrow, Dutch photographer Corine Vermeulen also deals with how existing power structures have impacted the citizens of a particular place. In this case, they are the resilient but precarious residents of the city of Detroit, where Vermeulen has been based since 2006. The series exemplifies the ways in which the people have persisted during periods of hardship. Erinn and her son Nye (2011) depicts a mother and son in one of the urban farms which were created in order to sustain the community during the recession. In the photograph, Erin gazes steadily at the camera, while standing barefoot in the garden. The portraits are an intimate and effective way to make visible the darker truths of a city.

Vermeulen's social documentary approach shifts the focus from the narrative of a city once ready for revitalization to the community and the people living there. The title of the project, Your Town Tomorrow, is reminiscent of a real estate company slogan. In the series, symbols of the community contrast with patriotic references and artificial objects. Statue of Liberty (2017) depicts a lonely statue of Lady Liberty holding a torch aloft on a forlorn sidewalk. These moments of disconnect contribute to the sense of unease present in the images. The residents of Detroit are neither strong nor entirely available to the people who See them. They are impermanent, subject to larger cultural shifts. The constancy of change, as the underlying subtext of each series, reminds us to recognize and appreciate what we have, as it is impossible to know what the future holds. However, by understanding the region's challenges and building upon its strengths, we may be able to take control and shift the direction of our collective future.
Morgan Ashcom

What the Living Carry (2011–2016)

b. 1982
Charlottesville, VA

“When my father was young he rode horses for William Faulkner. This was around the time [Faulkner] was writing his last book called The Reivers. There’s a main character in the book, a 12 year-old boy who rides, and we always would say that aspects of my father were in this character in this work of fiction. And the family joke was that he had hired my father just to observe him. That’s always around my idea of the process of how things are absorbed and how that gets changed into narrative and carries a sort of power.”
In *What the Living Carry*, Morgan Ashcom depicts the places and people of the fictional town of Hoy's Fork. The rural community he constructs takes its name from the headstone of Joel Hoy, an enslaved man buried near the artist's childhood home in Free Union, Virginia. By working in photographic fictions, Ashcom allows himself narrative freedoms that traditional documentary approaches might hinder. He is an active participant in the process, and his image-making is a collaborative act with his subjects—each bringing their own understandings to the scenes that Ashcom builds. The artist says, "calling it fiction is an acknowledgment of the reality of the process that I'm engaged with."

The world of Hoy's Fork is one of deep reds and dense woods. It is comprised of isolated individuals and fragile structures. Ashcom's attention to every detail in this fictional town—from the drunk men and the lost dogs, to the town map—helps him create a world that seemingly traps its inhabitants, tethering them to their histories and shaping their identities. Interspersing this fragmented narrative is a set of texts—letters responding to a fictional 'Morgan's' requests—written by 'Eugene' of the 'Center for Epigenetics and Wellness of the Spirit'. These artifacts serve as a kind of unreliable guide through this series, adding notes of context that only deepen our curiosity about Hoy's Fork and its inhabitants.
May 15th

Dear Morgan,

Happy belated birthday.

I will let you know if I need an out of town lawyer. We sounds very qualified but I am afraid folks do not respond well to outsiders in the courtroom here. I look forward to seeing you later this month.

As you probably know by now, I am a perfectly anxious fellow so I have been trying to take my mind off everything going on in the Fork. The other day I threw a little party and I even bought some special cigars. They are the Banker series by H Upmann. Over $100 a box for fifteen of the delicious Bellocosas at 5.1". It was a themed party where the conversation was all about 1699—the wars they had going on in Europe between the English, Scottish, the Dutch Republic and the Russian and Ottoman Empires and so forth—the wars we had going on here with the French and Indians and what not. Everyone was invited to think about that year and note the time of the year and all that implies—and having resources of things like wood to burn and a fireplace to cook in—all the attributes of being extremely fortunate and well off people speaking with conviction in 1699 in a woodland lodge of our choosing.
Morgan Ashcon

What the Living Carry

Bartleby #56, 2017
We talked and so forth. Everybody put on their fur coats with the fur next to the skin, you know—inside out? And all our shoes were loosely tied, hands and mouths affixed to various delicacies—cigarettes, cipers, wine and berries and so forth.

The night after the party I dreamt that I was in my 20s riding the bus and five charming boys got on and rode five blocks. On the way off one of them leaned over and groped a young woman and then fled into the woods. When the police arrived they conferred with one another and agreed that this was in fact something nihilist children just did from time to time. They just told the woman to go home. I suspect she hesitated to tell her husband on account of her being reduced to nothing and all there on the bus—but by that time there was no one on the streets and the bus had disappeared so naturally I went into the woods after the boys. Inside was like a maze and there was no way to leave and there was a bunch of beautiful people with all the potential in the world doing various things in disarray and such. But no one had a direction—and they were aware of time—each second carefully drawn and cataloged and contemplated and so forth. No one spoke. I observed this monotonous scene for as long as I could manage because I felt it was a useful exercise. Then I woke up and drafted the enclosed map.

Well that is all I have to report from the Fork for now. Things are quiet for a change aside from an occasional late library book and the usual round-town shebiness of the RU students. As expected, the police have not found anyone responsible for my car since I submitted the incident report. Look forward to seeing you soon, and don't forget to bring some prints from the photo study you did on me.

Sincerely,
Eugene
“My work will take me to various locations throughout the Rust Belt, and I always make time to walk, to stray from the beaten path in search of these layered industrial scenes. There is a lot of time between the shutter click and when I print an image. I do not plan on finding anything specific and am often surprised by what I see. The initial urge to make an image is instinctual. Any clarity comes later in the studio, connecting the dots and recontextualizing the original experience.”

Interrupter (2016–the present)

Jacob Koestler
b.1984
Cleveland, OH
Jacob Koestler's work depicts the vague terrain of what he calls the Ohio River Valley’s “post-industrial places in the process of reinvention.” A central image in this sequence shows the Kinzua Bridge after it was struck by a tornado in 2003. The bridge was built in 1882 and was once billed as the “Eighth Wonder of the World,” and briefly held the record as the tallest railroad bridge in the world. After the bridge collapsed, a cap was built on the portion that remained, creating a scenic lookout of the wreckage. Koestler strives for images where you can see what was and what is simultaneously, as once-utilitarian structures of a thriving industrial economy become scenic history, new marks across an old landscape.

These images of impacted landscapes and decaying structures are further affected by “unplanned contributions,” interruptions from photographic chemicals and light leaks. Koestler’s willingness to allow these analog remnants, a mark of his own photographic presence, into his process speaks to his knowledge of the underlying history that determines what a place looks like. Other elements in these images, like a section of fence threaded through the landscape in *Fence Cluster at Sunset, Ohio,* or water pooling over a cement surface in *Dam Floor, Pennsylvania,* further disrupt Koestler’s depictions of the land. Rather than fight against these moments of interruption, the artist leans into them, stating that “An interruption is usually rude, but in some cases it can cut through a declarative statement, offer an opposing idea, and create a conversation with multiple viewpoints.”
From left: Fence Cluster at Sunset, Ohio, 2018/2019; Dam Floor, Pennsylvania, 2018/2019
26 Planned Parenthoods
(2015–2018)

b. 1981
Columbus, OH

“I make work that speaks to where I am, asking: what are these communities really like? My hope is that these images will be as carefully considered as I considered them, and that the viewer’s eye will want to look and to wander.”
For his series, *26 Planned Parenthoods*, Jared Thorne spent two and a half years traversing the state of Ohio, creating images of the twenty-six titular organizations scattered across the state. While the title includes a reference to Ed Rusha’s austere conceptual art book, *26 Gasoline Stations*, Thorne’s series is imbued with emotional and political meanings that Rusha deliberately eschewed. Choosing to work primarily in the early hours of Sunday mornings—when Planned Parenthood protestors weren’t positioned outside the buildings—Thorne’s photographs are almost all devoid of people. This sense of quiet and stillness prompts viewers to look and think about the architecture of each city, and the environments which surround these buildings. In Thorne’s use of broad, sweeping views of the urban landscapes, the location of the Planned Parenthood is not often obvious, if present at all, creating in the viewer a natural inclination to seek out the building within the landscape.

Thorne hasn’t put these out in the open for us. Our eyes must carefully scan the photographs to spot the small blue sign low to the snowy ground in Youngstown, nearly blocked from view entirely by a tree in Akron, or hovering above a neighborhood porch in Canton. Thorne speaks of this series as acting as a kind of guide, or map, to the state of Ohio. In being asked to carefully consider each image, we find ourselves slowly becoming acquainted with a landscape that is still struggling economically, and whose city’s populations are, in the artist’s words, “hemorrhaging people.” Thorne’s images of Planned Parenthoods—an organization whose funding and very presence is continually under threat—become emblematic of shifts in power, speaking to where ideas of access and belonging exist within the state.
Top row, from left: Delaware, East Columbus, Kent, Lorain, 2015-2018; Bottom, from left: East Columbus, Hamilton, Mansfield, Medina, 2015-2018
Top row, from left: Circleville, Cleveland Bedford Heights, Mount Auburn, North Columbus Health Center, 2015-2018; Bottom, from left: Cleveland Health Center, Columbus, Rocky River, Springdale, 2015-2018

Jared Thorne
“Although documentary in format, *Your Town Tomorrow* is also a very personal series as it chronicles my life and work in Detroit, the communities where I have lived, and my friends and neighbors. Detroit has been the site of complicated change since I moved here thirteen years ago. Real estate developers and corporate investors have altered the character of the city. ¶ The national media claims Detroit is a “new” city of great economic opportunity, but it hardly recognizes the people who have lived here throughout the changes. A city’s residents define its identity; the people of Detroit are essential to its culture and vitality. These images are not meant to survey a Detroit ‘as is’. Rather, they function as a glimpse into an alternate reality, where everyday life stands at a crossroads: between hope and despair, vulnerability and strength, the past and the future.”

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**Corine Vermeulen**


b. 1977
Detroit, MI
Your Town Tomorrow is a decade long, immersive photo-documentary project that shows the city of Detroit in the midst of a monumental and challenging transition. Photographed largely between 2007 and 2017, this project chronicles the city as it entered the great recession, and then later as it emerged as a site of opportunity for outsiders to benefit from reinvestment and gentrification.

But Vermeulen doesn’t focus her camera on Detroit’s infamous post-industrial landscape. Instead she turns primarily to the people of the city: community gardeners, families, activists, and long time residents. Her photographs are firmly entrenched in the humanist school of social documentary photography. Vermeulen engages and connects with her subjects, learns their stories and histories, and photographs them with dignity.

This generosity of spirit comes through powerfully in her portraiture. The people in this selection of images exude confidence, confronting Vermeulen’s camera directly, but there is also a subtle uncertainty in her subjects. A striking young woman with purple hair, wearing a jacket covered in buttons promoting activist causes and punk bands wrings her hands, perhaps unsure of her place in the future of her city.

Your Town Tomorrow shows the landscape of Detroit through surprising details that also suggest its uncertain future. Long and beautiful grass in an overgrown field obscures the decaying buildings. A replica Statue of Liberty seems lost, absurdly watching over a building’s electric meter. Some sort of light pole or cell phone tower is dressed up as a bright red palm tree against a grey sky; this image combines the silly and the mundane to suggest the emerging presence of something insincere and artificial.
Corine Vermeulen
Your Town Tomorrow

From left: Zahraa, 2017; Linda and her daughter Diamond, 2011
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From left: Erin and her son Nye, 2011; Statue of Liberty, 2017
We never live only where we are.
NANDO ALVAREZ-PEREZ is an artist and educator based in Buffalo, New York. He holds an M.A. from the San Francisco Art Institute and has exhibited throughout the Bay Area and internationally, including at the Material Art Fair in Mexico City, the Drake One Fifty in Toronto, Interface in California, and the Visual Studies Workshop. He has taught courses at the California College of the Arts, UC Berkeley, and the San Francisco Art Institute. He is the co-founder of The Buffalo Institute for Contemporary Art.

MORGAN ASHCOM is an artist based in Charlottesville, Virginia whose work explores the tension between invented and experiential narratives. Ashcom’s work has been exhibited nationally and internationally, including two solo exhibitions at Candela Gallery and the Houston Center for Photography in 2018. Ashcom has been an artist-in-residence at Light Work and has taught at Western Connecticut State University, Ithaca College, University of Hartford, Cornell University, and the University of Virginia.

NYDIA BLAS is a visual artist living in Ithaca, New York. She holds a B.S. from Ithaca College, and received her M.F.A. from Syracuse University in the College of Visual and Performing Arts. She was one of six selected talents of World Press’ 2018 6x6 Global Talent Program for North and Central America and was a recipient of the 2018 Light Work grant. She has completed artist residencies at Constance Saltonstall Foundation for the Arts and The Center for Photography at Woodstock. She has been featured in The New York Times, New York Magazine, The Huffington Post, Dazed and Confused Magazine, Strange Fire Collective, Lensculture, Fotografia Magazine, and more.

MELISSA CATANESE lives in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and is the founder of Spaces Corners, an artist-run bookshop and project space. She has been editing from a vast collection of over 20,000 photographs belonging to collector Peter J. Cohen for some years, and is the author of Dive Dark Dream Slow (2012), Dangerous Women (2013), and Hells Hollow Fallen Monarch (2015). Her work has been included in the Mulhouse Biennial of Photography, NoFound Photo Fair in Paris, and at institutions including Pier 24 Photography in San Francisco and Aperture Foundation in New York.

BRENDAN GEORGE KO is a visual storyteller that works in photography, video, installation, text, and sound. Ko received a B.F.A. from Ontario College of Art & Design and a Masters in Visual Arts at the University of Toronto. Ko’s work has been included in such events as The Magenta Foundation’s annual photography exhibition and publication, Flash Forward, the juried exhibition Hey! Hot Shot by Jen Bekman in New York City, and in numerous auctions such as ACT’s Snap! Live Auction, Buddies in Bad Times’ Art Attack Auction, and Youthline’s Line Art Auction.

JACOB KOESTLER is an artist and musician from Johnstown, Pennsylvania. He holds an M.F.A. from the Photography and Integrated Media program at Ohio University. His practice includes photography, video and multimedia installation and he is a co-founder of My Idea of Fun, an art and music archive that features over 350 releases. He currently lives and works in Cleveland, Ohio, where he is a lecturer in the Photography and Video Department at The Cleveland Institute of Art.
### Biographies

#### EVA O'LEARY

Received a B.F.A. from California College of the Arts in 2012 and a M.F.A. from Yale University in 2016. Using photography, text and video, her work investigates issues such as identity formation and human behavioral patterns on the backdrop of wider social, cultural and philosophical implications. Before joining the faculty at OSU Jared taught at the collegiate level in South Africa from 2010–2015. He has had solo shows both domestically and internationally.

#### CORINE VERMEULEN

A Dutch photographer who set up her studio practice in Detroit in 2006. She earned a B.F.A. from the Design Academy Eindhoven, and an M.F.A. in photography from the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan. Her photographs have been featured in The New York Times, Brooklyn Rail, Time Magazine, The Guardian and The Fader, among others. She has had numerous solo and group exhibitions at national and international venues including, a solo exhibition at The Detroit Institute of Arts.

#### LYDIA PANAS

An artist working in photography and video, dividing her time between Kutztown, Pennsylvania and New York, New York. Panas’ work has been exhibited widely in museums and galleries in the U.S. and internationally. She has degrees from Boston College, School of Visual Arts, and New York University’s International Center of Photography. She is the recipient of the Whitney Museum Independent Study Fellowship and a CFEVA Fellowship. Her photographs are represented in collections nationally, including the Brooklyn Museum, Bronx Museum, Museum of Fine Arts Houston, and the Museum of Contemporary Photography Chicago. She has two monographs, *Falling from Grace (Conveyor Arts 2016)* and *The Mark of Abel (Kehrer Verlag 2012)*.

#### MINDAYA PARLATO

Holds a B.A. in photography from Bard College and an M.F.A. from California College of the Arts. She has recently published two books, *East of the Sun, West of the Moon* with Etudes Books and *A Spectacle and Nothing Strange* with Kehrer Verlag. She has also been a Light Work grant recipient, a New York Foundation for the Arts grant recipient, and a Magenta Foundation Emerging Photographer Award winner. In 2008, she created and curated *Art for Obama*, a fundraiser that included the work of over sixty photographers, including Philip-Lorca DiCorcia, Katy Grannan, Richard Misrach, Larry Sultan, and Wolfgang Tillmans.

#### JARED THORNE

Holds a B.A. in English Literature from Dartmouth College and a M.F.A. from Columbia University. His work speaks to issues of identity and subjectivity as it relates to class and race in America and abroad. Thorne is an Assistant Professor in the Art Department at Ohio State University.
Radial Survey

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Silver Eye promotes the power of contemporary photography as a fine art medium by creating original exhibitions, unique educational programming, and a space for artists to learn, create, and connect through our digital lab. Our programs are dedicated to supporting the work of emerging, mid-career, and under-recognized artists and sharing that work with our diverse audiences in engaging and meaningful ways.

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