



"LA BAJADA RED," 2016-2017, **Athena LaTocha**, SUMI AND WALNUT INK, LA BAJADA RED ON PAPER, 104" X 362"
 PHOTO: JASON ORDAZ, COURTESY: IAIA MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY NATIVE ART

inhabiting the artist's body as she collected the dirt. It's an immersive experience, though I wonder if displaying the work on the floor under a walkable Plexiglas stage might further her artistic mission. Allowing the viewer to literally leap into a composition is perhaps LaTocha's final frontier for this body of work.

—JORDAN EDDY

CHICAGO

Matthew Schlagbaum: **"Smiling through gritted teeth"** **at Bert Green Fine Art**

Photography is so regularly dissected and autopsied as a conceptual visual medium, so often poked and prodded to reveal its hidden assumptions and innate inconsistencies, that it deserves a stately funeral. Matthew Schlagbaum's ruminations on photography aren't quite that, but rather an intelligent and relentless exposure—with a little help from paint and sculpture—of its ambiguities and fissures. From the age of about two or three, when we're taught—against our will at first, perhaps we instinctively sense something awry happening—to sit still and look at the camera, we enter into a lifetime of a complicit staring contest with an image machine that can freeze time. The myriad ways it can and does do that are cleverly turned this way and that here, from the sense of beauty being captured—whatever 'beauty' means—to an image of our head as the core signifier of self, and more. In the first of those, *A promise, a hope, a dream, an aspiration* (all works 2017) Schlagbaum frames a digital print of a lovely vase of flowers, a mixed bouquet that will never age or wither. But he photographs the vase from its back, it's mostly stems and leaves with just a slightly obscured crowning of flowers, teasing and denying the privileged frontal view one would expect. And really, how many photographs of you and your own privileged frontal view do you actually like—10 percent? 20 percent? In *The labor of making you feel a certain way*,

Schlagbaum parodies the only shooting of ourselves with which we cooperate, with a complicit chap having his face literally adjusted to strike the 'correct' pose. So many ways to parse this, photography is such a piñata that any solid poke sets its innards spewing, dependent as it is on so many shared assumptions that don't make much sense. Schlagbaum really does hit a lot of telling blows here, and in turn he ruminates on various strategies of obscuring an image, black and white and color issues, images as sculpture, the genre of photographing works of art, and more. In the aggregate, he provides a thoughtful and cautionary tale here, that what we think is the answer is often just the question jumbled about, and that, as Derrida famously noted, "meaning is endlessly deferred."

—JAMES YOOD

BOSTON

Gwenneth Boelens: "At Odds" **at MIT List Visual Arts Center**

How can an art medium get out of its own way? For Dutch photographer Gwenneth Boelens it comes from being in the same room with light. In MIT List Visual Art Center's "Gwenneth Boelens: At Odds," her wall-sized photograms result from making overlapping patterns by placing objects in

between controlled light projection and photosensitive materials. These modulated monochromes are more like a spatial echo than a stable image captured by a lens; more sculptural performance than photograph. Their surface entreats the viewer to decipher how the shadows that lasted only a few moments made these images.

Fluctuating between marks and feelings, each work in the show speaks of both cast impressions and duration. How long do things last? A broken umbrella and a pair of sculptures that look like simplistic shields (in two different materials) are on the floor. A pair of sticks marks an indistinct time, shocking the space with a sharp noise when they clap together. Fabric that looks like repaired denim—woven with reflective and electro-conductive fibers—is draped over a folding chair. There is a light shining on it that fluctuates in intensity. The room is divided by a cotton scrim. A meticulous row of fibers has been removed from the scrim, like a horizon crossing an erstwhile canvas. After the scrim has been handled, it is exposed to a forensic chemical used to find fingerprints. A reddish-purple smudge of fingerprints follows the line and marks where the scrim was handled. Much like photographic paper, the canvas only gains an image when bathed in chemicals. West-African Nkontompo Ntama, or Liar's Cloth, inspires the weaving slumped over the wooden folding chair. It got its name from the King of Ashanti, who would wear this cloth while deliberating in court. The projected light makes it intermittently glow phosphorescent blue. At first, you question if your eyes are playing tricks on you, but no. It glows again.

Curated by LVAC's Henriette Huldish, "Gwenneth Boelens: At Odds" runs concurrently with another show by a European artist who examines photography, space and perception, Charlotte Moth's "Seeing While Moving." Boelens' show is a meditation on the limits of photography, yet is also a thesis on how an artist that was trained as a photographer can escape her category. These gestural images and sculptures fluctuate between transparency and opacity. Human motion



"LIAR'S CLOTH," 2017
Gwenneth Boelens

REFLECTIVE AND CONDUCTIVE THREAD,
 FOLDING CHAIR

PHOTO: COURTESY THE ARTIST,
 GRIMM GALLERY, AMSTERDAM AND KLEMM'S, BERLIN



“FLOWER SPACE IN GREEN,” 2016, **Elisabeth Condon**
ACRYLIC ON LINEN, 54" X 72" PHOTO: COURTESY EMERSON DORSCH GALLERY

leaves a negative space while the shadows cast by objects create layers of information.

—JOHN PYPER

MIAMI

Elisabeth Condon: “Unnatural Life” at Emerson Dorsch Gallery

Vibrant, beautiful, and fragrant, flowers have inspired artists as varied as Georgia O’Keeffe and Charlie Kaufman. Brooklyn-based artist Elisabeth Condon uses the natural flora of her adopted home, Tampa, Florida—where she taught painting and drawing at the University of South Florida from 2003 to 2014—as the palette for her whimsical oeuvre. Her latest work is currently on display in a show at Emerson Dorsch Gallery’s new home in the heart of Miami’s Little Haiti neighborhood. Pale-pink, deep-blue, and fluorescent-green hues mix, mingle, and interact, often just on a single canvass. Yet don’t let the awkward pastiche of colors fool you. Behind Condon’s jarring hues lies a deep meditation on proportion and abstraction, not just an ostensible exercise in coloristic mishmash.

Working in a flurry, she forms petals, pines, and errant fronds with an ersatz sense of entropy and fecundity. These forms are balanced by a clear feel for color and palette that, though at times abstracted beyond recognition—bleeding out into the edges of the frame, displacing form into large swatches of bright hues—is balanced with neutrals, set against glittery surfaces, and muddled in their mixtures. In *Pink Feeder* (2015), for example, a clean red hue is layered with an iridescent pearl so the pigments show through. The play between a pure color, or a color straight out of the bottle, and another color that moves through the top coat evokes a sense

of dynamism, turning static images into flourishing renditions. It’s a technique that Condon has slowly developed through her many years of study and practice.

Easily dismissed as frivolity for their apparently superficiality, Condon’s work extends far beyond the complex palettes and abstract forms she renders on the canvas. Prompted by a growing fascination with ancient Chinese scrolls, Condon’s research led to a reinterpretation of Eastern principles of balance and restraint for an information-saturated world. From that philosophical jumping-off point, she crafts canvasses late into the night. Condon likes to split her time between her Brooklyn and Tampa studios. The two spaces bookend the abstract and representational nodes of her work. The latter comprises the bulk of the current show. Lush and exuberant, these pieces are imbued with the spirit of the tropics.

—NEIL VAZQUEZ

NEW YORK

Roe Ethridge: “American Spirit” at Andrew Kreps Gallery

In 1955, Jasper Johns painted *White Flag*, an American flag made of newspaper clippings covered in white encaustic paint. The piece survives both as an emblem of America and a physical archive of life within its borders, as captured in the columns and headlines frozen beneath Johns’ hardened wax brushstrokes and drippings. In his new exhibition, photog-

rapher Roe Ethridge responds to Johns with *Johns Flag* (all works 2017), a snapshot of the canvas taken in extremely low resolution and transformed into a field of white, off-white, and light brown pixels. The already difficult-to-read newsprint is rendered completely illegible; the icon of America, and of 20th-century American art, is muddled. The exhibition may be called “American Spirit”—a nod to both the cigarette brand and Alfred Stieglitz—but as *Johns Flag* makes clear, Ethridge does his best to cast suspicion on any product or image that claims to succinctly summarize America or American-ness.

The centerpiece of the show, *Untitled (American Spirit)*, seems at first glance to depict a textbook suburban home set on a lush green lawn bordered by dewy red roses. Look more closely, however, and you notice Chinese writing looming eerily in the upper-left-hand corner. The text is the result of a glitch in batch photo editing which Ethridge leaves in, as a reminder of the image’s constructed nature: Is this scene any less organic than a Doris Day movie? A Norman Rockwell painting? The incursion of Chinese into the frame also hints at how digital media shapes identity, something further addressed in the strange and spellbinding *Pic ‘n Clips*, a series of collages made from image files saved on Ethridge’s desktop over twelve years, and backed by ghostly, enlarged photographs of flat American Spirit cartons. The images, sourced from fashion spreads, advertising, personal photographs, and internet screenshots, appear in enigmatic arrangements. Some even seem randomly generated. In *Pic ‘n Clip 9*, photographs of ocean waves appear alongside pictures of tide forecasts and an ad for the “Tide 3.0” watch—a precarious merging of image, information, and commerce reminiscent of a Google search.



“YELLOW AMERICAN SPIRIT WITH BLUE ROSES”
2017

Roe Ethridge

DYE SUBLIMATION PRINT ON ALUMINUM

60" X 40"

PHOTO: COURTESY ANDREW KREPS GALLERY