

RENA BRANSTEN GALLERY

HIDDEN STORIES

Jonathan Calm, Rodney Ewing, Oliver Lee Jackson, Bovey Lee, and Diane Roby
December 2, 2023 – February 10, 2024

1



Bovey Lee

Tsunami-Oblivious, 2009

Chinese rice paper

34 3/4 x 45 3/4 x 3 inches

This work depicts disparate gripping tales of survival inspired by Hokusai's woodblock print THE GREAT WAVE OF KANAGAWA. The central figure is the little girl on the floating sofa, seemingly unaware of the enormous, cresting waves. Giant jellyfish are tossed in the air and a group come up to the surface as if trying to protect her. By contrast, other children are in high alert, fighting and firing at targets unseen. There are planes, cars, and oil rigs in the background struggling to move through the currents. Surfing on the edge of the waves are three elephants gingerly balancing on balls, their otherwise intimidating presence is dwarfed by the sheer power of nature. In times of unprecedented crisis, it's up to each individual whether to fight or flight, work together or go alone.

2



Diane Roby

Untitled Drawing II, 2023

Graphite on paper

14 x 17.25 inches

3



Diane Roby

Untitled Drawing I, 2023

Graphite on paper

14.25 x 16.75 in.

Roby's graphite drawings are developed through a slow process of accumulation. Begun in plein-air as a response to a particular landscape setting, different forms arise in the making process. The drawings are also informed by the composition of Roger Van der Weyden's "Deposition". While landscape elements remain, the drawings depart from pure landscape, as the fine graphite mark-making creates a morphing interplay of illumination and images.

RENA BRANSTEN GALLERY

4



Rodney Ewing

Come the Mean Times, 2022

Hand-colored silkscreen on ledger paper

48 x 36 3/4 inches

This work examines the history of dislocation through the lens of the Trail of Tears and the Tulsa Massacre. The diagrams that are used in the composition represent the Greenwood area of Tulsa that was bombed from the air (the first time an American city was attacked in this manner by its own citizens), the type of plane that was used, and a map of the trail of tears, documenting the ethnic cleansing and forced displacement of approximately 100,000 people of the "Five Civilized Tribes" between 1830 and 1850.

5



Oliver Lee Jackson

Untitled Handcolored Woodblock (1/4), 1967-2022

photographic woodblock on canvas, hand-colored with colored pencil and silver spray paint

51 x 51 inches

In the later 1960s Jackson made a series of square paintings that included figurative elements from newspaper photos of the Sharpeville Massacre of March 1960 in South Africa. At that time, he also carved a wood block and made one print on paper, which was discovered last year. Using that print as a matrix, he was able to reproduce the woodblock on canvas in an edition of four, and has hand colored this one print. The "Sharpeville Series" continued in the 1970s with a number of large canvases based on the same figurative forms seen in the photographs of the event.

6



Jonathan Calm

Blue Black History (A Moment in the New China Club, NV), 2022

Cyanotype print, ed. 1/6

18 x 24 inches

In the series *Blue Black History*, Calm uses a 19th century photo process (cyanotype) to look at significant locations where the historical context is paramount to the work. In this piece, we see Calm's hand holding down a photograph of patrons at the New China Club in Reno, Nevada, that was open from 1952 to 1973. From its opening, New China Club was positioned as a place where Black servicemen at Stead Air Force base could come and gamble, as the existing Reno casinos would not serve them.

RENA BRANSTEN GALLERY

7



Jonathan Calm

Blue Black History (Tuskegee Army Airfield), 2020

Cyanotype print, ed. 1/6

18 x 24 inches

In 1941, the Secretary of the Army authorized the formation of a black squadron and began training in segregated facilities at Tuskegee Army Airfield in Alabama. This was the single school for instruction of black pilots until it closed in 1946. Its graduates are known as the Tuskegee Airmen.

8



Rodney Ewing

Faded, 2022

Hand-colored silkscreen on ledger paper

29 1/4 x 38 3/4 inches

Part of a series called "Planned Obsolescence" these mixed media works on paper use archival images in the form of photo silkscreens that range from Jim Crow era prison labor to the sports arena. Coated with striations of color that emphasize the figures by removing a distinctive horizon line, flattening the picture plane. Over each subject is a schematic of discarded technology to show the parallel between manufactured tools and manufactured servitude. The substrate for the information rests on vintage ledger paper that functions as an object and reinforces the narrative regarding value. Works from this series reveal how commerce and production in the pursuit of advancement have relied on the exploitation of the Black body. The foreground of "Faded" features a schematic of a cotton gin, a device that did not eliminate the need for slaves, but actually increased their use and expanded the practice of slavery by making the separation of cotton fibers from the seeds faster.