

West of True

Churchill Arts Council

Jane Waggoner Deschner

It Must Be True: Work with Found Photographs

Gordon McConnell

West of Everything: New and Selected Paintings

DECEMBER 6, 2013 – MARCH 22, 2014

Oats Park Art Center

Fallon, Nevada

LOST AND FOUND

Each day, I sit down to work preoccupied by looming deadlines and seemingly unattainable goals. The picture hanging just above the desk beckons me to look up from this anxiety and take a breath. A little girl in western wear getup, complete with chaps, beams back at me from atop a docile pony. Stitched in subtle monochromatic threads across the surface are the immortal words of John Wayne, iconic hero of the Old West, "Courage is being scared to death but saddling up anyway." Cracked with age, this black and white snapshot offers daily encouragement—and endless mystery. It is not my family photo. I will never know who took it. I will never know who this little girl was. But instead of being unsettling, this anonymity becomes a generous access point, allowing me to momentarily become the young rider ever-ready for adventure.

This unexpected mix of found imagery, aphorism, and handwork becomes a potent triple threat in the hands of Jane Waggoner Deschner. In the spirit of Marcel Duchamp, appropriation is the cornerstone of her success. "I appropriate everything—photographs taken by others, words spoken by others, fonts and embroidery stitches created by others. My contribution is to gather, then combine these disparate elements into something more than the sum of their parts."

Susan Sontag's book *On Photography* has been essential to the development of Deschner's unique creative vision. Of critical importance is the quote: "The ultimate wisdom of the photographic image is to say: 'There is a surface. Now think—or rather feel, intuit—what is beyond it, what that reality must be like if it looks this way.' Photographs, which cannot themselves explain anything, are inexhaustible invitations to deduction, speculation, and fantasy."

Found objects, text, and textiles have all been used to great effect in contemporary art for decades. However, Deschner's unique combination of photography and embroidery contributes to a newly emerging subgenre in

the twenty-first century. This specific mash-up has grown in popularity over the last several years, fueled in part by a desire to slow down and reconnect with tactile modes of making in an increasingly fast-paced technological age. The accessibility of digital photography has all but replaced silver gelatin and 35mm prints. Like VHS and cassette tapes, these archaic records of human activity are imbued with the energy of bygone eras. As members of older generations pass on, estate sales and online marketplaces like eBay have swelled with millions of snapshots, all detached from the sentimentality of their original context.

Intriguing examples include Italian artist Maurizio Anzeri, whose handstitched designs transform the faces of vintage studio portraits into decorative Op Art masks. When asked about the choice of embroidery to render his Modernist line work, Anzeri says "When I begin stitching, something else happens. Drawing will never do what thread will..." American artist Diane Meyer investigates the formation of memories by cross-stitching pixelated blocks of color into snapshots of cityscapes and family outings. Reminiscent of computer glitches and image-scrambling algorithms, her hand-embroidered disruptions represent "the means by which photographs become nostalgic objects that obscure the objective understanding of the past."

Deschner's strategies for looking more intensely at and into vernacular photography have been deeply influenced by the writings of Roland Barthes. In *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, he explains "The effect the Photograph produces upon me is not to restore what has been abolished (by time, by distance) but to attest that what I see has indeed existed."

A compulsive maker since girlhood, Deschner has created hundreds of what she refers to as "manipulated ready-mades." This obsessive drive to mine the memories of others for existential meaning can be traced back to her childhood. Deschner lost her mother to breast cancer

without warning in 1961 when she was just 13. Denied any last letters or heart-to-heart talks, she wandered through adolescence and adulthood haunted by a lack of proof—unsure of her mother’s love and devotion. After two children and a failed marriage, “My first revelation came from rediscovering these two snapshots of my family on vacation in the Ozarks. I’d run across them off and on over the years but now *aha!*, I realized I was looking through my 10-year-old eyes again. This is what I saw, what I chose to document. And life then was perfect—there were no sick or crazy people in it.”

In Deschner’s 2011 digital print, *from the polka dot series (mother & me)*, she creates a colorful kaleidoscope of quotidian events embedded in a picture from her infancy. “The snap I used as the starting point is of my mother and me. I can see in our eyes the connection; finding and working with this image answered some important questions for me. We adored each other.”

The range of emotions each piece can inspire are unavoidable as connections to one’s own past, fears, and dreams flood the act of subjective interpretation. In the post-Modern era, where cynicism and irony are often favored for their conceptual grit, the tender trappings of Deschner’s introspective works are easy to dismiss—but harder to resist.

In a life-size 2011 garment assemblage, Deschner altered dozens of snapshots charting the happy growth of one boy from toddler to young man. The classic Peter, Paul and Mary lyric “A dragon lives forever but not so little boys” is accompanied by an elaborately stitched line drawing of a winged beast. Having just sent my son off to college last fall after a year rife with mother/son struggles for independence, this piece struck a personal chord that reverberates with regret but hope for the future.

Much of Deschner’s current collection of over 40,000 snapshots, studio portraits, and news photos, primarily from

the early to the mid-20th century, reflects a kind of ease and affluence enjoyed by white middle class Americans who had access to the technology and the time to cultivate photography as a hobby. This vast archive is carefully organized by subject and milestone, and affords Deschner endless opportunities to study faces and places from the past in search of a shared humanity. In lieu of spectacle, Deschner prizes the far more abundant and unassuming images captured by unknown enthusiasts. Commonality sets the stage for moments of existential reflection.

The desire to restore this orphaned imagery to a place of honor led Deschner to handstitch thought-provoking quotes directly into the surface. Rather than draw or paint the text, she chose hand embroidery for its traditional ties to instructive samplers and *memento mori* heirlooms. The methodical stitching process demands great time and precision, but also allows Deschner to connect more deeply with the present moment and to meditate on the philosophical maxims she binds to each image. The irrevocable act of piercing the photographic paper (rather than working from scans) both tears and repairs the original artifact, mending it with renewed purpose and aesthetic appeal.

Her sources run wild through the ages from Homer to Vonnegut. “Using the words of famous people adds prestige and allows me to ventriloquize thoughts my aging maternal (and increasingly opinionated) self wants to express.” A dark sense of humor is often at the heart of her juxtapositions. In a 2013 assemblage, the double image of a gawky girl in glasses posing stiffly for a high school yearbook is trumped by the casual insertion of a sexy blonde. Furtive smirks—or frowns—abound with the addition of George Bernard Shaw’s short and sweet adage “Virtue is insufficient temptation.”

Deschner’s exhibition, *It Must Be True: Work with Found Photographs*, fittingly coincides with not one but two

landmark anniversaries in the history of photography. On January 7, 1839, the French artist and physicist Louis Daguerre altered the very nature of human perception by introducing his revolutionary Daguerreotype process. The French government secured the rights later that year in exchange for Daguerre's lifetime pension, and shared this miraculous invention with the world by publishing the instructions—for free.

Eastman Kodak refined the technology to offer portable box cameras in 1888, but it was the release of the handheld cardboard "Brownie" in February of 1900 that made it possible for anyone to affordably create what came to known as "snapshots" of everyday life. Today, a whole range of handheld devices can instantly take and store thousands of high-quality digital images. Seen on a living room mantle, a gallery wall, or a cellphone screen, each one is a reflection of its respective era.

Alfred Stieglitz, one of America's earliest advocates of photography as an art form, passionately believed in the medium's ability to capture life as a way to more fully experience it. "Utopia is in the moment. Not in some future time, some other place, but in the here and now, or else it is nowhere."

The appreciation and understanding of everyday or vernacular photography benefited tremendously from the watershed 2007 exhibition *The Art of the American Snapshot: 1888-1978* at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. The show featured over 200 snapshots from the collection of Robert E. Jackson.

Deschner, who has been commissioned by Jackson to work with photos from his collection, recently asked him: "You mentioned that some images 'speak to you about being embroidered.' You spend so much time with vernacular photos, why add embroidery?" He replied, "I felt there was something in a photo that was lacking.

In two cases, the photos were rather damaged due to being wrinkled or marred ... (the third) seemed rather static and formalistic. The original 'story' was gone or diminished. They needed to be brought back to life by an overlay of some embroidered truth, which would make them whole again—where the imperfections in the photo were now secondary to another artist's hand in creating a whole new piece—a metamorphosis—from the bones of what was there before."

In the award-winning book that accompanied his exhibit, Jackson notes how "a single snapshot signifies one moment in the narrative thread of a person's life...." This poetic sentiment deftly connects the humble origins of amateur photography to needle arts. Both are ubiquitous forms of creative expression readily available to people of all ages, backgrounds, and classes. Both aid in the creation of intensely intimate objects that reflect personal identity and the ceaseless passage of time.

THE PAST THAT WAS

Thriving on physical sensation, wedded to violence, dominated by the need for domination, and imprisoned by its own heroic code, the Western appeals finally beyond all these to whatever it is the high-up hills betoken.

Jane Tompkins, West of Everything

Montana painter Gordon McConnell, in his haunting new exhibition, *West of Everything: New and Selected Paintings*, recapitulates real and imagined scenes from the classics of Western film. Such scenes have been McConnell's chosen imagery for the past thirty-odd years, but in his most recent work, something fundamental begins to change. From the start, McConnell's work has been intellectually challenging and rendered with considerable wit, embodying a corrosive vision. In the recent work, the changes are subtle and emotionally powerful. There is a mournful or retrospective quality, a sense that this work is no longer primarily playful or satiric, but rather constitutes an extended elegy for a lost time and place, a Western culture that, however flawed, deserves if not our respect, at least our affection.

"At first," McConnell has written, "I had a subversive or satirical intention. The early work was intentionally crude and also tended toward darkness and expressionistic violence." And then in recent years, he found his attitudes and his approach changing. He writes: "[M]y intentions have become more constructive and my inclination is to honor the heritage of the West, the cinema, and the tradition of the great painters—Remington and Russell, yes, but also Manet and Sargent, Pollock and de Kooning, Kiefer and Richter."

It can be argued that this more constructive intention has grown increasingly intense and personal in the past two years, as Gordon McConnell has dealt with major life changes, in particular the death of his father, James Gordon "J. G." McConnell. Like many native-born Westerners

who seem thoroughly urban, Gordon McConnell has startlingly direct and deep connections to the fabled West of cowboys, cattle drives, and Indian wars.

His father, J. G., was born in 1918 near Pampa, Texas, and as a boy and young man, the elder McConnell helped tend his family's herd of Herefords. J. G.'s obituary notes, "He grew up on the frontier stories of his great uncle and aunt, Henry and Fanny Lovett, and attended the funeral of Charles Goodnight [1836-1929]. His uncle, Skinny Adams, was a range boss on the JA Ranch," Goodnight's legendary ranch in the Texas Panhandle.

Charlie Goodnight, of course, was one of the principal cowmen who drove wild Texas longhorns north in the great cattle drives following the Civil War, and he is reputed to be the model for Larry McMurtry's character Woodrow F. Call in the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Lonesome Dove*. In the CBS *Lonesome Dove* miniseries, Tommy Lee Jones plays the grizzled Captain Call. J. G.'s great-uncle Henry Lovett had been an early-day buffalo hunter, woodcutter, ranch hand, and then successful rancher.

J. G. McConnell farmed and ranched in eastern Colorado until 1959—Gordon was born in 1950—but conflicts with other family members caused him to leave the land and undertake a new career as a science teacher. Gordon recalls that his father retained a great love for the mythic West, what Gordon has dubbed the *Phantom Empire*, and that he watched the Encore Westerns channel "obsessively." His passion for Western film was contagious, and Gordon—with considerable tenderness—remembers one evening coming home from school and his father sitting him down and regaling him with a blow-by-blow account of the plot of *My Darling Clementine*, John Ford's 1946 masterwork that starred Henry Fonda, Linda Darnell, Victor Mature, and Walter Brennan. *My Darling Clementine* remains one of Gordon's touchstones, and re-castings of its images appear frequently in his works.

Gordon believes that his father felt the loss of the agricultural life acutely and that watching Western films reconnected him, however partially, to that deeply meaningful portion of his existence. The literary critic Leslie Fiedler, in his famous essay, "Montana; or the End of Jean-Jacques Rousseau," opined that the Montana cowboys he witnessed exiting movie theaters after viewing Western films firmly believed that the "authentic hero is the man who herds cattle." Wallace Stegner, expressing a desire to "bury" the mythic cowboy, wrote: "But I know I can't. He is a faster gun than I am. He is too attractive to the day-dreaming imagination." Pablo Neruda, the Nobel Prize-winning Chilean poet, wrote:

*... in films where bullets fly on the wind,
I am left in envy of the cowboys,
left admiring even the horses*

McConnell, by internalizing his father's love for Westerns and recognizing his own sense of loss over a lack of connection to the "authentic," agricultural, mythic West, understands better than most that these films touch something elemental in the American psyche. It is easy enough to treat the Western film ironically, but Gordon McConnell, through these utterly compelling paintings, gives us a twice-imagined past, riddled with contradictions, rich in complex feelings (sorrow, dread, tenderness), stark and opulent—a place *Out Where the Black Winds Blow*. This may not be an entirely inviting place, but Gordon McConnell leaves us convinced that it is absolutely real.

Staged twentieth century Hollywood history, in endless iterations, is as real as the nineteenth century blood and thunder epic of conquest and conflict that inspired it.

Gordon McConnell

If Gordon McConnell's personal lineage includes buffalo hunters and range bosses, his artistic genealogy possesses its own trajectory. McConnell can be said to belong, at least by inclination, to the Pictures Generation, a group of artists who emerged in the 1970s and 1980s in reaction against the dictates of Minimalism and Conceptualism, where the specific object reigned supreme (painting was unthinkable) or the aesthetic work dematerialized altogether into pure idea. The Pictures Generation represented, as the critic Hal Foster has written, a "Return to the Real." In Foster's words, this "trajectory of art since 1960 was committed to realism and/or illusionism: some pop art, most superrealism (also known as photorealism), some appropriation art." The Pictures Generation artists took as their subject matter the unstoppable flow of images from mass media: television, film, magazines, and pop music, and they emerged from two centers, New York City and the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) in Valencia.

After receiving his B.A. in Studio Art in 1972 from Baylor University, McConnell spent a semester at CalArts where he studied with John Baldessari, a mentor and model for the Pictures Generation through his extensive use of all manner of appropriated imagery. McConnell didn't immediately connect with Baldessari's approach, but he would not forget the older artist's imaginative recapitulations of found photographs. Before and after graduate school in art history at the University of Colorado, McConnell worked in Texas where he encountered the work of artists like Vernon Fisher, Bob "Daddy-O" Wade, and Ed Blackburn, all of whom were working with found western imagery.

Blackburn's reuse of cowboy film publicity stills particularly drew McConnell's interest. While in Boulder, he rediscovered the movies of John Ford and began to develop his own style. His viewing of Ford's *Stagecoach* was revelatory:

The print was battered, the images de-resolved, flickering and stuttering. Details of the coach, horses and characters

dissolved in abstract shadows as the searing glare of the Arizona desert spilled into the auditorium. Still, the compelling story and performances, dynamic action set-pieces and powerful cinematic compositions came through. In its ruined state the old film seemed like a relic of an actual frontier.

While he admired the work of such Pictures Generation artists as Robert Longo (Longo's sculptural *Seven Seals for Missouri Breaks* was an inspiration), he was also drawn to the work of the German artist Gerhard Richter, especially Richter's photo-pictures of the mid-1960s. Like Richter, McConnell was temperamentally drawn to black-and-white imagery, sharing the German master's "sense of restraint and natural affinity for a grisaille palette."

But it was not until McConnell moved to Montana in 1982 to assume the position of curator at the Yellowstone Art Center (now the Yellowstone Art Museum) that he found his own voice. His arrival in Billings "brought [him] into intimate contact with some of the most storied places of the historic West and also gave [him] the opportunity to study the paintings of two of the most influential codifiers of western imagery, Frederic Remington and Charlie Russell." He came to understand both the impact Remington and Russell (and other western illustrators) had upon filmic depictions of the early West and the crucial ways in which film, "in its temporal, technological, and theatrical mediation," differed from painting.

McConnell met fellow Montana artists with whom he shared the challenges and joys of forging a personal visual language. From rancher/painter/sculptor Theodore Waddell, who had studied with pioneering Montana modernist Isabelle Johnson, he learned to "create forms with the brush" and to cultivate "accidental effects." Together with fellow curator Christopher Warner (now at the Otis College of Art & Design, Los Angeles), he learned to paint as he went along. Like many artists of

their generation, McConnell and Warner had received very little technical training in the art of painting, and so they "invented ways to paint things."

Today, having invented his own way to paint, Gordon McConnell is a master of his medium. Like many of the artists of his generation, he began by using appropriated imagery to create satirical effects, but as he has come to better understand his own ties to the mythic West and to the role that Western film has played in connecting westerners to their origins, he has eschewed a cool, critical stance for one more heartfelt and appreciative of tradition. But it remains a dark vision, full of melancholy and danger, with paintings like *Afterimage: Burnt Shadows*, *10,000 Ways to Die*, and *Black Shapes Stenciled Across the Road* reminding us of mortality and the attendant grief, of the inevitable losses that works of art can help us to bear.

Jane Waggoner Deschner
FROM THE MAXIM SERIES (TWIN, CARRADINE) (2011)
hand embroidered found photograph
10 × 8 INCHES

Go to
Heaven
for the climate,

Hell
for the company.

520-92

THE GOOD GUYS AND THE BAD GUYS,

Mark Twain

WARNER BROS. TELEVISION
DISTRIBUTION



A WARNER COMMUNICATIONS COMPANY

Printed in U.S.A.



Jane Waggoner Deschner

FROM THE ALBUM SERIES (SARTRE, EXISTENCE) (2012)

hand embroidered album page with photograph

6.875 x 11.5 INCHES



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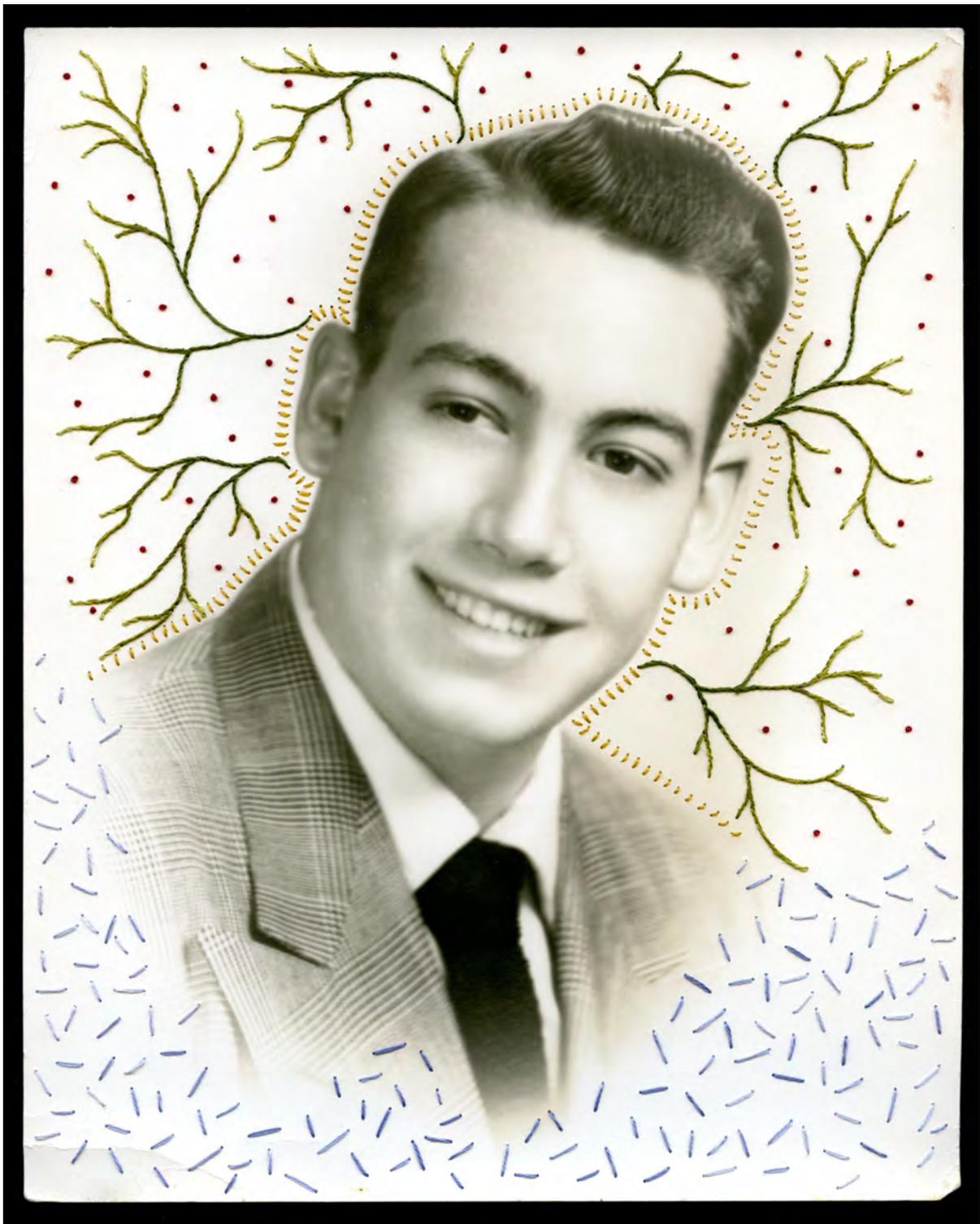
AN EYE FOR AN EYE
An Embassy Pictures release

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In the color 63/253

Back Palahniuk

Jane Waggoner Deschner
FROM THE MAXIM SERIES (PALAHNIUK, STEP, COWBOYS) (2011)
hand embroidered found photograph
8.125 x 10 INCHES



Jane Waggoner Deschner
FROM THE SYMBOL SERIES (HANDSOME YOUNG MAN) (2010)
hand embroidered found photograph
10 x 7.85 INCHES



Jane Waggoner Deschner
FROM THE MAXIM SERIES (PALAHNIUK, PROOF) (2010)
hand embroidered found photograph
7.875 × 7.875 INCHES



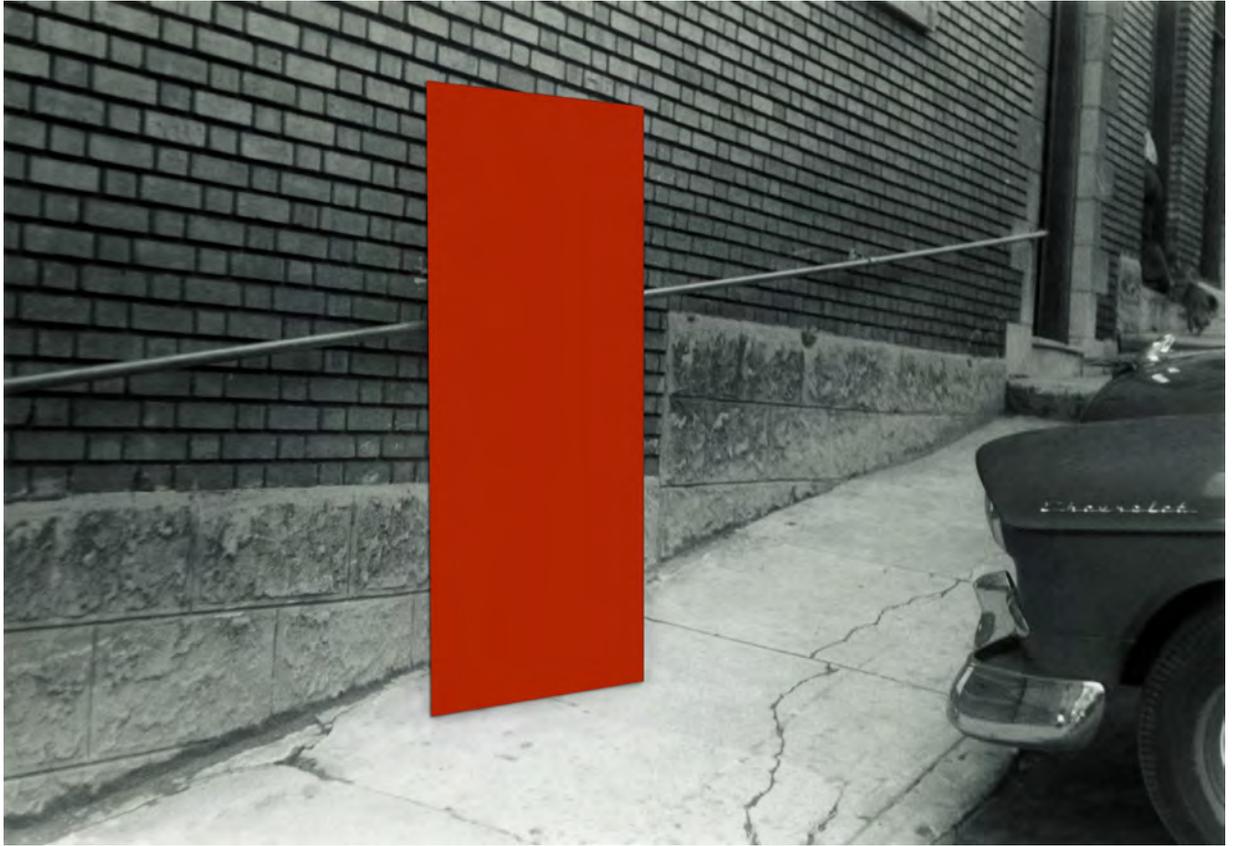
Jane Waggoner Deschner
FROM THE COMBO SERIES (FAMILY) (2008)
archival digital print
33.5 × 19 INCHES



Jane Waggoner Deschner
FROM THE SYMBOL SERIES (4 FLOWERS 2 WOMEN) (2013)
hand embroidered found photographs
14 x 9.875 INCHES



Jane Waggoner Deschner
FROM THE UNDERNEATH SERIES (SAILBOAT, BEACH) (2007)
archival digital print
16.625 x 28.5 INCHES



Jane Waggoner Deschner
FROM THE UNDERNEATH SERIES (CHEVROLET, SIDEWALK) (2006)
archival digital print
24.75 × 36 INCHES

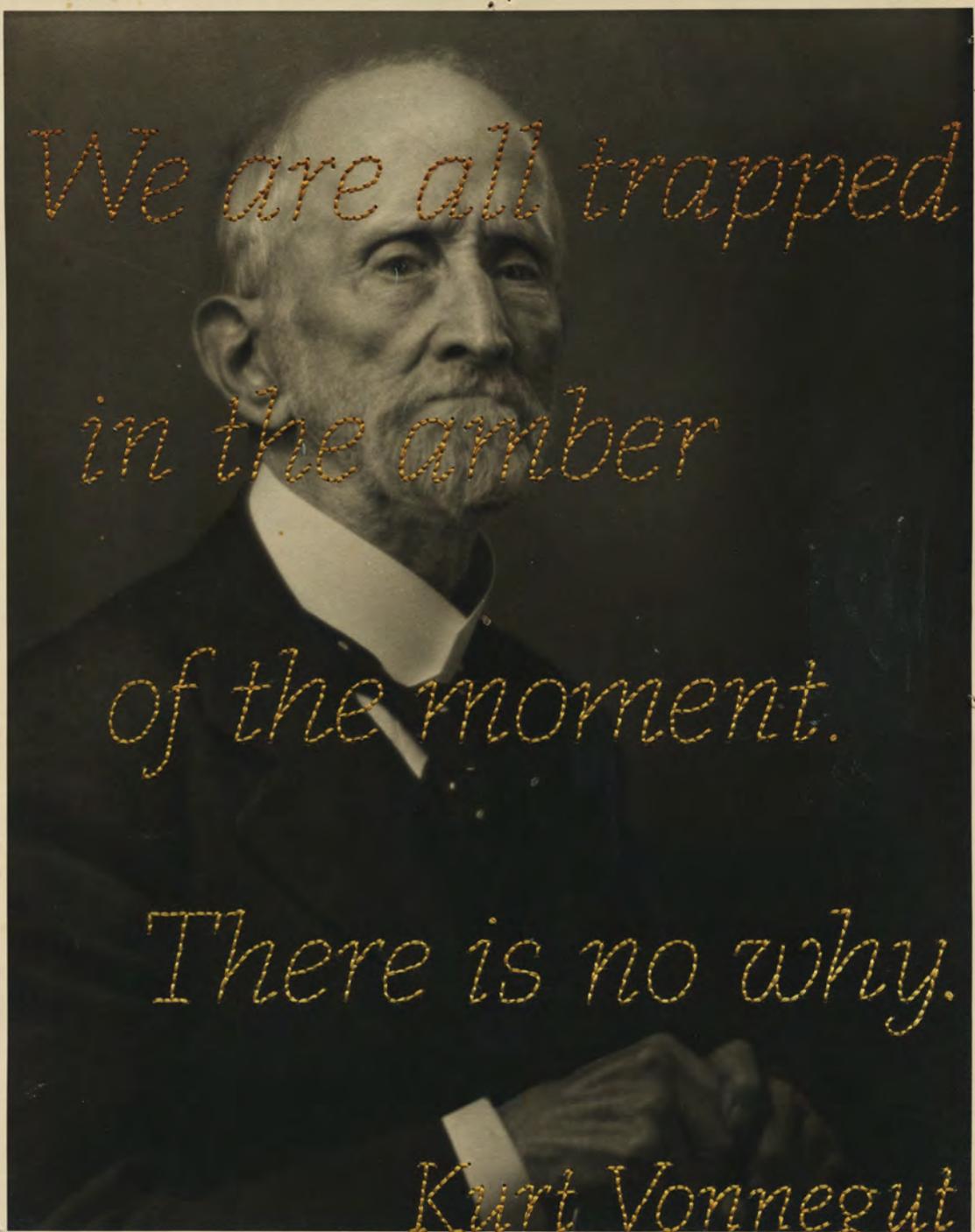


Jane Waggoner Deschner
FROM THE UNDERNEATH SERIES (ALLEY, AUTOMOBILE) (2008)
archival digital print
16.625 x 25.375 INCHES



Jane Waggoner Deschner
FROM THE UNDERNEATH SERIES (BEACH, BROWN SHOES) (2006)
archival digital print
20.25 x 36 INCHES

Jane Waggoner Deschner
FROM THE MAXIM SERIES (VONNEGUT, NO WHY) (2010)
hand embroidered found photograph
9.875 × 8 INCHES



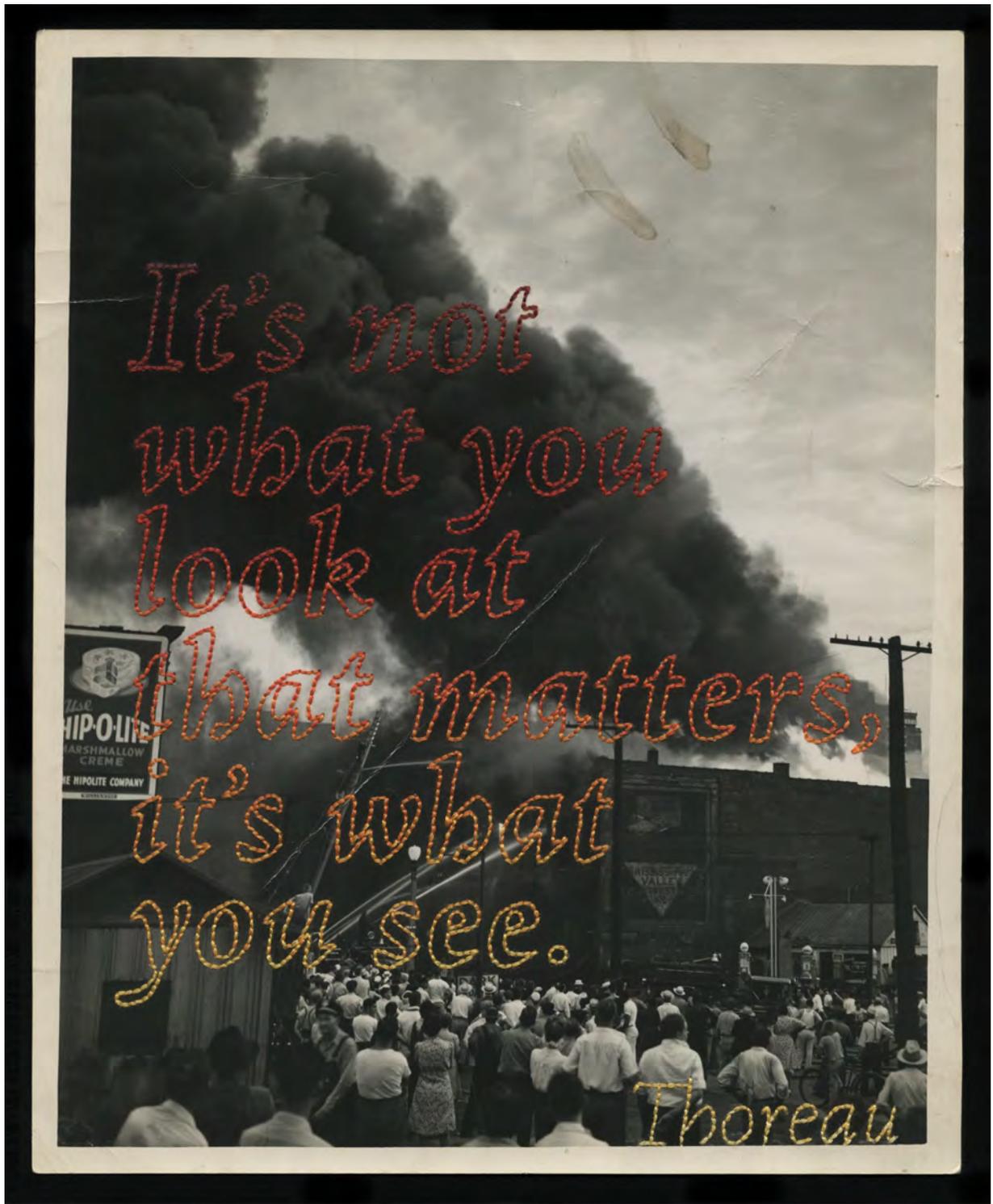
*We are all trapped
in the amber
of the moment.*

There is no why.

Kurt Vonnegut



Jane Waggoner Deschner
FROM THE HILITE SERIES (CAMERA STORE) (2010)
archival digital print
40 x 30.375 INCHES



Jane Waggoner Deschner
FROM THE MAXIM SERIES (THOREAU, SEE) (2013)
hand embroidered found photograph
10 x 8.125 INCHES



Jane Waggoner Deschner
FROM THE MAXIM SERIES (PALAHNIUK, PIÑATA) (2010)
hand embroidered found photograph
10 x 8.125 INCHES



Jane Waggoner Deschner
FROM THE FRAGMENT SERIES (UNTITLED LONGING) (2003)
archival digital prints
36 × 23 INCHES



Jane Waggoner Deschner
FROM THE MAXIM SERIES (HEPBURN, NEVER) (2012)
hand embroidered found photographs
9.25 x 11 INCHES



Jane Waggoner Deschner
FROM THE MAXIM SERIES (SERLING, COWS & ELEPHANTS) (2011)
hand embroidered found photographs
10.125 x 15,5 INCHES



Jane Waggoner Deschner
FROM THE ALBUM SERIES (O'NEILL, OVER&OVER) (2012)
hand embroidered album page with photographs
10.5 x 13.75 INCHES



Jane Waggoner Deschner
FROM THE GARMENT SERIES (LITTLE BOY, DRAGON) (2011)
hand embroidered found photographs
22.625 x 18.75 x 1.75 INCHES



Jane Waggoner Deschner
INSTALLATION VIEW
Classroom Gallery (Main Room)





Jane Waggoner Deschner
FROM THE MAXIM SERIES (NEVELSON, BETTY CROCKER) (2012)
hand embroidered found photographs
11.625 x 11 INCHES



Jane Waggoner Deschner
FROM THE MAXIM SERIES (ELLIOT, OPTIMISM) (2013)
hand embroidered found photograph
9 x 6.125 INCHES



Jane Waggoner Deschner
FROM THE MAXIM SERIES (BOURGEOIS, HOPPER) (2009)
hand embroidered found photograph
10.125 x 8 INCHES



Jane Waggoner Deschner
FROM THE MAXIM SERIES (SHAW, VIRTUE) (2013)
hand embroidered found photographs
11.25 x 16 INCHES

• MAY • 58



Jane Waggoner Deschner
FROM THE LINEUP SERIES (PARTY HATS, JESUS) (2007)
archival digital print
20.5 x 29.75 INCHES



Jane Waggoner Deschner
FROM THE HILITE SERIES (PEANUTS, BABY, CLOWN) (2010)
archival digital print
24.5 × 38.625 INCHES

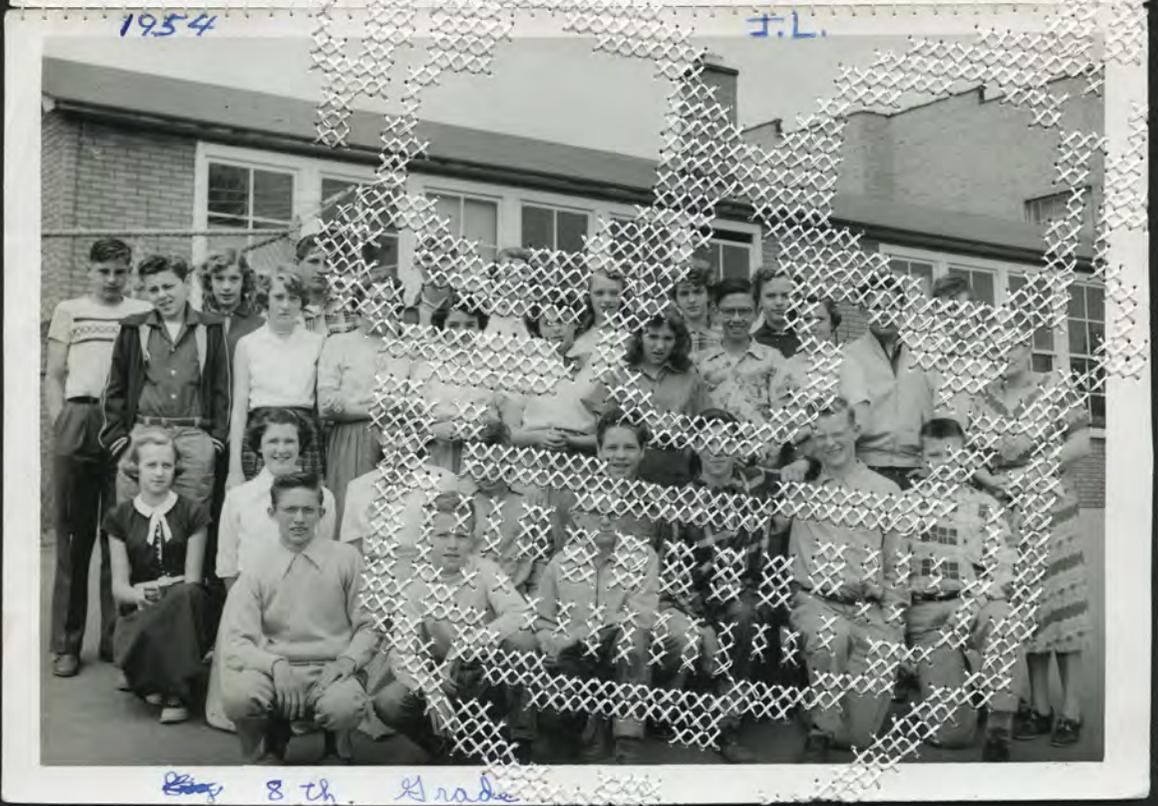
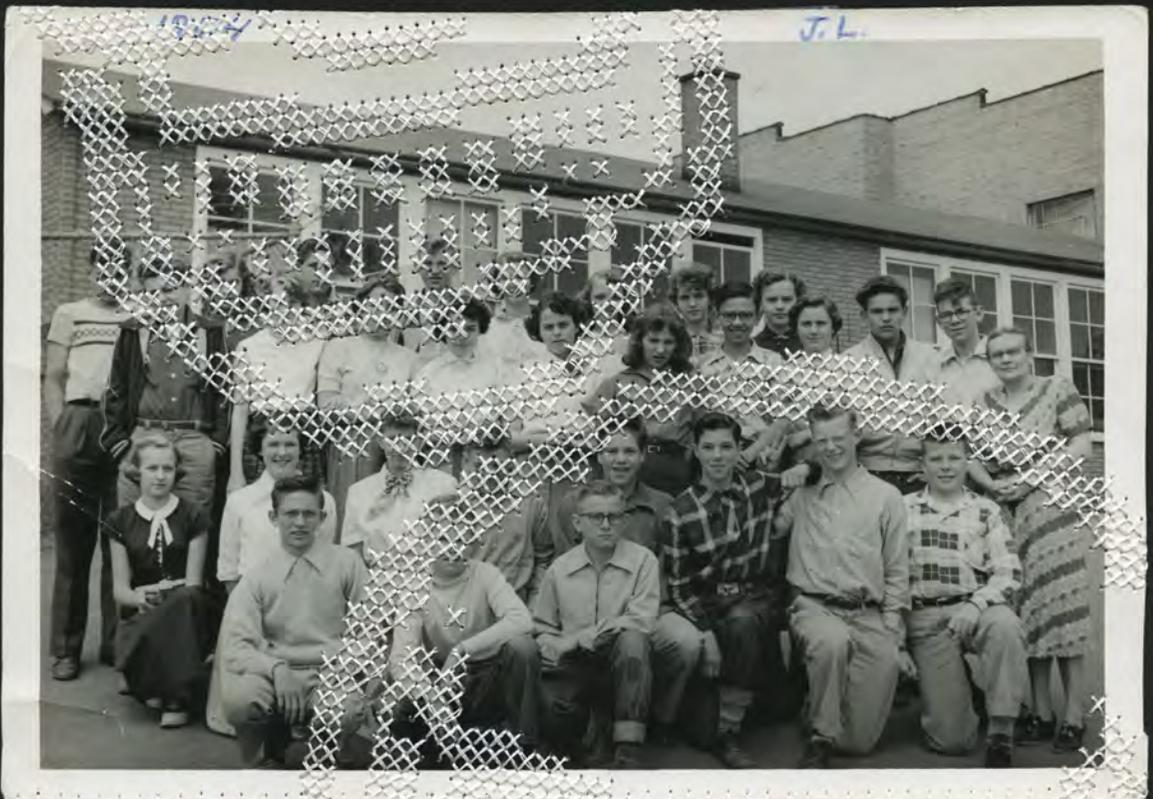


Jane Waggoner Deschner
FROM THE POLKA DOT SERIES (WOMAN ON PORCH) (2011)
archival digital print
41.25 x 25,5 INCHES



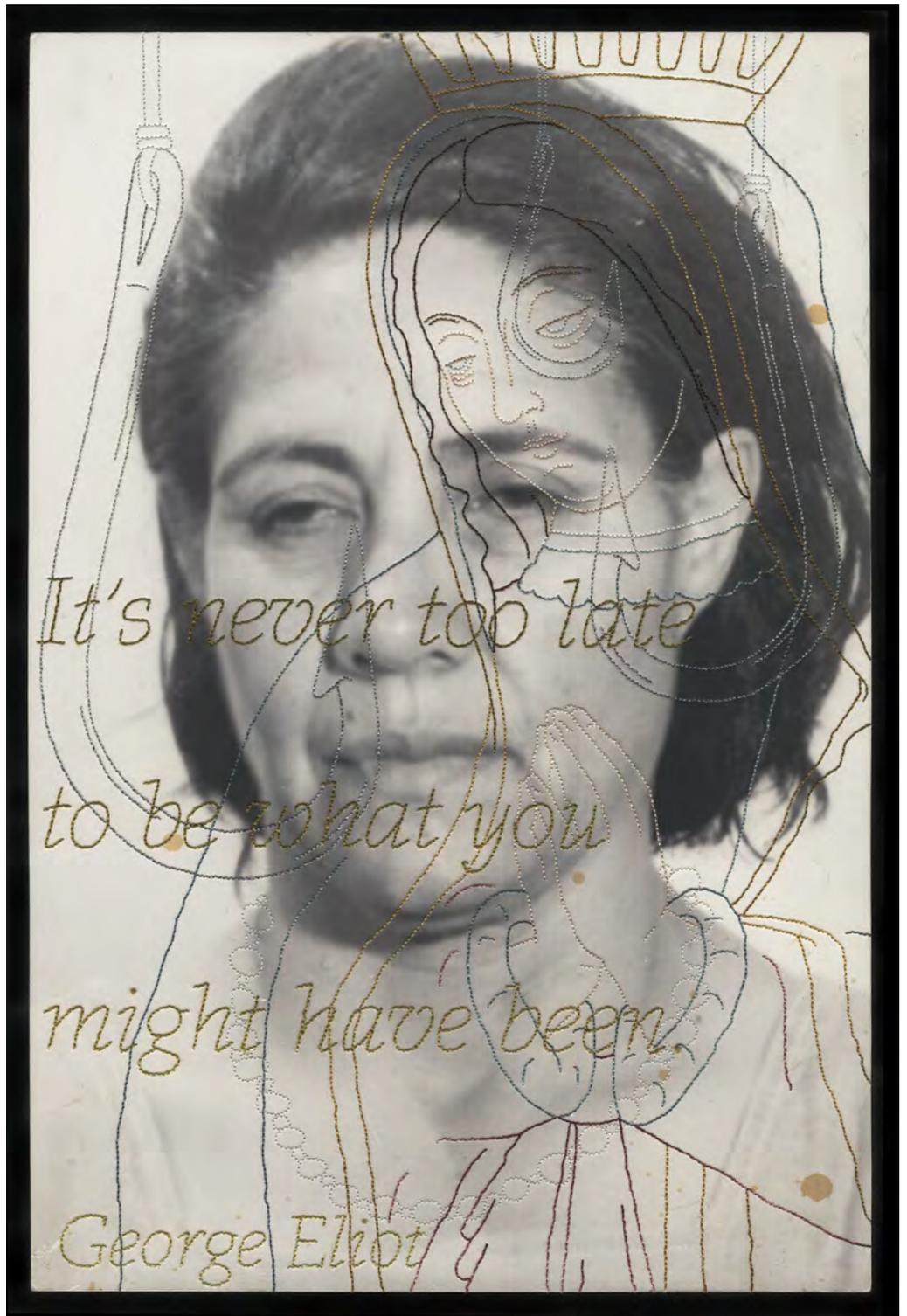
Jane Waggoner Deschner
FROM THE POLKA DOT SERIES (MOTHER & ME) (2011)
archival digital print
38.125 x 38.125 INCHES

Jane Waggoner Deschner
FROM THE SYMBOL SERIES (8TH GRADERS, SKULLS) (2011)
hand embroidered found photographs
9.75 × 7 INCHES

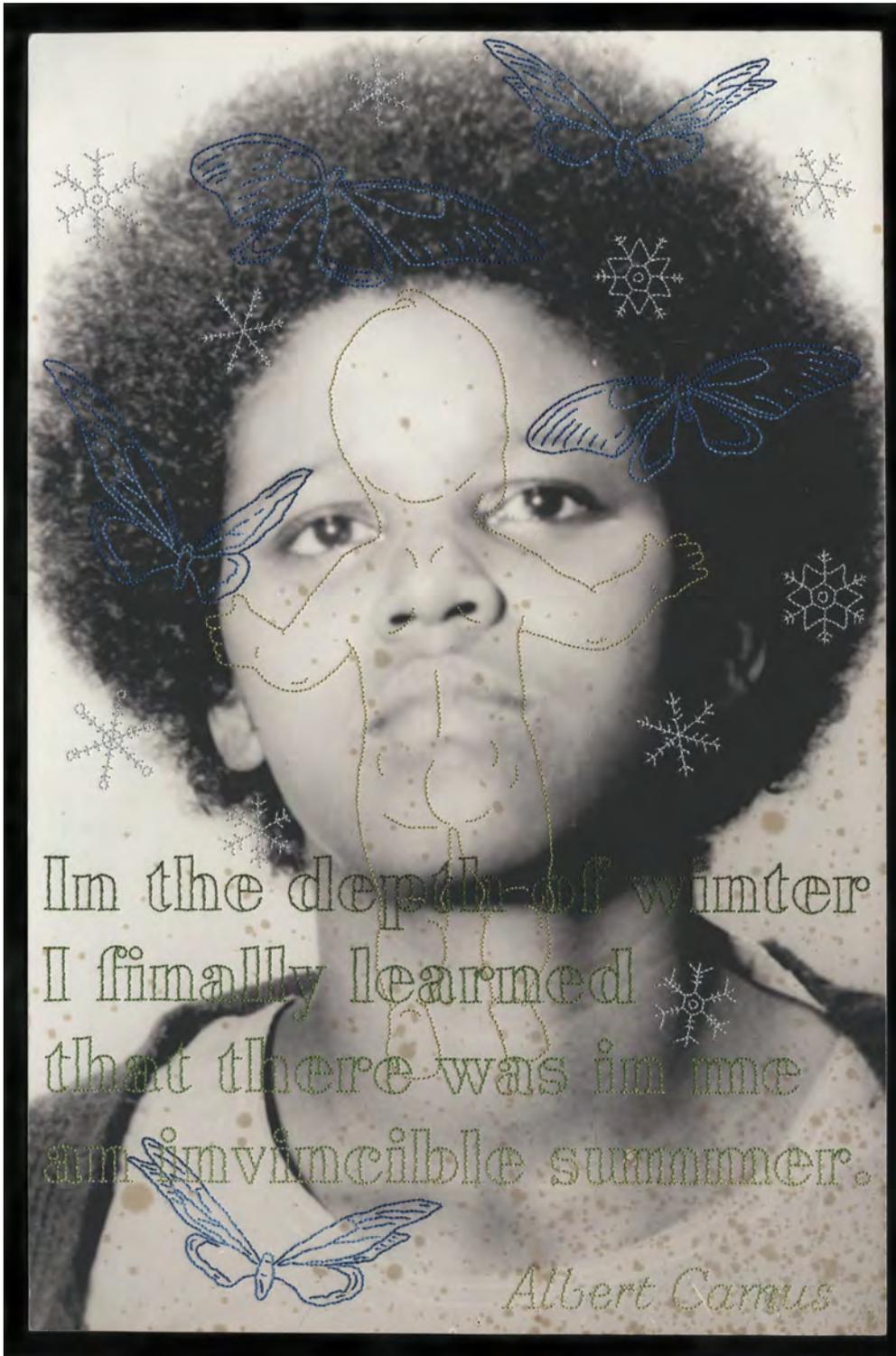




Jane Waggoner Deschner
FROM THE RESILIENCE SERIES (WILDE, TRUTH) (2013)
hand embroidered found photograph
17.25 x 11.5 INCHES



Jane Waggoner Deschner
FROM THE RESILIENCE SERIES (ELIOT, BE) (2011)
hand embroidered found photograph
17.25 x 11.5 INCHES



Jane Waggoner Deschner

FROM THE RESILIENCE SERIES (CAMUS, WINTER, SUMMER) (2013)

hand embroidered found photograph

17.25 x 11.5 INCHES



Jane Waggoner Deschner
FROM THE MAXIM SERIES (KANT, CHILDREN) (2013)
hand embroidered found photographs
16.625 x 16.125 INCHES



Jane Waggoner Deschner
FROM THE FRAGMENT SERIES (2 GIRLS, 2 DOLLS) (2012)
archival digital prints
28 x 20 INCHES



Jane Waggoner Deschner
FROM THE FRAGMENT SERIES (DONNIE'S DOG) (2009)
archival digital prints
30 x 29 INCHES



Jane Waggoner Deschner
FROM THE MAXIM SERIES (PUSHKIN, PEACEMAKER, ILLUSION) (2011)
hand embroidered found photographs
16.25 x 20.25 INCHES



Jane Waggoner Deschner
 FROM THE MAXIM SERIES (TARGET, #9 PALAHNIUKS) (2013)
 hand embroidered found photographs
 24 x 29.875 INCHES

Jane Waggoner Deschner
FROM THE MAXIM SERIES (WAYNE, COWGIRL) (2007)
hand embroidered found photograph
7 × 5 INCHES



COURAGE IS
BEING BRAVE
TO GET OUT
SADDLING
UP ANYWAY
JOHN WAYNE

Gordon McConnell
WEST OF EVERYTHING (2013)
acrylic and oil pastel on canvas
48 × 60 INCHES

"FORT APACHE"

"3 GODFATHERS"

THE WESTERN



THE END

"STAGECOACH" GUNS

The LONG RIDERS

ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE WEST

WAVERRICK
THE GREAT NORTHFIELD MINNESOTA RAID
COWBOY

"RED RIVER"

MY DARLING CLEMENTINE

BROKEN TRAIL



Gordon McConnell
IF WISHES WERE HORSES (2013)
acrylic on canvas panel
16 x 20 INCHES



Gordon McConnell
BITTER TRAIL (2007)
acrylic on paper
9 x 12 INCHES







Gordon McConnell
BUCKBOARD POSSE #4 (2013)
watercolor and ink on paper
10.25 × 14.1875 INCHES



Gordon McConnell
SURREY (2013)
acrylic on canvas panel
16 x 20 INCHES



Gordon McConnell
COLT DRAGOON (2013)
acrylic on canvas on hardboard
18 x 24 INCHES



Gordon McConnell
THE PAST THAT WAS DIFFERS LITTLE FROM THE PAST THAT WAS NOT (2013)
acrylic on canvas
24 x 30 INCHES



Gordon McConnell
HOLDING 'EM (2012)
acrylic on canvas panel
16 x 20 INCHES



Gordon McConnell
MEN'S MEMORIES ARE UNCERTAIN (2013)
acrylic on canvas
24 x 30 INCHES



Gordon McConnell
BUCKBOARD POSSE (2007)
acrylic on canvas mounted on hardboard
16 x 20 INCHES



Gordon McConnell
BLACK SHAPES STENCILED ACROSS THE ROAD (2013)
acrylic on hardboard panel
18 x 24 INCHES



Gordon McConnell
RIDER (2013)
acrylic on canvas
18 x 24 INCHES



Gordon McConnell
ANTHOLOGY – FRONTAL ASSAULT (2009)
acrylic on canvas
24 x 36 INCHES



Gordon McConnell
TURNING TO FIRE (2013)
acrylic on canvas
12 x 12 INCHES



Gordon McConnell
HOW LONELY DOES IT GET? (2012)
acrylic on canvas panel
12 x 16 INCHES



Gordon McConnell
PRIDE OF THE WEST (2013)
acrylic on canvas panel
12 x 16 INCHES



Gordon McConnell
POINTS IN SPACE (2012)
acrylic on canvas panel
18 x 24 INCHES



Gordon McConnell
CAVALRY (2009)
acrylic on canvas panel
20 x 32 INCHES



Gordon McConnell
AMERICANA (2012)
acrylic on hardboard panel
11 x 14 INCHES



Gordon McConnell
UNPACKING THE STAGE (2012)
acrylic on hardboard panel
11 x 14 INCHES



Gordon McConnell
HALF-SHADE (2012)
acrylic on hardboard panel
11 x 14 INCHES



Gordon McConnell
STONY (2008)
acrylic on two hardboard panels
24 x 48 INCHES





Gordon McConnell
HARMONICA (2008)
acrylic on two hardboard panels
24 x 48 INCHES





Gordon McConnell
SNKY (2008)
acrylic on two hardboard panels
24 x 48 INCHES





Gordon McConnell
UNTITLED (SCRATCHED SKY) (2010)
acrylic on hardboard panel
11 x 14 INCHES



Gordon McConnell
ARRIVAL (2008)
acrylic on hardboard panel
24 x 36 INCHES



Gordon McConnell
INTO OPEN COUNTRY (2012)
acrylic on canvas
12 x 12 INCHES



Gordon McConnell
WET BRONC (2011)
acrylic on canvas
12 x 12 INCHES



Gordon McConnell
DUSTY BRONC (2011)
acrylic on canvas
12 x 12 INCHES



Gordon McConnell
STEADY RIDER (2012)
acrylic on canvas
12 x 12 INCHES



Gordon McConnell
COWBOY (2011)
acrylic on canvas
30 x 40 INCHES



Gordon McConnell
PERSISTENCE OF VISION: COWBOYS (2007)
acrylic on nine hardboard panels
33 × 42 INCHES



Gordon McConnell
ANTHOLOGY – RUNNING FIGHT (2009)
acrylic on canvas
30 x 40 INCHES



Gordon McConnell
VICTORIAN CINEMA: RELAY (2012)
acrylic on canvas
30 x 40 INCHES



Gordon McConnell
WHIRLING ALONG (2011)
acrylic on canvas panel
12 x 16 INCHES



Gordon McConnell
OUT WHERE THE BLACK WINDS BLOW (2013)
acrylic on canvas panel
9 x 12 INCHES



Gordon McConnell
DROVER (2012)
acrylic on canvas panel
9 x 12 INCHES



Gordon McConnell
STAGECOACH ATTACK (2007)
acrylic on canvas
30 x 40 INCHES



Gordon McConnell
RETURN OF THE COWBOY (2012)
acrylic on canvas
12 x 12 INCHES



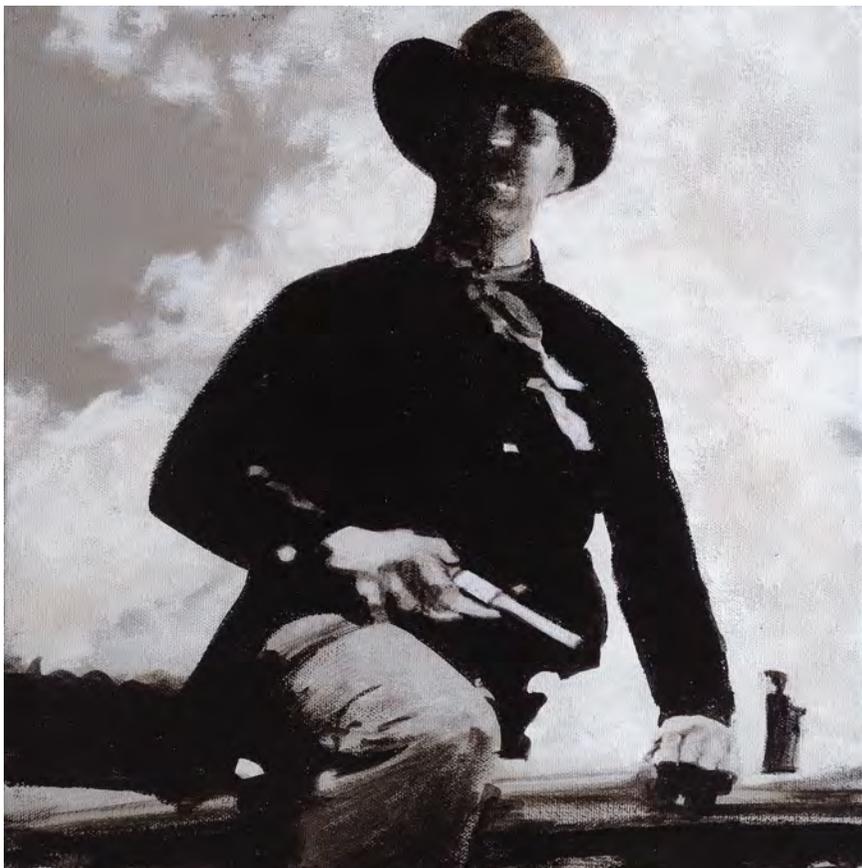
Gordon McConnell
10,000 WAYS TO DIE (2013)
acrylic on canvas panel
11 x 14 INCHES



Gordon McConnell
BULLION STAGE (2012)
acrylic on canvas panel
14 x 18 INCHES



Gordon McConnell
NEVER PASS THIS WAY AGAIN (2010)
acrylic on canvas on gatorboard
5 x 7.125 INCHES



Gordon McConnell
LOAD AND FIRE #1-3 (2012)
acrylic on canvas
12 x 12 INCHES EACH



Gordon McConnell
END TITLE #2 (2007)
acrylic on hardboard
18 x 24 INCHES



ARTIST STATEMENT

Snapshots are taken out of love and to remember people, places, and shared times. They're about creating a history by recording a history.

Nan Goldin

People were first able to take their own photographs in the late 1800s. Since then, snapshotting has become an act of creative expression and selective remembrance practiced by virtually everyone. I am one of the many who posed with my baby; snapped birthday parties, first days of school, fish caught; and sat in a studio for my high school graduation picture. These kinds of photographs represent the universality (and interchangeability) of everyday lives—personal, intimate documents of certainty (idealized and realistically unreal as they are).

With their lost history, orphaned photos taken by unknown photographers fascinate me, particularly those from the early- and mid-20th century. Since 2001, I have collected, studied and manipulated vernacular photographs. Poring over my archive of nearly 40,000 pieces of paper, I forage for archetypes of our shared humanity.

The camera records dispassionately, mechanically. In 2001 I first used digital technology to crop, enlarge, rearrange, clean, select, cover and/or juxtapose scanned vernacular photographs. Intervening in the viewer's experience with an unfamiliar snapshot, an oversized digital print suggests a different, perhaps more poetic, interpretation.

In 2007 I began embroidering into original old photos, irrevocably altering each. The quotes, drawings and symbols I stitch give me a chance to moralize, in sampler-esque form, on some of the lessons and hopes my aging, maternal (and increasingly opinionated) self wants to express.

Garments created from stitched-together snapshots are “wearable photo albums.” I craft a narrative in the snapshots I select, enhanced by an embroidered quote or image. The garment adds to the metaphor of ways we visualize ourselves (as we do in the photographs we choose to take).

We all snap photographs of people and things we love and times we want to remember. We go to a studio to be immortalized looking our best. When we look at photos that are two, three and four generations old, what is obvious is what has changed. But, when we look into them—we discover what has remained constant. When I interact with a photograph, I connect us by teasing out a common humanity not confined by time, place or circumstance. I explore our shared humanity to better understand my own.

JANE WAGGONER DESCHNER

DECEMBER 2013

ARTIST STATEMENT

People think of Westerns as light entertainment, adolescent and escapist, but there is nothing trivial about the needs they answer, the desires they arouse or the vision of life they portray.

Jane Tompkins, West of Everything

In the twentieth century the motion picture industry manufactured a prodigious number of western features, serials, TV shows and mini-series. A durable and popular genre of broad appeal, the western could also be a venue for serious artistry—as exemplified by directors like John Ford, Anthony Mann, Sergio Leone and Sam Peckinpah—and the writers, technicians and actors they worked with. I grew up with westerns during the heyday of *Gunsmoke* and *Rawhide*, seeing them, and the classic old movies, as primitive television signals in our home in rural Southeastern Colorado. Later, I loved the revisionist westerns of the 1960s and 1970s: *One-Eyed Jacks*, *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*, *The Wild Bunch*, *Little Big Man*, *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*. Now, I relish the restored classics available on DVD and the rare, worthy additions to the canon like *Blackthorn* or the Coen Brothers' *True Grit*.

For nearly thirty years, the majority of my paintings have been inspired by and derived from western film images. I'm drawn particularly to the action scenes of black and white westerns dating from the late 1930s through the early 1950s. Flying teams of horses, stagecoaches smothered in sun-struck dust, desperate bandits on the run, cowboys, cavalry troopers, and fearless Indians—wild riders all—are the main subjects in my work.

I strive to capture this furious action and suspend it in a matrix of dancing paint, to embody something that is elemental and timeless, animated and abstract. Distilled to black and white and tinted shades of gray between the two, the images in my paintings are stark, graphic and charged with painterly energy. They register the technological transfer of primal shadows onto the electroluminescent screens of our collective, national consciousness. A shimmering blur of perception, passion and memory is transposed in an interchange of gesture and description, a studio performance where painted marks loosely define forms and simultaneously arrest and embody movement.

Among the newer works in this exhibition, *Victorian Cinema: Relay* and *Points in Space* reference the stop-motion sequences of the nineteenth century photographer Eadweard Muybridge, which were foundational to motion picture technology. Several paintings are drawn from the imagery of John Ford's romanticized account of the Gunfight at the O.K. Corral, *My Darling Clementine*. Others reference Ford classics (*Fort Apache*, *Wagonmaster*, *3 Godfathers*), Howard Hawks' *Red River*, Phillip Kaufman's *The Great Northfield Minnesota Raid* and Walter Hill's *The Long Riders*. The exhibition's eponymous painting, *West of Everything*, is in part an index of works cited, an encapsulation of memories, an epitaph, and a dual homage to Jane Tompkins for her great book on westerns of the same title, and to Louis L'Amour who originated the evocative phrase "west of everything" in his novel *Hondo*.

JANE WAGGONER DESCHNER

Jane Waggoner Deschner grew up in Lawrence, Kansas, moving to Montana in 1977. She earned degrees in geography at the University of Kansas and, later, in art at Montana State University-Billings (BA) and Vermont College of Fine Arts (MFA). She exhibits actively with recent solo shows in Kansas, Missouri, Nevada and Montana. In the "Informed Source" department of *Surface Design Journal's* winter 2014 issue, she writes about her work and process. She has been featured on numerous blogs including *Hand/Eye*, *American Craft Magazine's Why I Make*, *House of Mirth*, *mr x stitch*, *Accidental Mysteries* and *Hand Embroidery Network*.

She has been awarded residencies/fellowships at Ucross Foundation, Clearmont, WY; The Banff Centre, Banff, Alberta, CA; Santa Fe Art Institute, Santa Fe, NM; Virginia Center for Creative Arts (including a LEAW Foundation Grant), Amherst, VA; Jentel Foundation, Banner, WY; Kimmell•Harding•Nelson Center for the Arts, Nebraska City, NE; and Ragdale Foundation, Chicago, IL. In Fall 2010, she was a visiting artist at Red Deer College, Red Deer, Alberta. Since May 2008 she has served as a Governor's appointee to the Montana Arts Council.

Her work is in the collections of Federal Reserve Banks in Minneapolis, MN, and Helena, MT; Missoula Art Museum, Missoula, MT; University of Montana; Montana State University-Billings Foundation; Yellowstone Public Radio; Nicolaysen Art Museum, Casper, WY; Archie Bray Foundation, Helena, MT; and in private collections across the US as well as in South Korea. She is represented by Sherry Leedy Contemporary Art in Kansas City, Missouri, and the Catherine Louisa Gallery, Billings, Montana. In addition to being an artist, she works as an exhibition installer, graphic designer, photographer and picture framer.

GORDON McCONNELL

Gordon McConnell came to Montana in May 1982 and until the end of 1998 was assistant director of the Yellowstone Art Center in Billings. During his sixteen years at the museum McConnell wrote and edited the majority of its publications, curated numerous exhibitions, and helped build the unparalleled Montana Collection of regional contemporary art and the \$6.2 million Yellowstone Art Museum, a renovation and major expansion of the Art Center, which opened in March 1998.

Since leaving the museum, McConnell has continued to write and curate exhibitions, most notably as a consultant to the Ucross Foundation, from 2000 to 2006, and he is recognized for his perspective on contemporary western art. In recent years he has spoken at symposia at the Denver Art Museum and the Booth Western Art Museum in Cartersville, Georgia (both 2008) and been a keynote speaker at the Mountain-Plains Museum Association and the Montana Art Education Association annual meetings (2009).

As a painter, Gordon McConnell's work and reputation are founded on a post-modernist reinterpretation of historic western regional themes and images. In recent years, his work has been included in exhibitions at: Mountain Trails Gallery, Jackson, Wyoming; Stremmel Gallery, Reno; the Ucross Foundation; The Arts Center, St. Petersburg, Florida; the Belger Arts Center, Kansas City; g2 Gallery, Scottsdale; Visions West Gallery, Denver; Broschofsky Galleries, Ketchum, Idaho; EVOKE Contemporary, Santa Fe; and the Meridian International Center, Washington, D.C., as well as in a group exhibition that traveled to the National Art Gallery, Beijing, and other museums in China.

In recent years, *Southwest Art*, *American Art Collector*, *Big Sky Journal*, and the online publication *Drumlummon Views* have published feature articles on his work. His work is represented in the collections of the Buffalo Bill Center of the West, Cody, the Art Museum of Missoula, and the Yellowstone Art Museum, among many other public and private collections.

Born in 1950 in La Junta, Colorado, and raised in rural Southeastern Colorado, Gordon McConnell studied art at Baylor University in Waco, Texas (B.A. 1972) and California Institute of the Arts in Valencia, and art history at the University of Colorado, Boulder (M.A., 1979).

MARCI RAE McDADE

Marci Rae McDade is editor of the contemporary textile-arts quarterly *Surface Design Journal*, published in the US by the non-profit educational organization Surface Design Association and former editor of *FiberArts* magazine, which ceased publication in 2011. In addition to her editorial pursuits, she is a mentor and instructor in the MFA Applied Craft and Design Program, co-sponsored by the Oregon College of Art and Craft and the Pacific Northwest College of Art, Portland, Oregon.

She received an MFA in fiber and material studies from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (2007), completed a Fiber Emerging Artist Residency at the Oregon College of Art and Craft (2007), and received a BA in film and video production from Columbia College Chicago (1993). As a practicing fiber artist, McDade has exhibited her embroidered two-dimensional pieces and multi-media fiber installation work nationally in solo and group exhibitions for the past decade.

McDade has curated numerous contemporary art exhibitions including the well-received *Girl on Guy: the object of my desire* (2007) at A+D Gallery, Columbia College Chicago, and *Perfect: a group exhibition* (2005-2007), which originated at the Chicago Cultural Center and traveled to several gallery and museum venues around the country. Her most recent curatorial endeavor, the group exhibition *Fail-Safe*, will be presented at Craft Alliance Grand Center gallery in St. Louis, Missouri in the spring of 2014. *Fail-Safe* features twelve artists who make a wide range of work with seemingly "safe" and comforting textile materials and techniques that express aspects of anxiety and discontent within American contemporary culture. All works in the exhibit were created between 2007-2013 to coincide with what is often referred to as the start of the Great Recession and its aftermath.

From her home office in Portland, Oregon, McDade enjoys working with artists, writers, and venues from all over the world. You can find her on Facebook and at www surfacedesign.org/journal

RICK NEWBY

Poet, critic, and independent scholar Rick Newby writes regularly about modern and contemporary art. He has contributed essays to the catalogs, *A Ceramic Continuum: Fifty Years of the Archie Bray Influence* (Holter Museum of Art/University of Washington Press, 2001); *The Most Difficult Journey: The Poindexter Collections of American Modernist Painting* (Yellowstone Art Museum, 2002); *Matter & Spirit: Stephen De Staebler* (Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 2012); and *Theodore Waddell: Life & Work* (forthcoming 2014).

Newby is also an authority on Montana literature, having edited or co-edited the anthologies *Writing Montana: Literature Under the Big Sky* (1996); *An Ornery Bunch: Tales and Anecdotes Collected by the W.P.A. Montana Writers' Project* (1999); *The New Montana Story: An Anthology* (2003); and the forthcoming *The Imaginal Book of Cave Paintings & Other Essays on the Literature of Montana & the West* (with Melissa Kwasny).

Newby's other credits as editor or co-editor include *On Flatwillow Creek: The Story of Montana's N Bar Ranch* (1991) by Linda Grosskopf; *A Most Desperate Situation: Frontier Adventures of a Young Scout, 1858-1864* (2000) by Walter Cooper (illustrations by Charles M. Russell); *The Rocky Mountain Region*, Greenwood Encyclopedia of American Regional Cultures (2004); *In Poetic Silence: The Floral Paintings of Joseph Henry Sharp* (2010), by Thomas Minckler; and *"The Whole Country was ... 'One Robe'": The Little Shell Tribe's America* (2012), by Nicholas C. P. Vrooman.

A past member of the Montana Arts Council and the Board of Directors of the Montana Center for the Book, Newby received the Montana Governor's Award for the Humanities in 2009. He is executive director of Drumlummon Institute, a nonprofit dedicated to fostering research, writing, and publishing on the arts and culture of Montana and the broader American West.

CHURCHILL ARTS COUNCIL

The Churchill Arts Council enriches the cultural and social life of our community and region by providing educational and experiential opportunities in the arts on a variety of levels: a performing arts series, visual art exhibitions, film programs, literary readings, and conversations with contemporary artists in all disciplines. Through innovative programming, we serve as cultural resource for the region, providing vision, leadership, information, support, education and enjoyment of a diversity of art experiences.

The Oats Park Art Center is an adaptive re-use of the historic Frederick J. DeLongchamps school building in Fallon, Nevada. The theatre portion of the facility opened in February, 2003 and the visual art galleries were completed in Spring, 2006.

Visual art exhibitions began in 1987 using a variety of venues from the Churchill County Library to Western Nevada College and in 2006 programming moved into the gallery spaces at the Art Center. While we believe that there's no substitute for encountering artworks in a physical exhibition, we're also interested in bringing the artists' work to the attention of a wider audience and began this series of online/print-on-demand catalogs in 2009. We'd like to especially thank the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts for their support of our endeavors.

Major support for this catalog and the Churchill Arts Council's visual arts programming has been provided by the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.

Additional support for CAC programs and activities has been provided by the National Endowment for the Arts, the Elizabeth Firestone Graham Foundation, the Bretzlaff Foundation, the E.L. Cord Foundation, the Nevada Arts Council, the Fallon Convention & Tourism Authority, Systems Consultants and the Nevada Commission on Tourism.

PHOTOGRAPHY Jane Waggoner Deschner & Asa Gilmore
VISUAL DESIGN Michael Eric Scott

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COVER

Gordon McConnell

10,000 WAYS TO DIE (2013/detail)

acrylic on canvas panel

11 x 14 INCHES

INSIDE SPREAD

Gordon McConnell

ROW 1: Remount for the Colonel (2004), Following Long Hair (2002), Phantom Empire #48 (2005)

ROW 2: The U.S. Cavalry (2000), Charge for the Guns (2005), Apache Guerrillas (2004)

ROW 3: Advancing the Frontier (2004), Afterimage: Burnt Shadows (1999), Coming at You (2005)

acrylic on canvas panel

9 x 12 INCHES EACH

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Churchill Arts Council

