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CONTACT Jonathan Beitler
Barrelhouse Media
jonathan@barrelhousemedia.com
832.964.9932

Meghan Hendley Lopez
Barrelhouse Media
meghan@barrelhousemedia.com
281.690.6346



HOUSTON CENTER FOR PHOTOGRAPHY PRESENTS

Sights, Nights, Neighborhoods, and Collaborations: Four Exhibitions Opening in May 2015 at HCP

AMY ELKINS: *Black is the Day, Black is the Night & Parting Words*

BEN ALTMAN—2015 HCP FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT: *Site/Sight*

VLADIMIR FRUMIN—2015 CAROL CROW MEMORIAL FELLOWSHIP

RECIPIENT: *Everybody's Fifth Ward*

COLLABORATIONS XII—*Identity: Putting It All on The Table*

EXHIBITONS ON VIEW

May 8–July 5, 2015

OPENING RECEPTION

May 8, 2015, 5:30 pm–8 pm

Saturday, May 9

11 am to 12pm: *Collaborations XII* artist talks

12 to 1 pm: Fellowships Juror Talk with Paul Kopeikin

1 to 2 pm: Amy Elkins' artist dialogue with Erina Duganne, Ph.D.

June 13, 1 to 5 pm: Capital Punishment in Texas: Free Workshop with Mark Menjivar and Ryan Sprott

HOUSTON—Houston Center for Photography presents an intriguing collection of exhibitions both in their gallery space and online, honoring fellowship winners and highlighting outstanding artists. On view May 8th through July 5, 2015, HCP's galleries will host four special exhibitions delving into topics of sight, war, interpretation, community, identity, and memory.

Amy Elkins: *Black is the Day, Black is the Night & Parting Words* features a probing collection of portraits and insight on men in our nation's prison system who are serving their sentences in some of the most maximum security prisons in the US. **2015 HCP Fellowship Recipient Ben Altman** presents *Site/Sight*, an exhibition highlighting the visitors of war memorials and the behavior of these individuals, heavily influenced by technology. The gallery will also show the work of **Vladimir Frumin—2015 Carol Crow Memorial Fellowship Recipient** in his exhibition *Everybody's Fifth Ward*. Examining the lives of those considered "mostly forgotten", Frumin documents the daily lives of those in poverty and the conditions they must surrender to over time. Finally, **Collaborations XII**, HCP's educational program featuring 15 students from 8 Houston-area high schools, presents their exhibition *Identity: Putting It All on The Table*, a self-exploration into the themes of adolescence and transitioning from childhood to adulthood.

Amy Elkins: Black is the Day, Black is the Night & Parting Words

Black is the Day, Black is the Night is a conceptual exploration featuring the numerous facets of the human identity using topics of time, memory, accumulation, and distance through personal correspondence between the artist and with men serving life and death row sentences in maximum security prisons in the United States. Elkins' work hones in on the daily lives of these men who spend twenty-two and a half hours a day in solitary confinement in cells roughly 6 x 9', facing the end of their own mortality in complete isolation.

"I often wondered how that would impact one's notion of reality, of self-identity or even of their own memories outside of such an environment?" asks Elkins. "Did they embrace the mind of a dreamer, the mind of a thinker or succumb to their bleak environment and allow mental, physical and emotional collapse? Did their violent impulses land them in an infinite state of vulnerability? I began writing several men to look into these complex ideas and ask first-hand the impacts of such severe isolation."

Through the use of letters, the collaboration for this body of work started. Elkins built images using original formulas speaking to the specifics of each inmate's situation including their age and years of incarceration. Because of the formula used, the portraits of the inmates revealed an altered look and shifted shape of memories through the passing years of their sentences. Over the years, Elkins would send the images to the inmates for their comments and suggestions. The final product of the collaborations is now featured through this unique exhibition at HCP.



Amy Elkins (Los Angeles, CA), *Four Years out of a Death Row Sentence (Forest)*, A pen pal 13 years into his death row sentence describes a childhood memory of taking refuge in the forest throughout his youth. Courtesy of the artist and Yancey Richardson Gallery (New York, NY)

Parting Words is a photography archive of the 500+ prisoners who have been executed in the state of Texas. Beginning in 2009, Elkins began a written correspondence with several men across the country serving death row sentences which cumulated into an in-depth project examining capital punishment and solitary confinement in the US.

Many letters were exchanged over the years with these inmates but within the first three months of the project, the first man Elkins wrote was executed in Texas. Elkins' investigation of this particular inmate led to intensive research on the Texas Department of Criminal Justice website and the details of executions throughout history. The photographs offer a visual commentary on the faces of those who have been executed in Texas.



ABOUT THE ARTIST: Born in 1979 in Venice, California, Amy Elkins is a photographer currently based in the Greater Los Angeles area. She received her BFA in Photography from the School of Visual Arts in New York City. Her portraits explore notions of vulnerability, identity and transitory states.

Amy Elkins (Los Angeles, CA) *Ronald O'Bryan, Execution #3, Age 39*, From the series *Parting Words*, Laser print. Courtesy of the artist and Yancey Richardson Gallery (New York, NY)

Elkins has been exhibited and published both nationally and internationally. She has been awarded The Lightwork Artist-in-Residence in Syracuse, NY in 2011, the Villa Waldberta International Artist-in-Residence in Munich, Germany in 2012, and most recently the Aperture Prize and the Latitude Artist-in-Residence in 2014.

Special Events for Amy Elkins: Black is the Day, Black is the Night & Parting Words

Exhibition on view: May 8–July 6, 2015

Opening reception: May 8, 2015 from 5:30 to 8 pm, Artist talks begin at 6 pm

Amy Elkins' Artist Dialogue with Erina Duganne, Ph.D.: May 9, 2015 from 1 to 2 pm

Capital Punishment in Texas: Free Workshop with Mark Menjivar and Ryan Sprott: June 13, 2015 from 1 to 5 pm

Ben Altman—2015 HCP Fellowship Recipient: *Site/Sight*

Over a two-year span Ben Altman has visited twenty-four memorials, museums, and sites affiliated with war and the atrocities of combat—places that were designed as architectural symbols of violent history that are now flooded with people raising their smart phones and cameras. Altman documented this clash of contemporary actions with the sacred past through the use of a 1940's 4 x 5 press-camera. Altman's body of work documents these visitors and their actions using historical equipment. In post-production, Altman intriguingly features all hands at life size, revealing each subject's camera icons, skin textures, jewelry, and scars, in his large-scale prints.

"I was born and raised in England with mixed Anglican and Jewish heritages," states Altman. "Although only collateral members of my father's family were caught up in the Holocaust, for me histories of genocide speak to the radically contingent nature of our contemporary world—and seem foundational to both its tensions and its comforts. *SITE/SIGHT* is one of several projects in which I reflect on memorials and on bearing witness to the intractable past. Atrocity memorials attempt multiple functions: to preserve memory, to educate and exhort, to provide records, burial, mourning, solemnity, and closure. But in practice they may elicit prurient interest in the suffering of others and, in some cases, clueless disrespect."

ABOUT THE ARTIST: Ben Altman trained as an artist by studying physics, towing icebergs, racing sailboats, and working as a commercial photographer. After moving to the United States from his native England in the early 1980s he spent twenty-five years in Chicago before moving to Ithica, NY.

Altman has recently shown his work in New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, Syracuse, NY, Asheville, NC, and Fort Wayne, IN. He was a 2014 Critical Mass finalist and runner-up in Soho Photo Gallery's 2014 *National Photography Competition*. His project *The More That Is Taken Away* is fiscally sponsored by Artspire, a program of the New York Foundation for the Arts. In addition to photography, Ben works with video, sound, installation, assemblage, and participation. He is an alumnus of NYFA's MARK professional development program.

Vladimir Frumin—2014 Carol Crow Memorial Fellowship Recipient: *Everybody's Fifth Ward*

Frumin examines the lives of those living in Houston's Fifth Ward neighborhood, focusing on the poverty that many often choose to overlook. Frumin sees the difficult existence of these people as an indication of something which is an affliction in contemporary culture.

"Despite an unsightly marginalized existence, these are real people," says Frumin. "Society tends to objectify and dehumanize people at it's margins—even though this is a layer within all of our lives. These people must be seen, despite our own fear, guilt, loathing, disgust and/or desire to avoid."

Frumin uses this body of work as a chance for these people to be seen by a large audience, despite the questions it may raise. Each photograph peels back a layer of the Fifth Ward community, showing us what type of life this section of our society endures on a daily basis, while also making viewers question the well-being of those in socio-economically-challenged neighborhoods everywhere.

ABOUT THE ARTIST: Frumin was born in St. Petersburg, Russia, and currently lives in Houston. Formerly an engineer with NASA for over a decade, Frumin has since been steeped in the arts as a fine art photographer over the past ten years. Growing up in the Former Soviet Union, Frumin learned the basics of art and photography from his father, a professional photographer and painter. While in college in St. Petersburg—



Ben Altman (Danby, NY), *Entrance to Auschwitz II—Birkenau Death Camp, Auschwitz-Birkenau State Memorial and Museum, Oswiecim, Republic of Poland, 2013*, From the series *Site/Sight*, Inkjet print, Courtesy of the artist



Vladimir Frumin (Houston, TX), *Guy*, Inkjet print, Courtesy of the artist

during the imminent collapse of the Soviet Union—Frumin studied filmmaking. Influenced by the avant-garde movement taking place throughout that country, Frumin developed a style and experimented with the topics of the time.

In 1989, Frumin immigrated with his family to the US without money, language skills, or knowledge about the West. While working as a NASA engineer, Frumin suffered a catastrophic accident, which included a three-and-a-half-year recovery period. Restricted to a wheelchair, Frumin underwent twenty-five surgeries and had to endure the aftermath including strong medications. As he recovered, his views and his entire life changed. Now as a full time photographer, his works present a different vision of the mundane routines we all encountered every day.

Special Events for 2014 Fellowship Exhibitions

Exhibition on view: May 8–July 6, 2015

Opening reception: May 8, 2015 from 5:30 to 8 pm, Artist talks begin at 6 pm

Juror Talk with Paul Kopeikin: May 9, 2015 from 12 to 1 pm

In addition, HCP presents two online exhibitions at www.hcponline.org:

2015 Carol Crow Memorial Fellowship Honorable Mentions, an online exhibition featuring work by **Johanna Warwick**. In her exhibition ***Between Light & Time***, Warwick breathes new visual life into antique relief half-tone printing blocks while also revealing new narratives about the block's subjects. This online exhibition also features **Victoria Gonzalez: *Pleasure Kitchen***, an exhibition exploring the identity and sexuality of women.

HCP also presents the Honorable Mention recipients from the **2015 HCP Fellowship Ryan Bush—*The Hours: A Cycle of Consciousness*** looks at the connection of nature to the cycle of human life along with the facets of our existence. **Matthew Arnold: *Topography Is Fate—North African Battlefields of World War II*** provides modern documentation of historic landscapes ravaged by war.

For further information on these exhibitions, visit: www.hcponline.org/exhibitions

Collaborations XII—Identity: Putting It All on The Table

Now in its 12th year, *Collaborations* is HCP's educational outreach program that celebrates photography and encourages cooperation and teamwork between Houston-area high school students as they create an exhibition from beginning to end. This year's group features 15 students from 8 area high schools who, throughout the program, met with photography experts including curators, professors and professional photographers to discuss exhibition planning, how to critique photographic works, and participate in lectures and discussions with artists and photographer from the Houston Community.

Identity: Putting It All on The Table features the theme of self-exploration as being the natural starting point for a young artist when embarking on making work. As we transition from childhood to adulthood, it is human nature to contemplate our own existence, our future, our behaviors and our relationships. It is through self-exploration that we gain more awareness of who we are as individual and how we fit into the world without our familial communities.



Kylie Blattman (Cy-Ranch High School) *Shroud*, 2015, Courtesy of the artist

"As the facilitator for this year's group, I watched as the students slowly became more cohesive as a group over the course of four months. Ultimately, the exhibition selection and the physical act of gathering around the table united the group to create, *Identity: Putting It All on The Table*. It was then that the students felt that the group had become truly collaborative."

—Jamie Robertson, Outreach Coordinator

Special Events for Collaborations XII—Identity: Putting It All on The Table

Exhibition on view: May 8–July 6, 2015

Opening reception: May 8, 2015 from 5:30 to 8 pm

Artist Talks: May 9, 2015 at 11 am

About the Houston Center for Photography

Connecting People with Photography

HCP's mission is to increase society's understanding and appreciation of photography and its evolving role in contemporary culture. HCP strives to encourage artists, build audiences, stimulate dialogue, and promote inquiry about photography and related media through education, exhibitions, publications, fellowship programs, and community collaboration. Houston Center for Photography's exhibition gallery, free to the public, features some of the finest works of contemporary photography. HCP also offers over 300 photography classes and workshops year-round. Varying in competency levels, these classes are all taught by esteemed renowned photographers and lecturers. HCP is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization serving as a resource to its members and the community with programs that have regional and national impact.

Houston Center for Photography is supported by The Houston Endowment; City of Houston through the Houston Arts Alliance; The Brown Foundation; The Eleanor and Frank Freed Foundation; Meyer Levy Charitable Foundation; Simmons Foundation; Julie and Drew Alexander; Patricia J. Eifel and Jim Belli; Artists' Framing Resource; Larson-Juhl; Antonio Manega, Gazer Design; JBD Foundation; Joe Aker; Deborah Bay and Edgar Browning; The John M. O'Quinn Foundation; Sterling-Turner Foundation; Poppi Massey; Howard Greenberg Gallery; Cemo Family Foundation; John D. Chaney; Barbara and Geoffrey Koslov; Art Colony Association; Frazier King; Gardere, Wynne, Sewell LLP; Celia and Jay Munisteri; Joan and Stanford Alexander; Charles Butt; Joan Morgenstern; Burt Nelson; Jereann Chaney; James E. Maloney; Sue and Bob Schwartz; Bob Gomel; Mid America Arts Alliance; The Joan Hohlt and Roger Wich Foundation; The Wortham Foundation, Inc.; Texas Commission on the Arts; Dornith Doherty; Jessica Todd Harper; Kathryn and Tim Lee; Whole Foods Market; Susan and Patrick Cook; Elizabeth and David Anders; Howard Hilliard and Betty Pecore; Renate Aller; Ballard Exploration Company Inc.; Lillian H. & C.W. Duncan Foundation; Paul M. Hertzmann, Inc.; Wendy and Mavis Kelsey, Jr.; Stuart C. Nelson FS; Amegy Bank; Catherine Couturier Gallery; Andy Freeberg; Mariquita Masterson; Muffy and Alexander K. McLanahan; Dixie Messner; Rocky Schenck; Mickey and Mike Marvins; Nena D. Marsh; Tatiana and Craig Massey; Brad Temkin; Lauren Marsolier; Rebecca Roof; Jim Dow; Natan Dvir; Sally and John Hopper; Joel Lederer; The GE Foundation; Rubi Lebovitch; Thomas Damsgaard; Cara and Jorge Barer; Keliy Anderson-Staley; Krista and Mike Dumas; Sherry and James Kempner; James R. Fisher; Aker Imaging; Kevin E. Bassler; Cameron International Corporation; Houston Camera Exchange; Jerry Reed; Robertson-Finley Foundation; Jeremy Underwood; QUE Imaging; Frank Sherwood White; John C. Lewis; Mike Stude; Bevin and Dan Dubrowski; Vadim Gushchin; Dodie Otey and Richard S. Jackson; Bob Gulley; Azita Panahpour; Bryan Schutmaat; Paul Smead; Eddie Allen and Chinhui Juhn; Gay Block; Stanford L. Dow; Martin Elkort; Kathleen Schmeler; Susan and Steve Solcher; Scott R. Sparvero; Tamara Staples; The Beth Block Foundation; Louis Vest; William Winkler; Eric Faust; Keith Carter; Libbie J. Masterson; ExxonMobil Foundation; Christopher Ashby; Janet and Roger Durand; Kelly and Norman Bering; Laura and Tom Bacon; Donna J. Wan; Corey Arnold; Carolyn Brown; Caleb Charland; Wyatt Gallery; Judy Haberl; Henry Horenstein; Manjari Sharma; Priscilla A. Kanady; Marisa Cigarroa Heymach; John H. Duncan, Jr.; Wallace Wilson; Anne Tucker; Marcia Patrick; Shelley Calton; Randy and Laurie Allen; Susan Burnstein; Michael Crouser; Joe Levit Family Foundation; Robert L. Gerry, III; Molly Hipp and Ford Hubbard, III; Leslie and Mark Hull, Fan and Peter Morris; J. Andrew Nairn; Dee Ann Pederson; Betsy and Charles Powell; Del Zogg.

HCP is located at 1441 West Alabama in the Museum District of Houston. Hours: Wednesday–Thursday, 11 am–9 pm; Friday, 11 am–5 pm; and Saturday and Sunday, 11 am–7 pm. Closed Monday and Tuesday. For more information, please call 713.529.4755 or visit www.hcponline.org.