

*POETICS OF PLACE*

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## • **Mission Statement** •

Gravy serves as a multi-functional space that promotes the discussion and advancement of Photography as an art form. As one of the only photography based galleries in Philadelphia, we strive to support local photographers through gallery exhibitions, events, artist talks, and workshops.

We are an artist owned gallery collective which fosters and equal dialogue between curator and artist. We strive to connect with the community through open dialogue about social, political, and artistic ideas filtered through the lens of photography.

**The rest is Gravy.**

**What relationship do we have with our physical surroundings?**

**How do these spaces factor into our concepts of home and identity?**

In a polarized political landscape, these questions seem ever more important. As the political powers question policies regarding immigration, environment and poverty, definitions of identity, home and place are brought to scrutiny. “The Poetics of Place” is titled in reference to Gaston Bachelard’s book, *The Poetics of Space*, which explores the phenomenology of architecture in relationship to the lived experience. This photographic exhibition examines humanity’s innate link with “Place”, historically, geographically, economically and culturally. Each artist, in their own way, explores a “topophilic” response to the nature of place.



• **Artists** •

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Rebekah Flake

Mark Havens

Neil Kohl

Sage Lewis

Ben Riley

Amy Ritter

Krista Svalbonas

Katie Tackman

# Rebekah Flake

## *Domestic Profiling*



These in – camera double exposures trace the comparative psychological experience of housing in America. The dwellings are a short distance from one another in my Mississippi hometown, yet economically they are worlds apart. The images are produced by a performance of walking from one house to another between exposures. This constant reminder of a desire for more and a fear of slipping in status can play out in the exterior of our homes as much as it does in our personal self-worth and concepts of social mobility.



120mm film  
12 x 12 inch prints  
2010–2017



120mm film  
12 x 12 inch prints  
2010-2017





120mm film  
12 x 12 inch prints  
2010-2017

*Rebekah Flake is a Canadian-American artist using lens-based media and curation to explore migration narratives and the psycho-social effects of borders. Raised in Mississippi, she references the inescapable persistence of history in the forms of public memorials and personal reflections. Her practice also expands to Berlin, where she was awarded a DAAD fellowship, and to South Africa, when she and her colleagues at Temple University received an EPPY Award for media work in Johannesburg in 2013. She was a 2015 Smithsonian Artist Research Fellowship finalist. She enjoys working collaboratively and has been a member of the artist collective Little Berlin. Flake holds an MFA in Photography and a Graduate Certificate in Documentary Arts and Ethnographic Practices from Tyler School of Art at Temple University, a BA from the University of Pennsylvania, and an MA from the Williams College Graduate Program in the History of Art. Her studio is based in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where she also teaches photography and digital media.*

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# Mark Havens



Almost immediately after an experience, the mind changes it – if only slightly at first – discarding certain details, shifting lines, distorting colors. Until eventually a vivid memory, even one still easily recalled, has jettisoned its myriad of details and is only an impression, a fragment.

The images in this series were made by applying archival pigment to unfinished baltic birch. The naturally high absorption rate of the wood causes much of the ink to soak in and “bleed” slightly upon application, permanently imprinting the image while at the same time softening it and streamlining its detail, in much the same way our memories do.



**So This Is Goodbye (Number 50)**

Archival Pigment on Wood

10" x 8"

2011



**So This Is Goodbye (Number 20)**

Archival Pigment on Wood

20" x 10"

2011



**So This Is Goodbye (Number 89)**

Archival Pigment on Wood

10" x 8"

2011

*Mark Havens' photography has been exhibited internationally and resides in collections both private and public such as The George Eastman Museum. Features on his work have appeared in The New York Times, The Atlantic, The Guardian, The British Journal of Photography, The Paris Review, The Daily Mail, Interview Magazine and many other publications.*

*His first major monograph, entitled "Out of Season", was recently published by Booth-Clibborn Editions. The book is a chronicle of his decade-long project about the rapidly vanishing motels of Wildwood, New Jersey and has been the subject of more than 70 features worldwide. The New York Times described the work as "a ten-year elegy" and Wallpaper Magazine declared it "a revolutionary architectural diary". In addition to his studio practice, Mark teaches at Thomas Jefferson University.*

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@havens\_mark

# Neil Kohl

## *Chrome, Glass & Leather*



My father's photo albums were organized in a neat row when I cleaned out his apartment. Looking through them I found vacations, birthdays, visiting relatives, the family all dressed up for weddings... and photos of bedrooms. Closets. Toilets. Bookshelves. Home offices. A picture of a collage he made of state welcome signs. My father felt the things in his life were equal to the people. These are photos he made of his home and possessions from 1988 to 2008.





Found 3x5 C-prints

Dates range from 1988-1991



**Home Office, Selmer Plaza**

Found 3x5 C-print

Dated June 1988

*Neil Kohl is a photographer who lives and works in Philadelphia. He made his first pinhole camera at the C.C.A. Baldi Middle School in 1978.*

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# Sage Lewis



*It is the principle of “correspondences” to receive the immensity of the world, which they transform into intensity of our intimate being.*

– Gaston Bachelard, writing about Baudelaire’s use of the word *vast* in *Poetics of Space*

For me, the process of image-making is an effort to compress time and space within a surface. Like terrain, I consider the picture plane as a moldable surface containing embedded layers.

In these works I am responding to the geological condition of a malleable planet and the experience of vastness as a perceptual phenomena. By transforming images of landscape into geometric forms, I am giving them the structure and limitations of an architectural model that can be held in one’s hand. As carefully constructed sculptural forms, they bend the image into a kind of cubist collision of planes. In the end, these structures are collapsed to offer a new mode of viewing in which the facets that compose the object are indiscriminately reconciled into a flat surface.



**Untitled**

Flattened sculpture made from inkjet printed Awagami Japanese paper

8 1/4 x 4 inches

2017



**Untitled**

Flattened sculpture made from inkjet printed Awagami Japanese paper

4 x 5 inches

2017



**Untitled**

Flattened sculptures made from inkjet printed Awagami Japanese paper

Dimensions Variable

2017

*Sage Lewis is a visual artist investigating the connections between material process and concept through varied media. She holds an MFA in Painting & Drawing from The Ohio State University and a BFA in Painting and Art History from Maine College of Art. Lewis recently completed a Project Space Residency at the Visual Studies Workshop in Rochester, New York and 10-month Artist-in-Residence Fellowship at Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar. While in Qatar she set up a darkroom for students to learn analogue processes and received a Faculty Research Grant to study and teach the process of carbon printing. Work that Lewis created in Qatar has spurred her current research into space analogues – places on earth that are analogous to other planets. A forthcoming artist book titled Mars Analogues will be published by the Visual Studies Workshop in 2018.*

*Recent exhibitions include Temporary Surface at the Hamad bin Khalifa University Art Gallery in Doha, Qatar, Material Inference at the Denison Museum in Granville, Ohio, and Fixed/Fluxed at Burlington City Arts in Burlington, Vermont. Lewis has taught at The Ohio State University, VCU Qatar, and been a visiting artist at Denison University (Granville, OH), College of the Atlantic (Bar Harbor, ME) and Hartwick College (Oneonta, NY). She is based in Tunbridge, Vermont.*

<http://www.sagelewis.net/>  
[@sagemlewis](#)



# Ben Riley

## *The Residuum Series*



The Residuum series is an ongoing exploration of American towns in the Eastern portion of the Ohio River Valley that have been ushered out of industrial economic progress and now face an uncertain future. The towns still linger while adapting to their post-boom nature, but with little or no recognition for their pasts, present, or shrinking futures. Historically borne as a direct result of the discovery and extraction of the region's valuable natural resources, these small towns and villages once formed a symbiotic relationship with the industries that allowed each to thrive and prosper. This interdependence would ultimately serve as a liability, as outsourcing, recession, and automation hastened the mass deindustrialization of the region.

Seeking to create more than a recording of stagnation in the face of an ever-changing economy, my photographs express the need for conversations concerning Anytown, USA, and the rebounding of a large part of the United States. Employing a formal approach, these images endeavor to serve more as portraits, imbued with a sense of reverence and emphasizing the variety and uniqueness of each structure and the spaces in which they reside. This diverse intermixture of design, craftsmanship, and attention to detail stands in stark contrast to the bland, homogenized, corporate-branded architecture of the present day. This series, which can easily become infinite in its scope, is a constant practice in adapting to new technologies and transitioning from one post-war moment to another.



5th Ave. & 9th St., New Kensington, PA

Baryta fiber-based pigment print

14" x 18"

2014



**Schoonmaker Ave & 4th St., Monessen, PA**

Baryta fiber-based pigment print

12" x 18"

2013



**Adams St. & Lake Erie Ave, Steubenville, OH**

Baryta fiber-based pigment print

12" x 24"

2015

*Ben Riley is a photographer and digital artist based in New York City. Working seamlessly between his commercial and personal work, Ben produces creative images with an emphasis on technical quality and effective storytelling.*

*Ben was exposed to photography at a very young age by his father. Not only was he introduced to the tools (e.g. cameras, lenses, film etc.), but also to the importance of recording events, people, and places. After gaining his Bachelor of Science in Photography from Drexel University, Ben began working full time with an architectural photographer, while simultaneously devoting free time to his own personal photographic work.*

*Ben Riley continues to blend the specialized aspects of his commercial work with his personal photography. Benjamin seeks to realize his creative visions through the use of technical skill and emerging digital technologies. Recently he has begun incorporating HD and 4K digital video into his creative arsenal. Additionally, Ben teaches photography and digital imaging as an adjunct professor in Drexel University's photography program.*

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# Amy Ritter



My work is an exploration of my relationship to my physical self vis-à-vis mobile homes and their interior landscapes. It stages my memories of my experience of growing up in a mobile home community—a place I’ve left but still feel rooted to. The photographic cutouts are sculptural canvases onto which my memories of mobile home life are projected. They turn three-dimensional objects into two-dimensional images, rendering what was once soft rigid, changing the function and reality of these objects. Xerox prints, plywood, and cinderblocks are materials that have been essential to my practice. These materials relate back to the makeshift home with its cheap construction and quick fixes. The figures becomes a new entity to explore the female body in visual culture and explore my anxieties towards the phrase “white trash” and play with its preconceptions.



**Dining Room Window (Installation)**

Xerox print, OSB plywood

8 ft. x 5.5 ft.

2017



**Erasure Study #1**

Xerox print mounted on wood paneling

8.5 in. x 11 in.

2017





**Behind A Hedge, Edition 10**

Archival Inkjet Print

8 in. x 10 in.

2017

*Amy Ritter (b. 1986) is a Brooklyn based artist born in Allentown, PA. Ritter holds a M.F.A. from The Ohio State University (2014), and attended Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in 2016. Her works reside in the prominent collections of Martin Margulies and Laurence Miller. Her most recent residencies include a fellowship at the Fine Arts work Center, Provincetown, MA (2015), LMCC's studio program located in Lower Manhattan (2016-2017), and a Hot Pick for Smack Mellon (2016). Ritter has recently been represented at SUPERMARKET Art Fair in Stockholm, Sweden, AIPAD and Spring Break Art Show in NYC..*

*Recent solo exhibitions include Behind A Hedge at Sculpture Space (Cleveland, OH), Behind A Hedge II at Fleisher Art Memorial (Philadelphia, PA), Window at Gravy Gallery (Philadelphia, PA). Ritter currently has work on display at Museum of Sex NSFW: Female Gaze (NYC) and a public sculpture "Single Wide" installed at Socrates Sculpture Park in (Long Island City, NY).*

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@aritterface

# Krista Svalbonas

## *Displacement*



Ideas of home and dislocation have always been compelling to me as the child of immigrant parents who arrived in the United States as refugees. Born in Latvia and Lithuania, my parents spent many years after the end of World War II in displaced-person camps in Germany before they were allowed to emigrate to the United States. My parents' childhood memories of "home" were of temporary structures, appropriated from other uses to house thousands of postwar refugees. These transitory spaces of mass habitation, demolished and rebuilt over the years, have left only a vague imprint on the earth. They no longer exist as homes, if they exist at all. I have retraced this history by intensive research and by revisiting and photographing several former displaced person camps in Germany.

"Displacement" captures the traces of this existence by drawing on historical refugee letters as well as my photographic documentation, combining past and present in a series of laser cut images on photographic paper. Using my documentation of the camps, I am laser cutting text from plea letters the refugees sent from these DP camps into my photographs. The resulting artworks will bring to mind the experiences of the refugees and the places that they were forced, if only temporarily, to call home. My family's displacement, which I am reimagining and restoring in this body of work, is part of a long history of uprooted peoples for whom the idea of "home" is contingent, in flux, without permanent definition and undermined by political agendas beyond their control.



**Ansbach 1**

layered laser cut pigment prints

14" x 21"

2017



**Eichstatt 1**

layered laser cut pigment prints

14" x 21"

2017



**Hanau 1**

layered laser cut pigment prints

14" x 21"

2017

*Krista Svalbonas ( b.1977, USA ) holds a BFA Photography (Syracuse University) and an MFA Interdisciplinary (SUNY New Paltz). Her work has been exhibited in a number of exhibitions including at the Klompching Gallery and ISE Cultural Foundation in New York. Her work has been collected in a number of private collections, as well as the Cesis Art Museum in Latvia. Recent awards include the Rhonda Wilson Award (2017), Puffin Foundation Grant (2016) and a Bemis Fellowship (2015) among others. In 2015 Svalbonas exhibited a solo installation at the Spartanburg Art Museum in South Carolina. She is an assistant professor of photography at St. Joseph's University. She lives and works in Philadelphia.*

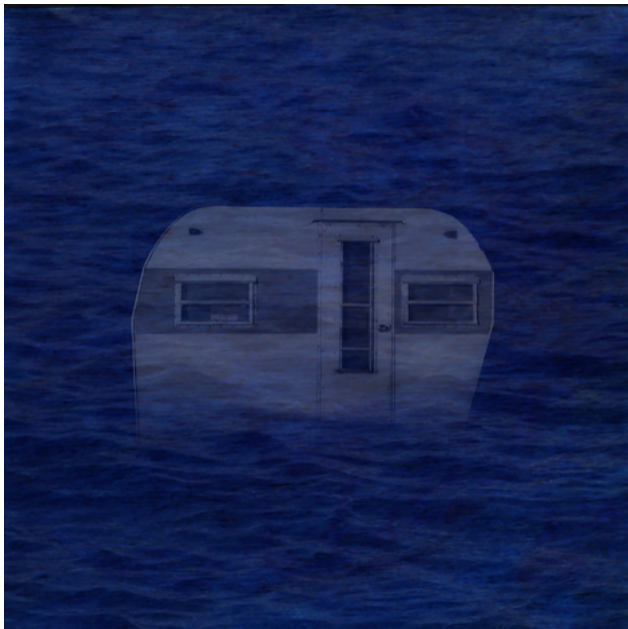
<http://www.kristasvalbonas.com>  
@kristasvalbonas

# Katie Tackman



The ocean has always connected me to nature and my place in it. From sailing in the Long Island Sound to the Bahamas, I have witnessed the true strength of the ocean. This power both excites and terrifies me. By using the cyanotype process, I aim to visually mimic the the power of the ocean to engulf objects in one's home during a flood. The faded images reference one's memory of objects damaged in a flood such as cars, trailers, furniture, family albums, clothing, and other personal items. The group of cyanotypes also culminated into a wallpaper pattern which is flooded with a deep blue dye from the bottom up. Transforming these lost objects back into beautiful pieces hopefully reminds the viewer that even though we experiencing loss, beauty can also show through.





**Trailer**

Cyanotype on wood panel

8" x 10"

2017

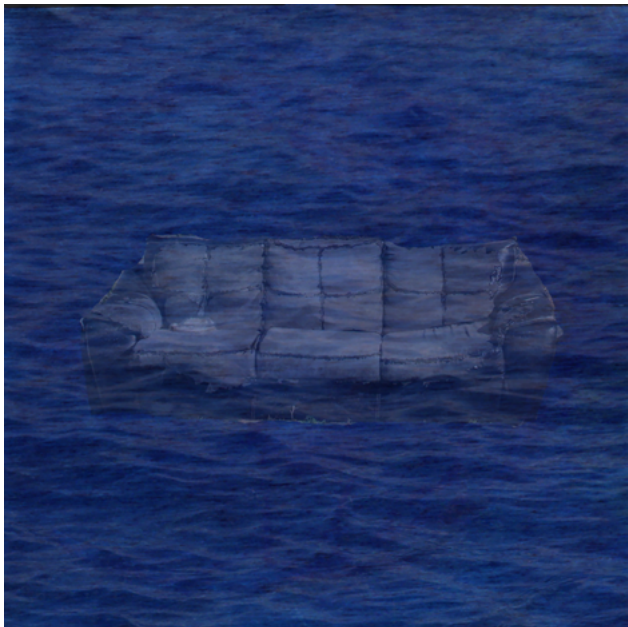


**Stranded**

Cyanotype on wood panel

8" x 8"

2017



**Water Lounge**

Cyanotype on wood panel

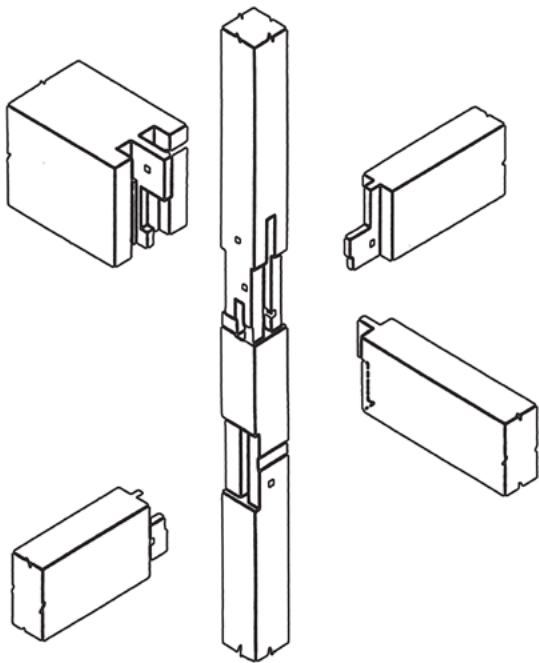
8" x 8"

2017

*Katie Tackman is an artist, photographer, and fine art printer living and working in Philadelphia, PA. She was raised in Connecticut where her love of nature and photography grew. Tackman graduated from Drexel University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Photography. After graduating, she worked at Silicon Fine Art Printing for over 5 years where she created community of artists in Philadelphia. She currently works on freelance photography, editing, social media, and digital printing projects. As a founding member of Gravy Studio + Gallery, she is also the co-curator of the photography exhibits.*

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