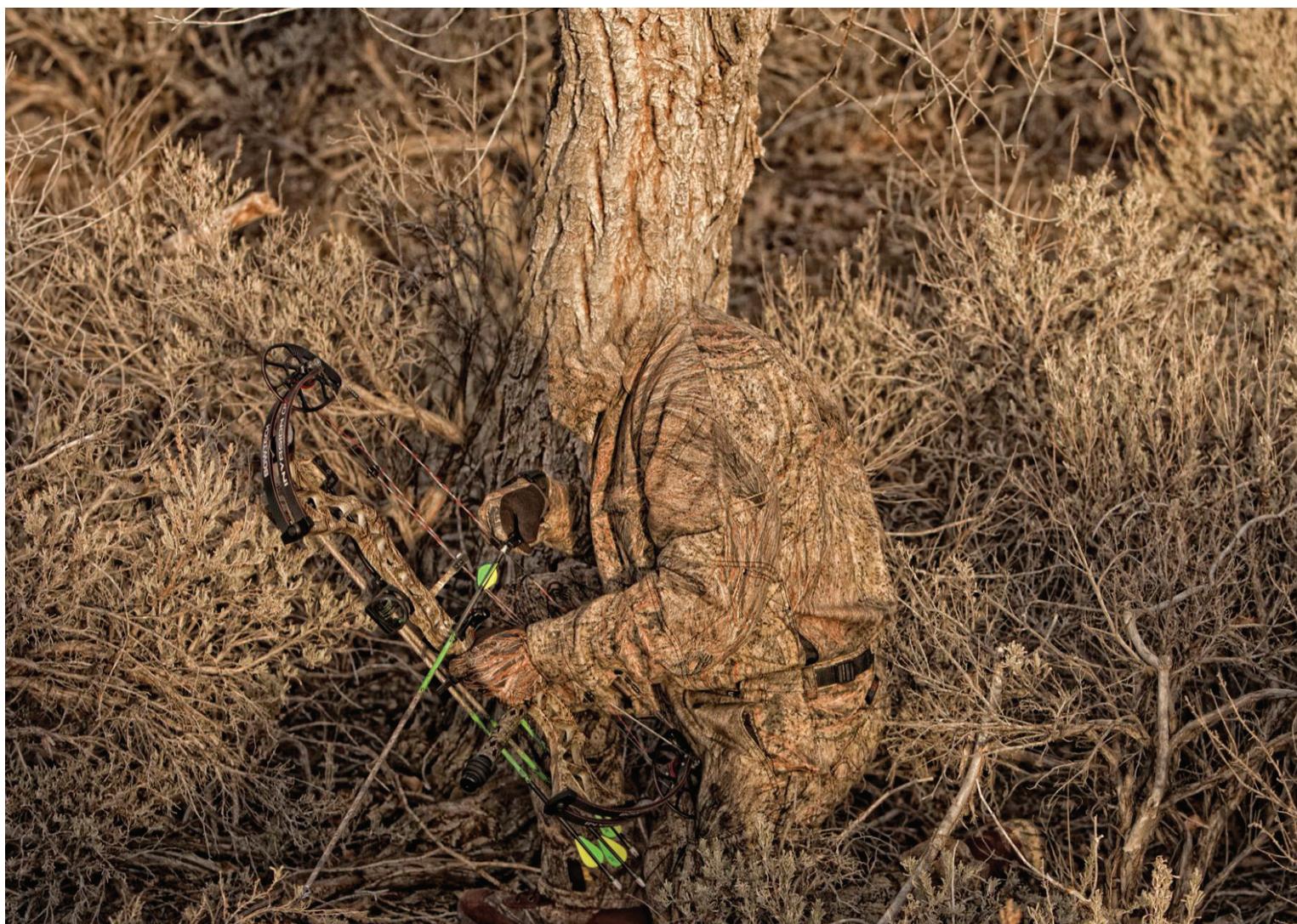


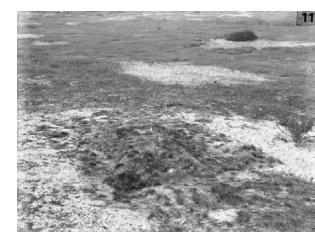
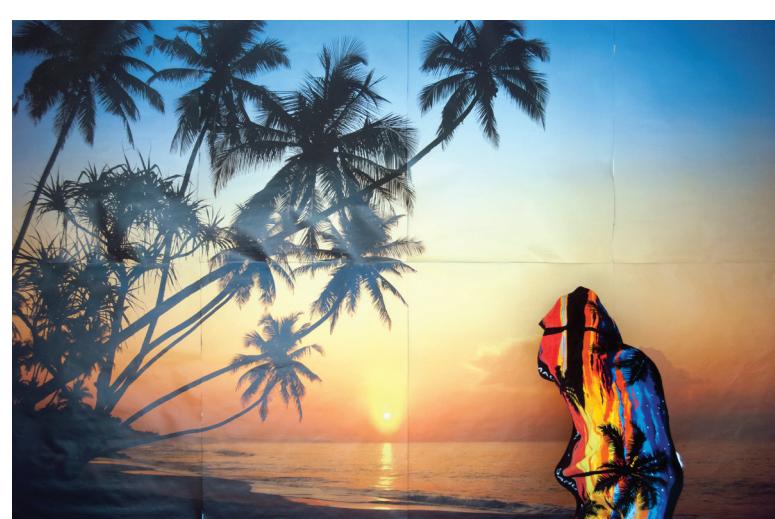
# MOSSY CLOAK

Samantha Bittman  
Drew Broderick  
Liz Ensz  
Kiam Marcelo Junio &  
Najee-Zaid Searcy  
Timothy McMullen  
Laura Hart Newlon

Rashayla Marie Brown  
Noah Gapsis  
Kelly Lloyd  
Curt Miller  
Eline Mul  
Third Object



Curated by Third Object  
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Camouflage is an expansive group of phenomena with distinct branches in evolutionary biology, military technology, hunting gear and fashion. Certainly, camouflage, mimicry and concealment – whether used to hide and seek or to lure by pretending to be something else – are as much a part of the natural world as the seasons are. The earliest manifestations conjure up visions of the plant *Amorphophallus*, whose flower exudes a strong odor of decaying meat in order to attract its pollinators, the arctic fox who conceals himself in the bright white snow and the human hunter, crouching motionless behind trees as eyes search the horizon for sustenance and enemies.

It wasn't until the twentieth century that the need for patterned concealment on a massive scale arose.<sup>1</sup>

Military camouflage, whose mother is aerial reconnaissance, first entered the battlefield in 1915 during World War I. With cameras newly affixed to airplanes, recording topography after topography in light and chemicals, the militaries of Europe needed a novel perceptual technology that could give them the deception, misdirection and confusion that they needed. Although it drew on the work of evolutionary patterning, modern camouflage started as a design for machine eyes, not human ones.

The link between photography and reconnaissance is embodied in the life and career of Edward Steichen. Colonel Steichen spent the grueling years of the First World War as director of aerial reconnaissance operations for the United States expeditionary corps, overseeing more than eleven hundred servicemen in the establishment of photographic reconnaissance for the US.<sup>2</sup> It was the first major military conflict in which the camera was put to the sky to record the positions and movements of the armies on the ground, and this development in skybound reconnaissance required a countervailing earthly technology, one that could mask the places and plans of the troops on the ground. Steichen would go on to be instrumental in the development of the photography department at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, his endeavors speeding the acceptance of photography as a medium of fine art.<sup>3</sup>

Naturally the artists of Europe were camo's designers. Gertrude Stein recounts her first experience of camouflage with Picasso: "It was at night, we had heard of camouflage but we had not yet seen it and Picasso amazed looked at it and then cried out, yes it is we who made it, that is cubism."<sup>4</sup> Stein, recognizing camouflage as "a composition that had neither a beginning nor an end, a composition of which one corner was as important as another," immediately grasped camouflage as a visual patterning that tends toward outward expansion. While it may be obvious that the visual effect sought by camouflage is a blending between object and environment, less obvious are the ways and reasons for camouflage to extend outward from the battlefield to the civilian sphere over the century since its first application in war.

Writing in the Surrealist journal *Minotaur* in 1935, Roger Caillois, then a twenty-two year old aspiring sociologist, became the first to theorize the expanded implications of camouflage. For him, the evolutionary process that creates camouflage in nature is a "photography on the level of the object" in that it is a merger of surface patterning and three dimensional morphology.<sup>5</sup> The animal camouflage that visually concealed certain creatures, he argued, should be thought of as an "instinct of renunciation," a drive in the organism toward "a mode of reduced existence" without consciousness or feeling. To camouflage, in other words, is to disperse more than your visual appearance; camouflage disperses the self. Descending, as Caillois puts it, "to the bottom of matter," the camoufleur strives to "be matter."<sup>6</sup>

From Caillois's point of view, this lust to become matter is a dark inner propulsion towards death. Historian and curator Michelle Puetz, by contrast, has noted that mimicry carries with it a position of deep empathy. It "opens up a tactile experience of the world in which the Cartesian categories of subject and object are not firm, but rather malleable," a relational exchange loaded with empathetic potential.<sup>7</sup> In 2015, one century after military camouflage was introduced on the battlefield, the true applicability of this empathetic position remains an open question. Do the horrors of war stir anywhere in the camo tote bag toter? Does the urban Realtree wearer contemplate the cycles of seasons and deployments implicit in both hunting culture and military service?

This publication serves as an extension and expansion of the ideas at play in the exhibition *Mossy Cloak*, with written and visual contributions from the artists in the show and other camouflage thinkers and makers. In her essay "Cute Camo," Kelly Lloyd weighs the risks and rewards of protecting oneself with cuteness, illuminating how personality and behavior can themselves be camouflaging agents. Noah Gapsis considers how camouflage works as fashion and how fashion works as camouflage, framing this reversal in the context of the supermediated Gulf War. A parallel essay by Curt Miller documents allegiances to two camo-producing companies and the tension that exists between being consumed by a landscape and blissfully merging with one. Rashayla Marie Brown provides an autobiographical essay that contemplates the barbed relationship between subjective and institutional knowledges. Additionally, two artists in the exhibition, Timothy McMullen and Liz Ensz, reflect on their work in the show, one from a broader consideration of his painting practice, the other from a specific historical thread explored in her *Mossy Cloak* sculpture. Throughout are visual contributions from the artists, and also from graphic designer Eline Mul, whose optically charged designs draw from the writings of Jacques Lacan, Ralph Ellison and Hannah Arendt. Together, these artists and writers draw out the interwoven vocabularies of camouflage, revealing what goes hidden in these patterns of concealment.

1. Julia Bryan-Wilson, "Six Words About Helen Mirra, or the Six Basic Factors of Camouflage," *Formalismus catalog* (Hamburg: Kunstverein Hamburg, 2004).

2. Gary E. Weir, "Photographer Pioneered Aerial Reconnaissance 'For the Lives of Men.'" *Pathfinder*, National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, (May/June, 2007), 29-30, p. 29.

3. Two of his most popular and expansive photography exhibitions at MoMA were *Family of Man* and *Power in the Pacific*. See Christopher Phillips, "The Judgment Seat of Photography," *October*, Vol. 22, (Autumn, 1982), pp. 27-63.

4. Gertrude Stein, *Picasso*, (London: Dover, 1984 [1938]), p. 11.

5. Roger Caillois, "Mimesis and Legendary Psychasthenia," *October*, Vol. 31, (Winter, 1984 [First published in *Minotaur*, vol. 7, 1935]), 17-32, p. 23.

6. Ibid., 31.

7. Michelle Puetz, "University of Chicago Theories of Media, Keywords Glossary: Mimesis." (<http://csmt.uchicago.edu/glossary2004/mimesis.htm>).

Left: Hasty Trees, ca. World War I. "These dummy trees were composed of strips of canvas fastened on wire and support poles. They were fixed around a howitzer. The shadows of these trees would assist considerably in preventing the howitzer being photographed from the air." Imperial War Museum (IWM Q 17715)

Right: "Sniper in camouflaged suit with camouflaged rifle. Battalion Head Quarters, 168th Infantry, 42nd Division, Bandonviller." American, May 18, 1918. Imperial War Museum (IWM Q 55229)



- Culling his forms from the many strata of advertising, graffiti and graffiti removal in the city, Timothy McMullen's gestures represent fleeting moments in a constantly evolving landscape. In his white on white paintings in *Mossy Cloak*, the figure and ground dissolve into one another. His loose brushstrokes are barely visible; they only appear through the highlight and shadow produced by the liquid wrinkled page, puckering in the wake of his wet paintbrush. The works act as hyperlow relief sculpture by using the material depth of the paper to define their content.
- Two distinct series by photographer Laura Hart Newlon are represented in *Mossy Cloak*, one depicting studio-based still lifes, the other analog-digital photo collages. In all of these images, Newlon heightens our awareness of the photographic construction of space, using, for instance, a zone of pure white in a picture as both a staunch flat surface and an infinitely receding space. Elsewhere, depth in the image is indicated only with the visual distortion of a chintz textile pattern as it slopes from one axis to another. In her *Incantation Artifact* series, Newlon draws houseplant imagery from vintage home and garden magazines, collaging together the clippings and then further modifying in Photoshop. Like the camoufleur, Newlon attacks the idea of the edge, scrambling our ability to maintain a grasp on what we observe.
- Liz Enszer stitches dichotomies together. Her work in sculpture, fiber and printmaking, often revolving around notions of American space, confronts dualities like accumulation and waste, protrusion and recession, cloaking and revealing. She approaches camouflage with a range of historical interests, including the gendered space of camo textile production, the relationship between aerial reconnaissance photography and the sublime imaging of the American West, and technological detritus in all its metaphorical dimensions. By conflating the formally similar aerial views of tiered strip mines and terraced landfills, she seduces us into gazing at our own cavernous, mountainous waste.
- One early solution for the problem of concealing the gigantic battleships of World War I was to not hide them at all. Dazzle camouflage, also called parti-colour, consisted of bold, high contrast stripes interlocking in cubistic messes with the intention of preventing accurate visual assessment of size, speed, and direction. Samantha Bittman's paintings achieve the same kind of optical discombobulation, confusing the clarity of the picture plane. Each painting consists of two coinciding images, one the weave of the canvas itself, the other painted on this woven surface, utilizing the physical structure of the fibers to direct the depicted forms. With the pixel acting as the basic unit in woven textile production, her paintings' surfaces oscillate between painted and woven pattern, at once revealing and masking the binary structure underneath.
- Kiam Marcelo Junio and Najee-Zaid Searcy's collaborative sound piece stems from Kiam's ongoing project *Camouflage as a Metaphor for Passing* in which their critique and exploration of Filipino identity expands the conversation of the American military in the Pacific. Using the disruptive and disorienting concept of dazzle camouflage as a framework for their piece, the two channel work meditates on simultaneity and dualism. The piece begins with the artist chanting "Nangayari Na," a Tagalog phrase meaning "it's already happening." In the artist's words, Nangayari Na "posits that time itself is infinitely expansive and at the same time, compressed into the phenomenological experience of the present. All of history, all that's to come, and all that is possible is already here. And what is already happening is existence, is the present moment, is the connectivity inherent in matter and anti-matter. simultaneously compress and expand one's perception of time and space."
- Drew Broderick's practice is at once expansive and casual, using a combination of humor, irony, and found objects to launch a critique of the militarized leisure economy in Hawai'i. With his wallpaper installation in *Mossy Cloak*, Broderick splices together the dazzle camouflage that was important to early 20th century naval activity, the pixelated U.S. military camouflage of the post-Gulf War era, and the exoticizing kitch of aloha shirt textiles. The work suggests that the "Hawaiian shirt" garb of the tourist is a kind of behavioral camouflage, one that links the wearer to past modes of adapting to the radical, colonized otherness of the Pacific. As the artist has said of camouflage and aloha shirts, "historical narratives of colonialism, tourism, the native, oppression and joy can be read out of these materials."



*Keīta and Sherman Had a Baby*  
*Near Threatened*  
*Endangered Species*  
*Passing for a Leopard*  
*You can't see me, fool*  
*Imitation of Life*  
*Equal Opportunist*  
*The Domestication Effect*  
*True Beast*  
*Dionysius, the Dying God*  
*For My Grandma Who Passed for White,*  
*then Stopped*  
*Living a Lie is a Poor Substitute*  
*Jeremiah 13:23: Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.*  
*Fuck you, I like leopard*  
*50 Shades of Slay*



Rashayla Marie Brown

### Feuding Patterns

Curt Miller

A Luna Caterpillar transforms into a leaf among leaves along a slender tree branch.  
A copperhead shatters into a mess of dried foliage and dirt.  
A Roseate Spoonbill dissolves into a murky pink-tinged sky.

Under the perfect alignment of circumstances anything can disappear.

Such was the assertion that began the feud between painter and naturalist Abbott H. Thayer and Theodore Roosevelt. Due perhaps to an unwavering devotion to a misunderstanding of evolutionary biology, for Thayer all animal coloration was cryptic. This included the pink flamingo, which he claimed that if viewed at the correct angle and at the correct time of day would dissolve into the setting sun. He argued that even the conspicuous sexual dimorphisms of different species of waterfowl served a cryptic purpose if viewed from the proper vantage point.

For the better part thirty years, the camo brands Realtree and Mossy Oak have vied for who can better blend in while sticking out. Each tried to outdo the other through simulating more layers of flora than the competitor, adding shadows, individual blades of grass, designing new specialized patterns for different environments, and increasing printing resolution. Groupies formed and hunting communities divided. Today, the two companies continue to attempt to out-mime one another, to become more like the hardwoods, the grassy fields, the snowy hillsides, and the autumn leaves. They adopt slogans like *It's not a passion. It's an obsession™* and *More than a logo. A badge of outdoor HONOR.™*

Camouflage suffers from a fatal flaw; it is situational. Despite its stunning mimesis, its simulated depth-of-field and photographic realism, the hardwood pattern of Mossy Oak's Breakup Infinity™ performs shoddily in the grass fields. The Luna Caterpillar of Thayer's paintings sticks out like a black speck of paint on a white fence if copied and pasted into the environment of his painted Spoonbill. The US military has tried to hack this by introducing the Universal Camouflage Pattern (UPC, also known as digicam) to effectively break-up the outline of a given subject in a variety of terrain. Though recently replaced by the Scorpion W2 pattern (a camouflage of the familiar splotchy tan and green variety), both UPC and Scorpion W2 were designed in order to overcome camouflage's finicky nature. It doesn't like to blend in to just anything. The mime and the mimed need to get along. They have to be compatible. Their relationship requires a threshold of macro- and micro- similarities.

Camouflage is the proverbial tree falling with no one around to hear it. It is things as we don't see them, hidden from view due to an alignment of beneficial circumstances. It is how the world exists in relationship to us most of the time, hidden, ready-to-hand, blending into the background, until, like Heidegger's hammer, it breaks down. It becomes conspicuous.

Camouflage presents a sort of existential crisis. In order for a camouflaged thing to resist dissolving into its environment the thing must be decidedly out of context. Selfness requires the tear of foreground from background. Not any confusing reversals.

However, perhaps rather than a crisis camouflage represents a longing to disappear beyond the purposes of obtaining privileged vantage points (of being able to see without being seen). Perhaps it's rooted in a Romantic longing to momentarily merge—if only symbolically—with the outdoors, to break free of the man/nature, subject/object binaries and allow for one's body to become indivisible from the larger whole, atomized by pattern. A thing among things.

I'm struggling with the pursuit of semiotics, that is, the study of meaning-making through signs, symbols, metaphors and other forms of cultural phenomena and systems of communication. Every artist and most social scientists are familiar with this type of study whether they have labeled it semiotics or not. Part of me feels no guilt whatsoever about ignoring the humanity of people or the psycho-techno-chemical composition of things in order to speak specifically about their iconic status and the meaning of it. I'm not interested in trying to read into a sense of interiority and subjectivity for anyone but myself.

Nonetheless, I understand that this intellectual pursuit is in a lot of ways very de-humanizing. In focusing on, say the meaning of Michelle Obama's arms, we simply reproduce the exact same paradigm where people, particularly famous ones, are dissected, body part by body part – it becomes Venus Hottentot all over again. My goal eventually is to have Obama speak back to me once I've said everything I want to say about what she means when she puts her body on display. She has a set of intentions and I have a set of interpretations, and vice versa. Back to the house analogy, I want the people to come out of the house and tell me to stop taking pictures of where they live.

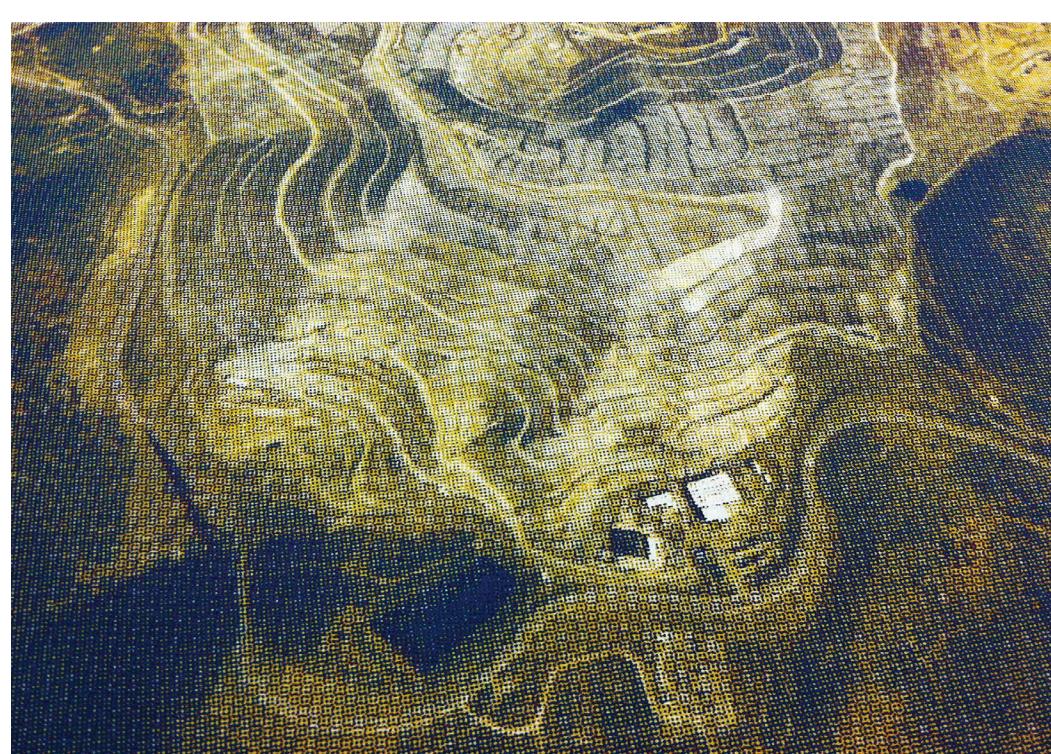
I am suspending humanity for a moment because these are immensely powerful figures who I am writing about. I don't feel I should be able to hurt them in any kind of way, so I don't know if I should let that stifle me from saying the things I want to say about their symbolic status. As an artist, I welcome everyone to speak back to me, to declare their own subjectivity about the same things I am declaring mine, and to let both of those co-exist in their separate houses of our individual bodies and minds without hatred or fear. Poetry, the performing arts, and music have shown us how to co-exist separately yet it is largely lost in museums and other hallowed spaces of visual art where high modernism has swallowed up individuality and has been shitting out conceptual white-washed works for decades. We also haven't brought this idea of multiplicity into the realm of scholarship as it is understood by PhD programs and institutionally sanctioned knowledge. I am still recuperating from my education in the arts and sociology, and I may likely never recover the purely selfish desire to draw pretty princesses again. I often mourn this loss.

I have not reviewed all of the journalism, the TV shows and pop culture ephemera, and scholarly texts around the social constructs of identity. Primarily because I want to put my limitations aside and let my work develop from a true sense of my subjectivity, I do not view unadulterated subjectivity as a limitation in scholarly and artistic pursuits. I view them as giving me access to a uniquely formed world view in response to a set of conditions and experiences that only I have access to. No one else in the world knows what it feels like to move almost every other year of their life since birth, to be both a military brat and a latch key kid, to be both queer and straight, to be both multiracial and unabashedly black, to be a child of both a broken home and a stable one, to be rachet and respectable in the only way that Rashayla Marie Brown can. I am interested in stating these things so that it can become clear that yes, there are other people who share these complex experiences, and that one's unique point of view is just as inclusive and authoritative as a literature review of all the Sontag, Foucault, and Barthes that one can fit into a lifetime – as long as one recognizes that others will share the opposite and they are both "true."

An image is a message through a form. It is not the truth, but it is not a lie.

Each human being will read every single form differently and get a different message. What you believe to be true is true.

Liz Ensz



Liz Ensz, detail of *Mountain's Memory*, 2015

Aerial reconnaissance and defensive camouflage were my points of departure for the work in *Mossy Cloak*. I have had a long fascination with the architectural-scale decoys and simulated landscapes created from hand-made netting to shield factories and military build-ups from aerial photography during WWII. I wanted to reconsider these strategies in the context of the contemporary technology and access to information the average person has today.

During the middle of the 19th century extensive geological surveys were conducted by the newly formed United States Geological Survey (USGS). The vast new western territories were mapped and combed for mineral resources. Topographic maps were created from these surveys, which are still referenced today. Google Earth uses this topographic data to drape their aerial photography on the surface of the earth.

In the years since the original surveys, the surface of the earth has been altered by accumulative and reductive human activity, changing the landforms. The mountain peaks near Cripple Creek, Colorado are one of many sites of change where the Google image data and the USGS topographic data do not align. The result is my current site of investigation: a mysterious terraced crater draped over the ghost mass of former mountains. The landscape is surreal, and can be navigated in street view.



## Cute Camo

Kelly Lloyd

Asia was the first place I realized I was cute. If I'm complimented most often people reach toward beautiful but once, during my first year at Oberlin College, I was called cute. I liked that Ian Hilburger called me cute because I felt it communicated a kind of innocuousness that I assumed translated into romantic accessibility.

In Beijing, sitting down at a table near carts selling kebabs, my friends and I were startled when a Chinese man threw a chair at, and then attacked an African man when he tried to also sit down and eat. People warned me of racism in China, but I quickly learned that my cuteness shielded me from a fearful, abrupt and physically violent form of racism.

My cuteness, however, has not protected me from the kind of racism and sexism that you encounter when people are at ease. At times, I fear that my cuteness has actually facilitated these interactions.

Cute camouflage. cam·ou·flage **noun** \'ka-mə-fläzh, -fläj\

: a way of hiding something (such as military equipment) by painting it or covering it with leaves or branches to make it harder to see

: the green and brown clothing that soldiers and hunters wear to make them harder to see

: something (such as color or shape) that protects an animal from attack by making the animal difficult to see in the area around it<sup>1</sup>

Associated with infantile physical characteristics and behavior, the feminine domestic sphere and powerlessness, cuteness simultaneously triggers a need to protect as well an urge to violate through force, commodification and fetishization. In *Our Aesthetic Categories*, Sianne Ngai writes that cuteness is a range of objects and objective phenomena, and “calls forth not only specific subjective capacities for feeling and acting but also specific ways of relating to other subjects and the larger social arrangements these ways of relating presuppose.”<sup>2</sup>

Through its ability to seductively perform powerlessness cute camo hides indeterminacy, complexity and power and protects you from attack. Cute camo could mean your physical and psychological survival. In being associated with the infantile, the diminutive and the innocuous, there is violence inherent in cuteness. These associations make those who use cuteness as camouflage seem unthreatening. Easy to handle and easy to dismiss. What are the pros and cons of using cuteness as camouflage?

### Pros.

1. Everyone has an equal opportunity to use cuteness as camouflage. Although most age out of their cuteness, we are all cute when we are young and when we are old.
2. Through objectification many people are made aware of their cuteness early on and have found a way to hone their performance. They have developed it as a skill and can yield it like a weapon.
3. If performed well it can protect you from attack.

### Cons.

1. Even if performed well, cute camo may not allow you to evade psychologically damaging situations. The effect of feeling forced to hide behind a guise of powerlessness has consequences.
2. Cuteness helps people feel at ease. However, when people do not see you as a threat, they are more likely to show themselves. When people show too much of themselves, they feel exposed, embarrassed and then angry. Their anger will most likely be directed at you for they will feel you deceived them.
3. Cuteness is particularly infectious. Ngai explains, “the admirer of the cute puppy or baby often ends up unconsciously emulating that object’s infantile qualities in the language of her aesthetic appraisal.”<sup>3</sup> You must be vigilant not to succumb to cuteness. When no longer camouflage, it becomes simply saccharine. An acceptance of your powerlessness.

1. “camouflage,” *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, accessed January 10, 2015, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/camouflage>

2. Sianne Ngai, *Our Aesthetic Categories* (Harvard University Press, 2012), 11.

3. Ibid., 3

Image: Drew Broderick, sketch for *Wallpaper*, 2015

Facing page image: “Soldiers demonstrate various styles of camouflage clothing, at Langford near Redlinch in Somerset, 13 March 1941.” Imperial War Museum (IWM H 8059)

Recently, I purchased a camo t-shirt. Covered with undulating bands of tan and sand and shaded “rocks,” I bought it for its unique blend of sedimentary layers and leopard print. I later discovered a picture of George H.W. Bush wearing a uniform with the same pattern and I realized it wasn’t a stylized approximation of camouflage but actual military issue. It is the Desert Battle Dress Uniform – colloquially known as “chocolate chip camo,” after its resemblance to raw cookie dough – developed in the 60s in anticipation of U.S. involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict. It was utilized during various operations in the Middle East in the 80s and 90s, most notably in the Gulf War, but was eventually abandoned in favor of a more efficacious design.<sup>1</sup> I had stumbled upon a relic of the recent past. A sartorial fragment left behind in the progression of U.S. geopolitical dominance, repurposed and recycled as a decontextualized object of fashion. However, it remains an object with a memory; a reminder of the first Iraq war, of continuous American bombardment and hegemony in the Middle East, a testament to the dissociative understanding of these overseas wars at home.

As Jean Baudrillard suggests, the Gulf War was conceptualized, carried out, and understood in the media. Not the first televised war, but the first with a “live feed” from the battlefield. The television coverage orchestrated informational events that stood in for real ones, which in turn informed and produced real social outcomes – a hyperreal fusion of the virtual and the real.<sup>2</sup> This media spectacle of war “turn[s] the world and the violence of the world into a consumable substance.”<sup>3</sup> Just as the media makes war viewable, graspable, consumable, so does fashion. Desert Storm camouflage is available for the eclectic wardrobe. No longer just a means to express pride or duty (itself, a form of consumption and performance), camouflage is on the runway; it’s for going out and being seen. The artifacts of war are now the commodities of style.

In his *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, Walter Benjamin uses a Klee painting of an angel to represent history. Wings spread, mouth open, he looks towards the past: “Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet.” The storm of progress “irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward.”<sup>4</sup> The pile of debris is our legacy. And it is where fashion finds innovation. Continuously drawing on past forms, citing them out of context, it is a “self-construction of the newest in the medium of what has been.”<sup>5</sup> A cycle of novelty and obsolescence, of discovery and disposal, each caught up endlessly in the other – the snake Uroboros, its own waste becoming its food. Set apart from the ideology of progress, the processes of fashion are a reflexive undercurrent, a vortex.

As a social practice, fashion is an attempt at both individual differentiation and social adaptation; a process that produces an individual that is singular and subsumed into a social group. Participating in a particular fashion allows for a feeling of uniqueness and personal taste but also the feeling of social relevancy and support from those others participating. Here is the paradoxical movement of fashion. An originality that finds expression in assent that eventually leads to its own irrelevance and dissolution.<sup>6</sup> Wearing camouflage reifies this dynamic. It is an attempt at individuation and hypervisibility – a specialized uniform out of context, a desert pattern in urban space, a quotidian technology of war. It allows an opening for scrutiny. Simultaneously, its currency and diffusion renders it safe, a means of blending in, joining with the social world. Fashion is a “leveling cloak,”<sup>7</sup> a type of camouflage itself. Its movement deflects scrutiny, producing approval and envy, communion and commodified desire.

Ensconced in both the past and future, its simultaneous beginning and end, fashion manufactures a feeling of nowness. The articles and styles in vogue become “inexhaustible containers of memories,” snippets from and that form this collective imagining.<sup>8</sup> We may find this in camouflage: in the recycled uniform of the first Gulf War and the collections of contemporary camouflage on the runway. Old and yet new, neither of the present nor the past, and of both, limitless yet impenetrable in its resonances.

The world can be seen as a series of latent paintings if you know what to look for.

Cracked brick walls are repaired with a brick color stucco. The fat lines that fill in organic fractures become alien writing, noodly lines frozen in brickwork.

In Texas the same thing happens on the ground. Heat cracks in the light gray asphalt are repaired with thick arms of tar. As a result the whole state is filled with an arabesque drawing that crawls across the paved landscape.

A painted surface is a painting.

Graffiti removal is a ceaseless abstraction. Blocky accumulations of monotone brown or grey rectangles create a colorless Hans Hoffman.

Other times a large central rectangle is painted over graffiti. For some reason the person covering the graffiti decided to follow a few arching lines revealing the original form of what lies beneath. Caught in muted limbo, the tag is neither fully removed nor fully legible. A new neutral translation is made.

I am searching for a window.

Green dust tarps are affixed to chain link fences at construction sites. Slits are made across the surface in idiosyncratic intervals. Wind passes through these sheets creating a dizzying oscillation between fence and construction site, between green mesh and distant rubble pile.

Don’t look for meaning. Just learn to look.

The rubbery black spots on sidewalks are one of two things: blackened gum or accumulated grime balled up under foot. After some time, constellations of blobs work their way across a concrete slab. This constellation is staunch and uniform refusing any free associations towards crabs or centaurs.

I am trying to appear.

I don’t want a resolved form, a polished idea framed behind glass. I’m looking for the translational potential of a form that is simultaneously emerging and receding. I’m looking for Mrs. Witch from *A Wrinkle in Time* who is always caught in a struggle to materialize.

Seems like an apt enough metaphor for the act of looking.



1. Modeled on the rocky topography of the U.S. Southwest, it was ill suited for the sandy desert terrain of North Africa and the Persian Gulf. Along with its purported ineffectiveness, the high cost of producing the six-color pattern contributed to its replacement. Cresson H Kearny, *Jungle Snafus...And Remedies*, (Oregon Institute of Science and Medicine, 1997)

2. Jean Baudrillard, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, trans. Paul Patton, (Indiana University Press, 1995)

3. Ibid., 31

4. Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schoken, 1968), 257-8

5. Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge University Press, 1999). Convolute B1a,2

6. See Georg Simmel, “Fashion,” *International Quarterly*, Vol. 10 (1904), 130 -155.

7. Ibid., 146

8. Arcades Project, J71,2

#### Samantha Bittman

Samantha Bittman lives and works in Chicago, IL. Bittman received her BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design in 2004 and her MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2010. Bittman also attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in 2011. Recent solo exhibitions include *Number Cruncher* at Longhouse Projects, New York, and *Razzle Dazzle* at Andrew Rafacz Gallery, Chicago. Her work has been exhibited at art fairs in Miami, Mexico City, and Chicago. She is included in numerous private and public collections.

#### Drew Broderick

Drew Broderick lives and works in Honolulu, Hawaii. He graduated from Wesleyan University in 2011 with degrees in Biology and Studio Art. Broderick currently runs SPF Projects, a venue for contemporary art in Honolulu.

#### Liz Ensz

Liz Ensz was born in Minnesota to a resourceful family of penny-savers, metal scrappers, and curators of cast-offs. She received her BFA in Fiber from the Maryland Institute College of Art, and her MFA in Fiber and Material Studies from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Ensz is a founding collective member of The Visitor Center Artist Camp, a DIY arts testing ground in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

#### Kiam Marcelo Junio

Kiam Marcelo Junio is a Chicago-based interdisciplinary artist creating work through various media, including but not limited to, photography, video, performance (blending butoh, drag and burlesque), sculpture, installation and culinary arts. Their research and art practice centers around queer identities, Philippine history and the Filipino diaspora, post/colonialist Asian American tropes and stereotypes, military power dynamics, the politics of personal agency, and social justice through collaborative practices and healing modalities. Kiam served seven years in the US Navy. They were born in the Philippines, and have lived in the US, Japan and Spain.

#### Timothy McMullen

Timothy McMullen is a Chicago resident. He received his MFA from the University of Illinois at Chicago in 2014. His site specific installations, paintings and drawings explore the intersection between the fabricated space of painting and the real world site that serves as inspiration. In 2013, he was an artist in residence at Ox-Bow School of Art in Saugatuck Michigan. McMullen has exhibited his work at Robert Bills Contemporary, Chicago; Gallery 400, University of Illinois at Chicago; and numerous solo and group shows in Los Angeles.

#### Laura Hart Newlon

Laura Hart Newlon is a Seattle-based artist working with (and among) objects, images and the residue of contemporary culture. Newlon has recently exhibited at Studio 424, Chicago; the Baltimore Alternative Art Fair, Baltimore; LVL3, Chicago; Johalla Projects, Chicago; and ADDS DONNA, Chicago. Formerly a cultural anthropologist, Newlon received her MFA in Photography from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2013.

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#### Rashayla Marie Brown

A lifelong nomad who has moved 24 times, Rashayla Marie Brown is an interdisciplinary artist. Her practice spans across photography and image-making, writing, performance, installation, research and social engagement. Her works often infuse cultural studies with personal agency, queer Afrofeminist subjectivity and spirituality. Her journey as a professional artist began as a radio DJ researching black British music in London, England and as the founder of the family-owned graphic design company Selah Vibe, Inc. in Atlanta, Georgia. Brown holds a BA in Sociology and African-American Studies from Yale University and a BFA in Photography and Video from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

#### Noah Gapsis

Noah was born and raised in Santa Fe, New Mexico. He holds a BA in American Studies from Wesleyan University. He lives and works in San Francisco. Noah enjoys long walks on the beach and laughing with friends.

#### Kelly Lloyd

Born and raised outside of Washington D.C., Kelly Lloyd earned her BA from Oberlin College where she double majored in Studio Art and African-American Studies and minored in Environmental Studies and is currently in her final year of a 3 year dual MA in Visual and Critical Studies and MFA in Painting & Drawing at SAIC. Recent exhibitions include *Retreat* at Valerie Carberry Gallery and Richard Gray Gallery, *Baudy* at ADDS DONNA, a solo-exhibition at TRUNK SHOW, and *Ground Floor*, the Hyde Park Art Center's biennial of recent MFA graduates.

#### Curt Miller

Curt Miller is a Chicago-based artist currently working toward his MFA at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

#### Eline Mul

Eline Mul is a graphic designer and art-director from Amsterdam. She is a student of the MFA program in Graphic Design at California Institute of the Arts, where she is currently working on her thesis about camouflage. Eline's every day life exists out of observing, mimicking, evading, obfuscating, revealing, disrupting and concealing — both in her work and in her new surroundings of Los Angeles and the US.

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#### Third Object

Third Object is a curatorial collective based in Chicago.  
www.thirdobject.net



Eline Mul

**I do not know if it has ever been noted before that one of the main characteristics of life is discreteness. Unless a film of flesh envelops us, we die. Man exists only insofar as he is separated from his surroundings. The cranium is a space-traveler's helmet. Stay inside or you perish. Death is divestment, death is communion. It may be wonderful to mix with the landscape, but to do so is the end of the tender ego.**

Vladimir Nabokov, *Pnin*

#### front cover images

Top: Curt Miller, Untitled, 2014

Clockwise from bottom left:  
Colin William Moss, 1943 watercolor, Imperial War Museum (Art.IWM ART LD 3028)

Cecil King, circa 1915 watercolor, Imperial War Museum (Art.IWM ART 991)

Rhodesian camouflage shirt, ca. 1970, Imperial War Museum (IWM UNI 5681)

Drew Broderick, *Sunset*, 2012

Camouflage, Imperial War Museum (IWM Q 35863)

Personal camouflage net, German, circa World War II (IWM EQU 1756)

"First Class Camouflage," Flavor of the Month, November 2014, Baskin-Robbins

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