RYAN LEE

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Stephanie Syjuco
Latent Images
January 8 – March 12, 2022

RYAN LEE is pleased to announce *Latent Images*, an exhibition of new work by Oakland-based artist Stephanie Syjuco. Drawing on Syjuco's recent research at the archives of the Smithsonian National Museum of American History, *Latent Images* examines the memory of the American empire as preserved and perpetuated through the lens of its own archive. The work is a counterpart to Syjuco's previous work, which served as decolonizing interventions into the same archive's early 20th-century depictions of the Philippines. The exhibition includes a selection of large-scale photographs, an installation of photographs displayed on an interconnected series of raised platforms, and small color checker images referencing her *Chromakey* series which investigate race and color in America.

Syjuco's use of photography in this body of work reiterates the constructed nature of the archival narrative: she photographs archival material (existing photographs, documents, ephemera), enlarges and prints them in segmented tiles 8 1/2 x 11-inch office printing paper that she then physically reassembles in her studio before rephotographing them to achieve her final composition. Visible in the final object is the tape that the artist used to put back together the various segments of the original photo—thus lending the work a trompe l'oeil quality. The reconstructed images are finally printed as high resolution, large-scale digital inkjet prints. This "piecing together," as Syjuco describes it, points to the mediating gaze of both photography and the archive. *Better America* (2021) illustrates Syjuco's exploration of "the archive itself as an imperfect carrier of information." The image depicts Syjuco's gloved fingers holding a badly damaged slide inscribed with text that identifies it as part of the "Better American Lecture service," a mass-produced teaching program used in the 1920s and 1930s. The process of producing a high-quality reproduction of an illegible slide's snapshot draws attention to what is lost in translation as images and histories are reproduced across time.

In *Reverse View: KKK* (2021), Syjuco presents a composition that initially resembles a cubist collage, but is in fact an arrangement of the back sides of documents belonging to an Ohio chapter of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1950s. By reversing the records of this hate group, which are found in various locations throughout the Smithsonian's archives of American History, Syjuco is both denying the legibility of white supremacist propaganda while also demonstrating how deeply embedded it is in the fabric of American national history.

In the center of the main gallery, *Platform Installation* (2021) reinterprets the psychological and physical experience of archival research. Syjuco layers historical material along with contemporaneous elements into an intentional arrangement that recalls the process of discovery and active reconstruction of the historical narrative.

Also on view in the RL Window will be *Block Out the Sun* (2021), a video showing a series of images of Syjuco's hand covering the faces of Filipinx individuals brought to the United States for exhibition as part of the 1906 World's Fair. Syjuco's action disrupts the colonial gaze, suspending the repetitious cycle of exploitation and consumption.

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Syjuco received her MFA from Stanford University and her BFA from the San Francisco Art Institute. A long-time arts educator, she taught at Stanford University, California College of the Arts, San Francisco Art Institute, Mills College, and Carnegie Mellon University before joining the faculty at University of California, Berkeley in 2014.

Syjuco's work has been included in international biennials and exhibitions, including the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; ASU Art Museum, Tempe; Illingworth Kerr Gallery, Calgary; New Britain Museum of American Art, New Britain; Tang Teaching Museum at Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs; Cantor Arts Center at Stanford University, Stanford; 2015 Asian Art Biennial, Taiwan; 12th Havana Biennale; 2014 Bucharest Biennial; La Triennale di Milano; ADN Platform, Barcelona; Contemporary Art Museum, Houston; Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; Heinz Nixdorf Museums Forum, Paderborn; Museum of Modern Art, New York; MoMA PS1, New York; Noguchi Museum, New York; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC; Verein fur Kunst and Kultur, Berlin; Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco; Z33 Space for Contemporary Art, Belgium; and ZKM Center for Art and Technology, Germany; among others. Her work is held in the public collections of Berkeley Art Museum; Columbus Museum of Art; Contemporary Museum Honolulu; Henry Art Gallery, Seattle; Museum of Fine Arts Houston; Museum of Modern Art, New York; New Museum, New York; Portland Museum of Art; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; San Jose Museum of Art; and Whitney Museum of American Art, among others. Syjuco received a Smithsonian Artist Research Fellowship in 2019, a Guggenheim Fellowship Award in 2014, and a Joan Mitchell Painters and Sculptors Award in 2009. Syjuco lives and works in Oakland, CA.