



BLACKSTON

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TOPICAL SONGS

Reuben Cox

Blackston is delighted to present Reuben Cox's *Topical Songs*, a solo exhibition of new photo-based works by the artist. Cox's second solo show at the gallery includes new archival abstract and representational inkjet prints and cyanotypes on paper, wood and other organic matter.

Since graduating from Cooper Union in 1994 Cox's photography has fused analog photography with conceptual and material concerns in a forward-thinking documentary-style approach that considers art and social histories, sculptural and formal concerns. In his five solo exhibitions in New York galleries since 2004, the subjects of his lens, whether transgender women in rural America (*What a Woman Wants*, 2005) or impermanent foil sculptures (*The Scholar's Rocks of Lethe Gardens*, 2008), are markers of an approach that embraces compositional experimentation within the photographic frame and medium.

After nearly twenty years of studying and art making in New York, Cox relocated with his family to Los Angeles in 2009. This exhibition is a culmination of bittersweet, oblique, pithy and comedic observations on the photo-based image, the sea change in Cox's life, a divide between East and West Coast living, what it is to be a Gen X adult in a Generation Y world, the seemingly irrevocable new art economy.

Following are excerpts from our recent email correspondence.

So the stuff is in the mail. Should arrive tomorrow or Saturday.

The show is called 'Topical Songs' and that's the goo that holds it all together. Observations, comments, and some satire. Some of the subject matter: the diminishing of analog photography in my life and what aummer that is. A bit of eco paranoia/dystopian angst. The bloated art market. Living in the desert during the time of drought. New beginnings/second act in life after moving west. Technology and its dehumanizing effect. But, trying to pull it off without being a Debbie Downer. Included in show are a few pieces that are 72 degrees and sunny.

Here's some info on [some of] the work. All work is 2014:

Christopher Wool Painting Found in Pasadena Basement. Made this earlier in the year. Felt like I'd awakened from a long, deep sleep after it was complete. I suppose it's the seed material that the rest of the show springs from.

Attractive But Light on Content. 1991-Present. 1991 was the year of the Pleasures and Terrors of Domestic Comfort show at MoMA. It opened a year after I moved to NYC to go to art school and pursue a life as an artist. Lots of wonderful memorable photos in the show but it seems the turning point and spark of the gold rush of photography. The show that launched a thousand fauxtographers.

Vince Aletti Browsing Chelsea Flea Market (circa 1987). Vince Aletti's career as a critic springs in part from his collection of vintage soft-core photos. (I emailed him and he confirmed this.)

Ain't Got No Time for Postmodern Irony. Lloyd Stuart Casson, Jr. There's a certain type of dude around LA that were in bands in the 80s and 90s that were pretty wasted for a couple decades. They missed the infiltration of irony into popular culture. They missed out on the Nirvanas and Pavements, etc. They're still rocking it earnestly!

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Castigat Ridendo Mores. Mixed media. 'One corrects morals by laughing at them.' From a 19th Century French book on raising children. Another thread running through the show. A piece about Cooper Union. And Joseph Cornell who made something out of nothing. And the recent administration at Cooper Union, who've made nothing out of something. Blue bottle is a vintage milk of magnesia bottle. Har.

Birdwell Beach Britches Cyanotype and gouache on mulberry paper. The stresses of parenthood shoehorn their way into much of the work but these have to do with the positive effects that a child can have on your aesthetic sensibility.

Domestecia 2 Cyanotype on hornet's nest. Most of my days in LA until recently. Unsettled domestic life.

Rain on the Sun Roof. (Santa Barbara Craft Fair) SoCal living is a-ok but I miss regular rain so much and the nuance of light that weather brings. Rain is always cause for celebration.

Neptunalia Eight panels. An ancient roman festival to ease anxiety of heat, sun, and drought.

Trash Vortex (aerial view) Eight panels. There's a bunch of trash in the north pacific about the size of Texas (minimum). This is a detail.

Cox lives in Los Angeles, CA. He was born in Highlands, North Carolina in 1972 and graduated from The Cooper Union in New York, NY. His work has been featured in *Blind Spot*, *Aperture*, *Doubletake*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *the New Yorker*, *Newsweek*, *Rolling Stone*, *House and Garden*, and other publications. Cox's photographs are included in collections of The Ogden Museum, The New Orleans Museum of Art, The Center for Documentary Studies, The Alice Austen House Museum, and Howard Stein's Cameraworks. Cox has had numerous solo shows: *Bagatelles*, *Blackston* (2012); *Portraits of Musicians*, *Midway* (2008); *The Work of Joe Webb* (2007), *The Scholar's Stones of Lethe Gardens* (2006) and *What a Woman Wants* (2005), all at Bespoke Gallery, New York, NY; *X-Ray Dreams* at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory in Cold Spring, NY and *The 2003 Contract Bridge World Championships!* at The Captain's Bookshelf in Asheville, NC in 2005. Cox's work has been included in numerous group shows and publications and he was a finalist for the Discovery Prize at the 2005 Rencontres Arles festival in Arles, France. His monograph *The Work of Joe Webb: Appalachian Master of Rustic Architecture*, a book comprising Cox's photographs of the cabins constructed by architect Joe Webb and an essay authored by Cox, was published in 2009 by The Jargon Society and distributed by The University of Georgia Press. Cox is the owner of Old Style Guitar Shop in Silver Lake, Los Angeles.