

M A R G E A U X
W A L T E R



B E L I E V E M E

FOTO RELEVANCE HOUSTON TEXAS

NOV 15, 2019 - JAN 17, 2020

MARGEAUX WALTER
BELIEVE ME

'Believe Me', is said to be Trump's most frequently used two-word phrase. Mimicking augmented realities, these staged, site-specific scenes challenge our current post-fact world influenced by scripted and hyperbolic reality television, fake news, sensational journalism and virtual experiences. By using a drone for a surveillance point-of-view, I am twisting the indexicality of the photograph to depict this blurring of what is real and constructed in our contemporary political and social environment.

— Margeaux Walter

Cumulus

(cover image)
Dye sublimation on aluminum
30x40" • Edition of 7
40x53" • Edition of 5

AS ABOVE, SO BELOW IN THE WORK OF MARGEUX WALTER

AMANDA DAHLGREN

I find that, for most people, there is still something inherently captivating about the aerial view in photography. Perhaps it stems from a fascination with flight, a fear or awe of heights, or simply the novelty of seeing our world from an unusual perspective. No matter the reason, most of us do not seem to have developed a jaded post-postmodern attitude towards this "God's-eye" view. It remains to be seen whether or not this will change with drone photography becoming ever more accessible and common-place — I suppose the eye-rolls and deep sighs of over-saturation may still be forthcoming.

Another interesting thing about aerial photography is that we still tend to trust it as relatively objective. We can thank the scientific, military, and surveillance nature of the majority of historical and contemporary aerial imagery for that. The oldest surviving aerial photograph, taken from a hot air balloon by James Wallace Black above Boston in 1860, has an objectivity that makes it feel like a scientific document even as its title, *Boston, as the Eagle and the Wild Goose See It*, captures the imagination.

Artist Margeaux Walter plays brilliantly with both our trust in, and fascination with, aerial photography to create images that she describes as teetering between believable, ridiculous, and surreal. Much has been written about her series *Sign Language* in which she "reveals how our technology and possessions threaten to overtake us, suggesting that we are consumed by our consumerist culture." Although the photographs in *Sign Language* employ an overhead view, the intimate proximity makes them feel more "ceiling-fan's eye" view than aerial view. In her latest body of work, *Believe Me*, however, she directly engages the embedded signifiers of the aerial view to twist its perceived objectivity and validity to great affect in her constructed site-specific installations.

In many of these photographs, Walter takes the constructions to the level of the absurd. For example, in "Swan Lake," it doesn't take much more than a cursory glance for the viewer of the photograph to realize something that the figure in the photograph seems to miss. From our vantage point, it is clearly evident that those are plastic, inflatable pool toys, not real swans, but the figure in the kayak seems to be intently studying these creatures with her binoculars,

perhaps making a mental note to add them to her birding "Life List." In this and many other of her photographs in this series, Walter seems to be calling out the absurdity of the denial of climate change and the inevitable tragic end in which we will need to replace nature with artificial substitutions.

Walter references consumerism, waste, and conformity in photographs like "Some Assembly Required," in which everything in this beach scene, including the seaweed at the shoreline, has been replaced by items from Ikea. Similarly, in "Off the Deep End," the pool the figure is sunning herself in front of has been replaced by a consumer item, an Ikea rug.

Walter is also commenting on the anonymity of our everyday lives, especially in terms of surveillance and digital culture. Although all the figures in these photographs are self-portraits, from this vantage point, she is not recognizable as anyone specific. She is not an individual; she is at once playing everyone, but is no one. As in much of her work, she is commenting on the "fragility of identity, and the role that photography plays in our ability to remember and create a self-image. Hiding is becoming harder, and at the same time so is being seen." In many of these photographs, she is playing with camouflage, not only as a reference to the military history of aerial photography, but as a way to reference this notion of visibility/invisibility in today's digital culture. In "Don't Feed the Birds," she seems to be admonishing us not to support ("feed into") the ubiquity of surveillance, as well as referencing the idea that we are replacing the natural world with human-made substitutions.

As with most photographs in general, Walter's works in this series are best enjoyed and fully understood as large-scale prints, where the viewer can examine the meticulously-crafted details and spend the time and energy to contemplate them. I must admit that I missed the brilliance of what later became my favorite of Walter's pieces in this series until I had come back to the piece a number of times. At first glance, I thought the mob in "Capture" was carrying golf clubs or maybe even metal detectors. When I finally realized that they were holding up selfie sticks, I realized that the scene she created here is a wonderful contemporary allegory in which the lone figure thinks that the mob is coming after him/her, but they are actually just obsessed with "capturing" themselves.

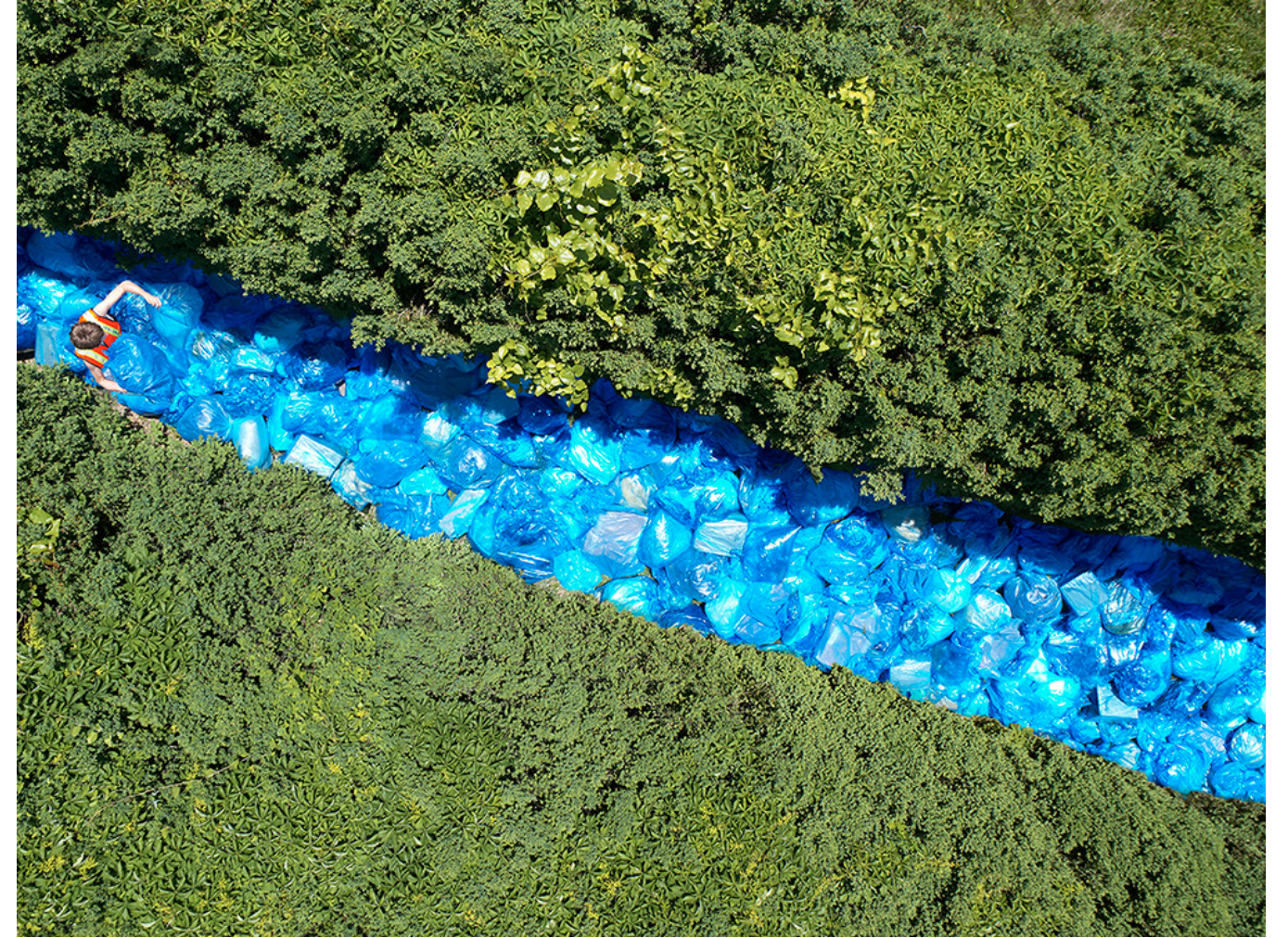
—

A full version of this article was originally published online in Exposure, the flagship publication of the Society for Photographic Education. SPE is a nonprofit membership-based organization that seeks to promote a broader understanding of the medium in all of its forms through teaching and learning, scholarship, conversation and criticism.

Amanda Dahlgren is a San Diego-based photographic artist whose work opens dialogues about the way we live as a society and what we choose to value. She is currently Director of the Athenaeum's School of the Arts, a Gallery Educator at the Museum of Photographic Arts, Lead Producer for Open Show San Diego, and Chairperson for the West Chapter of the Society for Photographic Education.



Some Assembly Required
Dye sublimation on aluminum
30x40" • Edition of 7
40x53" • Edition of 5



Ebb and Flow
Dye sublimation on aluminum
30x40" • Edition of 7
40x53" • Edition of 5



Hang Loose

Dye sublimation on aluminum
30x40" • Edition of 7
40x53" • Edition of 5



Hefty Harvest

Dye sublimation on aluminum
30x40" • Edition of 7
40x53" • Edition of 5



Impression, Nympheas
Dye sublimation on aluminum
30x40" • Edition of 7
40x53" • Edition of 5



Strawy Night
Dye sublimation on aluminum
30x40" • Edition of 7
40x53" • Edition of 5



Into the Wild
Dye sublimation on aluminum
30x40" • Edition of 7
40x53" • Edition of 5



Island
Dye sublimation on aluminum
30x40" • Edition of 7
40x53" • Edition of 5



Swan Lake

Dye sublimation on aluminum
30x40" • Edition of 7
40x53" • Edition of 5



The Grass is Greener

Dye sublimation on aluminum
30x40" • Edition of 7
40x53" • Edition of 5



XO
Dye sublimation on aluminum
30x40" • Edition of 7
40x53" • Edition of 5



Googly Earth
Dye sublimation on aluminum
30x40" • Edition of 7
40x53" • Edition of 5



Don't Feed the Birds
Dye sublimation on aluminum
30x40" • Edition of 7
40x53" • Edition of 5

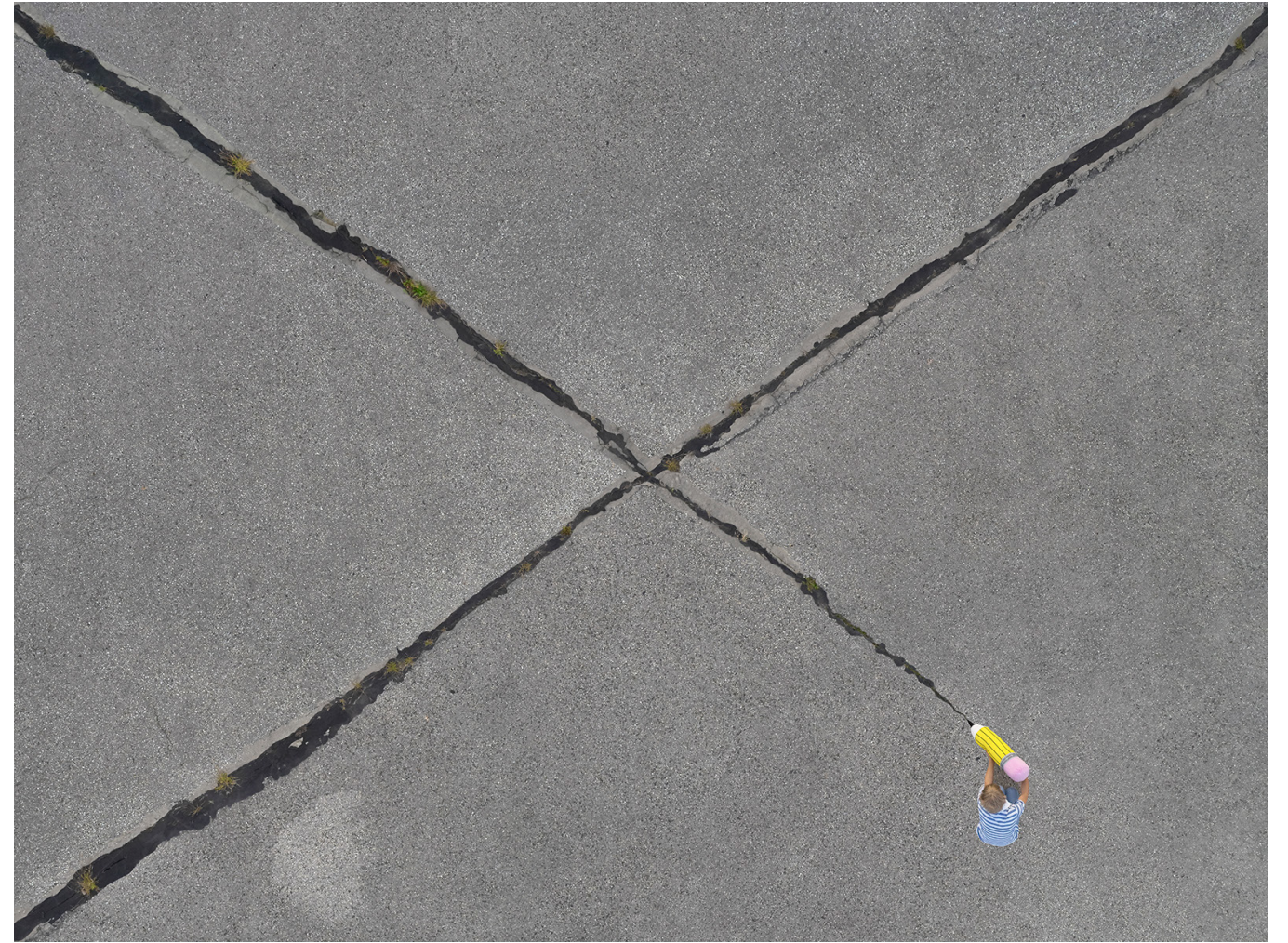


Perennial
Dye sublimation on aluminum
30x40" • Edition of 7
40x53" • Edition of 5



Capture

Dye sublimation on aluminum
30x40" • Edition of 7
40x53" • Edition of 5



X Marks the Spot

Dye sublimation on aluminum
30x40" • Edition of 7
40x53" • Edition of 5



High Rise
Dye sublimation on aluminum
30x40" • Edition of 7
40x53" • Edition of 5

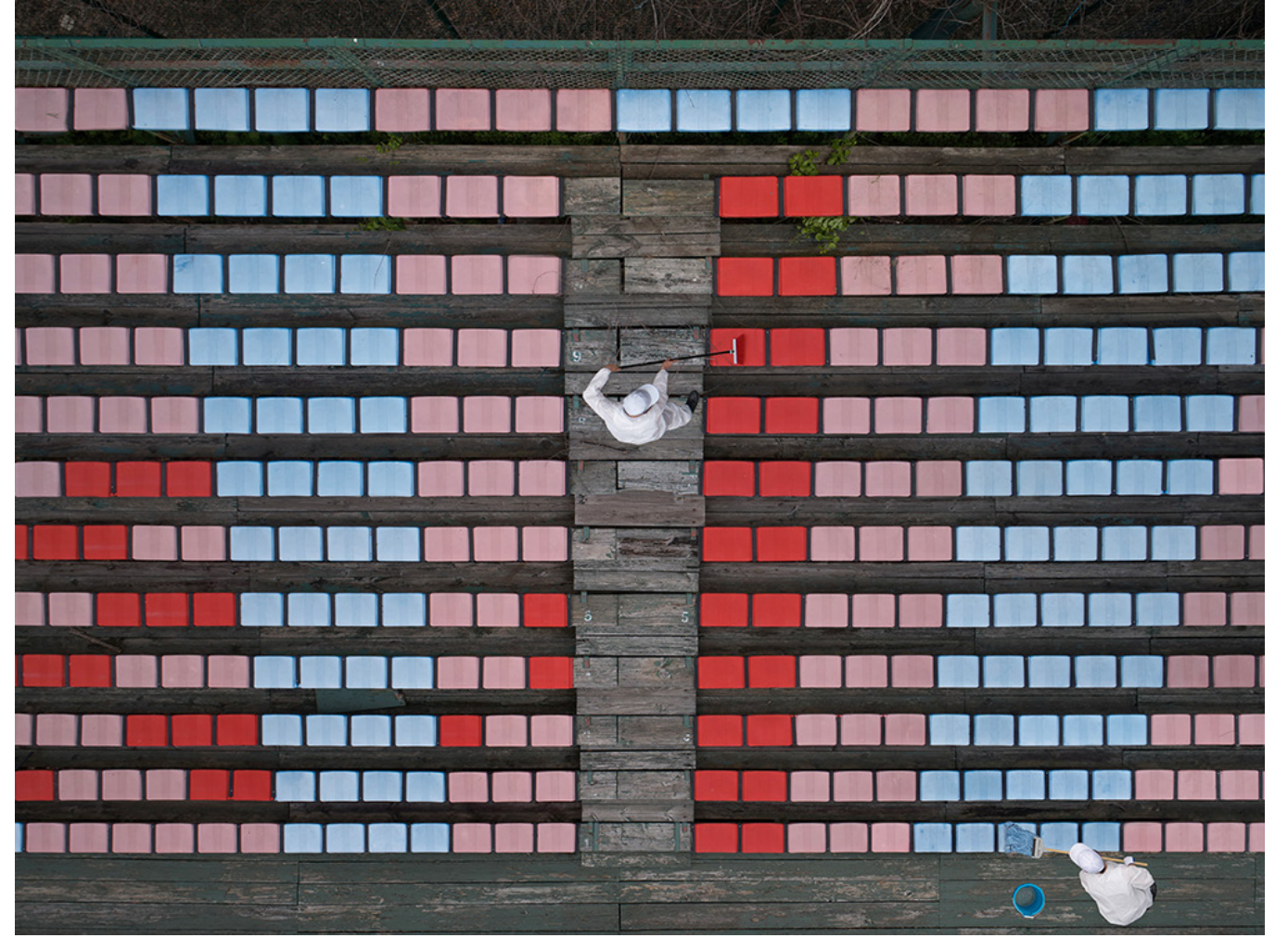


Composition in Blue
Dye sublimation on aluminum
30x40" • Edition of 7
40x53" • Edition of 5



Game Face

Dye sublimation on aluminum
30x40" • Edition of 7
40x53" • Edition of 5



Cog In the Machine

Dye sublimation on aluminum
30x40" • Edition of 7
40x53" • Edition of 5



Foie Gras
Dye sublimation on aluminum
30x40" • Edition of 7
40x53" • Edition of 5



Shrimp On the Barbie
Dye sublimation on aluminum
30x40" • Edition of 7
40x53" • Edition of 5



Ambush

Dye sublimation on aluminum
30x40" • Edition of 7
40x53" • Edition of 5



Tee Storm

Dye sublimation on aluminum
30x40" • Edition of 7
40x53" • Edition of 5



Fresh Coat

Dye sublimation on aluminum
30x40" • Edition of 7
40x53" • Edition of 5



Simulate

Dye sublimation on aluminum
30x40" • Edition of 7
40x53" • Edition of 5



Proof

Dye sublimation on aluminum
30x40" • Edition of 7
40x53" • Edition of 5



Cloudy

Dye sublimation on aluminum
30x40" • Edition of 7
40x53" • Edition of 5



Springing

Dye sublimation on aluminum
30x40" • Edition of 7
40x53" • Edition of 5



Off the Deep End

Dye sublimation on aluminum
30x40" • Edition of 7
40x53" • Edition of 5



Pursuit

Dye sublimation on aluminum
30x40" • Edition of 7
40x53" • Edition of 5



El Fin

Dye sublimation on aluminum
30x40" • Edition of 7
40x53" • Edition of 5

MARGEAUX WALTER

THE ARTIST

Margeaux Walter was born in Seattle, Washington and currently lives and works in New York City. She received her MFA from Hunter College in 2014 and her BFA from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts in 2006. She has received multiple honors from the Magenta Foundation Flash Forward, HeadOn Photo Festival, Photolucida, Prix de la Photographie Paris, International Photography Awards, and other organizations. She has been awarded artist-in-residence programs at Red Gate Gallery in Beijing, China (2011), Montalvo Arts Center (2012), Marble House Project (2015), MacDowell Colony (2017), Yaddo (2018), and VCCA (2019). In 2016 and 2019, she was selected for the New York Times Portfolio Review. She has participated in dozens of exhibitions at institutions such as MOCA in Los Angeles, CA, Hunterdon Art Museum in Clinton, NJ, The Center for Photography in Woodstock, NY, Montalvo Arts Center in Saratoga, CA, Sonoma County Museum in Santa Rosa, CA, Tacoma Art Museum in Tacoma, WA, and the Griffin Museum of Photography in Winchester, MA. Her work has been featured in publications including *The New York Times*, *New York Post*, *Seattle Times*, *Boston Globe*, and *Blouin Art Info*.

FOTO RELEVANCE

Since 2016, Foto Relevance cofounders Geoffrey C. Koslov and Bryn Larsen have focused on the exhibition and acquisition of museum quality contemporary fine art photography and photography-based work. Foto Relevance is dedicated to providing a platform for an innovative selection of American and international photographic artists pushing the boundaries of photography. The gallery has mounted monographic exhibitions as well as group shows to investigate current trends and themes in contemporary art, showcasing a broad range of both darkroom and digital photographic techniques. In addition to promoting the work of artists, Foto Relevance provides guidance, educating individual collectors and corporations in the acquisition and sale of art. Foto Relevance is a member of the Houston Art Gallery Association (HAGA). The gallery is located in the historic Audubon District of Montrose in Houston, Texas.



FOTO RELEVANCE

616 Hawthorne St.
Houston, TX 77006
281.989.4356
FotoRelevance.com