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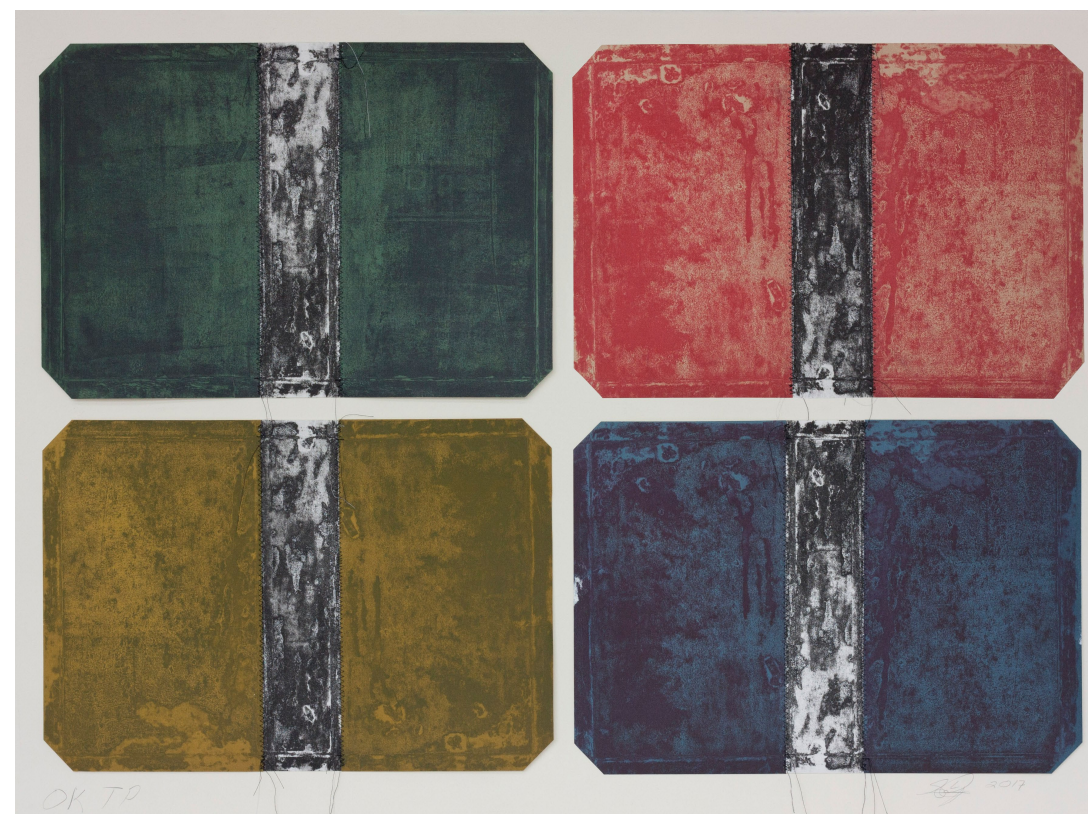
SAMUEL LEVI JONES

**PAULSON
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Deeper, 2017
Flatbite and color aquatint. Paper size: 63" x 47"; Edition of 25



Elements, 2017
Flatbite and color aquatint. Paper size: 26 1/4" x 36 1/2"; Edition of 25



Sold Ya, 2017
Flatbite and color aquatint. Paper size: 42" x 65"; Edition of 25

Samuel Levi Jones works with discarded books and other materials to build collages, disrupting the regularity of his source materials through deconstruction. His work explores the relationship between documents and systems of knowledge and power, questioning the selectivity of encyclopedias and other kinds of “authoritative” texts. In his first visit to Paulson Fontaine Press, he recreated his usual pattern of working, even stitching some of the prints with a sewing machine. Pam Paulson opened our conversation with Jones by discussing how the plates were made.

Kenneth Caldwell



Paulson: Sam created some compositions of stitched book covers that we then rolled with tar—asphaltum, to be precise—laid on a blank copper plate and ran through the press. This process offset the tar onto the plate which was then dropped in a bath of acid and flat-bit. The tar acted as a resist, and the acid etched around it. Then we polished it and proofed it. The second plate has a solid aquatint so when printed there are two colors in each square.

Both plates are inked à la poupée. Each of the rectangles is inked in a particular color by hand next to each other.

Some have blends. Each half of the composition is printed from the same plates, and one is just flipped upside-down, and then they are stitched together in the middle.

Q: How are these books joined?

SJ: They are sewn together.

Q: Did you know the direction you wanted to go before you arrived?

SJ: Other than bringing the material, not so much.

Q: Your work is so rooted in working with these objects. Why did you decide to try printing something that represents printing, a book?

SJ: I'm always open to other people's ideas. I just brought the material. As long as the material could be used within the process, that's what was important to me.

Q: So what are these books?

SJ: These are Illinois law books. These are California case law books. These are books from the African-American

Studies Department at U.C. Berkeley, with the exception of this one. It's a law book.

Q: How did you get these?

SJ: They were just books that someone was getting rid of. I began deconstructing encyclopedias and the other books while thinking about narratives and histories that have been left out. It is a way of rewriting or rethinking history. This is a way to collaborate with other people's thoughts and bring them into the process. It gets me to think about more possibilities.

Q: It is a strange time in the culture. The idea of fact and truth seems to be in play. So does the book itself. Is that affecting your work?

SJ: Time has and always will be strange. In my work I question both the idea of and the presentation of fact. I once used law book source material titled Proof of Facts. Then I came up with the title Selective Proof of Facts as I questioned who selects the facts being presented and what facts are being omitted. Facts are relative.

Q: Tell me about these smaller prints.

SJ: These are some I started off with early on. In my process, when I'm making, I'll cut up the material and move it around. I'll cut the spine of the book and move it around from one book to another. This feels like a study of working once I deconstruct them and manipulate them. I think about color and working with each book individually and the stitching.

The wonderful thing about this process was the color proofing. Typically my palette is dictated by the material I am using. For the prints, I had to invent color. When I worked on Amalgamation we got to a point that they said, “Do you want more colors?” And I said, “No, because it's going to be too overwhelming for me.” I need to work with a few different things and see what I can get from that. They pulled this print and I liked the colors right away.

Q: Did you learn to sew in art school, or did you know how to do it before?

SJ: The only other time I used a sewing machine was in Home Ec. It's easy.

Q: And what do you do with the books after you're done making the work?

SJ: Recycle them.

Q: Where are the books coming from now?

SJ: Mostly Craigslist. Sometimes law firms. These right here, these came from a law firm in Illinois. They were retiring,

and they posted all their books. I went and picked some of them up.

Q: Do they have any idea what you're going to do with them?

SJ: Some people ask, some people don't. Sometimes I tell them, sometimes I don't. There was one time I picked up a set of books from someone who was attached to the books. “I want these to go to a good home.” I said, “Okay, I'll take good care of them.”

Q: Does anyone ever give you books and then find out later what you do with them? Do they ever follow through and Google you and figure it out?



Amalgamation, 2017
Flatbite and color aquatint. Paper size: 39" x 31 1/2"; Edition of 25

SJ: One time this guy said, “Send me some images. I want to see what you do with them afterwards.” That rarely happens. For the most part, for them, it's just a transaction.

Q: So have you started thinking about the next project?

SJ: I have some ideas in terms of other types of reference books. I used medical books once. I've been thinking about different types of books to respond to other things conceptually. But for me, in terms of using the book itself, this is my paint.