Held By The Image

damon sauer
(To those I am debted)
We are held by the image, suspended by its confinement and embrace. The photograph is violent, as it is also compassionate and complacent. The image we are given is partially our own reflection. The good that it does is matched equally by its harm. The photograph is always a convoluted and imperfect document. It is the witness that insists on its version of the truth, against all others. And we, both subject and viewer, are held in state.

The photograph is intimately connected with our cultural self-image. It is a part of our shared history - part of the way we remember. Yet, this history always lacks the things not held in the image, and is forever chained to the specter of loss. Any weight an image is thought to have is because of what it represents, not what it depicts. I am interested in using the photograph to realize its own fallibility, to make its imperfections self-evident. I am interested in implicating the photograph as an agent that reinforces the separation one feels from one’s own experience.

What becomes of the photograph that images a culture that is overwhelmingly violent? Does it sympathize, or does it do further harm? And in either case, what does the viewer do, by extension?

We live in a society that distances its perception of brutality so that it can subdue the grief that comes with contributing to social violence. This work seeks to heal the injury we incur while existing within a culture that passively accepts violence. It means to close the distance between others and ourselves and to bring us back to feeling the ways in which we are all connected. It is an attempt to do that in this waking life, before we are all leveled and connected by the finality of ash and death.
The questions we ask of ourselves remain whispered in the dusk of our evenings. To which, the answers are echoed quietly, chorused in the pause of midnight.

See clearly, this edge of humanity. Which circles tight to its center. Did you not know that we are eclipsed by that edge?

We cannot hear the sound of our suffering as it harmonizes with the tone of our day. While the measure of bliss is always made by the weight of what we are willing to give.

As all of us separate

Those people we kill, From the act

And the loving we give, From the lack

And the images we make, From the fact

Damon Sauer

(Opposite) Neutral Border [Detail]
Death Rubbings
Unidentified U.S. Soldier
Unidentified Iraqi Civilian
Unidentified Indian Civilian
Jesse James
Mediated Violence