

Chris Duncan

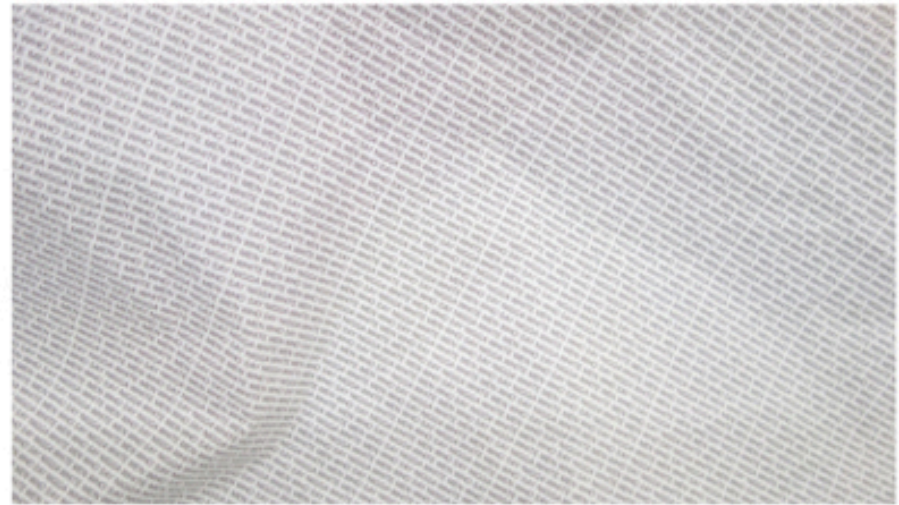
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April 24 – May 9, 2015

Et al.

620 Kearny Street, San Francisco, CA 94108

LEORA LUTZ — MAY 8, 2015



There is stillness in Chris Duncan's solo exhibition at Et. al gallery in Chinatown. Marked by the time that he tracks in his work—printed, rubbed, or faded—the repetition and pairings of work point toward an inward, contemplative, and empathic place.

Anchoring the exhibition is a large stretched linen canvas of a crayon rubbing, *APRIL 6TH, 1968-APRIL 6TH, 2015* (excerpted subtitle "basement floor"). The material gives the illusion that the piece is a photographic transfer, but knowing that it is not a photo carries a significant weight—not only with the formal qualities but also to the implications of its meaning. While photos are documentation through a lens, rubbings are documentation in situ, by hand. Creating the work not only requires the artist to be in a space, to see and observe and then freeze a moment, but it requires the artist to touch the space—to literally rub it. The piece was made in a house located in West Oakland, where Black Panther member [Bobby Hutton was killed](#) by police in 1968, on April 6 just two days after Martin Luther King's assassination. The nation was in mourning and outrage was heated by long standing civil rights injustices toward people of color. After a violent ambush toward the Oakland Police where two officers were killed, he and fellow Panther Eldridge Cleaver retreated to the house. The police raided it, throwing tear gas into the basement, which igniting a fire. In surrender, Hutton stripped down to his underwear—completely vulnerable and unarmed—but was shot more than twelve times and died. The house still stands today, but the basement was not fully repaired. Instead, the burned wood was merely painted white. The blatant irony of "white washing" the deaths of black men makes the heart wrench and the mind reel with utter shame. To white wash the history of the black lives lost is a feeble attempt to erase what happened to them. A smaller rubbing, also titled *APRIL 6TH, 1968-APRIL 6TH, 2015* (excerpted subtitle "charred ceiling joist") was made using the wood beam ceiling. As Duncan was working, the white paint began to flake and crumble, revealing the burned wood that remains a constant reminder of police brutality not only in Oakland (where Duncan lives) but around the nation.