

Artillery Magazine Gallery Rounds
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Glen Wilson
Slim Margins
Various Small Fires
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by Jody Zellen



The works that make up Glen Wilson's exhibition "Slim Margins" are striking and unique. Wilson has an uncanny sense of materials and a keen ability to juxtapose incongruous elements to create the unexpected. Wilson cites the influence of documentary photographers like Gordon Parks and Roy DeCarava, as well as Carrie Mae Weems and Lorna Simpson whose early photographs empowered female African American voices, yet his works also share an affiliation with the woven photographs of Dinh Q. Lee and the overlapping-framed photo-montages by Todd Gray.

These references aside, many of the most enticing works in Wilson's installation are hybrids of photography and sculpture. The exhibition starts in the courtyard where Wilson presents four large-scale, double-sided freestanding sculptures: *TexarkanaCaliCool / Relaxing With Mr. Dafney* (2019), *Immaculate (Sundial)* (2020), *Deliver Us (90291 x 10037)* (2020), and *King Solomon* (2020). In these pieces, as well as in many on view within the gallery, Wilson weaves photographic strips between the spaces in large sections of chain link fence reconstituting the image as a dynamic object. In the courtyard, it is easy to walk around the works and inspect all sides. *King Solomon* depicts the silhouette of an African American dancer balancing on a stool at Venice beach on one side while his feet are acrobatically poised towards the sky in a handstand on the other. The piece is perched high on a pole like a flag or banner, paralleling the body's skyward movements. Though the images coalesce when viewed from afar, up close one is aware of the fragmentary nature of the imagery and that which can be seen between the printed strips.

Many of Wilson's photographs have the aura of snapshots, people, and places he has observed and captured within the frame of his camera. He is interested in where the private and public intersect and his images serve as celebrations of intimate and often playful times, as many of the photographs depict leisure activities and people at the beach. But for Wilson, the photographic image is a point of departure for further exploration rather than an endpoint. He states, "I have always considered the photograph an object that might introduce ideas or

concepts which may be further elaborated when brought into dialogue with other objects, photographic or otherwise... Single images may be multiplied, combined, borrowed, juxtaposed or otherwise manipulated to broaden context, and narrative.”

In his pieces, Wilson fuses numerous images that can be thought of as before and after, or different aspects of the same scene. These fragmented and undulating photographs are integrated with a variety of formats of chain link fence (gates, swinging doors, and free-standing sections) that function as both a barrier and a framing device. The kids at play in *Ritual Unions* (2020), are nested between ocean waves and an opening in the two pieces of chain link, akin to a portal to the unknown beyond. Where fences are usually barricades, Wilson transforms them into something inviting and playful. The notion of play is further articulated in *Notice of Intent* (2020), a close-up of the hands of two men playing chess on a paper board. The image is split in half on two sides of a gate. Because Wilson fills the spaces in the fences with color photographs, he transports viewers to his personal world.

The sculptural aspects of the work and the use of dilapidated fencing as an apparatus are apropos to the “slim margins” of the exhibition’s title. While the works are reminders that a fence is often erected to say “stay out,” Wilson suggests imagining what exists on the other side can be a positive experience, even during dire times. “Slim Margins” is a rich exhibition filled with thoughtful and beautifully executed works using the power of photography to show the importance of community and family. Though put together with discarded materials, Wilson’s works are constructed memories of more positive times that illustrate how looking, seeing, and making sense of that which surrounds us can be a rewarding experience.

<https://www.artillerymag.com/gallery-round-glen-wilson/>