

EXHIBITION PROPOSAL

Christian Patterson
REDHEADED PECKERWOOD



**TRANSFORMER
STATION**

Redheaded Peckerwood is the first complete museum exhibition of the now-legendary work by Christian Patterson and is produced by Transformer Station and Fred and Laura Ruth Bidwell in collaboration with the artist.

Installation Video/Walk-through: <http://youtu.be/6M93rQMuA5g>

Christian Patterson Interview: <http://youtu.be/VEREs7PRcik>

Contents:

(34) Framed images in various sizes between 8 in x 10 in and 40 in x 60 in (102 cm x 152 cm)

(17) Framed 8 in x 10 in (20 cm x 25 cm) vintage press photos

(3) Ready-made objects

Assorted ephemera to be displayed in vitrines

A checklist is included in this package.

Space requirements:

Approx. 194 linear feet (59 linear meters). The work can be installed with fewer works to suit smaller floor plans, in collaboration with the artist.

Shipping:

The entire exhibition is crated. Shipping costs are the responsibility of the borrowing institution.

Support Materials:

A critically-acclaimed book of this work, Redheaded Peckerwood (MACK, 2011), now in its third printing, is distributed worldwide and available to accompany the exhibition.

Events:

The artist has lectured widely on this work and is available for lectures and book signings at host venues.

Availability: Fall 2014 through Fall 2016.

*"A boy and a girl and a car and a gun. The formula is deeply encoded in American mythology. Christian Patterson comes at this highly charged material as a poet and a gumshoe, employing tools from every part of the photographic arsenal. Some of his photographs are of actual settings, some of actual artifacts, some of symbolic landscapes and metonymic objects; there are also archival photos and documents. The resulting assemblage resembles the accumulation of material that accompanies an investigation. Look at that ragged stuffed animal: it is the very one that Starkweather stole for Fugate during a robbery-murder. Patterson found it in the remains of one of the crime scenes. Here, its grimy poignancy tells us all we need to know. Murder charges everything it touches, and in **Redheaded Peckerwood** Christian Patterson is working out something that hasn't been done much before, if ever: a kind of subjective documentary photography of the historical past. That requires that the individual pictures be true, as close as possible to the physical details as historically established, while remaining ambiguous and unsettling. Their accumulation thrusts the viewer into the emotional center of the story. **Redheaded Peckerwood**, which unerringly walks the fine line between fiction and nonfiction, is a disturbingly beautiful narrative about violence and its place on the land."*

- Luc Sante

Over the course of five years, Christian Patterson meticulously investigated the true crime story of Charles Starkweather and Caril Ann Fugate, two teenagers from Lincoln, Nebraska. In January 1958, Starkweather killed 11 people, including members of 14-year-old Fugate's family, while driving across the Great Plains of Nebraska. In making this work, Patterson retraced their path, made photographs, collected archival materials and uncovered chilling new pieces of evidence along the way.

Redheaded Peckerwood does more than simply retell this story; it deftly deconstructs and fragments its narrative, effectively reopening the case for additional consideration. Patterson singles out elements of significance -- places, objects and phrases -- in the manner of a detective reviewing evidence. But he does not confine himself to facts in his pursuit of truth; he invites viewers to form their interpretations of the story.

The photographs and objects in *Redheaded Peckerwood* are stylistically varied and consistent with Patterson's interest in narrative complexity. They are also unified by the artist's interest in communicating a sense of time and its lingering, charged presence -- "Something that you cannot see in a photograph, but you feel or know to be there." In this way, the work subtly addresses themes of confusion, panic, fear, violence and, ultimately, the loss of innocence.

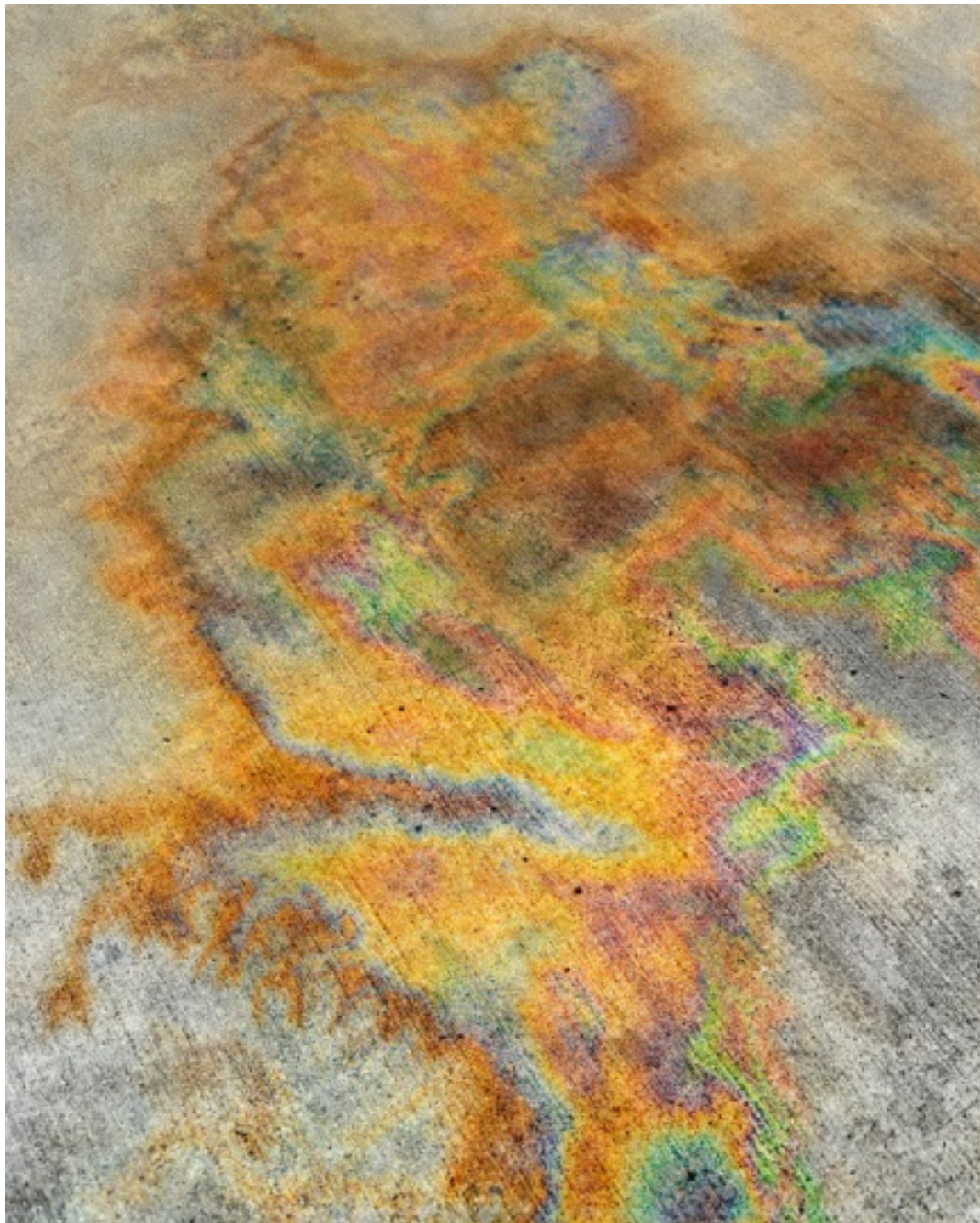
Some of the most captivating and chilling moments in the exhibition result from Patterson's inclusion of archival artifacts and several pieces of evidence the artist recovered while making this work. Many of these things -- a stuffed toy poodle, notes, letters and poems, and a car hood ornament -- belonged to or were touched by the hands of the killers and their victims, and can be seen publicly for the first time in this exhibition.

Like a Greek chorus commenting on the story as it transpires, the artist's word paintings -- messages including "Ask for Ethyl," "Drop Dead Twice," "Helluva Mess" and "Fruit Cake 98 Cents" -- sardonically summarize the situation and evoke the time period. An undercurrent of anxiety, restlessness and change permeated the era, which included the emergence of the "teenager" and juvenile delinquency as societal forces with which to be reckoned. In many ways, America would never be the same again.



Ask For

ETHYL











Installation views



Installation views



Installation views



Installation views



Installation views



Installation views



Installation views



Installation views



Installation views



Installation views



Installation views



Installation views



Vitrine installation



Publication



Redheaded Peckerwood

by Christian Patterson

Publisher: MACK

Now in its third edition, this highly influential book was awarded the Arles Recontres 2012 Author Book Award .

“Redheaded Peckerwood is a very contemporary updating of what might be termed the elliptical narrative photo book. Patterson uses every facet of the bookmaking craft to underline a tale that, like all historical stories, we interpret through secondary rather than primary media... ..above all, *Redheaded Peckerwood* is a complex and challenging commentary on the photographic medium itself.”

- Gary Badger, Martin Parr *The Photobook: A History Volume III*

Signed copies available

First edition published
October 2011

Third edition

Essays by Luc Sante
and Karen Irvine

168 pages

19 cm x 24 cm

98 images including 3 inserts, an illustrated
booklet and a facsimile postcard

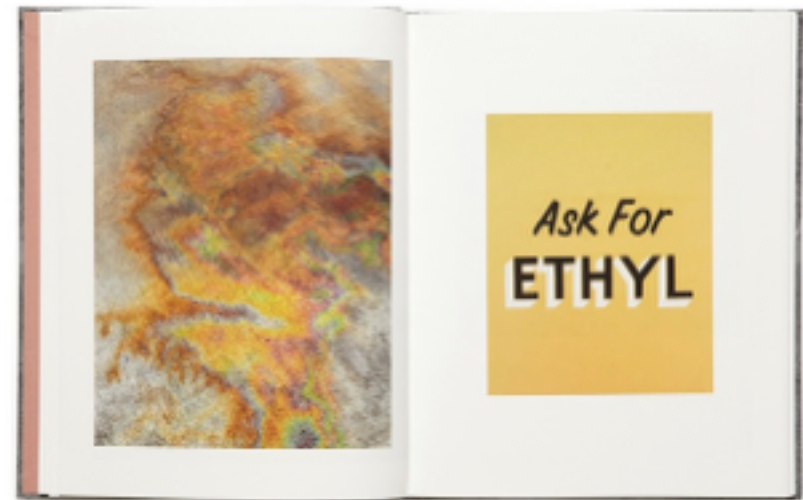
Printed paper over board

Publication date: January 2013

€45.00 £40.00 \$65.00

ISBN 978-1-907946-14-1

Publication



Press Coverage: Guggenheim Foundation

John Simon Guggenheim

Memorial Foundation Fellowships to Assist Research and Artistic Creation



Christian Patterson

2013 - US & Canada Competition
Creative Arts - Photography

<http://www.christianpatterson.com>

BIO

Christian Patterson (born Fond du Lac, Wisconsin) lives and works in Brooklyn, New York, and is a self-taught artist.

Photographs are the heart of Patterson's work but they are often complemented and informed by other mediums. This is done to create a more immersive, multidimensional experience, and to expand narrative potential and interpretive possibilities.

Patterson's first work, *Sound Affects* (2002–2005), explores Memphis, Tennessee, as a musical place through visual arrangements of light, color, rhythm, and form. In this work, photographs serve as visual analogues to sound and music and are sometimes exhibited with musical accompaniment. The work has been exhibited internationally and was published as a monograph in 2008.

Patterson's second work, *Redheaded Peckerwood* (2005–2011), utilizes a true crime story as a spine and functions as a visual crime dossier—a cryptic collection of clues for the viewer to decipher. This work utilizes a multitude of photographic techniques to tell anew a tragic story from the past and is exhibited with documents and objects related to the story.

Redheaded Peckerwood was published by MACK in 2011 to international critical acclaim, nominated for the 2012 Kraszna-Krausz Book Awards, and won the prestigious 2012 Recontres d'Arles Author Book Award.

With his forthcoming work, Patterson continues on this course—working with new subject matter, exploiting photographic conventions, striving to expand photographic perception, and finding new ways to tell stories visually.

Patterson's work is exhibited and collected internationally. He is represented by Rose Gallery (Santa Monica) and Robert Morat Galerie (Hamburg/Berlin).

The John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, "Christian Patterson," Apr 2013.

Press Coverage: Los Angeles Times

Los Angeles Times

Christian Patterson on the Tenuousness of Knowing



All photographs serve as evidence, but not necessarily in support of the most obvious questions put to them.

Often they seem more like pointers than fixed points, arrows extended in multiple directions. Front-loaded with credibility, though, photographs bear a weighty load of expectations, some reasonable, many not. As filmmaker Errol Morris has written, "Photographs attract false beliefs the way flypaper attracts flies."

"Redheaded Peckerwood" (2005-11), a potent, time-release project by Christian Patterson, is based on a specific incident, the 1958 murder of 10 people, including relatives and friends, by Charles Starkweather, 19, and his girlfriend Caril Ann Fugate, 14.

Their killing spree in Nebraska and capture three days later in Wyoming has spurred several films (most notably "Badlands") as well as a Bruce Springsteen song.

Patterson's take, now at Rose Gallery, is a radical redefinition of the documentary photo-essay as fragmentary, episodic, speculative, unanchored to the time and facts of the presumptive main event. It centers less on information about the particular crimes committed by the teenagers than on knowledge itself as a tenuous prospect.

The show and its accompanying book keenly meditate, through photographs and assorted other objects, on extrapolation, projection, fabrication and imagination as the raw ingredients of visual perception.

The images borrow from familiar idioms. There is a small black-and-white archival news shot of Fugate in custody, grasped by her forearm, teary and defiant. There is a crisp, color, studio-style still life of a Zippo lighter, full-flame. There is a large, Eggleston-like photograph of a rumpled bed, its sheets and pillow a sallow brown.

And there are word paintings, à la Ruscha and Baldessari, lettered like commercial signage: "Helluva Mess," "Fruit Cake 98¢" and stacked in a column, "Drop Dead Drop Dead." There are also sheets of heavy paper stock that have been blasted by a shotgun, leaving ash-rimmed holes.

Every image is trailed by a story, or at least bits of one -- details related to the killings and their aftermath, or to Patterson's own endeavor to piece the tale together and yet affirm its provocative value as fragments that will be assembled in different order and with different emphasis in every viewer/reader's mind.

The work "... From Shinola" is one such glimpse. The photograph shows a bottle of black shoe polish tipped and spilled, a reference to the dye that the redheaded Starkweather used to disguise himself while on the run. The liquid seeps out of the bottle in an inky, calligraphic spread, much like a Rorschach test image that in itself means nothing but takes on whatever significance is projected onto it.

And the title's snippet of the old colloquial expression reminds us that with a random inkblot, as with Patterson's pictures and, by extension, nearly every photographic image, we don't know the difference between fact and fake, art and artifact, what we see and what we know.

Rose Gallery, Bergamot Station, 2525 Michigan Ave., Santa Monica, (310) 264-8440, through Aug. 3. Closed Sunday and Monday. www.rosegallery.net

Ollman, Leah. "Christian Patterson on the Tenuousness of Knowing," Los Angeles Times, 18 Jul 2013.

Press Coverage: The Paris Review

the PARIS REVIEW

Object Lessons: A Conversation with Christian Patterson



Sissy Spacek in *Badlands*, 1973. By permission of Criterion Collection.

*Lovers on the run tend to travel light. Generally speaking, in our collective imagination, accoutrements tend to be limited to car (probably stolen), gun (also stolen), clothes on their backs. Yet Charles Starkweather and Caril Ann Fugate (captured in 1958 after a violent shooting spree in Nebraska and Wyoming that left eleven dead) become legend in part by leaving behind a physical trail. Of the multiple films inspired by the Starkweather-Fugate killings, Terrence Malick's 1973 *Badlands* (newly released by the Criterion Collection), is the one that—even as it takes dramatic liberties—most explicitly focuses on*

*these tangible objects. Kit and Holly (Martin Sheen and Sissy Spacek) cart along a birdcage, a copy of Kon-Tiki, and a Maxfield Parrish painting; the film's art director, Jack Fisk, filled one character's house with \$100 worth of random pieces—a jar of black widows, a giant ball of twine—he'd bought from the relatives of a dead man. Just prior to their capture, Kit buries a few of their belongings, described in deadpan voice-over: "He said no one else would know where we put 'em, and that we'd come back some day, maybe, and they'd still be sitting here just the same, but we'd be different, and if we never got back, well, somebody might dig 'em up a thousand years from now and wouldn't they wonder." Nearly forty years later, [Christian Patterson's](#) 2011 book of photographs, [Redheaded Peckerwood](#), continues down a similar path. Already in its third edition, with a thoughtful introduction by Luc Sante and curator Karen Irvine, Patterson's is a work that defies the easy definition of photo book, approaching as it does the *Starkweather* narrative from a number of vantage points: newspaper clippings, interviews, ephemera. The photographs of bits of evidence, or of things belonging to the killers and victim—a hood ornament from the getaway car, the teenage Fugate's stuffed toy poodle—have the aura of a saint's relics. Tucked into the binding of the book are more souvenirs, reproductions of documents related to *Starkweather* (a store receipt with a poem printed on its reverse side; a typed list of dirty aphorisms). Even those things that are not directly related to *Starkweather* and *Fugate* take on the air of authenticity; the effect of seeing all these effects, in the context of the photographer's present-day mapping of their journey, is transcendent and shocking, the objects themselves acting as witnesses.*

What struck you most about *Badlands* when you first saw the film?

I was taken with the film in every way. Visually, it was just so damn beautiful, with its big, painterly skies and endless, romantic landscapes. And thematically, well ... it was one hell of a crazy story. Sheen and Spacek were great too. It's a great film.

What were some of the first pictures you made that appear in the book? And when you arrived in Nebraska, what were some of your early impressions?

House at Night and Ray of Light stand out in my mind. The former is the first of my photographs that appears in *Redheaded Peckerwood* and the latter is one of the last. This story is quite well documented, and parts of it are well preserved in these various archives. But after all of my research, I felt that there was still plenty of room for me to step into this story, to attempt to reconstruct, then deconstruct, and ultimately fragment it. A new vision for the work began to form in my head—the idea of presenting this true crime story through a mix of photographs, documents, and objects, challenging the viewer to sift through the information, to decipher the visual clues—to deal with the crime story in a similar way an investigator or researcher would.

Bengal, Rebecca. "Object Lessons: A Conversation with Christian Patterson," *The Paris Review*, 24 Jun 2013.

Press Coverage: The Paris Review



House at Night, 2007.

How did those you approached in the course of your research respond?

The Starkweather-Fugate story is one of the biggest news stories in the history of Nebraska. There, the story is one of those events like the Kennedy assassination—anyone who was alive at the time remembers exactly what they were doing when the story first broke, and they remember that week of terror very clearly. Lincoln, Nebraska, is a relatively small city and Nebraska is a sparsely populated state.

For all of these reasons, it's not hard to find people who have very personal connections to the story—family members of the killers and their victims, people who worked for the newspaper or police department, or who were somehow involved in the eventual trial. There's still a lot of raw emotion surrounding the story. Some people are very eager to share their stories. Other people just want it all to go away.

I was also able to find people in the possession of various personal objects outside official archives—photo booth portraits of Caril Ann, Charlie's cowboy boots, and even the car they drove as they fled Lincoln for Washington State, among other things. The people who now own these things were initially cautious about sharing them, but once I was able to explain my intentions, they shared them enthusiastically.



Map of Lincoln (Erased), 2010.

Objects related to killers, whether actual evidence or simply things they touched, weirdly take on the quality of relics, and they certainly do in *Badlands*, from the things Kit and Holly carry with them on their journey to the comb and lighter that Kit, in his moment of celebrity, gives away like party favors or souvenirs to the officers after his capture. In your book, without pointing out what is “authentic” and what is not, you depict both actual ephemera and places related to Fugate and Starkweather, as well as things that look like they might have been theirs, or touched by them. What was your thinking behind the ephemera you chose to photograph and that which you include, in reproduction form, in the book?

As I said, I researched the story intensely. I read every book I could get my hands on and took note of anything of interest or potential. I began with factual information—dates, times, and places of the crimes, and every other known location involved in the story. But I also included many random ideas—long lists of visual ideas, objects, random words and phrases, anything that painted a picture in my mind.

Two of my favorite scenes in *Badlands* involve the objects that Kit and Holly carry with them—the scene where they bury a metal bucket containing some of these things and launch a red balloon, and the scene towards the end of the film when Kit is on the run alone, stops at a gas station and opens up a suitcase from the car. We catch a glimpse of clothes, cigarettes, and a magnifying glass.

My friend Luc Sante says murder charges everything it touches, and he's right. I'm fascinated with the idea of the object as relic or talisman—an object taking on significance as a result of something other than itself.

Bengal, Rebecca. “Object Lessons: A Conversation with Christian Patterson,” *The Paris Review*, 24 Jun 2013.

Press Coverage: The Paris Review

The Tree on Fire image was shot in a different place, and in another year. The Nebraska Land Management Bureau has a prescribed burn program where well-controlled fires are deliberately set to clear brush and debris on the land, mostly in farming areas. I happened to catch a crew of burners finishing a field at the very end of a day. They had piled up some debris at the base of this tree, set it on fire, and driven away. But what I like about the image is that you can't tell if the fire is just starting or ending.

I included the fire images in my work because they are obviously a fitting metaphor for the destruction Starkweather caused as he traveled through this same landscape.



House on Fire, 2008.

Malick wanted the movie to “set up like a fairy tale, outside time.” Your pictures also have a timeless feel—actual documents are mixed in with contemporary photographs, period objects photographed in present day are shot as if they’re intended to appear dated. I’m interested in your choice to make them consciously anachronistic.

I often try to make photographs that have a classic or timeless feeling. I don’t say this as a value judgment, but a visual one. I often try to avoid time signals in my images—things that give away the time period in which the image is made.

Malick made *Badlands* in 1973—only fifteen years after the Starkweather spree. I made *Redheaded Peckerwood* fifty years after the fact, so I had to work carefully and strive for a certain timeless look. I think I was successful, with one exception. There is an image called *Telephone*, which includes a push-button telephone that didn’t exist in 1958. But I felt the image was so eerie and powerful that it

Bengal, Rebecca. “Object Lessons: A Conversation with Christian Patterson,” *The Paris Review*, 24 Jun 2013.

overcame that concern. When I saw that phone, I just imagined that if I picked up the receiver I’d hear the most horrible news.



Telephone, 2008.

On the other hand, you did heavy research not only into the news stories surrounding the actual Starkweather story, but also into the vernacular of the period. Some of those examples are incorporated as ephemera bound into the book. And the title, *Redheaded Peckerwood*, comes from an insult lobbed at Charles Starkweather when he was growing up, right? How did what you discovered in your language research inform the book?

I’ve always been a fan of slang, and I became fascinated with the teenage slang of the time period—words and phrases like cherry, cool as a cucumber, daddy-o, drop dead twice, and kooky, just to name a very few. I made lists of these words and phrases, just like my lists of more obviously visual ideas. For the longest time, I didn’t know what to do with them. But I finally came up with the idea of painting the words and phrases by hand, in a traditional sign maker’s typeface evocative of the time, utilizing colors that directly complemented those contained within my photographs.

One of the most successful things about the book is the way humor pervades the violence. Was that always there, or was there a point when you felt like you were deliberately introducing a sort of macabre into the narrative?

Much of the perceived humor in the book comes directly from the story. I didn’t make it up. “The Election Is Over,” a political poem, and “Confusais Say” [sic], a list of dirty limericks, both came from

Bengal, Rebecca. “Object Lessons: A Conversation with Christian Patterson,” *The Paris Review*, 24 Jun 2013.

one of the victim's wallets. "I pledge allegiance" was actually a phrase uttered by Starkweather when he meant to say the Pledge of Allegiance. It's a beautiful mistake.

I did try to have a little fun with the titles of some of the work—Shit from Shinola, Stairway to Nowhere, Switcheroo, and The Writing on the Wall, to name a few.

I wasn't so interested in being funny—I was interested in the strange feelings that result from the combination of other feelings, how humor and sadness can combine to be bittersweet, and how humor and death or violence can combine to be macabre.



Shit from Shinola, 2010.

Let's talk about the way that signs and advertising language work in *Redheaded Peckerwood*. In the film, Holly's father, played by Warren Oates, is a stern and forbidding man who kills her dog as punishment, yet paints sunny, bright advertising signs and billboards for a living. When written language appears in your photos in this book, it has that sharp-intake effect of delivering both laughter and shock—the painted words What happens after the SHOT was fired? sequenced just before a photograph of a bullet-riddled car, for instance. The last photograph in the book is of the words Let's go out and get a STEAK—with painted flames smoke arising from the word STEAK in a way that's both funny and haunting.

I'm known more as a photographer, so it's important to point out that the signs were designed and painted by hand, and only photographed for the purposes of the book. There are three signs in my book but I created several more that are sometimes shown in exhibitions.

Bengal, Rebecca. "Object Lessons: A Conversation with Christian Patterson," *The Paris Review*, 24 Jun 2013.

The "Fruit Cake 98 Cents" and "Ask for Ethyl" signs were inspired by similar signs that appear in a black-and-white police photograph of a gas station that I discovered in an archive. Starkweather robbed the station, stole a stuffed toy poodle for Caril Ann, then kidnapped and executed the attendant.

The end piece, Let's All Go Out and Get a Steak, was supposedly said by Starkweather's father moments after his son was sentenced to die in the electric chair. How's that for macabre?



Stuffed Toy Poodle, 2007.

Redheaded Peckerwood has just come out in its third edition—congratulations! Tell me about the additions and changes in the later editions. Do you think it will keep evolving in future editions?

The second edition has improved reproductions incorporating different inks and varnishes, and the booklet tucked into the back of the book includes a few courtroom sketches of Starkweather. Between the second and third editions, I learned of a man who was working on an old house near Lincoln, Nebraska, and discovered a stash of photographic negatives and prints hidden inside one of the walls of the house. I spent a day tracking him down on the phone, and he very kindly sent the prints to me. Most of the images were gruesome crime scene photos, and I've never wanted to include anything to gory or sensational. Surprisingly, this story continues to unfold, now more than fifty years later. The third edition includes one of the photographs found in the wall of the house, along with three new archival images and one new insert—a facsimile of a postcard with a message written on the back.

I made this work to share it, and I see no reason to not share new material as it comes my way—as long as it adds to the work in what I feel is a compelling way. I can't imagine a fourth edition of the book but if that opportunity presents itself I'll consider adding any worthy new discoveries to the mix.

Bengal, Rebecca. "Object Lessons: A Conversation with Christian Patterson," *The Paris Review*, 24 Jun 2013.

[illegible]

By CHRISTIAN PATTERSON and LUC SANTE

The formula was already traditional by the time Charles Starkweather and Caril Ann Fugate hit the road in 1958. Its principles were established by Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow before they were gunned down in 1934. They were accomplices, not a couple, but they were married in blood — Bonnie took 23 bullets and Clyde 25. The cultural echoes began soon: Edward Anderson's novel "Thieves Like Us" and Fritz Lang's film "You Only Live Once," both 1937. After the war, Mr. Anderson's novel was filmed by Nicholas Ray as "They Live by Night" (1949) and Joseph H. Lewis made "Gun Crazy" (1950), another variation on the theme.

In his book “Redheaded Peckerwood,” Christian Patterson situates the actions of Mr. Starkweather and Miss Fugate in their time and place. He followed their trail, seeking out material remnants of their lives and actions. His photographs are of actual settings, actual artifacts, symbolic landscapes and metonymic objects; there are also archival photos and reproductions of documents. Mr. Patterson is attempting something that hasn’t been done much: subjective documentary photography of the historical past. This requires that pictures stick close to the physical details while remaining ambiguous; each of the pictures, no matter how innocuous its contents may be, is unsettling and anxiety-producing. The accumulation thrusts the viewer into the emotional center of the story, in a way you could call novelistic. It’s a disturbingly beautiful narrative about unfathomable violence and its place on the land.

LUC SANTE

Patterson, Christian / Sante, Luc. "Violence, Dissected," The New York Times, 09 Sep 2012.

Press Coverage: The New York Times

The New York Times Magazine

Our Top Ten Photo Books of 2011

By THE PHOTO DEPARTMENT

It was not unlike a political caucus. The candidates — in this case, nearly 100 photography books published this year — took over every inch of available counter space in the photo department, where they were carefully scrutinized by a group of opinionated voters, each of whom was given just 10 Post-it notes as ballots. Impassioned speeches were made. Votes were cast: a few books grew polychromatic bouquets of Post-its — each voter had his or her own individual color — while others sprouted single lonely Post-its. Votes were changed: worthy candidates, including the likes of Diana Vreeland and Gerhard Richter, were abandoned. Finally, after weeks, a group of winners emerged. Like all campaigns, it was brutal. Here are the 10 victors, in no particular order.



“Redheaded Peckerwood” (Mack), by Christian Patterson

Patterson takes his inspiration from the story of Charles Starkweather and Caril Ann Fugate, an Eisenhower-era teenage couple who murdered 10 people in Nebraska over three days before they were captured by authorities. Patterson, who approaches their story “as a poet and a gumshoe,” in the words of Luc Sante, whose essay accompanies the book, combines historical photographs, documents and his own creative wanderings into an unsettling dance between evidence and myth.

“Our Top Ten Photo Books of 2011,” [The New York Times](#), 27 Dec 2011.

Press Coverage: Art in America



Ars Libri

By Faye Hirsch

"Sex, speed and ballistics," writes Luc Sante in an essay for Christian Patterson's *Redheaded Peckerwood*, "you simply have to accept that you will explode along the way." He is referring to the ingredients in the crime spree of Charles Starkweather and Caril Ann Fugate, who in the winter of 1957-58 killed 11 people in Nebraska and Wyoming. Like Terrence Malick, Oliver Stone and Bruce Springsteen before him, Patterson, a photographer, became intrigued with those arbitrary murders and the teenagers who committed them. He set off on an investigative journey, researching news archives, visiting key sites, speaking to people involved and taking pictures along the way. The result is a species of crime dossier. The evidentiary photos, a mixture of straight shots and appropriation, feel as random as the crimes themselves. From yellowing documents to suggestive yet inconclusive landscape shots, the book exudes that special frisson that makes teenagers-who-kill a recurring topos in American culture. And from its opening pages, reproducing a letter handwritten by

Starkweather in the thick of events, to the ending, with a taped-together map of the killers' route through Lincoln, a beautifully composed series of images unfolds: nostalgic signage with a sinister undercurrent, anxiety-fraught details like a bare-bulb light fixture with one of the bulbs broken, a crummy stuffed dog, a bed with soiled linens, makeshift curtains warding off sunlight like it's a bad hangover. The unspoken story never overtakes the visuals, nor do the compelling images ever feel anything less than necessary to tell a tale well told. A barely visible photograph of the criminals on the book's cover presents their images as ghostly at best: we'll never see them clearly, it suggests. *Redheaded Peckerwood* ("peckerwood" is a derogatory expression for poor whites, and Starkweather was a redheaded) is now mostly sold out, after just a few short months, but a second edition is forthcoming.

Hirsch, Faye. "Ars Libri," *Art in America*, March, 2012.

theguardian

Christian Patterson Goes on the Trail of America's Natural Born Killers

The Brooklyn photographer's latest book, *Redheaded Peckerwood*, is strange and beautiful despite its subject – an epic killing spree that has haunted America since 1958.



Scene of the crime ... Burned-out Room, an image from Christian Patterson's photobook *Redhead Peckerwood* (2011). Courtesy the artist and Mack Books

In January 1958, Charles Starkweather, a 20 year-old from Lincoln in Nebraska, and Caril Fugate, his 14-year-old girlfriend, embarked on a two-month killing spree that would result in the deaths of 10 people. Starkweather's first victims were Fugate's mother, stepfather and two-year-old sister. The couple hid the bodies, then holed up in Fugate's family home, discouraging visitors with a note pinned to the door that read: "Stay a Way Every Body is sick with the Flue."

When a relative grew suspicious and called the police, the couple fled – so beginning a deadly adventure that by turns mesmerised and appalled the American media and public. They were eventually captured in Douglas,

Wyoming. Starkweather went to the electric chair in 1959 and Fugate began an 18-year sentence in Nebraska Correctional Centre for Women. She now lives in Michigan under an assumed name, and has never remarried, nor spoken of Starkweather or her part in the killings.

Long after the event, the couple's exploits continue to capture the American imagination. In 1973, Terrence Malick directed the disturbingly powerful *Badlands*, his debut feature film based on the murders and starring Sissy Spacek and Martin Sheen. In 1994, amid much controversy over its gratuitous violence, Oliver Stone's *Natural Born Killers* was released, another take on the same dark legend. In 1982, Bruce Springsteen released his album *Nebraska*, the title song of which begins: "Saw her standing on her front lawn / Just a-twirlin' her baton / Me and her went for a ride, sir, and 10 innocent people died / From the town of Lincoln, Nebraska, with a sawn-off .4-10 on my lap / To the badlands of Wyoming, I killed everything in my path."

In 1990, Sonic Youth released *Goo*, an album with a cover illustration by Raymond Pettibon featuring a cool couple in a car with the words: "I stole my sister's boyfriend. It was all whirlwind, heat and flash. Within a week, we killed our parents and hit the road."

Now comes *Redheaded Peckerwood*, a strange and beautiful photobook by Christian Patterson, a young photographer from Brooklyn. (The title refers to a derisory term coined by Southern black people to refer to poor whites from rural neighbourhoods, such as Starkweather and Fugate.) Fifty years after the event, Patterson followed the trail of Starkweather and Fugate across Nebraska and into Wyoming, his magpie eye picking out landscapes, buildings, woods, wastegrounds and darkly suggestive interiors. On the way, he visited the murder sites and the neighbourhoods of the killers and their victims, discovered personal letters and official documents pertaining to the case and trawled the archives of local papers such as the *Lincoln Journal Star* for first-hand accounts of the trial. He talked to police officers, local people, drifters and strangers he met in bars and coffee houses. The result is a unique photobook-cum-archive, a kind of impressionist visual narrative whose subtext is Patterson's own obsession with the couple and their dark mythology, an obsession that began when he watched *Badlands* for the first time in 2004.

"In *Redheaded Peckerwood*," writes Luc Sante in his essay for the book, "Christian Patterson is working out something that hasn't been done much before, if ever: a kind of subjective documentary photography of the historical past. That requires that the individual pictures be true, as close as possible to the physical details as historically established, while remaining ambiguous and unsettling ..."

Press Coverage: The Guardian



Chilling memento ... Patterson found the couple's stuffed toy at one of the murder sites

In a talk that Patterson gave on the book at Rough Trade East in London a few weeks ago, he spoke of the influence of the 1930s Crime Dossier series of books created by Dennis Wheatley and the art historian JG Links. The books went for an unconventional interactive approach, encouraging the reader to decipher the mystery through a series of clues – letters, documents, photographs – contained in cardboard folders that looked like police files. In *Redheaded Peckerwood*, the narrative is altogether more postmodern. For instance, some of the settings are actual, others symbolic. An ominous-looking house photographed at night belongs to one of Fugate's neighbours (her family home was demolished decades ago). A grey and ragged stuffed-toy dog is placed against a pink background, its tackiness emphasised. This was the gift Starkweather intended for Fugate – but the store owner, Robert Colvert, refused his credit. Colvert was shot dead by Starkweather on 30 November 1957, seven weeks before he set off on his epic killing spree with Fugate. Patterson found the ragged toy in the remains of one of the murder sites.

"Murder charges everything it touches," writes Sante. "Every blurred photo, scrap of writing, wadded rag and broken comb ... things you'd never look at twice in any other context ... takes on imminence with its association with violent death." This, then, is a book of testimony and suggestion; a murder mystery that offers no answers, only more clues, possibilities and interpretations. It looks back across the decades at a casually murderous saga that still eludes understanding and continues to fascinate. It brings to mind Springsteen's Nebraska song lyrics, in the voice of Charles Starkweather: "They wanted to know why I did what I did / Well, sir, I guess there's just a meanness in this world."

O'Hagan, Sean. "Christian Patterson Goes on the Trail of America's Natural Born Killers," *The Guardian*, 1 December 2011.

Christian Patterson: Biography and CV

CHRISTIAN PATTERSON was born in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin and currently lives in Brooklyn, New York. Photographs are the heart of his work, but documents, drawings, objects and paintings often accompany them. His work *Redheaded Peckerwood* was published in 2011 to critical acclaim, won the 2012 Recontres d'Arles Author Book Award and is now in its third printing. In 2013 he was awarded a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship. Patterson is self-taught but has lectured extensively about his work. He is represented by Rose Gallery in Santa Monica and Robert Morat in Hamburg and Berlin.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2014 *Redheaded Peckerwood*, Transformer Station, Cleveland, OH
- 2013 *Redheaded Peckerwood*, Rose Gallery, Santa Monica, CA
- 2012 *Redheaded Peckerwood*, Robert Morat, Berlin, Germany
- 2012 *Redheaded Peckerwood & Sound Affects*, Robert Morat, Hamburg, Germany
- 2008 *Sound Affects*, Kaune, Sudendorf Contemporary, Cologne, Germany
- 2007 *Sound Affects*, Robert Koch Gallery, San Francisco, CA
- 2006 *Sound Affects*, Yancey Richardson Gallery, New York, NY
- 2005 *Sound Affects*, Power House, Memphis, TN
- 2003 *Another Time, Another Place, and You*, Southside Gallery, Oxford, MS

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2014 *The Sandbox: At Play with the Photobook*, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA
- BLOG RE-BLOG*, Big Medium, Austin, TX

2013

- Lost Home*, Colette, Paris, France
- Of the Ordinary*, Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester, NY
- Proyecto Fotolibros*, Outono Fotográfico Festival (Dispara), Galicia, Spain
- 10x10 American Photobooks*, Tokyo Institute for Photography, Tokyo, Japan
- BLOG RE-BLOG*, Signal Gallery, New York, NY
- Where I'm Calling From*, Transformer Station, Cleveland, OH
- A Different Kind of Order* (ICP Triennial Reading Room), New York, NY
- Everyday America*, Steven Kasher Gallery, New York, NY
- Present Tense: The Art of Memphis from 2001-Now*, Dixon Gallery, Memphis, TN

2012

- Art Miami Basel (Rose Gallery)*, Miami, FL
- Fidélité, Enthousiasme, Découverte*, agnès b., Paris, France
- Fire Wall*, Paris Photo (Michael Hoppen Gallery), Paris, France
- Paris Photo* (Robert Morat / Rose Gallery), Paris, France
- Work*, FotoGrafia di Roma Festival, MACRO Testaccio, Rome, Italy
- Sommer Accrochage* Kaune, Sudendorf Contemporary, Cologne, Germany
- Kraszna-Krausz Book Awards Exhibition*, Somerset House, London, UK
- Of the Ordinary*, Philadelphia Photo Arts Center, Philadelphia, PA

2011

- Crime Unseen*, The Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago, IL
- Through the Plain Camera*, Haverford College, Haverford, PA
- AIPAD Photography Show* (Robert Morat), New York, NY
- Le Garage*, Le Bal, Paris, France

2010

- New Work New York*, Levi's Photo Workshop, New York, NY
- Bookmakers*, Le Printemps de Septembre (Le Chateau d'Eau), Toulouse, France
- Le Garage*, Septembre de la Photographie, Lyon, France
- Le Garage*, Arles, France
- Music Loves You*, Colette, Paris, France

Christian Patterson: Biography and CV

2008

Preview Berlin (Kaune, Sudendorf), Berlin, Germany
Signs, Mt. Tremper Arts, Mt. Tremper, NY
Vice Photo Show, Vice Gallery, Brooklyn, NY
Vice Photo Show, Scion Installation L.A., Los Angeles, CA
Here You Are, Kaune, Sudendorf, Cologne, Germany
Various Photographs, New York Photo Festival, New York, NY
NEXT Chicago (Kaune, Sudendorf), Chicago, IL

2007

Tiny Vices, La Esquina Gallery, Kansas City, MO
Noise: Young American Photographers, TH Inside, Berlin, Germany
Tiny Vices, White Flag Projects, St. Louis, MO
The Interactive Landscape, Mt. Tremper Arts, Mt. Tremper, NY
Easy Rider, Yancey Richardson, New York, NY
Tiny Vices, *Proyectos Monclova*, Mexico City, Mexico
Noise: Young American Photographers, TH Inside, Milan, Italy
I Turn My Camera On, Milk Gallery, New York, NY, April 10, 2007
The Stable, OkOk Gallery, Seattle, WA
Tiny Vices, Colette, Paris, France

2006

J & L Books, Marcia Wood Gallery, Atlanta, GA
Tiny Vices, Studio Bee, Tokyo, Japan
Tiny Vices, Annex Gallery, University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, Oshkosh, WI
To Hell with Dixie, Groeflin-Maag, Basel, Switzerland
Storefront Stories, Yancey Richardson, New York, NY
The Armory Show (Spencer Brownstone), New York, NY
Tiny Vices, Spencer Brownstone, New York, NY
Lantana Projects, The Nineteenth Century Club, Memphis, TN
Palm Beach Contemporary 3 (Marcia Wood), Palm Beach, FL

2005

Katrina Art Auction, Cheim & Read, New York, NY

2004

Power House 2004, Power House Memphis, TN
New Southern Photography, Ogden Museum, New Orleans, LA

2003

Picturing Bill, John Stinson Fine Arts, New Orleans, LA

SELECTED COLLECTIONS

Collection agnès b., Paris, France
Berman Photography Collection, Los Angeles, CA
The Fred and Laura Ruth Bidwell Photography Collection, Peninsula, OH
Dow Jones, New York, NY
Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser Collection, Los Angeles, CA
John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, New York, NY
Library of the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL
Library of the International Center of Photography, New York, NY
Library of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY
Library of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA
Library of the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY
Light Work Collection, Syracuse, NY
Milwaukee Art Museum, Milwaukee, WI
The Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago, IL
Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO
New Orleans Museum of Art, New Orleans, LA
Ogden Museum of Southern Art, New Orleans, LA
Fred and Nancy Poses, New York, NY
The Sir Elton John Photography Collection, Atlanta, GA

MONOGRAPHS

2013 Lost Home. Super Labo: Tokyo.
2013 Bottom of the Lake. TBW Books: Oakland.
2011 Redheaded Peckerwood. MACK: London.
2010 Redheaded Peckerwood. (Self-published artist book)
2008 Sound Affects. Edition Kaune, Sudendorf: Cologne.

Christian Patterson: Biography and CV

BIBLIOGRAPHY

2014

Ortlieb, Pierre. "Visual Artist Discusses Recent Work," Yale Daily News, 05 Mar 2014.
Soubrier, Antoine. "Zineland," L'Oeil de la Photographie, 28 Feb 2014.
Vecten, Laurence. "Christian Patterson: Bottom of the Lake," One Year of Books, 19 Feb 2014.
Sutcliffe, Lisa. "Christian Patterson: Bottom of the Lake," 1000 Words, 27 Jan 2014.

2013

Bush, Lewis. "Christian Patterson," Of the Afternoon, Winter 2013.
Barker, Gregory. "Christian Patterson: Bottom of the Lake," Hotshoe, Winter 2013.
Wolgamott, L. Kent. "Photographer Explores Charles Starkweather, Caril Ann Fugate," Lincoln Journal Star, 24 Oct 2013.
Samson, Jonah. "Open Book: Christian Patterson + Paul Schiek," Cool Hunting, 20 Sep 2013.
Bennett, Emma. "Photographically Unconcealing the Crimes: Christian Patterson's Redheaded Peckerwood and Heidegger's 'Aletheia'," Philosophy of Photography, Sep 2013.
Lavoie, Vincent. "Legal Re-enactment in Christian Patterson's Redheaded Peckerwood," Esse, Autumn 2013.
Drucker, Johanna. "Shut Up and Listen to the Artists!," Los Angeles Review of Books, 5 Sep 2013.
Yamashita, Kiichiro. "Redheaded Peckerwood: Christian Patterson," IMA, Autumn 2013.
Kikuta, Mikiko. "New Documents," IMA, Autumn 2013.
Bennet, Emma. "Photographically Unconcealing the Crimes: Christian Patterson's *Redheaded Peckerwood* and Heidegger's *Aletheia*," Philosophy of Photography, Sep 2013.
Roels, Bruno. "In De Ban Van Een Slachting," De Standaard, 31 Aug 2013.
"The Chilling Images in Christian Patterson's 'Redheaded Peckerwood,'" All That is Interesting, 31 Aug 2013.
Jones, Tiffany. "Christian Patterson: On the Case," fLIP, Summer 2013.
Bengal, Rebecca. "Object Lessons: A Conversation with Christian Patterson," The Paris Review, 24 Jun 2013.

Afterimage (cover), Summer 2013.

"Upcoming Photographers Around the World," IMA, Summer 2013.
"Best Photobooks of the 2010s," IMA, Summer 2013.
Colberg, Jörg. "Redheaded Peckerwood III," Conscientious, 2 May 2013.
Noll, Ute. "Mosaik des Grauens," Photographie, May 2013.
"2013 Guggenheim Fellows Announced," Artforum, 11 Apr 2013.
Magenat, Pauline. "A Studio Visit with Christian Patterson," All of this is Rocket Science, 8 Apr 2013.
Colberg, Jörg. "The Golden Age of the Photobook," Café Royal Books, Apr 2013.
Pastrovich, Jacob. "Christian Patterson," BOMBLOG, 18 Mar 2013.
Augschöll, Daniel. "Interview: Christian Patterson," Ahorn, 25 Feb 2013.
Samson, Jonah. "Interview: Christian Patterson," Cool Hunting, 19 Feb 2013.
Storm, Christian. "Christian Patterson and the Trail of Dead," VICE, 19 Feb 2013.
"David Lynch on His Favorite Photographs," Los Angeles Review of Books, 12 Feb 2013
"Conversation with Christian Patterson," Études Studio, 3 Jan 2013.

2012

"20+20," Installation Magazine, Dec 2012.
"Christian Patterson," Hayden's Ferry Review, Fall/Winter 2012.
Gordon, Amanda. "Paris Photo," Bloomberg, 16 Nov 2012.
Risch, Conor. "Circles of Influence: Christian Patterson's Redheaded Peckerwood," PDN, Dec 2012.
Walker, David. "Influencers: Fred & Laura Bidwell," PDN, Dec 2012.
Badger, Gerry. "Sequencing the Photobook," The Photobook Review, Fall 2012.
Colberg, Jörg. "Toward the 21st Century: Redheaded Peckerwood by Christian Patterson," Conscientious, 21 Sep 2012.
Sante, Luc. "Violence, Dissected," The New York Times, 9 Sep 2012.
Fischer, Jack. "The Photobook Renaissance," SquareCylinder.com, 12 Aug 2012.
"2012 Arles Book Prize Winners," Photo-Eye Blog, 16 Jul 2012.
Coignet, Rémi. "Arles: Prix du Livre 2012," Des Livres et des Photos, 9 Jul 2012.
Azoury, Phillippe. "Prix du livre 2012 au Festival d'Arles: 'Redheaded Peckerwood' de Christian Patterson," Obsession, 9 Jul 2012.
"200 Days, 200 Photo Books: Christian Patterson, Redheaded Peckerwood,"

Christian Patterson: Biography and CV

Fotografie Forums Frankfurt / Album Magazin für Fotografie, 4 Jul 2012.
“Redheaded Peckerwood,” The Story (American Public Media), 22 Jun 2012.
“Christian Patterson on the Second Edition of Redheaded Peckerwood,”
Photo-Eye Blog, 8 June 2012.
“The Photographs Not Taken,” The Story (American Public Media), 30 May 2012.
Schles, Ken. “Photographer, Detective, Photobook-Maker,” The Photobook Review, Spring 2012.
“Redheaded Peckerwood by Christian Patterson,” The Independent, 15 Apr 2012.
Colberg, Jörg. “A Conversation with Christian Patterson,” Conscientious, 9 Apr 2012.
Colberg, Jörg. “Better by Design: The Role of Design in the Making of Five Modern Photobooks,” British Journal of Photography, 21 Mar 2012.
O’Hagan, Sean. “Photographs Not Taken: What Makes a Photographer Freeze?” The Guardian, 15 Mar 2012.
Ford, Wayne. “Redheaded Peckerwood: A Visual Crime Dossier by American Artist Christian Patterson,” Wayne Ford’s Posterous, 12 Jan 2012.

2011

Muthard, Chad. “Niagara / Redheaded Peckerwood,” Impalpable Parallel, 15 Dec 2011.
Roalf, Peggy. “Christian Patterson at Dashwood Books,” Design Art Daily, 30 Nov 2011.
Irvine, Karen, “Crime Unseen.” The Museum of Contemporary Photography, Oct 2011.
Hanson, Sarah P., “Clued In: Redheaded Peckerwood by Christian Patterson.” Modern Painters, Sep 2011.

2010

“Snapshot.” ArtReview, Dec 2010.

2008

“The Honor Roll.” SPIN, Aug 2008.
“Riddles.” Vice, Aug 2008.
“An Interview with Christian Patterson” Sonic Blog, May 2008.

2007

“Christian Patterson: Out There,” Making Room Magazine, Jul 2007.
“The Beauty of Everyday American Life.” FlashFilm. Jun 2007.

2006

“Salon XVIII.” The Journal. Winter 2006.
Flavorpill. Sep 19-25, 2006.
Miller, Ken. “Surround Sounds.” Tokion. Jun 2006.
“King of Photo: Christian Patterson.” Tokion. Feb 2006.

2005

Hausermann, Thierry. “Portfolio: Christian Patterson.” IdPure. Spring 2005.
Res. Mar-Apr 2005.
Diekmann, Joerg. “Kicks.” AK47 (cover). Dec 2004-Jan 2005.

2004

Mirani, Robert. “Conversation with Christian Patterson.” Coincidences. December 2004.
“Jam on Down the Road.” Tokion. November 2004.
Daiwan, Shaila K. “Old or New, the South Remains a Place Apart.” The New York Times. July 11, 2004.
Goodinson, Elena. “On the Road.” HotShoe. July 2004.
LaSala, Anthony. “PDN’s 30 2004.” Photo District News. March 2004.

2003

Weidenfeld, Nicholas “Christian Patterson.” While You Were Sleeping. Oct 2003.

Christian Patterson: Biography and CV

AWARDS AND RESIDENCIES

2013

John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship
Nominee, HCB Award

2012

Winner, Recontres d'Arles Author Book Award
Finalist, Kraszna-Krausz Book Award

2010

Artist-In-Residence, Light Work, Syracuse, NY

2009

Nominee, The Baum Award for Emerging American Photographers
Artist-In-Residence, Art Farm, Marquette, NE

2008

Nominee, New York Photo Award, Fine Art Series
Artist-In-Residence, Kimmel Harding Nelson Center for the Arts, Nebraska City, NE

2007

Nominee, Santa Fe Prize for Photography
Artist-In-Residence, Lincoln Arts Council, Lincoln, NE

2006

Artist-In-Residence, Lincoln Arts Council, Lincoln, NE

2004

PDN30

ARTIST TALKS, WORKSHOPS AND TEACHING

2014

University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, WI
Vevey School of Photography, Vevey, Switzerland
Cooper Union, New York, NY
Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY
Yale School of Art, New Haven, CT
Pratt Institute, New York, NY
Mentor, School of Visual Arts, New York, NY

2013

ECAL University of Art and Design, Lausanne, Switzerland
Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester, NY
Midwest Society for Photographic Education (Keynote Speaker), Lincoln, NE
Indiana University, Bloomington, IN
MiCamera Workshop, Milan, Italy
Blank Paper Workshop, Madrid, Spain
School of Visual Arts, New York, NY

2012

International Center of Photography, New York, NY
Royal Academy of Fine Arts, Antwerp, Belgium
School of Visual Arts Theater (with Luc Sante and Michael Mack), New York, NY
Visual Studies Workshop Photo-Bookworks Symposium, Rochester, NY
Salt Institute for Documentary Studies, Portland, ME
Stanford University, Stanford, CA
California College of the Arts, San Francisco/Oakland, CA
Pratt Institute, New York, NY
Parsons School of Design, New York, NY
Philadelphia Photo Arts Center, Philadelphia, PA

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