



H a r d w a r e
AT ISLAND HARDWARE

September – December 2026



Lindsay Buchman S T R A T A G E M S (ORANGE COUNTY)

NOVEMBER 1 – DECEMBER 31, 2026

Stratagems (Orange County) is a film essay by Lindsay Buchman exploring how place shapes who we become. The work is part of Buchman's long-term project *Everything I've Ever Loved*, which explores underrepresented narratives in Orange County, California through the lens of transracial adoption, social identity, land use, and the Southern California landscape.

Lindsay Buchman is an interdisciplinary artist, writer, and publisher based in Brooklyn, NY, whose work explores image-making and writing through print and lens-based media, artist books, and installation. Recent exhibitions include the Penumbra Foundation, Center for Photography at Woodstock, and the Wignall Museum of Contemporary Art. Her work is in the collections

of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the New York Public Library, and SFMOMA, and she has received the Lighthouse Works Fellowship, the Flaherty Fellowship, and the Toby Devan Lewis Fellowship. Her work has appeared in *Hyperallergic*, *Lenscratch*, and *The Hopper Prize Journal*. She has been an artist-in-residence at Light Work, CPW, the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, and the Lower East Side Printshop. Buchman holds an MFA from the University of Pennsylvania and a BFA from California State University, Long Beach.

Lindsay Buchman: Stratagems (Orange County), 2020–25, 8 minute 56 second HD video with sound played on loop. Curated for HARDWARE by Lighthouse Works Curator-at-Large Laurel Ptak.

LAUREL PTAK *Stratagems (Orange County)* is a poignant film essay that explores how place shapes who we become. You draw upon your own personal history and relate it so interestingly to the landscape and broader social histories of where you grew up. What led you to make this work? How did it begin?

LINDSAY BUCHMAN I began working on my long-term project about Orange County after completing a former body of work (*Sunstruck*, 2018–19) focused on vernacular photography, archives, and the relationship between distance and desire. My seven-year project evolved naturally between two modes of working: photographing and filming the Southern California landscape and sifting through regional public archives.

I looked through my photo album for this interview to remember which process came first, and it appears the first photograph I made was an inkjet print of an archival photograph—an aerial topographic image—that disappeared on one edge as the printer ran out of ink. This disappearing act, evident as an accident, became the subtext of what the project would become: a meandering narrative, differing resolutions across pixels and grain, gestures connected to my own obscured biography and its relation to the land.

I don't remember what prompted my first search of the Orange County Archives online, but by December 2019, I was at the University of California, Irvine photographing ephemera related to land use and the development of the county I grew up in. Over the years, I accidentally became a landscape photographer.

The entire process has been one of searching: first for information about how Orange County's land was subdivided and for whom, and next for evidence of how place shapes racial imaginaries. My autobiography as a transracial adoptee became threaded through the work in the form of autoethnography, at times receding to focus on the broader sociopolitical histories of the region and their role in affecting belonging, but in the latter years, I have begun to piece it all together—I am still searching, but I can finally see the ground.

PTAK There is a quiet tension between the video's poetic visual language and the counter-narrative in its subtitles. It's an interesting approach that underscores a lot of other disjunctures you are addressing here too. How do you think about the different layers in this work?

BUCHMAN My work has focused on creating ruptures between perceptual sight and physical site. This working method often acts as a form of refusal, resisting a clean or neutral narrative and instead unsettling how surfaces can be understood.

I am interested in utilizing poetic language, both visual and textual, to position differing temporalities that actively conflict with each other: A soft, ethereal tree with beaded drops of rain shifts to a shallow depth of field, while text runs over it, echoing suburban histories of white flight and "Not In My Backyard" politics. How might we reimagine the land beneath us and the histories buried in the process?

My work often considers how a landscape can be both beautiful and fraught at the same time. As the project's name suggests, I am making work about a place I love. And it is true that I am enamored by the Californian landscape. But I am also affected by its history of racism and discrimination. My project attempts to negotiate this tension, remaining critical of how power has shaped the region while also hovering around softer memories I associate with Orange County's natural environment.

PTAK This video is just one part of a larger and ongoing series of photographs, installations, publications, and more, that explore themes of identity, race, land use, and landscape. Can you tell us a bit more about this project?

BUCHMAN *Everything I've Ever Loved* is a multimedia autoethnography that considers Orange County, California's history of landholdings, conservatism, and underrepresented narratives surrounding transracial adoption, race, and ethnicity, and how identity is formed through the landscape in the absence of kinship. The project explores autobiographical accounts of place alongside broader

social histories of Southern California, mapping how a veiled understanding of self, distinct to adoption, can be contoured by regional politics, place-based racism, and geography. The project features photographic negatives and archives from the 20th century, paired with the iconography of the Valencia orange, a symbol for Orange County's name and an emblem of migrant labor in its farmlands; these central images are contrasted by image-making from regional locations, parklands, coastlines, and neighborhoods that comment on the preservation of 'natural' land within the southernmost part of the County. I work between my familial backyard, home, and neighborhoods within South OC, reconstructing images through collage,



writing, photo essays, artist books, films, and print media, often situated in installation formats that expand time and space.

PTAK Your project is underpinned by interesting artistic research. What archives and information did you seek out and how did this shape the work? What was it like to map your experience of growing up in a place onto its regional politics and history?

BUCHMAN The majority of my research comes from the University of California, Irvine's Orange County & Southeast Asian Archive Center. I work from numerous collections within the OC Regional Collection, from local historians to general OC ephemera; however, I am particularly interested in the Jim Sleeper Papers because they are minimally processed and idiosyncratic, revealing how authorship emerges through archives. Across the collections, I have encountered topics ranging from racial profiling, organized discrimination, and violence to natural land preserves, Mexican land grants, ranchos, and the subdivisions from these land parcels, as well as the development of harbors, beaches, and parks. I also seek out real estate advertising from the 1980s and its connection to Manifest Destiny, most notable in South OC, branded through typography, "master-planned" communities, and the romanticization of the American West; these particular materials dovetail with elements of Christian nationalism and the mega churches that defined Orange County from the 1970s to the early aughts. There is no shortage of newspaper clippings referencing the County's conservative influence and movements (think John Birch Society, Barry Goldwater, and Ronald Reagan) to the role of libertarianism and NIMBYism. I study these ideologies to analyze how they produced fear of the other (non-white, non-heteronormative groups) and resulted in attacks—on individuals and marginalized groups, and on educational curricula in ethnic and social studies—not dissimilar from today.

My creative research in the archives has produced hundreds of photographed and scanned documents, which I reposition through photo collage and artist books as recomposed counter-narratives. I place these materials in contrast with my current photographs, asking how Orange County's past continues to shape its present—reflections on who gets to belong and who is marked as the other. This process has mirrored my experience growing up between the 1980s and 2010s in Orange County, a time that was rife with xenophobia, anti-Mexican rhetoric, and assimilation. In addition to the social tensions I point to in my critique of how prejudice is born, I also draw on the parklands I grew up in and the development of South OC. (The latter, an outcome of having a park ranger for a father.) The map I have formed is

was your impulse in combining and working across these mediums?

BUCHMAN I tend to work within and between disciplines, and my interdisciplinary graduate training was foundational in establishing my methodology across digital and analog media. I am interested in mediated images that transmute as they move back and forth between physical media and the screen. I typically try to produce moving images that act as books, and vice versa.

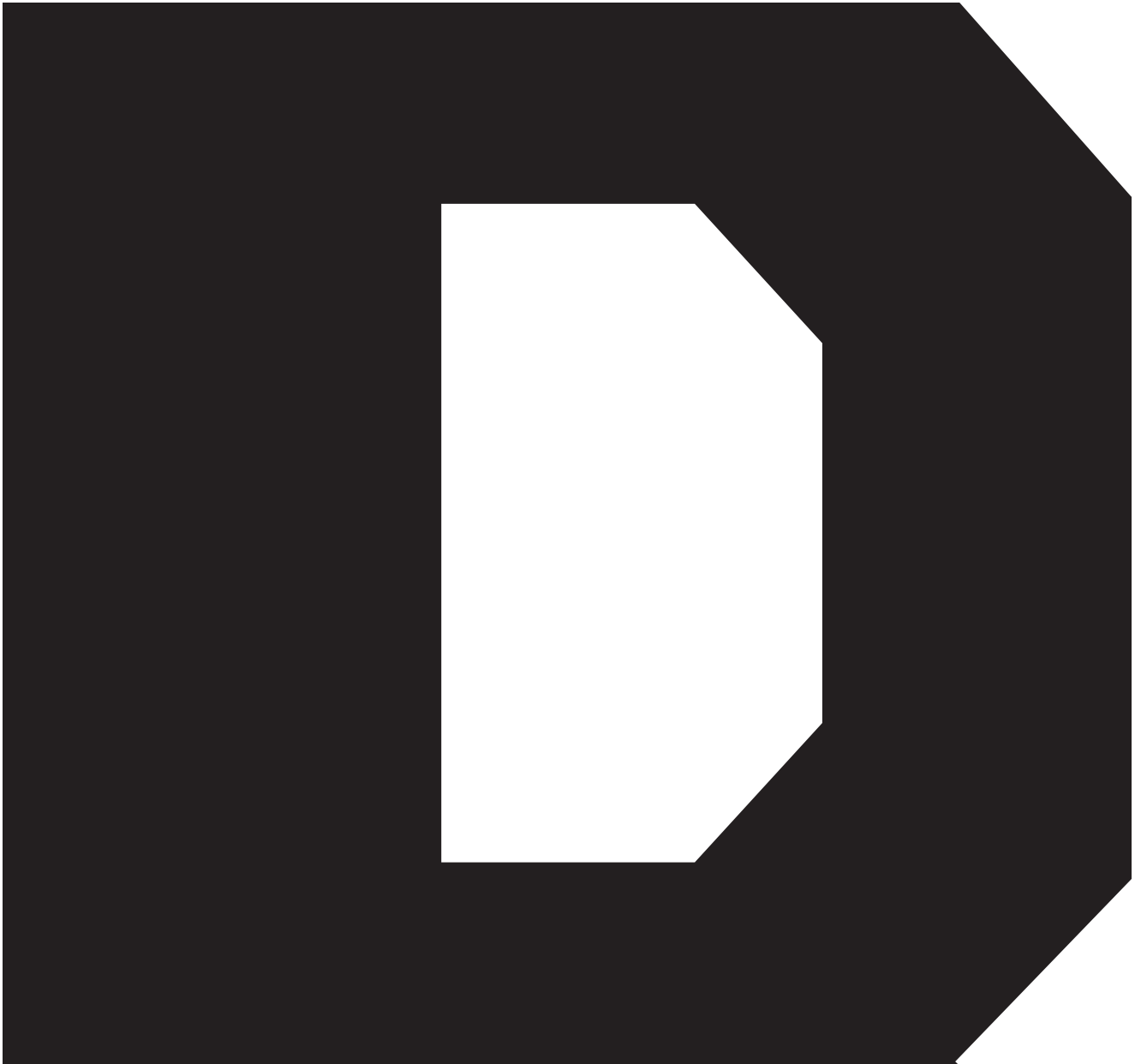
PTAK In the span of time you've worked on this project there's been much that's shifted profoundly in terms of how race, immigration, and belonging get addressed and play out politically inside American life. How do you see the work relating, or not, to what's happening around us on a national stage?

BUCHMAN It's difficult to articulate the sustained sense of pain I feel about American values when it comes to race, immigration, and belonging. But I can say as someone who grew up hearing "go back to where you came from" along with racial slurs commonly directed at Mexican Americans, the discrimination we are currently hearing directed at immigrants and people of color is not new. And yet, the US government's attacks on immigration have never been more violent in my lifetime. While I am a citizen, many transracially adopted people are not, and they, too, have been deported. I cannot begin to claim that my work can stop state-sanctioned violence or prevent people from being stolen from their loved ones. My work maps power and injustice through sociopolitical histories, asking viewers to look closely and observe keenly for how discriminatory ideologies emerge; it focuses on poetic landscapes and inserts difficult information as a rupture, a call back to reality, an attempt to refuse the comfort of beauty to wash away agonizing histories. It is meant to be a form of expression that challenges dominant culture, much like works of literature can help us reflect on society as historical markers, while also finding moments for visibility to create its own world beyond the one trapped in dispossession—more of a poem than a proclamation.

PTAK You've worked on *Everything I've Ever Loved* over a number of years, how has it evolved for you and where do you think it might still need to go? What else are you working on right now?

BUCHMAN The project has seen many evolutions but has a few more to go. I am preparing for a large-scale institutional solo show for September of 2027 at TILT Institute for the Contemporary Image in Philadelphia, which will allow for more ambitious installation formats in moving image and the introduction of new oral histories and archival ephemera. I am also working toward a larger publication to sit between research object, photographic archive, and creative writing—a critical point of inquiry that has yet to develop fully.

I am currently scanning an extensive backlog of negatives made between 2024–26 for my next publication and printing wall-sized images from these scans for my current solo exhibition, *Tierras (a sentence, a fragment)*, at Hofstra University, where I recently began teaching as Assistant Professor of Photography. The exhibition design has taken on a life of its own, comprising my publications, collages, lumen prints, digital and analog photographs, a neon text piece, and moving image, an exercise that has helped reconnect the absence and presence of ground.





HARDWARE is a year-round exhibition space for film and video by contemporary artists located in the loose screw section of Island Hardware on Fishers Island.

Every two months a new moving-image work appears, inviting unexpected encounters with contemporary art where the everyday rhythms, textures, and temporalities of a hardware shop frame the work.

Inside Island Hardware at 741 The Gloaming on Fishers Island, **HARDWARE** is programmed by Lighthouse Works and open to the public during business hours, Monday–Friday 8am–3:30pm or by appointment.

HARDWARE is curated by Laurel Ptak with support from Claudia DeSimone and Eliza Schmidt. Exhibition guide designed by Eric Nylund. Special thanks to Dave Beckwith and the entire team at Island Hardware for their ongoing support.

For further information about these exhibitions contact Nate Malinowski: nate@lighthouseworks.us or (631) 788-7713.

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