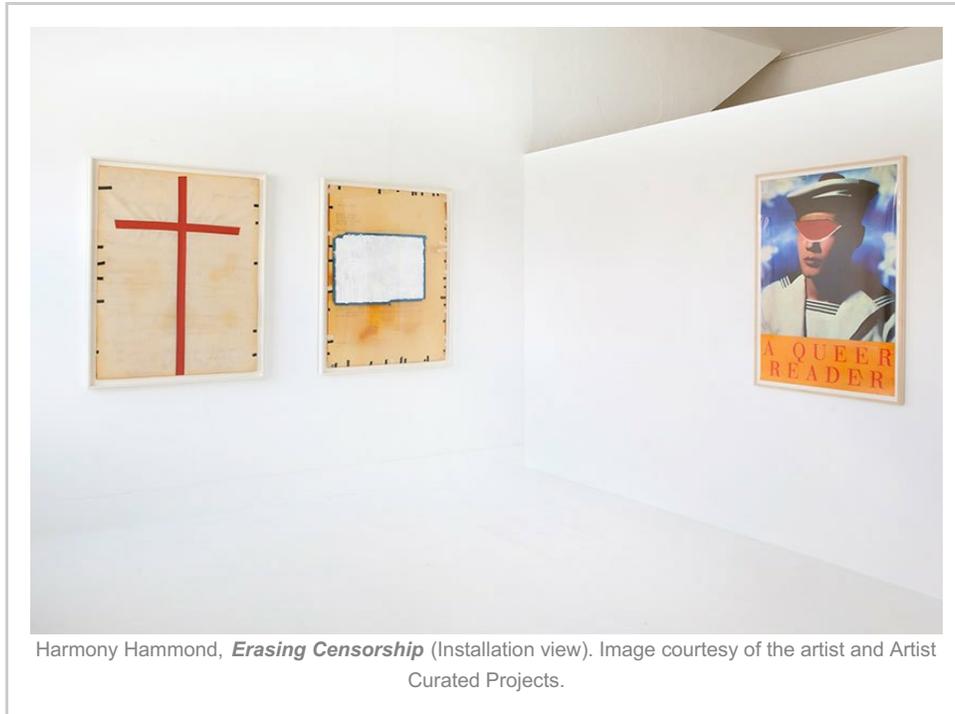


Harmony Hammond at Artist Curated Projects

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Text by Keith J. Varadi



Harmony Hammond's *Erasing Censorship* at Artist Curated Projects is a concise, cutting exhibition of reframed information, made up of works spanning 15 years. Like a self-selected historian, Hammond has dug into her own archive and offers insights into her personal history, as well as a historical narrative of queerness. Narratives, of course, change over time—details and perspectives harden or soften in relation to their cultural climate.

Books are crucial to the context of most of what is on view here. Almost 20 years ago, staff members at the San Francisco Public Library discovered that over 600 of their books, which focused on LGBTQ topics and women's health issues, were incised and hidden under shelves. In response, Hammond tastefully cropped a crudely altered cover of *A Queer Reader: 2500 Years of Male Homosexuality*, removing the subtitle and editor's name. The resulting medium-sized inkjet copy, *A Queer Reader* (2010), portrays the face of a softened, sexualized sailor, sliced by the vandal. Hammond's gesture transforms her into a new type of editor, moving the viewer past gender and generation. Located across from the gallery's front door, it serves both as artwork and advertisement for the show.

Hammond's *Erasure #1* and *Erasure #2* (both 2002) are related to her own book, *Lesbian Art in America: A Contemporary History* (2000). For this body of work, Hammond enlarged photocopies of rejection letters from lesbian artists she intended to include in her book, then obfuscated them with latex rubber and other materials—in the two works here, a red-taped cross and a cloud of white acrylic outlined in blue tape were added. In each instance, the artists' names are concealed, ironically revealing her own contentious implementation of

ensorship. Whereas the book-defacer at the public library was making a broad statement against strangers whose lifestyles he condemned, Hammond took specific action against those she felt betrayed her and her beliefs. Identity and politics are slippery and sloppy, yet Hammond's raw sensitivity and vulnerability exposes the nuances of processing and puts viewers in a position to re-examine their own strengths and insecurities.

Harmony Hammond: *Erasing Censorship* runs from February 15–March 29, 2018 at Artist Curated Projects (1664 W. Temple St., Los Angeles, CA 90026).





Harmony Hammond, *Erasure #1* (2002). Mixed media, 47.35 x 35.75 inches. Image courtesy of the artist and Artist Curated Projects.