Julie Linowes (formerly Julie Firth) lives in New York and has been a photographer and video installation artist for over 35 years. Linowes received a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Pennsylvania in 1978 and a Master of Fine Arts in 1988 from the University of Southern California, School of Cinema-Television. She has exhibited widely both internationally and in the United States and is in the permanent collections of prominent museums including the National Museum Of Women In The Arts and the Corcoran Gallery of Art. Linowes is also in private and corporate international collections and has been in numerous solo and group exhibits including a Sotheby’s exhibit and auction and the Corcoran Gallery’s “Both Sides Of Photography.” Linowes has been published in academic journals and she presents papers at international conferences in her area of specialization, the intersection between psychoanalytic experience and the creative process.

INCLUDED WORKS

he agreed. This was the object that started the journey that became STAIN.

The starting point for STAIN was when I came across a tallis that my father spoken to me in some way and so I’m willing to explore their significance kind of thing. I gather things up with little understanding of what will be of look for objects that possess that same quality, that are imbued with some at objects. Typically, I find myself going to places that are saturated with a Often, I wander around looking at landscapes, various locations, looking

I feel this impulse to start casting about for a new direction, new ideas. usually comes when I’m getting near to completing another body of work. The work was exploring. The starting point for me with a new body of work all I could listen to while I worked. It struck the emotional temperature that

JL: I came across the music as I went along but as soon as I heard it, it was

music, of course, is wonderful, so I’m wondering if you started with the

music or if you found the right music as you went along?

JL:  That’s true...both metaphorically and literally! And not only do they
go into the synagogue to pray. It is a sacred kind of object.

JL: It’s a Jewish prayer shawl that men have traditionally worn when they

returned to New Zealand after visiting the States, I walked into my organic butcher shop and there was a full-body pig carcass hanging behind the counter. It was like “Oh, my God!” First of all, as an object it appealed to me enormously because I love that push-pull between horror and beauty and, boy, did that pig carcass possess both. This kind of polarity really gets me going. I think that’s one of the reasons why I’m such a fan of Matthew Barney, Francis Bacon. My response was that it had to go in, but I didn’t know why. I spent several years working with both the tails and the pig carcass but I felt extremely uncomfortable about doing so. My discomfort came from not really understanding why I felt compelled to work with these objects. I knew that these were such loaded objects, and I knew that if I couldn’t articulate, to myself first of all, why I was doing what I was doing that not only was I headed for big trouble but I was also being irresponsible. My discomfort was so intense that several times I nearly abandoned the project altogether. But, I also trusted my intuitive process and believed that sooner or later I would arrive at an understanding. And, this happened. In fact, the meaning actually emerged from a dream. I came to understand that I was exploring the sacred and the profane and how unstable these concepts are, I was interrogating how we come to assign those labels to certain objects and ideas.

JR: The piece is called STAIN, and I assume that’s related to the blood, and also to your concern with human nature or Original Sin, a condition of being alive.

JL: You’re right in saying that STAIN is related to blood but more importantly, it’s an expression of my idea of the relationship between conscious and unconscious experience where the only knowledge we can ever hope to have of our unconscious is the residue that gets left behind...perhaps in the form of dream memories or reveries or fantasies. To my mind, there’s a stain, an evidentiary trace, that is deposited on the membrane of the conscious and it is this that we can examine for clues to ourselves.

Which brings me back to the second part of your question which has to do with human nature and Original Sin or, as you so beautifully put it, “the condition of being alive.” I really do believe in that saying, “the personal is political.” I think we all carry within us part of that which we reject, harshly judge, are ashamed of...and I also think that we turn our back on these parts and bury them out of sight, somewhere deep inside. Yet, just because we don’t see them doesn’t mean that they aren’t still alive and active. In fact, it is because these parts are unacknowledged that they have a way of seeping out and wreaking havoc. One of the most troubling manifestations of this dynamic is our need to project parts of ourselves or cultures that are different from us and to cast them into the role of the “Hated Other.” We see this over and over again on the world stage. The emnity that exists in various parts of the world, whether recent or ancient, has always as one of its components, this viewpoint of ourselves as the Hated Other. And, really, from an entirely different viewpoint we can simply look at the other party or culture as merely different. The hatred is a product of judgment. And that is a misuse of the pig and the pig carcass, for it is those who find the idea of the pig and the tails coexisting within the same image as deeply disturbing or offensive or blasphemous. And, yet, this is exactly what the work is asking the viewer to examine and experience in another cultural context, these objects would not carry the same emotional freight and what is reviled becomes revered. In the final image of the installation, “We Never The Stranger Verse,” the viewer has found a way to embrace the pig, she has learned how to have compassion for that pig, to see it for the wound that it is, and, most importantly...to forgive. Ultimately, STAIN is about compassion and forgiveness. It is a protest against occupying any position that results in polarizing hatred...either within ourselves or between ourselves and others.