

Reimagined Landscapes

Curated by Ann M. Jastrab

The *Reimagined Landscapes* exhibition features the work of 8 female artists, each reinterpreting the landscape genre. As August, 18, 2020 officially marks the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th amendment to the US Constitution, we honor this date with an exhibition of women photographers.

None of the artists in this show are making “straight” landscapes. While the images may have been born from tradition, something happened along the way. These new landscapes are constructed, altered, and reinterpreted. Many of them aren’t real at all. They have been created or built by the photographers, sometimes in a darkroom, sometimes with a pair of scissors, sometimes in a box. It’s a refreshing take on a beloved genre of photography. I still have my wooden view camera at the ready for when the land calls to me, but these women decided to create their own lands. I tip my hat.

The title, *Reimagined Landscapes*, is taken from Georgina Reskala’s project of the same name. I saw one of Reskala’s pieces at Photo LA a few years ago, a landscape like no other, veils of prints cascading down to reveal one photographic image of a forest that had been sliced, dissected, taken apart, but then hung back together so delicately. I thought, “Now this is something I haven’t seen before,” and made a note to watch her and now, of course, include her in this exhibition.

I’ve known some of these artists for a long time, like Vanessa Marsh who was an artist-in-residence at RayKo Photo Center where I was the gallery director. I saw her back then, inventing her landscapes, her giant negatives, with paper and paint and creating mural prints of landscapes that didn’t exist. Landscapes of the mind. Completely constructed. Marsh was driven to take her hand-made work from the digital darkroom to the color darkroom and now back to the origins with silver gelatin, still using her unique vision to create these one-of-a-kind prints.

I’ve also watched Charlotta María Hauksdóttir’s work evolve from a single image, to diptychs to triptychs until eventually she would create her own topography and language and suddenly her prints would no longer be 6 inches tall, but closer to 6 feet tall and also no longer be two-dimensional. And all made with an X-Acto knife and scissors and a lot of patience and care. Her book, *A Sense of Place*, is a culmination of all she has made.

When I saw DM Witman’s *Arctic Elegy*, it was across the room at a massive portfolio walk-through. The red icebergs caught my eye through the crowd. That these could be historical process prints, salted paper, but then the red sea and the red ice...it was violent and beautiful. It was the end. And the beginning of something else. We had just a few minutes together, but I couldn’t forget those reimagined Arctic settings.

I met Ann Mitchell at the same review and we sat across from each other and I looked at her platinum/palladium prints of scenes that she had created. Totally fictional. Sometimes terrifying. Almost always unsettling. At the very least strange. But because of her process, they were so beautiful that I believed them to be real. I still believe.

Liz Hickok has been building her own cities for years. Making molds, creating skylines, using different materials, lighting it all fantastically. And now she’s flooding her cities and she’s experimenting with

different chemicals and processes, but what has happened can feel like the apocalypse or it can feel like a fantasy. Be sure to watch Hickok's videos. And Ann Mitchell's too. Their conceived worlds are not still.

Mercedes Dorame's work explores her Native American roots and she constructs scenes in the landscape itself. A collaboration with the land, she tries to weave back together loose ends from history, from memory, from her ancestors and her life. I've exhibited her work in the context of the Western landscape and now as a reinterpretation of that very landscape.

Christa Blackwood has taken a look at the history of photography and has decided to make a new translation of an old metaphor. Her photogravures are sublime and perfect...and then there is a red dot painted in the desert landscapes, the hand of the artist, a symbol of the female form, the missing female figure. A different idea of the classical landscape and of the classical nude, employing mixed media and contemporary ideas. It is a landscape that is at once familiar and then disrupted.

The eight artists in this show offer us an alternative vision of the genre of landscape photography, each special, each singular, each reimagining the landscape.