

PARADISE



PAVED

From the age of the dinosaurs
Cars have run on gasoline
Where, where have they gone?
Now, it's nothing but flowers
There was a factory
Now there are mountains and rivers...
There was a shopping mall
Now it's all covered with flowers...
If this is paradise
I wish I had a lawnmower

-David Byrne
(Nothing But) FLOWERS

PARADISE PAVED

An exhibition at the Painted Bride Art Center
Independence Foundation Gallery for the Visual Arts
230 Vine Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106
April 1 – May 21, 2005

Introduction

Inspired by the anti-Vietnam War demonstrations and teach-ins of the late-1960s, Senator Gaylord Nelson issued an environmental call to action in 1969, leading to the first celebration of Earth Day on April 22, 1970, the same year as the founding of the Painted Bride Art Center. This year both Earth Day and the Bride celebrate their 35th anniversaries.



Along with Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962), the now famous photograph of the blue earth floating in the black void of space taken during one of the lunar missions in the 1960s is often credited with awakening the modern environmental movement. Certainly photography and other arts have played a role in bringing environmental issues to the forefront.

In the United States, Carleton Watkins's pioneering photographs of Yosemite in the early 1860s helped lead directly to Congress establishing the first wilderness area "for the benefit of the people, for their resort and recreation, to hold them inalienable for all time." It is said that California Senator John Conness, when introducing the bill to preserve Yosemite, passed Watkins's photographs around the halls of Congress. Watkins's photographs were also familiar to many people in the East Coast through exhibition and sales, both as large prints and stereo views. His images elicited such popular support that Edward Wilson, editor of the *Philadelphia Photographer*, wrote, "It has been said that 'the pen is mightier than the sword,' but who shall not say that in this instance, at least, the camera is mightier than the pen?" The legislation which deeded the Yosemite Valley and Mariposa Big Tree Grove to the state of California was signed into law in 1864.

Likewise, William Henry Jackson's photographs and Thomas Moran's watercolors and paintings of Yellowstone, made as part of Ferdinand Hayden's U.S. Geological Survey of the Territories in 1871, were instrumental in the successful lobbying effort to get Congress to designate Yellowstone the country's first national park. This tradition of using photography to introduce and preserve the wonders of wilderness areas was continued in the twentieth century by Ansel Adams, whose photographs were often made in support of the Sierra Club and other environmental organizations.

"Paradise Paved" presents a small cross-section of photographers who are addressing environmental issues today. Robert Glenn Ketchum is in some ways an heir to Ansel Adams's tradition: his glorious color photographs depict spectacular areas of pristine beauty that are threatened and need our protection. John Ganis's images show us the devastation our large-scale transformation of the landscape is causing while still finding an enduring grace in nature. Joann Brennan presents the

environmentalists who work with endangered as well as less threatened species, reminding us that our intervention is often necessary to ameliorate the changes we have imposed on the natural order. David Maisel's stunning abstract aerial color photographs transform a poisonous landscape into one of amazing visual delectation. And Christine Welch depicts the price that suburban sprawl demands from so many of our communities across the United States.

In today's media-saturated culture, it is often difficult to hold the public's attention for more than a few minutes. But at the present time when our environment is under vigorous attack by corporate interests, perhaps these images will renew our spirit to take action to protect the planet that we all inhabit.

Stephen Perloff, Curator

Acknowledgments

This exhibition and catalogue were made possible by the support of many people. First of all, I would like to thank Laurel Raczka, Director of the Painted Bride Art Center and the staff of the Bride — Dave Brown, Marketing Director; Hamida Kinge, Publicist; and Dave Adamski, Preparator — for all their help. Thank you also to Robert Raczka who was at the meeting where the idea for this exhibition first saw the light of day. I have admired his writing, his curatorial acumen, and his own photographs for many years now.

This exhibition came to fruition because of the wonderful generosity of the artists: Joann Brennan, John Ganis, Robert Glenn Ketchum, David Maisel, and Christine Welch.

And this catalogue would not have been possible without the equally wonderful generosity of numerous donors: The Honickman Foundation, Julie Jensen and Robert Bryan, Henry Buhl, Frances and Bayard Storey, Fred and Susan Denenberg, Leonard Evelev, Linda Lee Alter and Seymour Mednick, and Kenneth Wynn.

Lastly, I am grateful to the staff of The Photo Review, Charles Mann and Linda Suzanne Price, who, along with my wife, Naomi Mindlin, performed invaluable editing of this catalogue.

Stephen Perloff, Curator

ROBERT GLENN KETCHUM

Covering an area larger than the state of Washington, southwest Alaska is a vast watershed that drains from the summits and uplands of the Alaska and Aleutian mountain ranges, west to Bristol Bay and the Bering Sea. A tundra and forest landscape, it is crossed by hundreds of rivers and scattered with thousands of lakes, including Iliamna, one of the ten largest freshwater lakes on the planet. Home to three national wildlife refuges, two national parks (Katmai and Lake Clark), and Wood-Tikchik, the largest state park in the United States, the habitat supports a great array of wildlife including caribou, moose, eagle, and brown bear. It is also the most productive salmon fishery in the history of the world.

Nonetheless, driven by the politics of Alaska's pro-development legislature, the oil and mining industries are now targeting Southwest, and several enormous industrial plans have been proposed that would alter the entire landscape. The first is to build the largest oil refinery complex in the state less than 50 miles from the entrance to Wood-Tikchik State Park. The proposal includes siting drilling platforms in Bristol Bay and the Bering Sea, likely imperiling the fisheries resources, and on land more than 800 miles of support roads would be constructed impacting virtually every river in Southwest, and seriously fragmenting the integrity of the overall habitat. The second plan involves the Pebble Mine, proposed to be the largest open pit mine ever constructed. It would be sited at the head of one of the most significant watersheds in Southwest, and pollution from the source would threaten numerous major rivers.



Fall Spit, Nuyakuk (Wood-Tikchik State Park), 2001



The Iliuk Arm of Naknek Lake, Katmai (National Park and Preserve), 1998



The Red Hills (Wood-Tikchik State Park), 2001

JOHN GANIS

Consuming the American Landscape

For the past seventeen years, John Ganis has photographed the vast American landscape in various stages of disrepair and ruin. His subjects are all too familiar — abandoned wrecks, desolate strip mines, toxic pools, clear-cut forests, industrial parks, landfills, and the leveling of terrains for housing developments — but his treatment of these environmental blights is anything but ordinary. He approaches the subject of over-used and contaminated land with a fair amount of irony and despair, but also an abiding respect for the landscape. Through his subtle handling of color and his aesthetic sensibilities for the picturesque, he gleans the fragile beauty and resilience of even the most damaged landscape.

When he began the series Ganis did not have a particular agenda, just an interest in tracing the impact of industry and development on the landscape. But as the work progressed, and he observed the extent of the damage, he focused his efforts on restoring reverence for the land by revealing its persistent grace. Despite the weight of his subject, his images do not moralize or admonish. He introduces a certain degree of acerbic humor when possible — seen in a clumsy pair of cement moose placed near a stream in Arkansas, or in a viewing device, the kind typically found at scenic overlooks, stationed at the entrance to a strip mine in South Dakota — but more often it is an unflagging beauty that he finds along the edges or in the midst of these sites that engages the viewer. As Robert Sobieszek writes in his essay accompanying Ganis's book, "...Ganis's work is really about the edge, the margin that separates the uncultivated from the over-farmed, the pastoral garden from the bleak wasteland, the 'natural' from the cultured, the past from the present." He navigates this narrow path between the idyllic and the apocalyptic landscape evenly, pointing to minor offenses and irreversible ecologic disasters as equally worthy of notice. As a broad photographic survey, his work presents a strangely romantic view of the landscape and its undoing, deftly reframing contaminated and obliterated sites in golden light and dramatic expanses. His seductive views draw us in for a closer look, inviting new thinking about the landscape we have made.



Family at Badlands National Park, South Dakota



Edge of a Landfill, Oklahoma



Dirt Bike Trails, California



Earthmover, Texarkana, Texas



Fireworks Stand Near Fairbanks, Alaska

JOANN BRENNAN

Managing Eden

For the past sixteen years I have been making photographs that question how we define wildness and how we value nature. I have photographed hunting, habitat manipulation, and animal research, looking for moments of contact between man and animal. I feel these moments tell us something about the complexity of our relationship to nature. Through making this work I have come to realize that our perception of nature and our relationship to wildness is precarious and full of paradox. Nature does not possess endless bounty. It is not self-renewing. It can no longer thrive unassisted. More than ever before, it depends on us. Wildlife has been forced into a strange symbiotic relationship with mankind: when we intervene, we take away part of what is wild; if we do not intervene then wildlife itself may disappear. Our impact on nature, our self-imposed stewardship of all that is wild, has made our touch essential to the lives of the animals we have imperiled. We literally hold the future of wildness in our hands.

On the federal, state, and local level, biologists and chemists, conservationists and naturalists are working in laboratories and the field, conducting research on animals trying to maintain the delicate balance between human concerns and wildlife populations. As a natural resource, wild animals are regulated and manipulated in every state. Game animals such as deer, elk, and bear are hunted, trapped, tagged, and monitored. Fish and fowl are raised in captivity to be released in the wild. Animal habitats are burned, plowed, fenced, planted, and transformed to increase or decrease animal use. Nuisance species are relocated, exterminated, and controlled with chemical contraceptives. Threatened and endangered species are brought back from the brink of extinction through extensive monitoring and captive breeding.

The extent to which we manipulate nature is surprising to me and like many others I am reluctant to let go of the romantic myth of nature. But I have come to understand that there is a price to pay for wildness. To guarantee wildness in our backyards we have no choice but to intervene. In order to become the best possible stewards of our dwindling and battered wildness we must embrace a new definition of wildness that acknowledges complexity and the difficult challenges of realizing a future with wildness in it.



*"Scary Man," frightening device designed to deter coyotes and wolves from predated livestock.
National Wildlife Research Center. Estes Park, Colorado. Fall 2003.*



*Electro-shocking for Apache trout on the west fork of the Black River, Apache Trout Project.
Arizona Game and Fish. September 2003.*



Mark Lutman trapping turtles, Tres Rios River Wetlands Project. Arizona Game and Fish, Phoenix. September 2003.



Containers housing voles in the Simulated Natural Environment Lab used to research strategies for managing rodent populations. National Wildlife Research Center. Fort Collins, Colorado. Fall 2000.



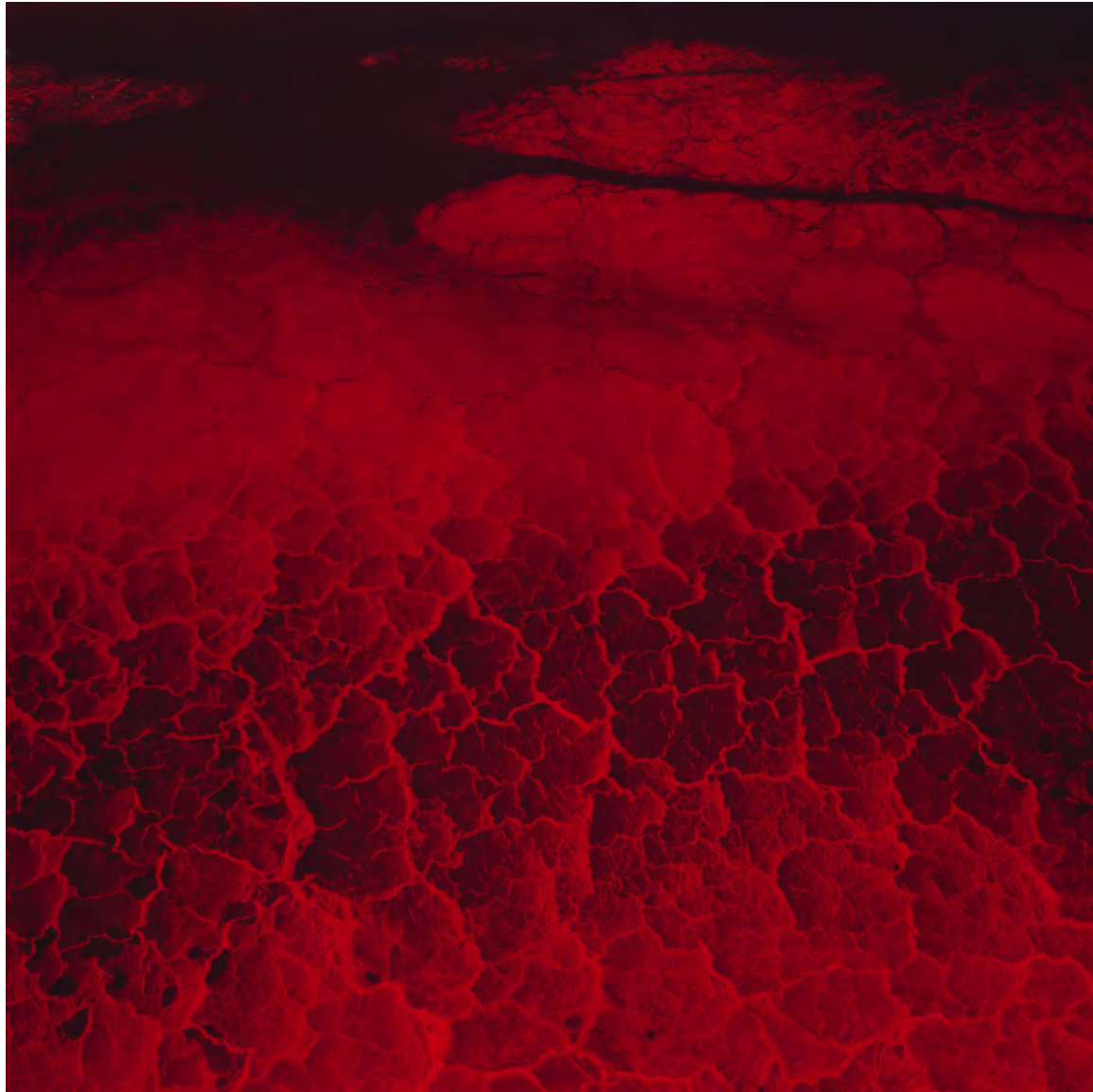
Starling cages, National Wildlife Research Center. Fort Collins, Colorado. Spring 2003.

DAVID MAISEL

The *Black Maps* series comprises aerial photographs of environmentally impacted landscapes. These images have as their subject matter the undoing of the natural world by the wide-scale intervention of human action. The depictions of these damaged wastelands, where human efforts have eradicated any natural order, are both spectacular and horrifying. Although these photographs evidence the devastation of these sites, they also transcribe interior psychic landscapes that are profoundly disturbing — for as otherworldly as these images may seem, they depict a shattered reality of our own making.

These images are meant neither to vilify nor to glorify their content, but rather to expand our notions of what constitutes landscape and landscape art. I am not attempting to make literal records of environmental destruction. Rather I seek to reveal the landscape in something other than purely visual terms, the photograph transcribing it as an archetypal space of destruction and ruin that mirrors the darker corners of our consciousness.

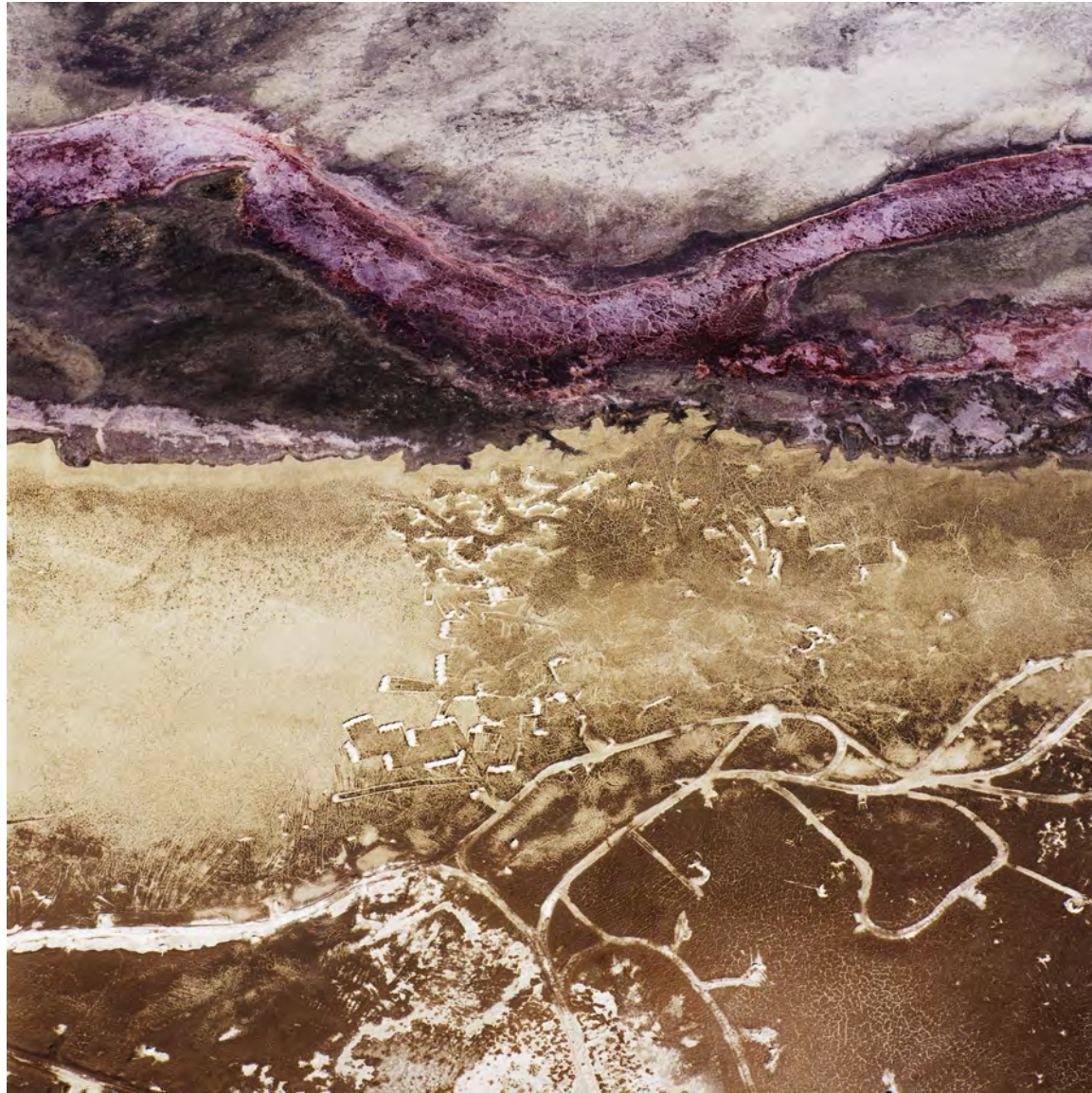
A current chapter in this body of work is *The Lake Project*, begun in 2001. It comprises images from Owens Lake, the site of a formerly 200-square-mile lake in California on the eastern side of the Sierra Mountains. Beginning in 1913, the Owens River was diverted into the Owens Valley Aqueduct to bring water to Los Angeles. By 1926, the lake had been depleted, exposing vast mineral flats. For decades, fierce winds have dislodged microscopic particles from the lakebed, creating carcinogenic dust storms. Indeed, the lakebed has become the highest source of particulate matter pollution in the United States, emitting some 300,000 tons annually of cadmium, chromium, arsenic, and other materials. The concentration of minerals in the remaining water of Owens Lake is so artificially high that blooms of microscopic bacterial organisms result, turning the liquid a deep, bloody red. Viewed from the air, vestiges of the lake appear as a river of blood, a microchip, a bisected vein, or a galaxy's map. It is this contemporary version of the sublime that I find compelling.



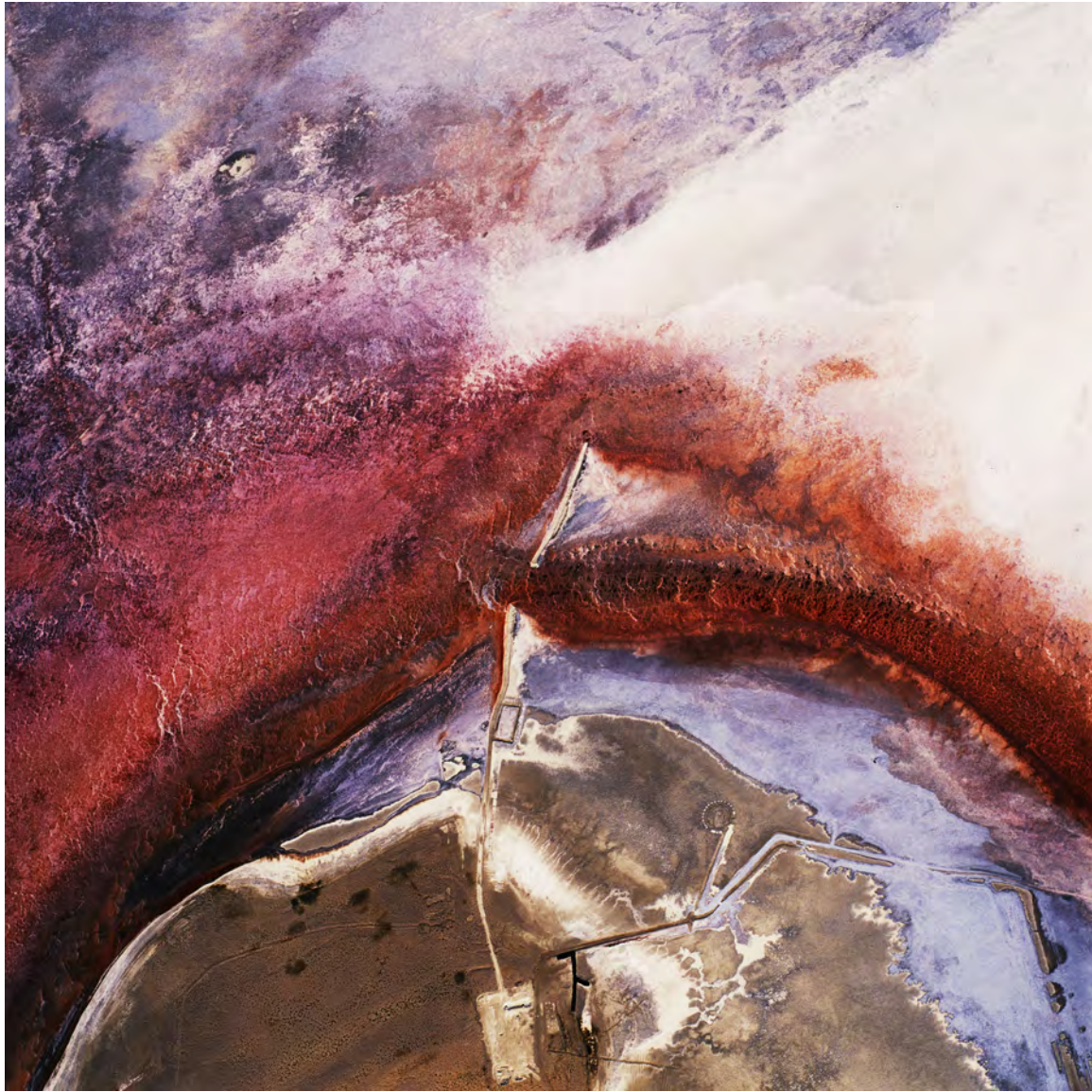
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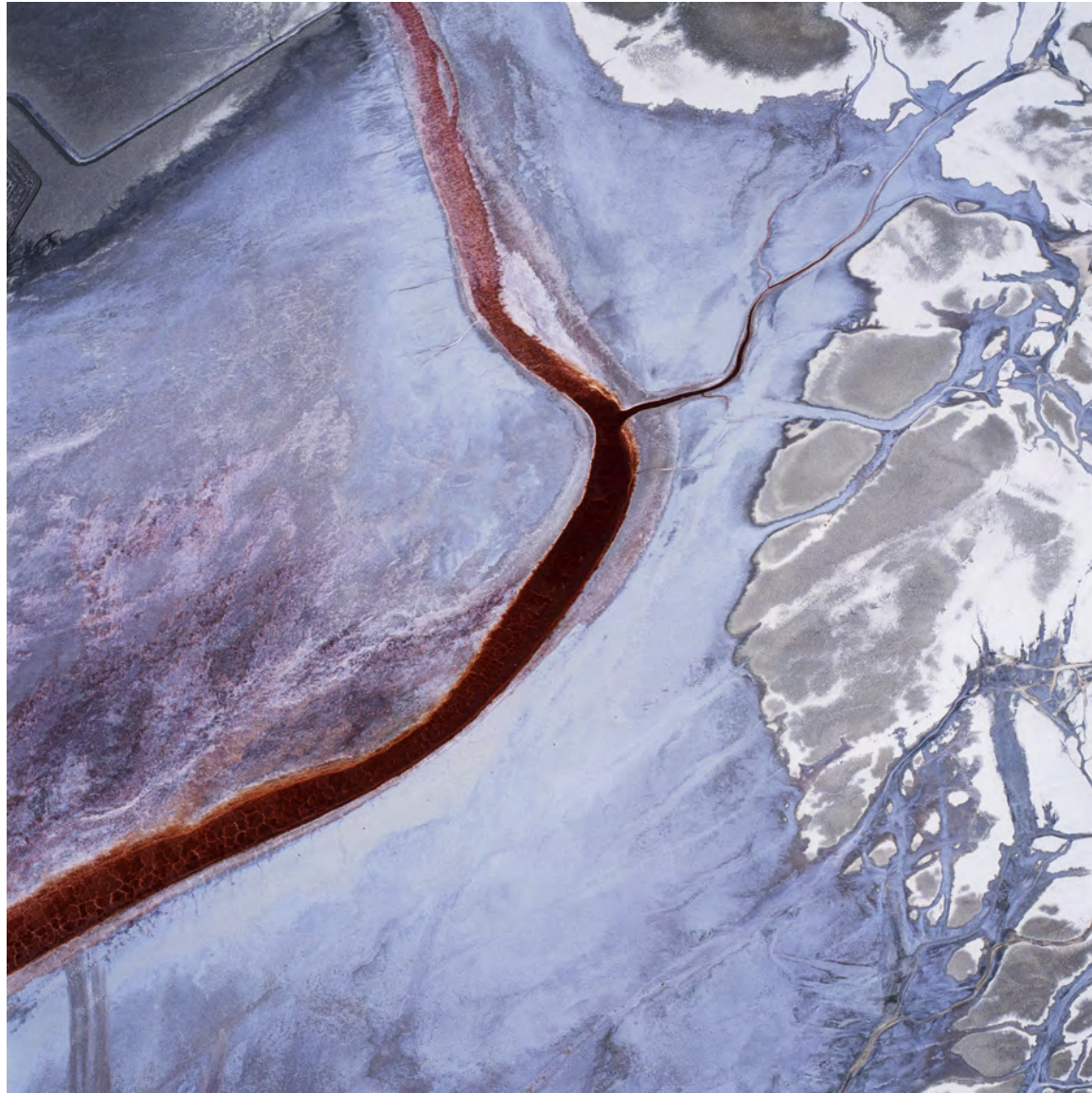
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CHRISTINE WELCH

Jarring the Sublime

When I took my first art history course, I was fascinated by the idea of artists who represented the “sublime,” the awe inspiring, by reducing it to wall-sized two-dimensionality and then hanging it in a museum. The fact that I was seeing the work of Friedrich, Church, Cole, and others as photographic reproductions in a warm, darkened room increased the irony of the experience.

There is an amusing human impulse to reduce everything we encounter to a more manageable scale and behavior. Consider, for example, the “development of the frontier.” First, over the horizon we see the virgin wilderness. In order to get there more easily (always a human concern) we dig up stuff from one place and put it in another and make a road. Then we move some more stuff — trees, rocks, more dirt — and reassemble it into shelters, from which we can see what is left of the wilderness. After we have removed as much of the uncomfortable and dangerous as we can, we replant the whole place with manageable vegetation, give it a name like “Stonehenge” or “Deer Run” and stick some cement animals on the lawn to make it look more like...what? The wilderness. When we run out of “unimproved” land, we go back to where we started and begin again, tearing down the old stuff, digging new holes, filling them in, converting one material into another which looks like still another...on and on and on. Over all this activity is that last vestige of the sublime, the sky — a sky that threatens storm, drought, flood, blistering heat, or razor sharp cold.



Near Washington Boro, Pennsylvania, 1997



Route 10 near Oxford, Pennsylvania, 2001



Route 32 near Caanan Valley, West Virginia, 1999



Route 404 near Bridgeville, Delaware, 2000



Route 30 near Saint Thomas, Pennsylvania, 1999

Photographer Biographies

Joann Brennan is an Assistant Professor of Photography at the University of Colorado in Denver. For the past fifteen years Joann's photographic work has explored the complex relationship between wildlife and human concerns. In the spring of 2003 Brennan was named a Fellow of the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation. Before arriving in Denver Joann taught photography and digital imaging at The School of Art and Design/ Alfred University in Alfred, New York and Princeton University in New Jersey. She is an active member of the Society for Photographic Education, serving on committees for the national board and organizing regional conferences. Joann was co-founder of Progetto Perugia, a studio art program in Perugia, Italy. She received her BFA and MFA from the Massachusetts College of Art in Boston, MA. Selected exhibitions shows include, Princeton University Art Museum, Center for Photography at Woodstock New York, Southern Light Gallery at Amarillo College, TX, the Roy H. Parks School of Communication at Ithaca College New York, Robert C. May Gallery at the University of Kentucky, University of California, Berkeley Extension Center and Tyler School of Art in Philadelphia. Visiting Artist talks include State University of New Mexico, Knox College, Hampden Sydney College in Virginia, Colorado State University, and Ball State University. Collections include New Mexico State University at Las Cruces, Princeton University Art Museum, and the Danforth Museum of Art.

John Ganis was born in Chicago in 1951. After graduating from Ohio Wesleyan University he moved to New York City and studied independently with Larry Fink and Lisette Model. He received his MFA in photography from the University of Arizona, where he studied with Harold Jones, Todd Walker, and W. Eugene Smith. His photographs are in the collections of the Brooklyn Museum of Art, the Center for Creative Photography, the Detroit Institute of Art, and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Ganis is a Professor and Photography Department Chair at the College for Creative Studies in Detroit, where he has taught since 1980.

In its centennial edition, *Audubon* magazine recognized 100 champions of conservation "who shaped the environmental movement in the 20th century." Included with such luminaries as John Muir, Rachael Carson, and David Brower, was photographer **Robert Glenn Ketchum**. Ketchum has also been listed by *American Photo* magazine as one of the 100 most important people in photography, because he is one of the most successful artists/ activists in American history. For nearly thirty-five years his numerous books, relentless lecturing and media campaigning, and his stream of exhibitions have brought critical public attention to little known wild lands and complex habitat management issues resulting in unparalleled legislative and regulatory successes.

Perhaps most recognized for his work about the Tongass rainforest, Ketchum is the author of more than 10 publications including *American Photographers and The National Parks* (Viking), *Overlooked In America: The Success and Failure of American Land Management* (Aperture), *Northwest Passage* (Aperture), *Rivers of Life: Southwest Alaska, The Last Great Salmon Fishery* (Aperture), as well as *The Tongass: Alaska's Vanishing Rain Forest* (Aperture/third printing).

Ketchum's fine photographic prints are included in the collections of Museum of Modern Art, NY; the National Museum of American Art, DC; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY; the Corcoran Gallery of Art, DC; George Eastman House, Rochester, NY; the Center for Creative Photography, Tucson, AZ; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, CA; and many others. Substantial collections of his prints have been established for scholarly research at the Amon Carter Museum of Art, Fort Worth, TX, and The Huntington Library, and Collections in Pasadena, CA. In 1989, he was one of only twelve photographers invited to participate in the first photography exhibition ever held in The White House and, in 1992, he was given a one-man exhibition at the National Museum of Fine Arts in Rio de Janeiro, as the representative of American art at the U.N. "Earth Summit" Conference in Brazil.

Named the 2001 Outstanding Photographer of the Year by the North American Nature Photography Association, his successful blending of art and politics has been recognized by a broad array of acknowledgements including the Ansel Adams Award for Conservation Photography, the United Nations Outstanding Environmental Achievement Award, the Josephine and Frank Duveneck Humanitarian Award, the Robert O. Easton Award for Environmental Stewardship.

David Maisel trained at Princeton University and now lives in San Francisco where he combines fine art and commercial photography. His first book, *The Lake Project*, published by Nazraeli Press, was named one of the 25 best photography books of 2004 by Vince Aletti of *The Village Voice*. His photographs are in the collections of the Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, Bowdoin College Art Museum, Brooklyn Museum of Art, Fidelity Investments, George Eastman House, General Mills, Houston Museum of Fine Art Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Museum of Contemporary Photography, Portland Museum of Art, Princeton University Museum of Art, Rose Art Museum, Santa Barbara Museum of Art, and the UBS Paine Weber Collection, among other institutions.

Christine Welch is associate professor and coordinator of photography at the Pennsylvania School of Art & Design in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Her photographs are included in the permanent print collections of the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Franklin & Marshall College, and the Johnson & Johnson Corporation, among others. Her book, *Commonplace*, was published in 2004 by the Center for American Places.

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P H O T O

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