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GHOST LANDS: PICTURES IN SILVER

A Solo Exhibition by William Van Beckum

On View: January 10–February 9, 2019

Reception: Friday, January 25, 7–9PM



CAMBRIDGE, MA – Gallery 263 is pleased to announce its upcoming show, *Ghost Lands: Pictures in Silver*. In this solo exhibition, artist William Van Beckum recreates landscape images from past and present using a combination of modern and antique photographic techniques to challenge the idea that photography may have a role in the protection of public lands.

The Bears Ears National Monument in Utah was one of many national monuments that saw the removal of protections under the Trump administration, opening the land up to gas, oil, and mineral extraction. In *Ghost Lands: Pictures in Silver*, three hundred photographs of the former monument will cover one entire gallery wall and will be available for purchase from the artist at the cost of \$10 to gallery visitors. Twenty percent of the proceeds will be donated to the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition. Sold pieces will be taken off the wall immediately after purchase and will slowly disappear from view as the exhibition continues, echoing the deterioration of the land depicted in the photographs.

The small and numerous prints of Bears Ears are complemented by large reproductions of works by historic landscape photographers Carleton Watkins, Timothy O’Sullivan, Edward Weston, and Ansel Adams. The reproductions are collaged on traditional silver gelatin paper, using smartphone screens in place of negatives. This process results in recognizably picturesque, yet fragmented versions of the original photographs with outlines and artifacts from the modern device left showing. This loss in clarity suggests that while early landscape artists were able to protect land with their photographs, the current cultural practice of re-photographing landscapes and sharing on social media may no longer be enough to save these lands from oil mining, fracking, and other ecologically devastating resource extraction methods.

About the Artist

William Van Beckum is a photographic artist working with appropriated imagery to explore the anthropocene through the lens of landscape photography and social media. In William's art practice and research, he investigates how social media reflects an increasingly self-centered attitude towards the natural world. He borrows Instagram images of famous landscape destinations and creates new compositions which dissect how humans view and value landscapes. William earned his MFA from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts University and his BA from Emerson College. He is currently a Visiting Lecturer in Photography at Wellesley College.

Gallery 263 advances the artistic endeavors of makers and performers, while fostering public engagement, enrichment, and exchange. Functioning as a creative nexus, Gallery 263 provides a contemporary voice for the arts in Cambridge and our regional communities. Gallery 263 exhibits are free and open to the public.