

# Fraenkel Gallery

49 GEARY STREET SAN FRANCISCO 94108

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For immediate release



Fraenkel Gallery Opens its 40th Anniversary  
Season with Two Concurrent Exhibitions

## CARLETON WATKINS

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## ANOTHER WEST

Curated by Richard Misrach

Fraenkel Gallery

49 Geary Street, San Francisco

September 5 – October 19, 2019

Opening reception:

Thursday, September 12, 5:30-7:30pm

Fraenkel Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of twelve rare, mammoth-plate photographs by **Carleton Watkins**, considered by many to be the greatest American photographer of the nineteenth century. Watkins was the focus of the gallery's first exhibition in September 1979, and the present project marks the beginning of a season-long celebration of Fraenkel Gallery's fortieth year. **Carleton Watkins** will be on view from September 5 to October 19, 2019.

Though made within the first decades of photography's invention, Watkins's work, and his perception of the western landscape, remain deeply relevant today. The exhibition includes dramatic views of a still little-known Yosemite Valley, the Columbia River in Oregon, and a near-surreal depiction of Mission San Luis Rey in Southern California, situated in an empty expanse. Other images include an overview of the burgeoning city of Portland, Oregon in 1867, and deer grazing on the grounds of a Menlo Park estate in the late 1870s. Watkins's large-format albumen prints, each measuring approximately 15 x 20 inches, were among the largest photographs of their time. To make photographic prints at this scale Watkins used massive glass-plate negatives painstakingly coated and developed on site, requiring the transportation of his cumbersome tent, glass plates, and chemicals into the wilderness.

As the gallery's original 1979 press release noted, it is "especially appropriate that the photographs are to be seen in San Francisco. In the 1860s and 1870s Watkins's photographs could be viewed at his own 'Yosemite Art Gallery' only two blocks away from the current exhibition." The photographer's archives, negatives, and the collection of photographs he considered to represent his life's work were destroyed in the San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906. A large-scale exhibition of his work was organized by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in 2000, and traveled to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., soon after. In 2014, the Cantor Arts Center at Stanford University exhibited *Carleton Watkins: The Stanford Albums*, and in 2014-2015, the Metropolitan Museum of Art presented Watkins's mammoth plate photographs of Yosemite. The latter exhibition marked the 150th anniversary of the Yosemite Valley Grant Act, legislation inspired by Watkins's photographs. In 2018, Watkins was the subject of the biography, *Carleton Watkins: Making the West American*, by Tyler Green.

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49 Geary Street, San Francisco

September 5 – October 19, 2019

Opening reception with artists & curator:  
Thursday, September 12, 5:30-7:30pm

Walkthrough with the curator:  
Saturday, September 14, 1:30pm

Concurrent with **Carleton Watkins**, Fraenkel Gallery is pleased to present **Another West**, curated by American photographer **Richard Misrach**. Comprised of work by eleven established and emerging artists, the exhibition surveys contemporary approaches to the Western landscape, and offers a counterpoint to Watkins's sublime vision. While Watkins was at times employed by railroad and mining companies that were transforming the land, the artists here use a variety of strategies to reveal the consequences and aftermath of the American concept of Manifest Destiny. Included in the show are works by Johnnie Chatman, Lewis deSoto, Mercedes Dorame, Mishka Henner, Nancy Holt, Zig Jackson, An-My Lê, Meghann Riepenhoff, Ed Ruscha, David Benjamin Sherry and Tabitha Soren. By presenting wide-ranging responses from artists with diverse backgrounds, the show illustrates shifting echoes of established traditions.

Richard Misrach notes:

Carleton Watkins's nineteenth-century photographs helped describe and define our notions of the American West. His work recorded early practices of mining and other human-impacted landscapes, but most notably a wilderness beauty like no other. The artists in this show present a different West, or perhaps more accurately, eleven different Wests. From Nancy Holt's 1972 color series "California Sun Signs," to Lewis deSoto's performance-driven long exposures, to Mishka Henner's appropriated and digitally-composited satellite images of oil derricks, these artists employ photographic strategies and technologies unimaginable in Watkins's era of the black-and-white mammoth plate. Most significantly, these artists of the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries call our attention to what the West has become.

Richard Misrach, (born 1949), has been photographing the American West for more than 50 years, and is perhaps best known for his ongoing series "Desert Cantos." His work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Art Institute of Chicago; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; and Centre Pompidou, Paris, among others. His work has been featured in more than a dozen monographs, including *Telegraph 3 A.M.*; *Bravo 20: The Bombing of the American West*; *Crimes and Splendors: The Desert Cantos of Richard Misrach*; *On the Beach*; *Destroy this Memory*; *Petrochemical America*; and *Border Cantos*. He is the recipient of numerous awards including four National Endowment for the Arts Fellowships and a Guggenheim Fellowship.

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## ALSO UPCOMING

### *Long Story Short*

October 24, 2019 – January 18, 2020

The gallery will mark its fortieth year with *Long Story Short*, an exhibition and book comprised of sixty photographs spanning nearly eighteen decades. Together the book and exhibition present an unconventional slice of photography's rich history, and function as an x-ray of the gallery's idiosyncratic approach to the medium. *Long Story Short* examines photography's essential role in the evolution of art over the last 180 years, and highlights links between the medium's early pioneers and multi-disciplinary artists of today.

### *Sophie Calle*

January 23 – March 21, 2020

On view for the first time in the U.S. will be selections from Sophie Calle's *Parce que (Because)*. In these works, texts are embroidered on curtains that conceal hidden photographs. The series is part of Calle's ongoing exploration of the relationship between narrative, memory and photography.

### *Hiroshi Sugimoto: Opticks*

March – May, 2020

Inspired by the work of Sir Isaac Newton, whose 1704 book of the same name describes the refraction of light through prisms, Hiroshi Sugimoto's new series explores the infinite nature of color. The large-scale works, shown for the first time in the U.S., present enlargements of Polaroids that record the spectrum of light Sugimoto observed in his Tokyo studio.

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For press inquiries and images, please contact Rebecca Robertson at 415.981.2661 or rrobertson@fraenkelgallery.com

IMAGE, FIRST PAGE: CARLETON WATKINS, *Cape Horn, Columbia River, Oregon*, 1867. Mammoth-plate albumen print.

IMAGE, SECOND PAGE: LEWIS DESOTO, *Ellipse/Tide V.2*, 1982. Pigment print. © Lewis deSoto, 1982 & 2017