

June 27 – August 11, 2006
A Rabbit as King of the Ghosts



May 10, 2006 – Mitchell-Innes & Nash will present a summer photography exhibition curated by photographers Justine Kurland and Dan Torop in its Chelsea space. The exhibition will include works from the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries, with a number of photographs on loan from private and public collections.

According to the curators, “This is a photography exhibition about magic. For us, the photographer is a seeker of mystery, and the act of photographing casts a spell that turns the banal into the supernatural. The works displayed here propose a history of photography which emphasizes the spiritual over the rational... We advocate a practice where the camera, used as an art-making tool, touches on a vast unknowable rather than delimits the real.”

The 27 artists included in the exhibition are **Bas Jan Ader, Angelblood, Kenneth Anger, Eugene Atget, Antoine-Henri Becquerel, William Balch, Roe Ethridge, Annika von Hausswolff, F. Jay Haynes, Susan Jennings, Joan Jonas, Matt Keegan, Clarence Kennedy, Darius Kinsey, Robert Macpherson, Corey McCorkle, Eadweard Muybridge, Simone Nieweg, Alice O’Malley, Adam Putnam, Victoria Sambunaris, David Benjamin Sherry, Joseph Sudek, W.F. Swann, Félix Teynard, Carleton Watkins, and Will Wendt.**

Justine Kurland’s photographs have been exhibited at museums and galleries in the U.S. and internationally. She received her B.F.A from School of Visual Arts, NY in 1996, and her M.F.A. from Yale University in 1998. She is represented by Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York. Dan Torop received his B.A. in 1994 from Harvard University and his M.F.A. in 1997 from Yale University. His work has been featured at museums and galleries around the U.S. Torop is represented by Derek Eller Gallery, New York.

An **opening reception** will be held at Mitchell-Innes & Nash Chelsea: Tuesday, June 27, 6 - 8pm

Mitchell-Innes & Nash Chelsea is located at 534 West 26th Street between 10th and 11th Avenues.
Gallery Hours: Tues-Sat, 10am – 6pm T: (212) 744-7400 www.miandn.com

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Caption: Félix Teynard , "Grand Spéos, Statues Colossales Vues de Profil, Abu Simbel," 1851-1852.
Courtesy of Hans P. Kraus, Jr., Inc., New York

A RABBIT AS KING OF THE GHOSTS

Curated by Justine Kurland and Dan Torop

This is a photography exhibition about magic. For us, the photographer is a seeker of mystery and the act of photographing casts a spell that turns the banal into the supernatural. The works displayed here propose a history of photography which emphasizes the spiritual over the rational.

We begin with images of the pre-modern idyll, when Magic did not yet know how to hide from the photographic mechanism. Soon, though, photographers became entranced with how the clarity and resolving powers of the lens could describe the knowable world. The notion of magic went underground, present only in exceptions, such as Clarence Kennedy's scholarly studies of Renaissance sculptures, or in Joseph Sudek's determined romanticism on the fringes of the canon. An anonymous group portrait of the Shriners presented here suggests it might not have been buried so deeply, but kept in the care of secret societies, during these, the dark ages for magic. We bypass the great mid-twentieth century photographic tradition and look to documentation of performances carried out in the 60's and 70's. These revelatory acts mark a resurgence of magic in photography.

The first part of the show examines the cosmological. Objects owned by science return to poetry. Becquerel, Madame Curie's collaborator, made cameraless photographs of radioactive materials. The resulting images are ominous black suns. A Muybridge motion study shows a hand beating time: disembodied it dances ritualistically on the page. The astronomer W. F. Swann made a photograph of the Network Nebula so beautiful that it overwhelms any scientific objective. Training the same camera on a day moon, Roe Ethridge transforms a common vision into stark romanticism. Susan Jennings' light abstractions conjure the x-rayed auras of spirits just beyond our perception. Will Wendt uses glass beads and prisms to break the light from a landscape, revealing a second world.

Through the mechanical act of performing a set of gestures for the camera, the artist creates an alternate world. In an atypical Darius Kinsey we see three sisters turned to sirens on the Pacific shore of Washington State. Bas Jan Ader, throwing himself bodily against the unknown, is levitated between the sky and ground. A still from Joan Jonas's "Twilight" shows the wizard at rest. In Kenneth Anger's "Invocation of My Demon Brother" the albino, Moon Beam, is transformed into a Miltonic Lucifer. Annika von Hausswolff uses the raw language of the snapshot to stage enigmatic moments in which her sitters become metaphysical sculpture. Alice O'Malley's formal portrait and David Benjamin Sherry's collaged rhapsody are collaborative fantasies in the ecstasy of being in-love. The ecstatic is carried into Angelblood's documentation of an incantatory pagan ritual. Adam Putnam's uses a room as a camera to photograph a furnace projecting a phantasmagoric image of an uncanny room.

The prelapsarian landscape is a stage upon which photographers can breach the division between themselves and the universe. Félix Teynard, at the dawn of photography, made the voyage to Egypt, the birth place of magic. Robert Macpherson revealed the grotto of Sibyl deep below her Temple. Eugene Atget set his taxonomic vision against mythic Paris. Hired by surveyors to promote the American West, Carleton Watkins projected the utopian dream of the New World onto the coast of Northern California. William Balch transplanted Vermont orchids into studio tableaux, while Simone Nieweg found deep sorrow in the wintry gardens on the outskirts of German towns. The landscape is a portal to transcendence in Corey McCorkle's photographs of pilgrims walking through the fog on Mount Fuji. Victoria Sambunaris looks into the belly of the earth from the top of a volcano in Hawaii. Matt Keegan silhouettes the absent figures on a beach.

Modernist photographers comprehended a shared, knowable world to produce objects of intrinsic value. In contrast, we have gathered works in which the artist, encountering a fragmentary and obscure world, gleans an intoxicating and mysterious image. We advocate a practice where the camera, used as art-making tool, touches on a vast unknowable rather than delimits the real.

- Justine Kurland and Dan Torop, May 2006