

THE MARKS ART CENTER

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THE SALTON SEA: LOST IN PARADISE

Curated by Deborah Martin

MARCH 21- APRIL 22, 2016

OPENING RECEPTION: *Friday April 1, 5-7pm * Durational performance "From Dawn To Dust" by Thinh Nguyen

COD Faculty and Staff Reception: Thursday March 31, 5-7pm Open to the public.

Gallery Hours: M-Th 11-4, Su 11-1, and by appointment.

Palm Desert, CA- The Marks Art Center is pleased to present "The Salton Sea: Lost in Paradise". The exhibition will run from March 21st- April 22, 2016 featuring a selection of works and memorabilia from the collection of the late Jenny Kelly, new video from Coachella Valley artist Cristopher Cichocki, contemporary sculpture by Ashley Hagen and Aili Schmeltz, photographic works from Christopher Landis (In Search of Eldorado), Joan Myers (Salt Dreams), Kim Stringfellow (Greetings from the Salton Sea), and new work from photographers Victory Tischler-Blue, Bill Leigh Brewer and environmental artist Doron Gazit. In addition, the exhibit will include paintings by Deborah Martin (The Slabs: The Last Free Place in America) and new work from landscape painters Andrew Dickson, Mary Austin-Klein and Eric Merrell, who will present a new series of "nocturnes" inspired by the Salton Sea. A site specific installation will be on view by Los Angeles based artist Thinh Nguyen who will present a durational performance "From Dawn to Dust" during the opening night reception on Friday April 1st, from 5-7pm.

"From Dawn to Dust" Durational performance by Thinh Nguyen

Using dry fish bones collected from the Salton Sea as his material, Nguyen will arrange these into a mandala pattern. This is the stage for his ritualistic durational performance, which is both a mourning and a prayer. "I'm mourning the rise and desolation of the area's abandonment, and I'm praying for its fate. If nothing is done, it could lead to a disastrous dust bowl and pollution. The micro-ecology of the Salton Sea and the life and death cycle of the Tilapia is a reflection of our larger culture. The lack of biodiversity in the sea's ecosystem, and its neglect are metaphors of our current environmental issues, socio-cultural hegemony, and our complacency."

-Thinh Nguyen



Christopher Landis, North Shore Beach, 1994

“The question that must be addressed, therefore, is not how to care for the planet, but how to care for each of the planet’s millions of natural and human neighborhoods, each of it’s millions of small pieces and parcels of land, each one of which is in some precious way different from all others” - Wendell Berry

Curatorial Statement

For those who have chosen to make the Salton Sea their home this is their sanctuary. Like the sea, these communities have been forgotten, yet they continue to band together and persevere in spite of the odds stacked against them.

The sea provides habitat to some four hundred and thirty species of birds, some of them endangered, and is one of the last significant wetlands remaining on the migratory path between Alaska and Central America. Every year, the North shore of the Salton Sea is diminished, partly because of drought and partly because of the sale of Colorado River water to coastal areas. The migrating pelicans and grebes have fewer fish to eat as the shallow water disappears. The dust from desiccated shallows blows into the air and is easily inhaled by local children, whose asthma rates lead the state.

The nonprofit Pacific Institute estimates that the surface area of the 350-square-mile lake will shrink 100 square miles by 2030, salinity will triple over 15 years, and fish will disappear in seven years without intervention.

This exhibition is not only a tribute to the artists who have found inspiration in the Salton Sea, it is a tribute to the endurance of the sea itself, and to the people who are dedicated to preserving it.

-Deborah Martin

Victory Tischler- Blue is a motion picture director and fine art photographer whose dark, single-frame tableaux evokes a deep sense of melancholy, tension and cinematic drama. A former member of the iconic '70s all-girl rock band the Runaways, Tischler-Blue often casts outliers and those who through their innate sense of self or the judgments of others - find themselves straddling their own personal edge. Tischler-Blue's stunning landscape photographs capture the epic beauty of the Southwestern desert, and with it the remains of failed dreams under crystalline skies. Born and raised in Newport Beach, California, Victory Tischler-Blue lives in Palm Springs, California.

Bill Leigh Brewer is commercial and fine art photographer who divides his time between Los Angeles and the California High Desert. A past instructor in California's public schools for over six years, Brewer taught commercial lighting and black and white photography at Long Beach City College, where he is a former member of their Photography Advisory Committee. He has been an assignment and fine art photographer for nearly thirty years. Brewer received his graduate degree from the University of Southern California.

Cristopher Cichocki is an internationally recognized artist who lives and works in the desert of Southern California's Coachella Valley. He creates artworks of intersecting media: painting, photography, sculpture, video, sound, light and installation. The cyclical relationship between humankind, environment, and industry generates an expansive narrative of mutation and interconnection within Cichocki's conceptual framework. Extending upon historical art movements such as Land Art & Light and Space, Cichocki defines his practice as New Earth Art in our increasingly toxic global climate. Topographies and micro-worlds unfold as shifting perceptions illusive in dimension and material origin. A realm of constant flux becomes evident within Cichocki's multi-sensory installation environments that transform from one moment to the next.

Andrew Dickson is a landscape painter and associate professor based in Long Beach, CA. Dickson spent time as a child with his grand parent's who owned property built in the 60's located on the North Shore of the Salton Sea. The house now owned by Dickson, is a retreat from LA which Dickson frequents while exploring the surrounding area for inspiration. Dickson currently works as an Associate Professor of Foundation Painting at California State University, Fullerton. He received his MFA from California State University, Long Beach.

Environmental artist and industrial designer **Doron Gazit** is a graduate of the Bezalel Academy of Art in Jerusalem. His work, its scale, and his choice of materials and settings reference the interface of nature, technology, and industry with a modern sensibility and playfulness. Gazit has installed a large number of environmental pieces throughout the world, including the Negev Desert in Israel, Santa Monica Beach in California, Tokyo, Mexicali, and Dubai. Gazit considers these temporary installations as literal extensions of the act of drawing and prefers to refer to these pieces as "lines." His method of intervention is to bring our full attention to the landscape, not to obscure it. Gazit's work brings our attention to the struggle against environmental degradation.

Ashley Hagen is a Los Angeles based conceptual artist and painter who uses play as part of her process, uncovering metaphors of home, self, fantasy and reality. Her work delves into the underlying resonance of childhood: limitlessness, inventiveness, mystery, imagination, adventure and possibility. She received her BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and her MFA from California State University Northridge.

The Collection of Jennie Kelly

Jennie Kelly was known throughout the Coachella Valley for her passionate advocacy for the Salton Sea and its history. She is the founder and Director of the Salton Sea History Museum which was originally located inside of the North Shore Yacht Club on the Salton Sea. Jennie believed telling the story of the Sea is intrinsic to saving it, and that the museum is an integral part of that message. Her final wish was that the Museum be returned to its original location. The Museum is currently closed without a location.

Mary-Austin Klein is a Los Angeles based landscape painter known for her vast desert landscapes. Klein's work is featured in Kim Stringfellow's book, *The Jackrabbit Homestead*, and *The Guide to the Wild Mojave* publication sponsored by the California Wilderness Coalition for her artwork and her advocacy efforts. Klein received her BFA from Otis Art Institute of Parsons School of Design, Los Angeles, CA

Christopher Landis received an MFA in Photography and an MA in History from California State University Fullerton. His fine art landscape portfolios have been exhibited and collected widely throughout the United States. Landis' documentary works Pilgrimage: Images from Manzanar and In Search of Eldorado: The Salton Sea have earned international recognition.

Deborah Martin initiated her formal training as a painter while attending the Museum School of Fine Arts, Boston. Her artistic work examines the complexities of individual experience particularly in relation to home, isolation and memory. Martin received her BFA and BS Masters of Arts in Teaching, Art Education from The Museum School of Fine Arts, Boston and Tufts University. She is a recipient of the Orlowsky Freed Foundation Grant (2011). Martin is a visual artist whose curatorial experience includes The Salton Sea History Museum's inaugural exhibition "Valley of the Ancient Lake", "Re: Materialization" with Shana Nys Dambrot, Director/curator of The Spring Arts Collective Gallery (2006-2009) and the Deborah Martin Gallery (2009-2010) in Downtown Los Angeles.

Los Angeles artist **Eric Merrell** is perhaps best known for his rigorous approach to landscape painting. For several years Merrell has been working on "Nocturnes", a series of abstract desert works that he has painted all over Southern California, each solely by the light of the moon. Merrell was recently featured in a documentary short from director Alec Ernest- Nocturnes: The paintings of Eric Merrell produced and directed for the Los Angeles Review of Books. He received his BFA from the Art Center College of Design, Pasadena, CA.

Joan Myers' photographs span the last quarter of the twentieth century and several locales. She is known for her platinum-palladium prints, a hand-coating process where the image becomes part of the drawing paper on which it is printed. Myers' work is in the Museum of Modern Art, the Center for Creative Photography, the George Eastman House, The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and the National Gallery of Art, Washington. Myers is the photographer of Salt Dreams: Land and Water in Low-Down California, written by William deBuys Winner of the 1999 Western States Book Award for Creative Nonfiction and the William P. Clements Prize for the Best Non-Fiction Book on Southwestern America.

Los Angeles based artist **Thinh Nguyen's** work is a complex contemporary look at a few converging issues investigating the personal, social, cultural, and historical while innovatively engaging the public in the process. He explores formal and conceptual processes in various media as a strategy to continue the development of critical exchange and aesthetic revolution. Nguyen received his BFA from California State University Fullerton and his MFA from Claremont Graduate University.

Los Angeles based conceptual artist **Aili Schmeltz** works are a constant process of research and response to natural events and phenomena that captivate and serve as an impetus to weave these seemingly isolated events into a larger contextual tale. Schmeltz is especially interested in how the landscape and weather systems are altered by the human hand, the driving social attitudes that guide those decisions and the aftermath of those alterations in terms of natural hybridization and human lifestyle shifts. Schmeltz received her Bachelor of Fine Arts from the Kansas City Art Institute and her Master of Fine Arts from the University of Arizona. She is the founder of Out Post Projects located in the High Desert

Kim Stringfellow is an artist and educator residing in Joshua Tree, CA. She teaches photography and multimedia courses at San Diego State University as an associate professor in the School of Art + Design. Stringfellow's work bridges cultural geography, environmental journalism, public practice and experimental documentary into creative, socially engaged transmedia experiences. Her research explores the cultural landscape and history of place, often addressing environmental repercussions of human interaction and occupation within these spaces. She received her MFA in Art and Technology from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Stringfellow was awarded a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship in Photography (2015).