

PRESS RELEASE

FLORIAN MAIER-AICHEN

January 12 – February 16, 2024

Opening reception:

Friday, January 12, 6-8pm

303 Gallery, New York



303 Gallery is proud to present Florian Maier-Aichen's sixth solo exhibition with the gallery. A selection of large and small-format photographs continue the artist's pursuit of new possibilities within the medium.

Known for his novel approach to image-making, Florian Maier-Aichen embraces both analog and digital techniques to create pictures that conflate the distinction between reality and invention. His photographs are primarily shot with an 8x10-inch camera, using film stock and printing processes on the verge of obsolescence. In creating his images, Maier-Aichen favors vantage points that are well-established as photogenic, seeking out locations that tie into the history of photography while also being iconically beautiful. Picture-perfect vistas and commercial backdrops of the American West are recast as generative grounds for experimentation. These sites and their naturally theatrical lighting provide an ideal counterpoint to post-war industrial Germany and the overcast, neutral skies that define the rigorously formal images of Bernd and Hilla Becher and their adherents, a way of revisiting the German romantic landscape on overdrive.

His photographs of California sunsets and ocean views push the natural glamor of these picturesque locations to otherworldly effect. Set becomes subject in Maier-Aichen's hands, reimagined beyond its typical mass-media presentation. The necessary slow shutter speed of his tri-color process lends a painterly effect to the frothing white waves veiling the shore of one particular seascape, capturing an experience over three separate long exposures which is then compressed into a single image. The size and format of an Untitled infrared Malibu photograph echoes that of the Becher's famous industrial series, but in an inverted beach setting, depicting leisure, sunshine, and unabashed color. Maier-Aichen rotates his image 90 degrees from the typical portrait framing to landscape, a playful gesture of toppling one's antecedents.

Yosemite National Park has been well documented since the 19th century by Carleton Watkins, George Fiske, Eadweard Muybridge, and later Ansel Adams, to be followed by countless others. Today, the park seems almost unchanged by time, appearing so pristine it borders on artificial. An uncanny image of Yosemite Falls reveals on closer examination a chance double-exposure, creating the illusion of twin waterfalls. This doubling effect contributes a sense of

unease, calling the sublimity of the landscape into question by destabilizing one's sense of fact and fiction.

Another of Maier-Aichen's Untitled photographs references Adams' famous black and white picture, *Tetons and the Snake River*, 1942, taken in Wyoming, though Adams' particular vantage point is now much overgrown. Captured over an hour-long exposure to absorb as much color as possible, Maier-Aichen's photograph focuses attention on the intensity and experience of the changing light. The vista's defining natural features become nearly obliterated, the iconic mountains silhouetted like a theatrical stage set against a vibrant, rainbow-streaked sky, opening up to a new imaginary world. Through his carefully composed images, Maier-Aichen proposes that even the most distinguished and familiar landscapes can be sites of dramatic invention.

A new series of abstractions further emphasizes the artist's impulse to craft an image rather than record one. Looking to pointillism and Lucio Fontana's slashed paintings, Maier-Aichen fashioned a reverse DIY camera obscura using awls, screwdrivers, and brushes to pierce hundreds of apertures into a board, which was then backlit with a strong flashlight and finally captured with a second camera. Rather than attempting to correct any irregularities, Maier-Aichen exploits the lo-fi, handcrafted nature of his process, layering multiple exposures to the point of visual crescendo.

Florian Maier-Aichen was born in Stuttgart, Germany in 1973. He studied at the School of Photography and Film, University for Gothenburg, Sweden and the University of Essen, Germany before earning his MFA from the University of California, Los Angeles. He has had solo exhibitions at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA and the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid, Spain. His work is represented in the public collections of the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA; Cincinnati Art Museum, Cincinnati, OH; Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington DC; Denver Museum of Art, Denver, CO; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY. The artist lives and works in Cologne, Germany and Los Angeles, CA.

CONTACT

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Image: Florian Maier-Aichen, *Untitled*, 2023, C-print.