

Catherine Opie

A Study of Blue Mountains

April 8 – May 10, 2025

New York



Catherine Opie, *Untitled #9, (Norway Mountain)*, 2024 (detail)

Lehmann Maupin is pleased to present *Catherine Opie: A Study of Blue Mountains*, a solo exhibition of new photographs and ceramic sculptures by the Los Angeles-based artist, on view April 8–May 10, 2025 in New York. Opie’s latest exhibition marks the New York debut of the artist’s *Norwegian Mountain* series, her newest body of work to date. The works, the artist has noted, are a meditation on “how the history of blue is used in art...about blue as a mourning as the planet changes so rapidly.” Looking at color and landscape, Opie imbues the images in *A Study of Blue Mountains* with a sense of the sublime.

This exhibition at Lehmann Maupin comes on the heels of the artist’s first major solo exhibition in Brazil, *Catherine Opie: Genre/Gender/Portraiture*, curated by Adriano Pedrosa, Artistic Director, and Guilherme Giufrida, Assistant Curator, which closed last fall at The Museu de Arte de São Paulo (MASP). *Catherine Opie: A Study of Blue Mountains* precedes an exhibition of the *Norwegian Mountain* series at the Posten Moderne in Trondheim, Norway, as well as a major solo show at the National Portrait Gallery in London, both opening in 2026.

For over four decades, Opie has been celebrated for her intimate portraiture and exploration of community and identity. Landscape has also been a central focus of her practice, spanning urban freeways, strip malls, Pacific Ocean surfers, and frozen Minnesota lakes, each reflecting her broader engagement with place and belonging. In this new body of work, Opie looks to the Norwegian landscape—long a source of inspiration for the artist—creating a powerful study of the rich range of blues found in the gradient variations within the Northern sky and the cascade of light blanketing the region’s most majestic mountains. Opie’s images emphasize a deeper, more personal interpretation of the color’s effect, in which the blue mountains symbolize an ascendance toward nature, and in turn, the power, grandeur, and change to nature itself.

Capturing subtle variations in light has become a life-long quest for Opie, who grew up observing the bluish atmosphere that washed over Lake Erie in Ohio. In these new photographs, Opie expands the scope of her portraiture to consider the shifting Norwegian terrain in the winter. Here, she captures the stillness and quality of winter light that imparts a deep blue to the landscape, and to do so, Opie would often wait hours for the right moment to take a photograph. The images of snow-

capped mountainscapes encapsulate the haptic essence of the body’s sense of scale and environment, at once intimate and expansive. Across the exhibition, mountains become portraits of the beloved Norwegian landscape, connecting body and nature through the observation of color, light, and contrast. At the same time, the works in *A Study of Blue Mountains* are in pursuit of the perfect shade of blue, found somewhere between the beginnings and endings of dusk and dawn—a metaphor for the passage of time. Poetic in her execution, Opie’s photographs ruminate on the fleeting impermanence of time and how it shapes both the environment and our human experience.

To make this series, Opie traveled across Norway during the winter of 2024 to photograph an iconic mountain range. In works such as *Untitled #5 (Norway Mountain)* and *Untitled #9 (Norway Mountain)* (both 2024), shades of deep cerulean and azure blue build on her engagement with histories of art throughout her oeuvre, considering how the color has been used across generations. References including Picasso’s ‘Blue Period’, Derek Jarman’s film *Blue*, and the use of cerulean blue in the early Italian Renaissance make their way into Opie’s photographs. In this way, the use of blue evokes a sense of liminality—on the verge of something new and uncertain, yet ephemeral and transcendent, like history itself.

In conjunction with the debut of Opie’s *Norwegian Mountain* photographs, *Catherine Opie: A Study of Blue Mountains* will mark the first exhibition of the artist’s new ceramic mountain sculptures. Preceding the *Norwegian Mountain* photographs, the ceramic sculptures—and the process of making them—provided a meditative space for her to ruminate on the trip to Norway and the compositions she was to create. Since first working with clay in 2018, ceramic sculpture has become an extension of both the physical process and chance outcomes of photography. This shift in material has come to represent the hand of the artist, applied more forcibly in creating three-dimensional forms. Displayed on custom-made pedestals, the small-scale mountain sculptures create a kind of tension with the immersive scale of the photographs, merging the physicality between the body and landscape. In her photographs and ceramic works alike, Opie’s study of blue contemplates the deeper historical weight of this melancholic color and its resonance across time, memory, and landscape.

Catherine Opie (b. 1961, Sandusky, OH; lives in Los Angeles) is known for her powerfully dynamic photography that examines the ideals and norms surrounding the culturally constructed American dream and American identity. She first gained recognition in the 1990s for her series of studio portraits, photographing gay, lesbian, and transgender individuals drawn from her circle of friends and artists. Opie has traveled extensively across the country exploring the diversity of America's communities and landscapes, documenting quintessential American subjects—high school football players and the 2008 presidential inauguration—while also continuing to display America's subcultures through formal portraits. Using dramatic staging, Opie presents queer and trans bodies in intimate photographs that evoke traditional Renaissance portraiture—images of power and respect. In her portraits and landscapes, Opie establishes a level of ambiguity of both identity and place by exaggerating masculine or feminine characteristics, or by exaggerating distance, cropping, or blurring her landscapes.

Opie received a B.F.A. from San Francisco Art Institute in 1985, and an M.F.A. from CalArts in 1988. Solo exhibitions of her work have been organized at Heide Museum, Melbourne Australia (2023); The Current Now, Stowe, VT (2022); Plug In Institute of Contemporary Art, Winnipeg, Canada (2020); Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), Cleveland, OH (2019); Marciano Foundation, Los Angeles, CA (2019); Princeton University School of Architecture, Princeton, NJ (2018); Centro Internazionale di Fotografia, Palermo, Italy (2018); Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA (2016); Museum of Contemporary Art, Pacific Design Center, Los Angeles, CA (2016); Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA (2016); Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, OH (2015); Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, CA (2012); Socrates Sculpture Park, New York, NY (2012); Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA (2011); Portland Art Museum, Portland, OR (2010); Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY (2008); Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, IL (2006); Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN (2002); and the Saint Louis Art Museum, Saint Louis, MO (2000). Select group exhibitions featuring her work include *Face to Face: Portraits of Artists by Tacita Dean, Brigitte Lacombe and Catherine Opie*, International Center of Photography, New York, NY (2023); *Coming Attractions: The John Waters Collection*, Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, MD (2022); *13 Women*, Orange County Museum of Art, Costa Mesa, CA (2022); *Our Selves: Photographs by Women Artists from Helen Kornblum*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY (2022); *Picturing Motherhood Now: Images for a New Era*, Cleveland Museum

of Art, Cleveland, OH (2021); *Any Distance Between Us*, RISD Museum, Providence, RI (2021); *Mother!*, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek, Denmark (2021); *Monoculture: A Recent History*, Museum of Modern Art, Antwerp, Belgium (2020); *In Focus: Election Eve*, The Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA (2020). *Kiss My Genders*, Hayward Gallery, London, United Kingdom (2019); *Implicit Tensions: Mapplethorpe Now*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY (2019); *West by Midwest*, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Chicago, IL (2018); *Ansel Adams in Our Time*, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA (2018); Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AR (2020); *Selections from the Permanent Collection: Catherine Opie and Sterling Ruby*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA (2017); *Breaking News*, Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA (2016-2017); *A Slow Succession with Many Interruptions*, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA (2016-2017); *Human Interest: Portraits from the Whitney's Collection*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY



(2016); *Who Shot Sports: A Photographic History*, Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY (2016); *Perfect Likeness: Photography and Composition*, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA (2015); *America Is Hard to See*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY (2015); and *Role Models: Feminine Identity in Contemporary American Photography*, National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C. (2008).

Opie's work is in numerous international public and private collections, including Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY; Art, Design & Architecture Museum, University of California, Santa Barbara, CA; Birmingham Museum of Art, Birmingham, AL; The Broad, Los Angeles, CA; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA; Centro Cultural Arte Contemporaneo, Mexico City, Mexico; Collezione Patrizia e Augustino Re Rebaudengo Sandretto, Turin, Italy; Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum, Saratoga Springs, NY; Hall Art Foundation, Reading, VT; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA; Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne, Australia; Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle, WA; Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA; The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Israel; J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA; Leslie-Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art, New York, NY; Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA; Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark; Miami Art Museum, Miami, FL; Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum, St. Louis, MO; Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, TX; The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Canada; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA; Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, La Jolla,

CA; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX; Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA; National Portrait Gallery, London, United Kingdom; National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; Nevada Museum of Art, Reno, NV; New Orleans Museum of Art, New Orleans, LA; Rubell Family Collection, Miami, FL; Saint Louis Art Museum, Saint Louis, MO; Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, WA; Si Shang Art Museum, Beijing, China; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY; The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, NY; Tate Modern, London, United Kingdom; Victoria and Albert Museum, London, United Kingdom; Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, CT.

Opie has received numerous awards and fellowships, including the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Guggenheim Fellowship, Photography (2019), Aperture Foundation Award (2018), Smithsonian Archives of American Art Medal (2016), Women's Caucus for Art President's Award for Lifetime Achievement (2009), United States Artists Fellowship (2006), San Francisco Art Institute President's Award for Excellence (2006), Larry Aldrich Award (2004), and the CalArts Alpert Award in the Arts (2003). She has been a professor of fine art at the University of California, Los Angeles, since 2001 and serves on the board of directors of The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.

Artist portrait by Heather Rasmussen

**Lehmann Maupin**

Rachel Lehmann and David Maupin co-founded Lehmann Maupin in 1996 in New York. Since inception, Lehmann Maupin has served as a leading contemporary art gallery with locations in the U.S., Europe, and Asia. For over 25 years, Lehmann Maupin has been instrumental in introducing international artists in new geographies and building long-lasting curatorial relationships. Known for championing diverse voices, the gallery's program proudly features artists whose work challenges notions of identity and shapes international culture. Today, the gallery has permanent locations in New York, Seoul, and London, as well as team members based in Hong Kong, Shanghai, Singapore, and Palm Beach. In recent years, with growing opportunities in new markets, the gallery has opened seasonal spaces in Aspen, Palm Beach, Taipei, Beijing, and Milan.

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