



LANDSCAPE



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A group show of photography,
painting and video

Curated by Telegram Gallery, hosted by dn&co.

30 September – 9 October

3 Tyers Gate
London SE1 3HX

Artists

Alberta Bamonte | Hannah Devereux | Will Jenkinson
Lynda Laird | Chris Stevens | Hayley Nia Thomas

www.telegramgallery.com

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This is a show about landscape and what it holds. Whether a signifier of change or a retainer of memory, landscape is not just a subject or a format, it can represent the artist's self as much as a portrait.

With technology the face of landscape is changing; we are charting, mapping and capturing constantly. *Plein air* is a thing of the past as today's artists look to their screens to shape their landscapes, to bear witness. The landscapes around us record the changes in our environment, from the gentle shift of seasons to the indelible damage of man.

The artists in this show approach landscape in different ways, with painting, video and photography as their chosen media. But they are not so distinct here. We have painters working from aerial views taken many miles above the earth and photographers who choose to focus on details of a landscape to the point of abstraction. Similarly there are no strict rules on what landscape represents, here we have the Pacific Ocean and there an oil field in Alberta, Canada; through it all remains the space we inhabit as well as the foreign lands of our imagination and the uncharted territory of technology.

Maria Howard
Curator, Telegram Gallery
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ALBERTA BAMONTE

Alberta Bamonte is a painter, draughtsman and printmaker. Her recent work is derived from satellite images of the earth with a focus on environmental issues. The paintings in the Badlandscapes series call our attention to the destruction of natural landscapes as a result of greenhouse gases or aggressive industry, at the same time highlighting the beauty of the landscapes left behind.

How would you describe your approach to landscape?

It's armchair landscape. Sometimes I get to see a place before or after I've had dealings with it but it doesn't necessarily make a difference to what I do.

So it's mediated through the screen?

Totally. I find something that is interesting on Google Earth, or any satellite. Sometimes a place makes me look for an aesthetic aspect of it because I'm intrigued by an environmental angle.

What do the works in the Landscape show represent?

They represent the Athabasca oil sands in Alberta, Canada. The oil is

mixed with sand which lies about 50 or 60 cm. underground so they have to remove the topsoil, but the topsoil supports trees and forest. People are always going on about rainforests but this forest is equally important for the breathing of the planet and how they can get away with just chopping it off, I don't know. On top of this when they get the sand they still have to separate it from the oil and there are various energy intensive ways of doing it. One of them is the one I represented — they shoot very hot water at this sand so that the oil floats away from it in these basins where sand presumably collects at the bottom and the oil rises. The whole thing is very, very labour intensive and uses up a colossal amount of power so it is not cheap oil at all. The whole thing is crazy and seems a crying shame.

These works follow on from your Ports series, what made you turn to aerial views as source material for your work?

It's because of my fascination with negative space/shape, or *controforma* in Italian. I started looking at coastlines and islands



Alberta Bamonte, *Fort McMurray III*

and the way that the shapes interact. Then from coastlines I became interested in ports and then I thought there's potential here for drawing. I have screenshots of maps, aerial views, from as long as I've had an iPad. Before I thought of drawing them I just collected them because I liked looking at them.

Why do you use a square format?

Because there is no up or down and landscape or portrait is always some sort of indication of a way, of orientation. The only indication of a way up could be the signature and even then, I wouldn't be too fussed if someone hung them upside down. There is no horizon so who's to say?

HANNAH DEVEREUX

Hannah Devereux is a landscape photographer who travels the world seeking out places with a powerful presence, whether it's the icefields of Alaska or the hills of the Lake District. At the same time she explores the abstract in landscape, focusing on extreme details of a mountain or body of water to remove the context and scale of a place.

How does your work approach landscape?

I aim to use a landscape as a tool for creating works which are intentionally detached from the location the photograph was taken. A purely visual image which stands autonomously.

My work responds to ecologies, geologies, and meteorologies: the way they reveal, conceal, pattern, texture and abstract the land. Photography unavoidably depicts a fragment of something larger; it's a very simple notion but I find the abstracting quality of this separation very interesting.

How do you think technology influences your view of landscape?

A year or so ago I would have

probably spoken about digital versus film photography and how it enables me in the way I work. But more recently I've felt unsure of social media's influence on my view of landscape. Landscape photography seems perfectly suited to Instagram, but now I am used to seeing a huge amount of it in one sitting if I want, and that feels sad somehow.

Which places resonate with you most?

I have a love of winter conditions in the Canadian rocky mountains, many areas of Iceland, Norway and Alaska, but I find something so special about the (humble in comparison) mountains in the UK: the Lake District, Cairngorms and the west coast of Scotland. Their modesty feels approachable, friendly and beautiful. They have a quiet grandeur. And the weather and changing conditions mean you can get all seasons in a day.

What attracts you to these landscapes?

Viewing these landscapes with a sublime gaze is a modern and possibly western phenomenon,



Hannah Devereux, Darken (Icefield)

not without cultural baggage. I am absolutely guilty of Adam Gopnik's observation that we are drawn to remote, harsh landscapes now that we have the luxury of warm, comfortable accommodation or technical tents and sleeping bags to return to after venturing into the wilds. He said "winter became a season to look at as much as one to live through." Experiencing that contrast is wonderful.

Your work rarely features the human figure, are you deliberately trying to show a world without man?

I photograph figures in landscapes every so often and I do enjoy it, but it feels too easy somehow. As soon as you place a figure in a vast expanse of natural beauty, there is a sense of scale and instantly triggers the 'wow factor', not to mention the internet being utterly saturated with such images. But it also brings you back to reality and severs that line of abstraction I am searching for.

WILL JENKINSON

Will Jenkinson is a painter and filmmaker. His latest series explores how landscape, memory and technology are linked through the ubiquitous presence of the smartphone camera. His paintings are abstract, but the starting point is always the captured image.

How does your work approach landscape?

My work usually starts by looking at landscape, whether that is my current surroundings, the digital landscape, or images and video I've taken, the contents of which are usually abstract or minimalist, focusing on shape, colour and nature. Then I bring multiple fragments together in painting to try and create works that reflect the multifaceted layers of the modern world.

How does technology influence your view of landscape?

It's hard to think about landscape without thinking of technology. It's ever present. A phone in front of you or a plane in the sky. For me they have become synonymous with each other.

How did this series come into being?

I started to look at technology and landscape together and the new landscapes they create. Cracks in a screen looking more like the tributaries of a river or the shapes and lines we look through when taking photos. I wanted to make work that had the same limitations of scale that technology faces.

Do you see your work as a break from the tradition of plein air painting or an evolution of it due to the rise of technology?

I think it's a different way of working. The rise of technology has made it easier to bring the outside in. Painting *en plein air* for the digital landscape maybe.

Meandering lines seem to be a constant throughout your work, where do these come from, what do they represent?

They are an amalgamation of multiple horizons from source material and memory. I usually paint them with no fixed idea of how I want them to look, I just let the horizon go where it needs to.



You are showing video as well as paintings, how do the two sit with each other?

Video can have a painterly quality to it, in that the more you look the more you see, often things you missed when you filmed them. It gives you a second opinion from your memory of that place. The paintings in the show are made using one of my films, *Someone Else's Dream*, as source material. They are an abstraction of that landscape which originated from found material in someone else's iPhone.

You have said your work is about landscape and memory, what does this mean to you?

I'm trying to understand the landscape of memory and how that continually changes; how we remember things by forming these connections with past and present through images and now technology. To me it forms a landscape, one that continually evolves.

Which places resonate with you the most?

The north, the mountains, the sea and above the clouds.

LYNDA LAIRD

Lynda Laird is a photographer and filmmaker who uses the land itself to make images. For her Comharradh series she submerged exposed paper into the waterways of Lewis – a Scottish island under threat from developers – to create unique prints that capture the abstract beauty of the moors and the culture that was born from this landscape.

Much of your work focuses on landscape but how do the Comharradh photographs approach it?

I'm interested in the idea that there is memory stored in landscape, in place and in buildings. Lewis is seen as this wilderness, a bleak empty nothingness – that's what a lot of the developers talked about it as – but for the people that live there it's in them. This project is like a collaboration in a sense because the land is making the art, it's not me directing it. And the material used for the art is also the subject. I'm the instigator of it and I help it along but I don't have a vision, I'm almost like a medium between the water and the sheet.

What memories did this landscape evoke when you met its inhabitants?

There was so much that you could feel in the landscape that was also in the place and the people, the language, the song — everything in their life is shaped by being in this place. The peat bog is a carbon sink made up of years and years of compressed vegetation but also the memory of what has happened, layers of history.

What sparked your interest in this landscape?

I was reading *Landmarks* by Robert Macfarlane; he was talking about a glossary of Gaelic peat terms. So I started researching that and the terms for the moor, all these beautiful words that were being lost, and then one thing led to another. There's a whole group of people who have been campaigning for years against this development. Wind turbines are a good thing but not if they're destroying something else. They're being built to create renewable energy but the amount of carbon that's released by building on a carbon sink outweighs the benefits.



Lynda Laird, Comharradh I

What attracted you to the waterways in particular?

I did some research and found that anything that has been in water leaves a trace of itself behind. That really interested me. Lewis is made up of peat and water and without one the other doesn't survive. All the water is running through the peat, running through years of history.

Do you see yourself as an environmental artist?

Yes that's what I find interesting, environmental issues. I've always been interested in the development of land and how big businesses take advantage of places and people for their own benefit.

CHRIS STEVENS

Chris Stevens trained as a graphic designer before turning to photography. He is based in South East London and takes inspiration from the urban and industrial landscapes near his home, finding intriguing details where many would only see the mundane.

Why did you choose to portray industrial landscapes?

I'm fairly new to photography, so initially I visited industrial areas to practise. There are very few people around during the weekends so they're a great place to experiment and improve.

What is it that attracts you to these places?

I'm constantly amazed by the variety at these sites, you never know what you're going to find as they're in a constant state of flux. The mysterious machinery, the textures, and the small details that give these sites their character all come to life in the sun.

What do you look for in a shot?

I don't go out looking for anything specifically but I guess

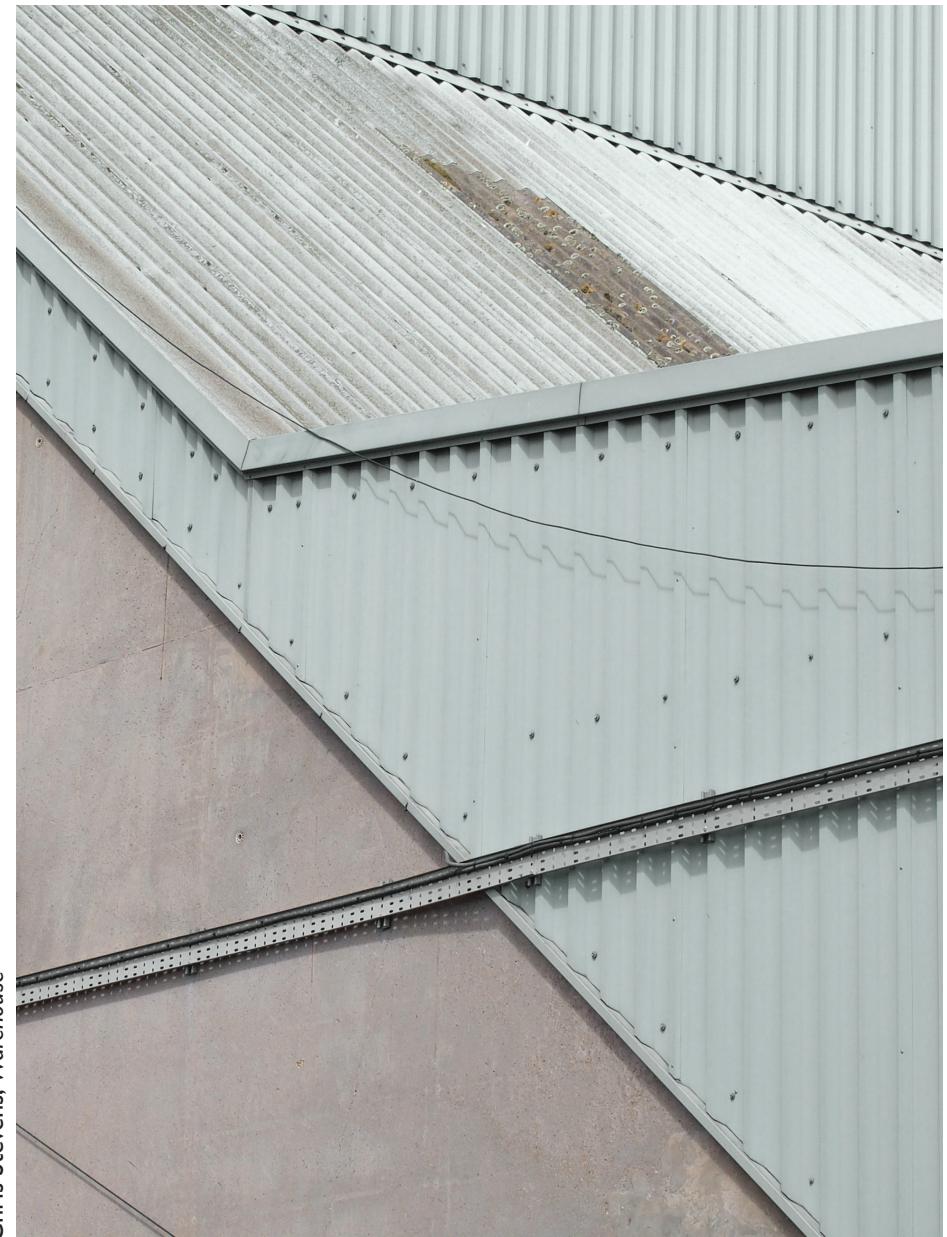
I like shadows, textures, lines, interesting colour combinations and compositions. The great thing about industrial landscapes is the little snippets of beauty that come and go – you never know what you're going to find.

How do you think technology influences your view of landscape?

I've not really thought about that before but I guess subconsciously it has had an effect. Everyone has access to a camera now and with things like Instagram it's made it easy for people to instantly share their photos. This is cool but it's harder to be original in a place like London, so I guess I'm seeking out a different kind of landscape.

Your previous work looked at details in urban landscapes, how have these images evolved from that?

I'm still looking at details but as I've become more confident, I guess I've zoomed out a little and started to reveal more of the landscape I'm in.



Chris Stevens, Warehouse

HAYLEY NIA THOMAS

Hayley Nia Thomas is primarily a portrait photographer but much of her work explores the relationship between sitter and landscape. She spent six months living in Australia where she photographed the ocean in black and white, offering an intriguing contrast to the familiar image of colour saturated surf photography.

How do these works approach landscape?

I recently spent some time living in Australia. The landscape there is incredible, but something that grabbed me was people's relationship with their landscape. Many of the Australians I met have a strong connection with the ocean. Their emotions are influenced by it, their day starts and ends in it.

How do you portray this in your work?

This connection was highlighted for me when I experienced one person's relationship with the ocean affected because of injury. *Therapy* captures their first time back in the water. Although they were not physically ready, their desire and determination to be back in a body of water, was so

strong. They needed it, like a kind of therapy. *Storm* shows the ocean in a darker light, one we may not expect to see. Australia is often known for its clear blue waters and sunny skies. The reality can sometimes be very different and in turn can have an effect on one's mood. Some are lost without their daily surf. *Afloat* is perhaps a comment on the power of the ocean. Many speak about its ability to transport you and its therapeutic properties. I often found myself bobbing up and down in the ocean for hours when I felt homesick.

Most of your work until now has been in colour, what is it about these subjects that made you choose black and white?

I wanted to avoid the usual stereotypes of the lush and colourful Australian landscape. By shooting in black and white the subjects are isolated, and therefore removed from that perception. I feel that the nature of black and white photography portrays a more appropriate mood for me.



Hayley Nia Thomas, *Therapy, QLD, Australia*

You used a range of cameras to take these shots, what were you looking for?

I used a combination of cameras such as an iPhone, a GoPro and a compact system camera. Each lends itself to the different environments in each image. I felt that by not limiting myself to one style or one camera, I was able to free myself up and work more instinctively.

Coming from working in the commercial photography industry,

in my own work I am embracing the opportunity to be more relaxed, spontaneous and less restricted when it comes to image quality. I am realising that pixels, grain and sharpness do not have to dictate whether a photo works or not. This shouldn't limit us. The importance of a photograph should be something more than that.

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