

DOLBY CHADWICK GALLERY

Vanessa Marsh

The Sun Beneath the Sky

July 9–August 29, 2020

Dolby Chadwick Gallery is pleased to announce *The Sun Beneath the Sky*, an exhibition of new work by Vanessa Marsh.

Marsh's minimal, graphic images feature empyrean, enigmatic, and often surreal landscapes that speak to forms of power—natural, cosmological, and man-made—as well to the sublime and its attendant enchantments and contradictions. While her mixed-media process is based in photographic techniques, Marsh does not work with a camera. She instead layers cut-paper silhouettes on top of photosensitive paper, making multiple exposures that she further manipulates through dodging and burning techniques.

Her most recent series, *The Sun Beneath the Sky*, depicts mountainous peaks and valleys in creamy pastel tones of pink, purple, and yellow. These unadorned and lucid landscapes are also strikingly atmospheric, as if seen through a thick haze or fog. Their light source is often low, reminiscent of sunrise or sunset, as glowing light rakes dramatically across the scenes, softening the focus and hard edges while heightening the play between layers. The works appear lit from within, an effect that conjures the sun itself. Sunlight is not only Marsh's subject matter but also her medium in these lumen prints, which she creates by exposing silver gelatin paper to the sun.

The Sun Beneath the Sky features geographic locations across the American West, such as Mount Hozomeen in Washington and Grand Teton in Wyoming, which she identifies in her titles. This titling system is a nod to conventions favored by some of photography's founding figures, including Carleton Watkins and Ansel Adams. While Marsh's works often merge multiple locations to evoke a somewhat dreamlike or ethereal space, the specific references in her titles serve to ground the images in a sense of place and earthliness.

Marsh grew up in Seattle, surrounded by the mountains of the North Cascades and the Olympics. This daily proximity to the sublime has heightened not only her appreciation of the timelessness and unknowable magnitude of the landscape but also her awareness of its potential for sudden and dramatic change: volcanic eruptions and earthquakes are an ever-present threat in the Pacific Northwest. As a result, an interest in how landscapes can transform over time inflects much of her art. By couching the sublime in imagery that shifts and dematerializes, Marsh's works are a reminder that, despite its scale and grandeur, nature is also a living system of moving, interconnected, and sometimes fragile parts.

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Vanessa Marsh was born in Seattle, Washington, in 1978. She earned a BA from Western Washington University in 2001 and an MFA from California College of the Arts in 2004. Marsh has exhibited across the United States, including at the SFO Museum; the Contemporary Jewish Museum, San Francisco; the New Museum of Los Gatos; the Richard L. Nelson Gallery at UC Davis; the San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art; the Sun Valley Center for the Arts; Camera Club of New York; and Schilt Publishing and Gallery, Amsterdam. She was a Critical Mass Finalist, Top 50, Photolucida, in 2018 and has been awarded fellowships at the Headlands Center for the Arts (2004), the MacDowell Colony (2007), and Kala Art Institute (2011). She was an artist in residence at the Jentel Foundation in Wyoming in 2018, and at San Francisco's Rayko Photo Center in 2014. Her work can be found in the collections of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and the San Jose Museum of Art. This is her fourth solo show at the Dolby Chadwick Gallery.