

Jules Maeght Gallery

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bitter Creek Sweet Water

Jules Maeght Gallery
149 Gough Street @ Oak
February 16 to April 29, 2017
Opening Reception: **February 16, 6 to 9 pm**

The Jules Maeght Gallery is pleased to present **Bitter Creek Sweet Water**, a group exhibition influenced by the nostalgia of the American West. The exhibition features four local artists: **Marshall Elliott, Paul Kos, Isabelle Sorrell** and **Christopher Upham**, who engage in a multimedia dialogue encompassing sculpture, installation, video, painting and photography.

Artwork that explores the concept of the American West simultaneously invites us to the unspoiled, untouched west that we long for, while encouraging a responsibility for the land. The name of the exhibition draws on the irony of naming. Beautiful places with names such as *Bitter Creek* discourage visitors, while *Sweet Water* changes the perception of a place disregarded and without appeal. This convention questions the way we remember the land, and in turn the way we create history. Water, whether bitter or sweet is what follows the frontier, "the end of where there is soil..."

The paintings of Isabelle Sorrell recompose elements of existing physical landscapes to create scenes reminiscent of real places. In the painting *The Land (On Measures and Weights)* the artist's likeness as well as that of the Tetons in Wyoming is seen. However the image is a composed landscape that refers to no true space. In this piece, wilderness, seen from a distance starts without a clear image at its inception, yet is achieved by a drive to reach an intuitive atmosphere. The artist's rendering of the West is thus one of utopia, rather than of verisimilitude. Even in paintings such as *There Is No God (left and/or right crack)*, a rock climb in the High Sierra's pristine landscape sets in motion the questioning of belief, and the focus is unconventionally distorted. The foreground is blurred and the background is in focus. The realism is one of the spirit and the imagination.

Paul Kos's sculpture and installation draw on materials and their relationship to a given site for inspiration. In particular, Kos has engaged with the American west, from his upbringing in Wyoming to time spent in the Sierras. The exhibition sees the realization of numerous pieces long ago imagined, most notably *Gun Contra Gun 1971-2016*, a pendulum of two rifles attached at the barrels, illuminated with a distinctive shadow against the wall. The piece, based on a drawing from 1971, questions our own history in the west, a back and forth conflict seemingly caught in an infinite loop-the suggestion that there is no end to these means. Conversely, Kos suggests the longevity of the land itself, as works such as *Dry Lake Mud* and *For the Garden* see simple, humble materials and landscapes elevated and eternalized. Paul Kos is represented by Anglim Gilbert Gallery in San Francisco and Galerie Georges-Phillipe and Nathalie Vallois in Paris.

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Through the diverse possibilities offered by sculpture, video and installation, Marshall Elliott seeks to shed light on the things people aren't paying attention to. Much of his work approaches memory through "the investigation of things that have disappeared," both in landscape and in collective memory. Elliott often works in series, using a wide range of media to understand historical events nearly forgotten. *Displaced Resident (Transparency)* is a sequence of upside-down California state flags, stacked one on top of the next. The work follows an existing series that retells the story of Monarch, the last living California grizzly bear, whose likeness is shown on the flag. The flags have the bear cut out to reveal a transparency grid, a reference to the event's near disappearance in memory.

The photography of writer, filmmaker and photographer Christopher Upham presents a counterpoint to the reminiscence relayed by the other works. Photographs such as *Bajada Hoop Dreams* portray the harshness of desert life, and both the beauty and irony of civilization in such a place. In a primal landscape, humanity seems secondary. Upham's work questions "the prickly nature and the tortured forms that humans have built and how long they might last before returning to sand."

In response to the natural landscapes of the frontier, these four artists display the utopian nostalgia through a diverse variety of media. The image presented, which flirts between reality and illusion, is one of artistic manifest destiny. The frontier is portrayed as our land not in a sense of ownership so much as in a sense of one's responsibility to protect it.

About the Gallery

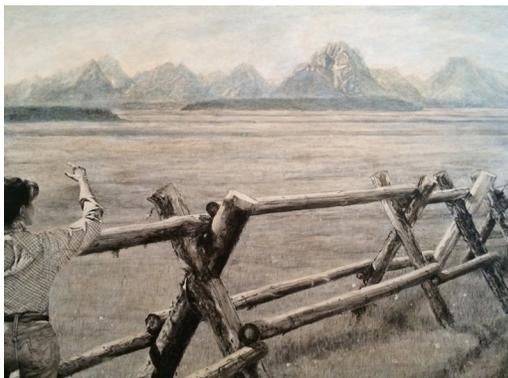
The Jules Maeght Gallery is a contemporary art gallery that seeks to engage the San Francisco community by infusing European artists, young and established alike, into a diverse, multimedia dialogue. Amélie and Jules Maeght carry on the Maeght tradition of strong support for contemporary art for the first time in San Francisco.



Marshall Elliott, *Displaced Resident (Transparency)*, 2016



Paul Kos, *Gun Contra Gun*, 1971-2016



Isabelle Sorrell, *The Land (On Measures and Weights)*, 2016



Christopher Upham, *Bajada Hoop Dreams*, 2007/2016

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