



ALUMNI ■ GALLERY

Mark McLoughlin

# LENSLESS

*pinhole photography in the digital age*



## INTRODUCTION

The pinhole camera represents a retreat from the wealth of options available in modern photo technology. It is an exercise in restriction, a deliberate paring-down of the image making process. Using a hand-built camera with paper as a negative returns the medium to its nascent period of simple light gathering.

Over the past several years I have constructed a variety of pinhole cameras in order to explore themes of time, memory, taxonomy and process. The contact-print positives (100% of the paper negative size) in each series reveal an expansion of time, in direct opposition to the frozen moment of a modern snapshot. The overall softness of the pinhole format, combined with the slow exposure time, leads the viewer away from the “evidence” of sharp detail and into the realm of serendipity or nuance.

These photographs explore a way of seeing that relates to the broader theme of temporality: ways of using time as a marker in order to understand our place in its passing.

All photographs in this exhibition are gelatin silver prints, hand-processed, toned, matted and framed by the artist.

*Exhibition curated by Robert Campbell*

**COVER:** ??? (20??), detail

**FACING PAGE:** *Test prints of Jody, Mark and Don*, from the Stolen Souls, Willing series (20??)

**BACK COVER:** ??? (20??), detail

**CATALOG DESIGN:** Dan D Shafer / dandy-co.com



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**SEPTEMBER 9 - DECEMBER 14, 2023**

**CORNISH** COLLEGE  
OF THE ARTS



## Italy

The prints in this series are part of a larger body of work reexamining historical elements of the photographic process. Each photo has been contact-printed from a paper negative exposed through a pinhole camera constructed by the artist.

As this process involves a longer than normal exposure, there is an expansion of time which creates an odd selectivity in the image. Although many people (and sometimes, boats) were moving through each frame of exposure, their movement prevented them from being recorded on the negative.

This method of simple light gathering, combined with the softness of the paper negative, as well as sepia toning, produces a look reminiscent of the medium's early history, further enhanced by the unchanged architecture of old Italy.

*There are thirty-five images in this series.*



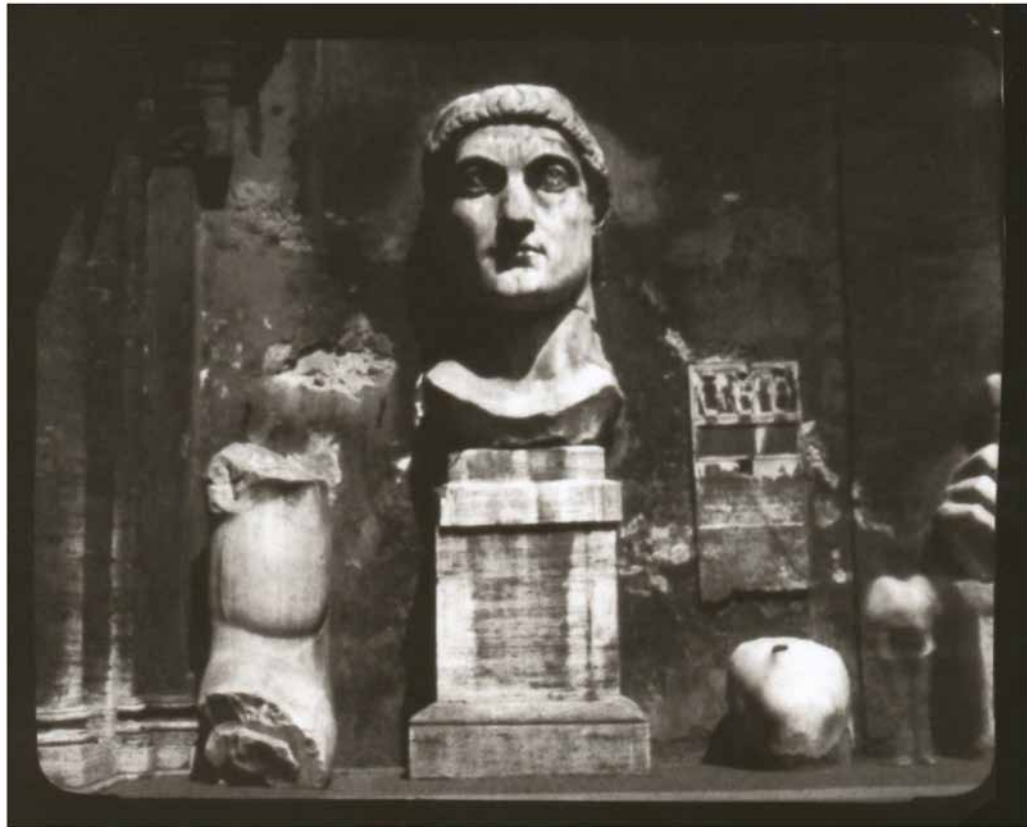
ROME

*View of Colosseum and Arch of Titus from The Palatine*



ROME

*Temple of Apollo Sosianus*



ROME

*Fragments from colossal statue of Constantine*



ROME

*Façade of The Pantheon*



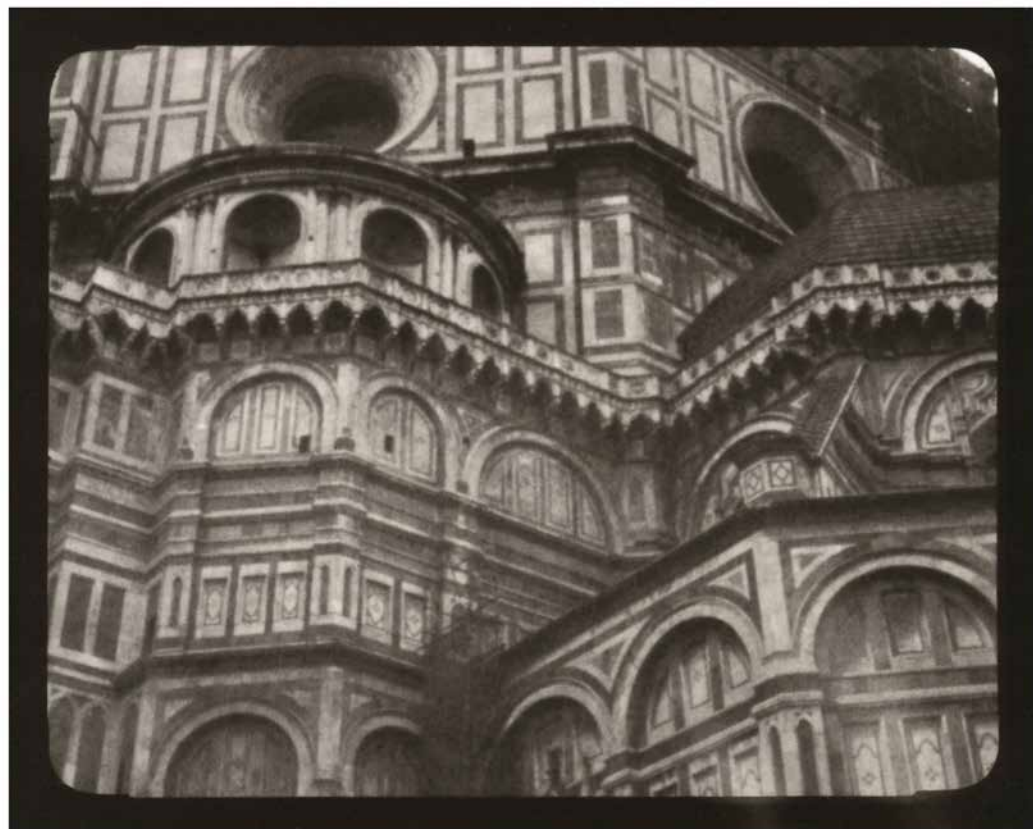
**ROME**

*Detail of the river god Ganges from the  
Fountain of the Four Rivers in the Piazza Navona*



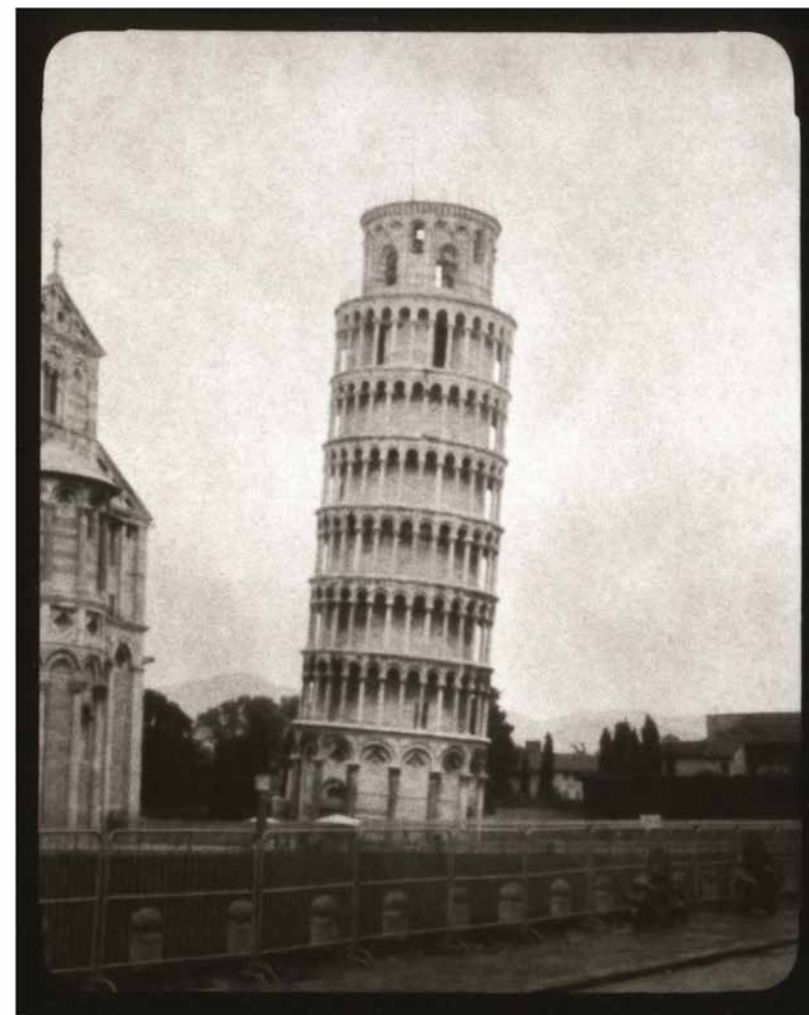
**FLORENCE**

*Palazzo Vecchio*



FLORENCE

*Duomo detail no. 3*



PISA

*Leaning Tower of Pisa*



VENICE

*Canal view near Campo San Lorenzo*



VENICE

*View of the Grand Canal from Campo dei Pescaria*



*Pinhole negative and positive: View from Ponte Croce near Papadopoli Gardens, Venice*



*Pinhole camera with processed negative in holder*



#### FROM THE SERIES

## Natural Selection

These photographs were produced using a square, 16-chamber box camera constructed by the artist from inexpensive materials. For the series, small objects were individually exposed onto the square paper negative using this simple formula: one object, one light source and one hour of exposure time. The camera would be repositioned for each of the one hour exposures; one for each chamber.

Each large negative was processed, then divided into groups of four and contact printed so that the objects could be seen as floating in, or emerging through a vertical ground of matte black. The limitations of the process created an intentional ambiguity of things not fully described.

Combining four discreet objects in a totemic presentation can suggest a cinematic sequence or, perhaps, a system of hierarchical classification. The images are divided into categories of either Culture or Nature.

This series contrasts the artist's early life spent in the Pacific Northwest with his later experience living and working in post-industrial areas of Brooklyn.

*There are twelve framed groups of images in this series.*



CULTURE 03



NATURE 06



CULTURE 07



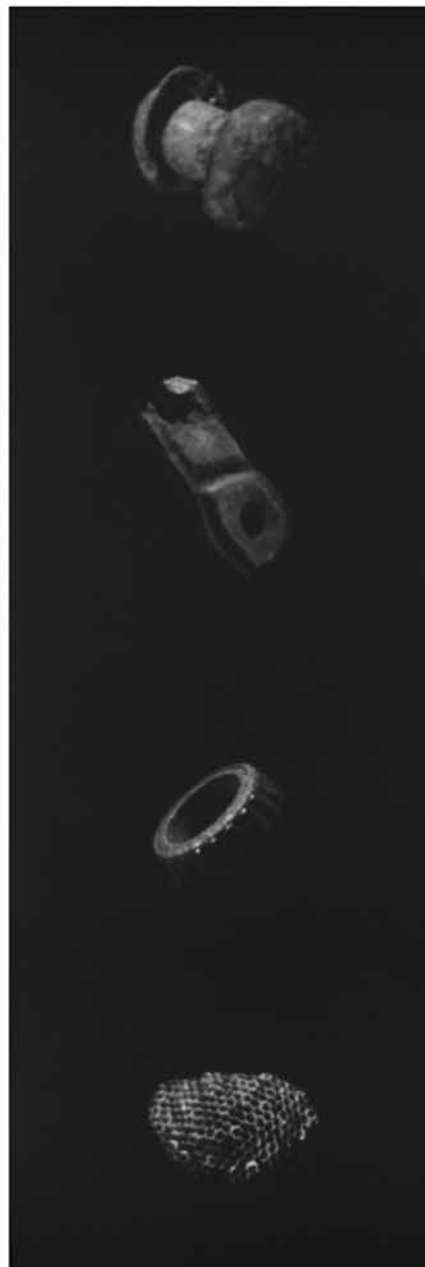
NATURE 03



CULTURE 12



NATURE 09



CULTURE 05



NATURE 04



CULTURE 08



NATURE 02



LEFT 16-chamber pinhole camera

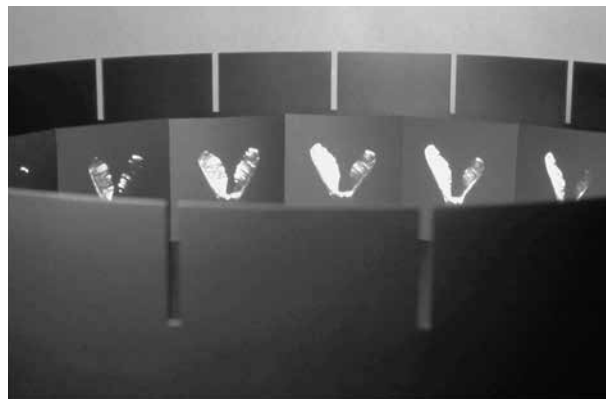
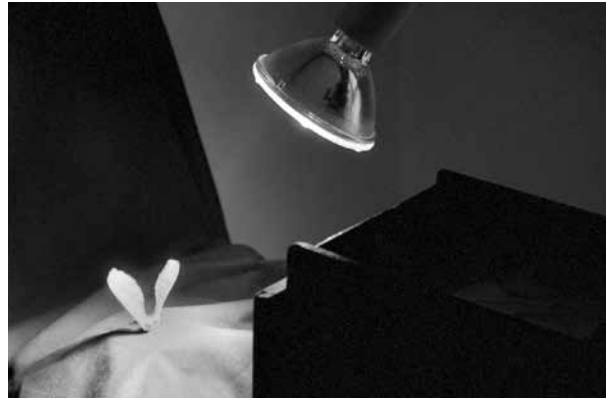


RIGHT full negative from 16-chamber pinhole camera

## NATURE STUDY & CULTURE STUDY

These two motorized zoetropes offer a more complete illusion of sequential animation suggested in the series, Natural Selection. Inside each circular housing are 19 pinhole photographs exposed using the same process: one object, one light source and one hour of exposure time. The object has been maneuvered slightly prior to the next exposure in order to complete a 360 degree rotation.

By stepping on the foot pedal and viewing these photos through the zoetrope's rotating slits, the expansion of motionless time (19 hours of accumulated exposure) becomes compressed into a momentary, yet endless, animated loop.





## Bilbao

In the Autumn of 1997, McLoughlin was one of 4 technicians tasked with overseeing the installation of artworks for the Inaugural Exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain. Many workers had spent months preparing and crating over 200 artworks from the museum's vast collection at the main warehouse in midtown Manhattan. The crated artworks were then transported by a fleet of fifteen semi-trucks to the tarmac at nearby Newark Airport.

The Guggenheim had contracted the services of the Ukrainian Antonov, the world's largest cargo plane, for the initial delivery of artworks. At Newark, McLoughlin and the other techs worked with the Ukrainian crew over two days to transfer crates from the trucks onto the plane (in a Tetris-like fashion), then scrambled aboard for the flight to Bilbao. When they arrived, the plane was greeted by Spanish Army units, who informed the crew that Basque Separatists had threatened to attack the plane as well as the museum. Over the following two days, the Army carefully escorted each caravan of artworks to the museum, fortunately without incident. Thus began a four-month odyssey working to install an entire, sprawling, not-yet-finished museum. Overseeing crews of local workers, as well as additional Guggenheim personnel, ninety-to-100-plus hours per week would be the working norm in order to be ready for the official opening date.

“Before leaving Brooklyn, I had constructed a pinhole camera that would make stereoscopic images. I found the obvious irony appealing; attempting to document a futuristic architectural marvel by decidedly low-tech means. As my exposure times ranged between 30 minutes and two hours, my working method was to secure the camera to a sturdy tripod, uncover the pinholes and set my timer. For the most part, I was able to quietly excuse myself and get back to the camera within the allotted time, cover the pinholes, change out the paper using a portable changing bag and set up in another location. I hung a sign on the tripod that read, Please Don't Touch in English, Spanish and Basque, and chose my locations to be as unobtrusive as possible. Late at night I would develop and fix the negatives in my hotel room, rinsing them in the bath tub and hanging them in the closet to dry”.

Following the museum's grand opening McLoughlin returned to his Brooklyn studio and made contact prints from the box of negatives. Before framing, the selected prints were transposed and mounted. When these prints are viewed through special glasses, the space and forms of Frank Gehry's architecture are enhanced by the stereoscopic illusion of depth.

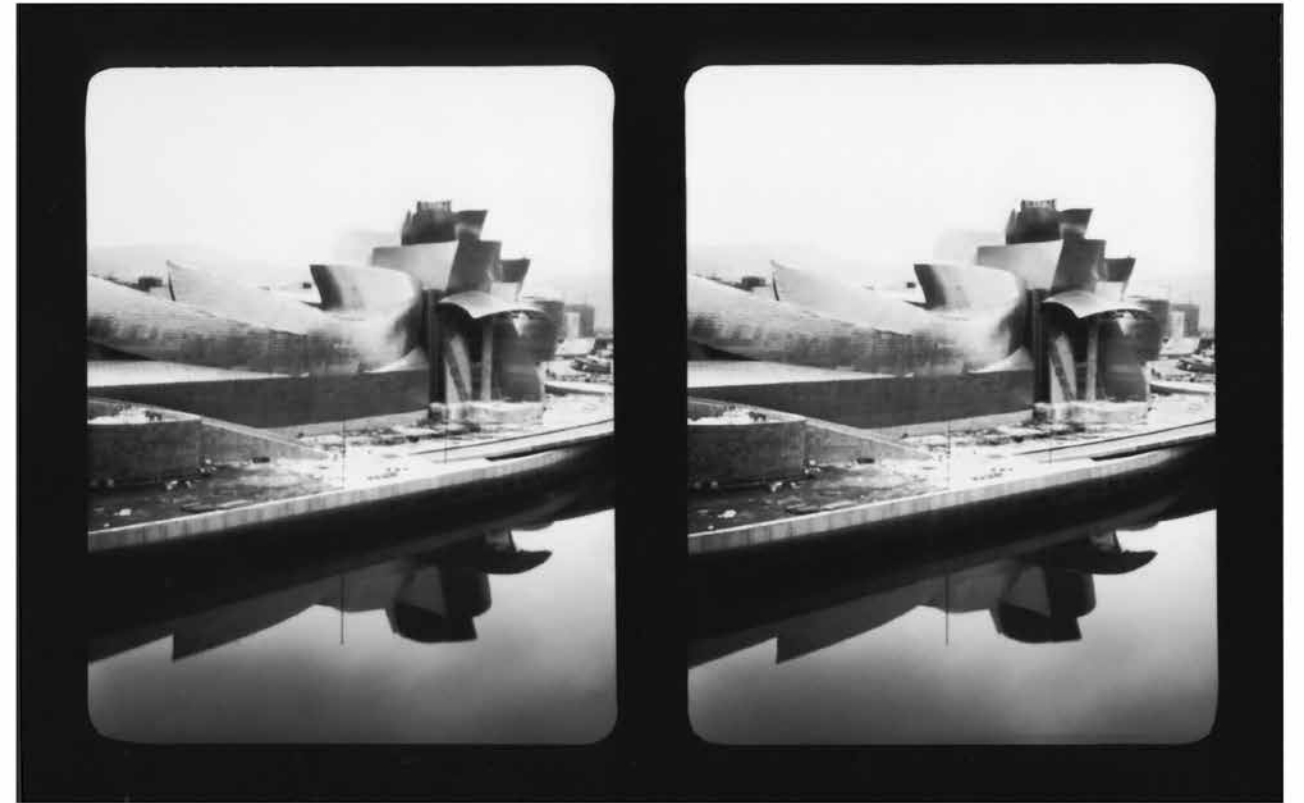
*There are thirty-five stereo images in this series.*



*Loading crated artworks onto the Antonov at Newark Airport*

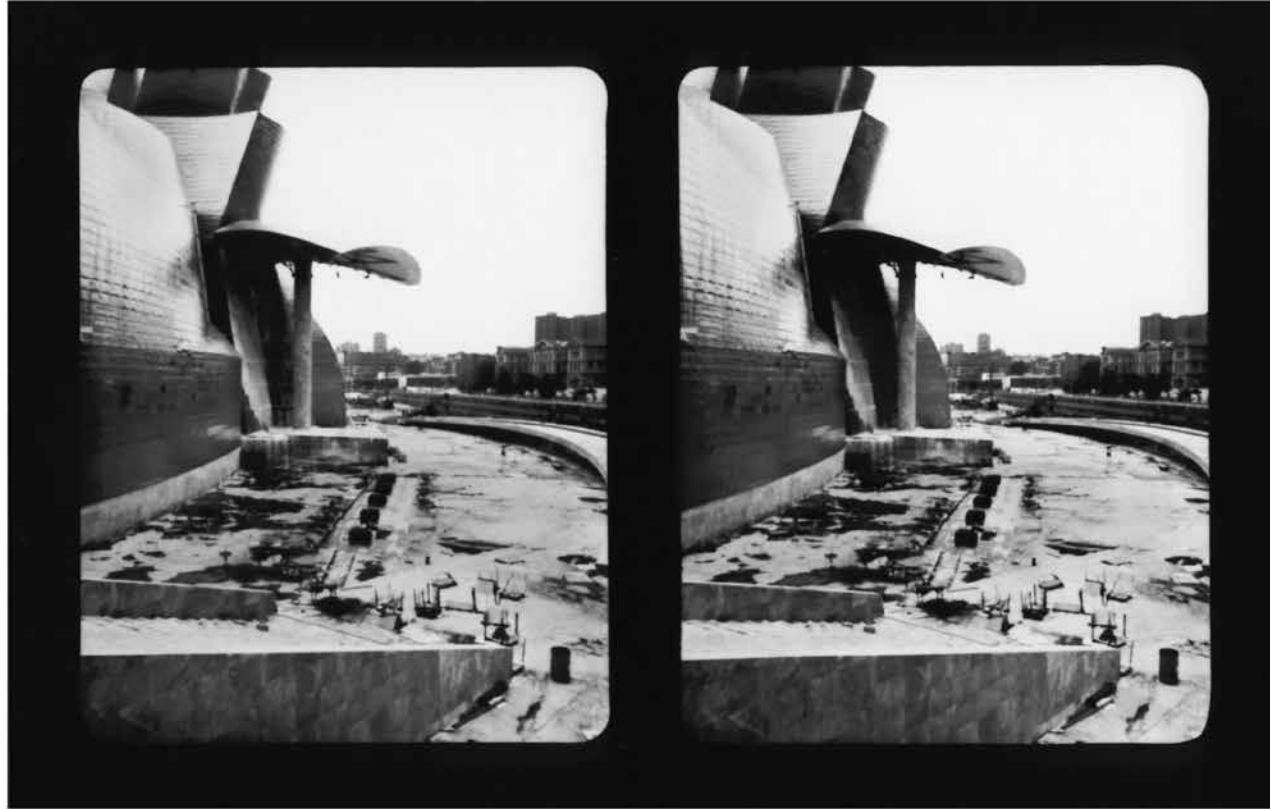


*Loading crated artworks into the large gallery at the Guggenheim, Bilbao.  
Richard Serra's permanent sculpture, Snake, can be seen at lower right.*



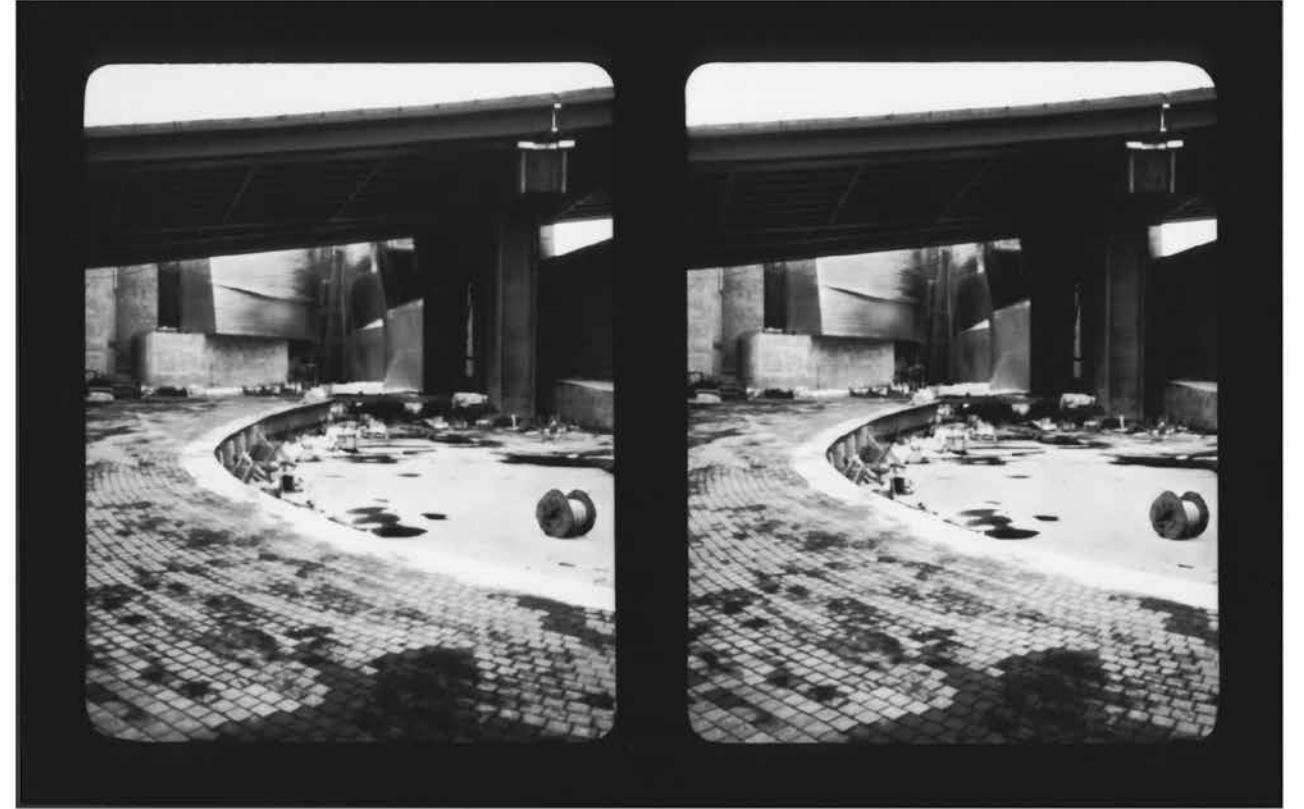
TIME AND PLACE

No. 1



TIME AND PLACE

No. 2



TIME AND PLACE

No. 4



TIME AND PLACE

*No. 8*



TIME AND PLACE

*No. 18*



TIME AND PLACE

*No. 20*



TIME AND PLACE

*No. 21*



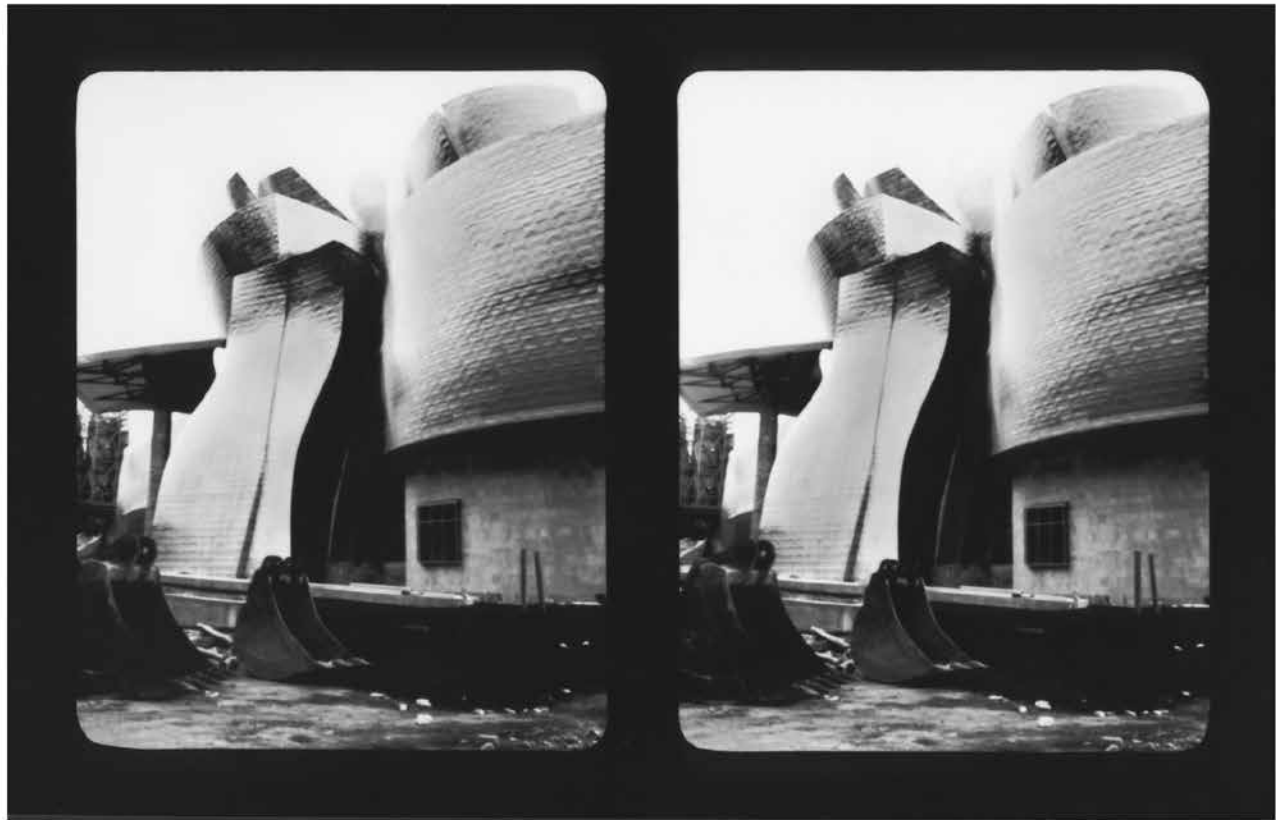
TIME AND PLACE

*No. 13*



TIME AND PLACE

*No. 14*



TIME AND PLACE

*No. 5*



TIME AND PLACE

*No. 15*



## THE LONG GOODBYE

# Meditations on the West

This series is an ongoing conversation with nature, a visual essay exploring the confluence of time, memory and process within the context of contemporary realism. With a nod to the early photographers of the American landscape, McLoughlin made trips during Summer months from New York to remote points west with 30 pounds of (mostly home-made) gear and boxes of photo paper.

“My aim was to set up in front of a beautiful vista and allow time to slow down. My camera was built around a repurposed bellows scavenged from a Brooklyn junk pile; basically a large, folding suitcase with a pinhole on one end and a 16 x 20 inch sheet of photo paper on the other. The long exposure times afforded me this respite to sit with the selected view, to observe subtle changes, to reflect on the history of early photography and the passing of time.”

Back in his studio, McLoughlin processed the exposed paper negatives and contact-printed them, adding toner to further the historical ambiguity of the finished prints. They are straightforward, contemporary documents of accumulated time, layered with the history and myth of the West.

*There are currently twenty-two photographs in this series.*



*Exposing a 16" x 20" paper negative  
Devils Tower, Wyoming*



*North Cascades, Washington*



*Sylvan Lake, South Dakota*



*Gibbon Falls, Wyoming*



*Jenny Lake, Grand Tetons, Wyoming*



*Badlands Hoodoo, South Dakota*



## Stolen Souls, Willing

This portrait series spans a ten-year period, involving both the Brooklyn and Buffalo studios. The large pinhole camera constructed for the West landscape series was turned on end in the studio and a variety of friends were invited for a sitting. Each person was asked to position him/herself in front of the camera and remain as still as they wished for 15 minutes (this exposure time was one part pun, one part trial and error). Studio lighting and backdrop were kept intentionally minimal.

Curator Michael J. Beam explained, “The idea of sitting still—completely still—seemed like it would be an eternity. In fact, sitting for a McLoughlin portrait was, in hindsight, a refreshing opportunity for a few moments of introspection. In the artist’s studio, I had the opportunity to review previous portraits McLoughlin had directed. I say directed because they are akin to Andy Warhol’s early screen tests; both artists turn on the lights, adjust the camera and exit the studio. As the subject... I needed to devise a unique way to express myself in front of this long-exposure, oversized camera sitting just inches from my face”.

The subtle movements of each sitter over the long exposure time, combined with the softness of the pinhole format, canceled out any sharp detail normally associated with formal portrait photography. The resulting 20" x 16" contact-print positives suggest something beyond a mere likeness; the energy of each sitter contributing to the erasure of their form, expanding into a notion of the spirit. The title of the series refers to the antiquated belief that the act of taking someone’s photograph would steal their soul.

*There are forty images in this series.*



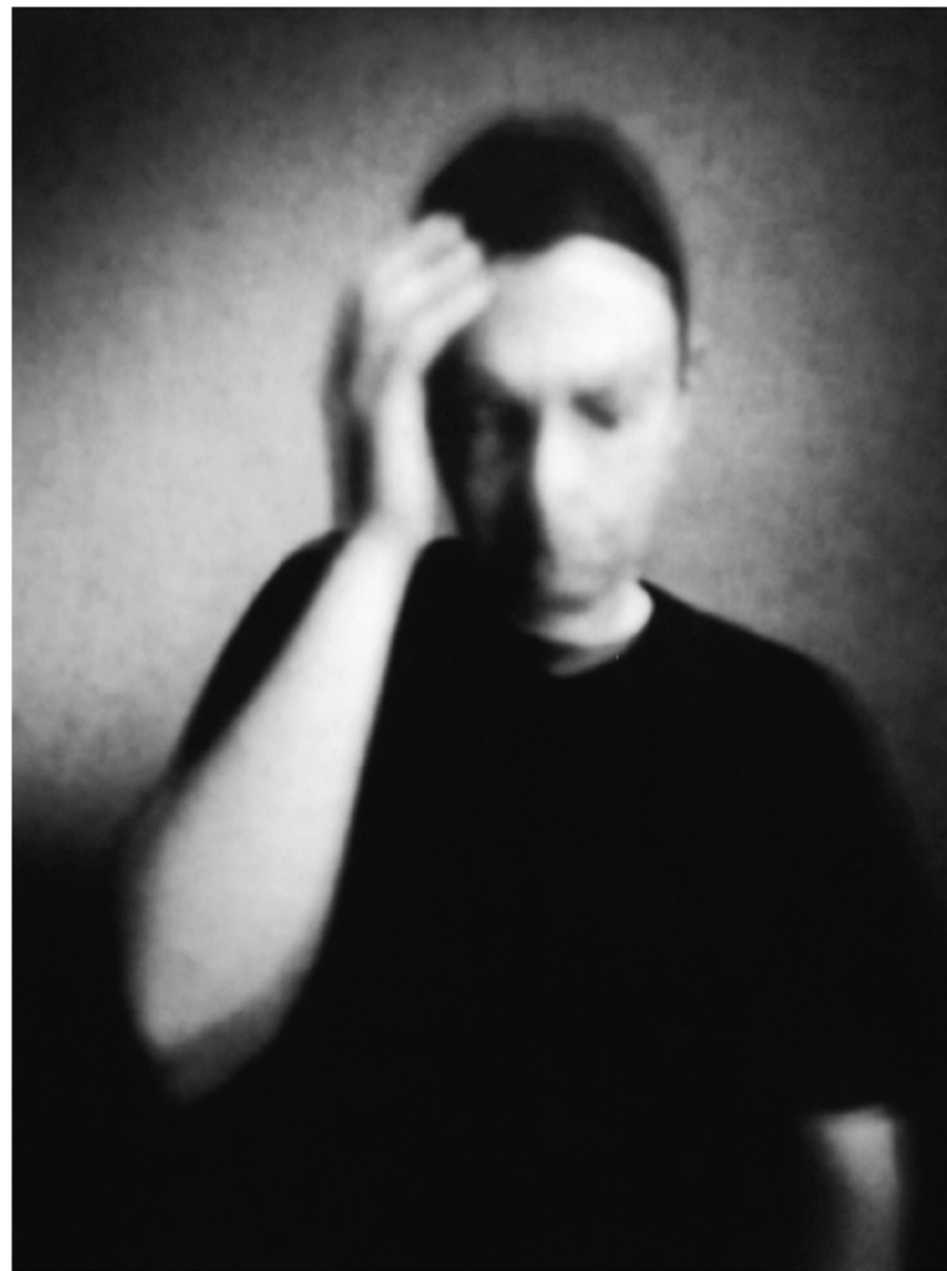
*Chris*



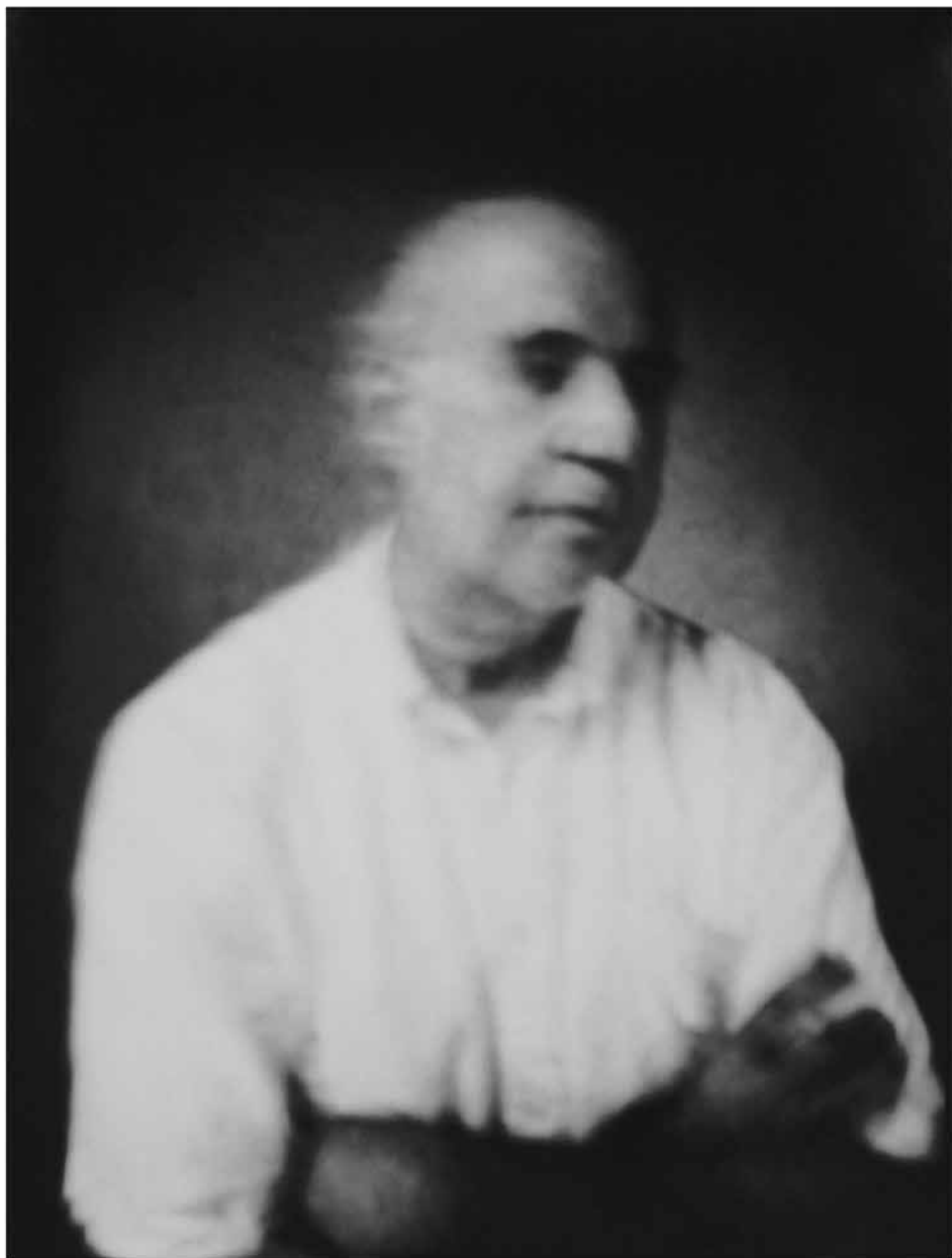
*James*



*Jody*



*John*



*Leo*



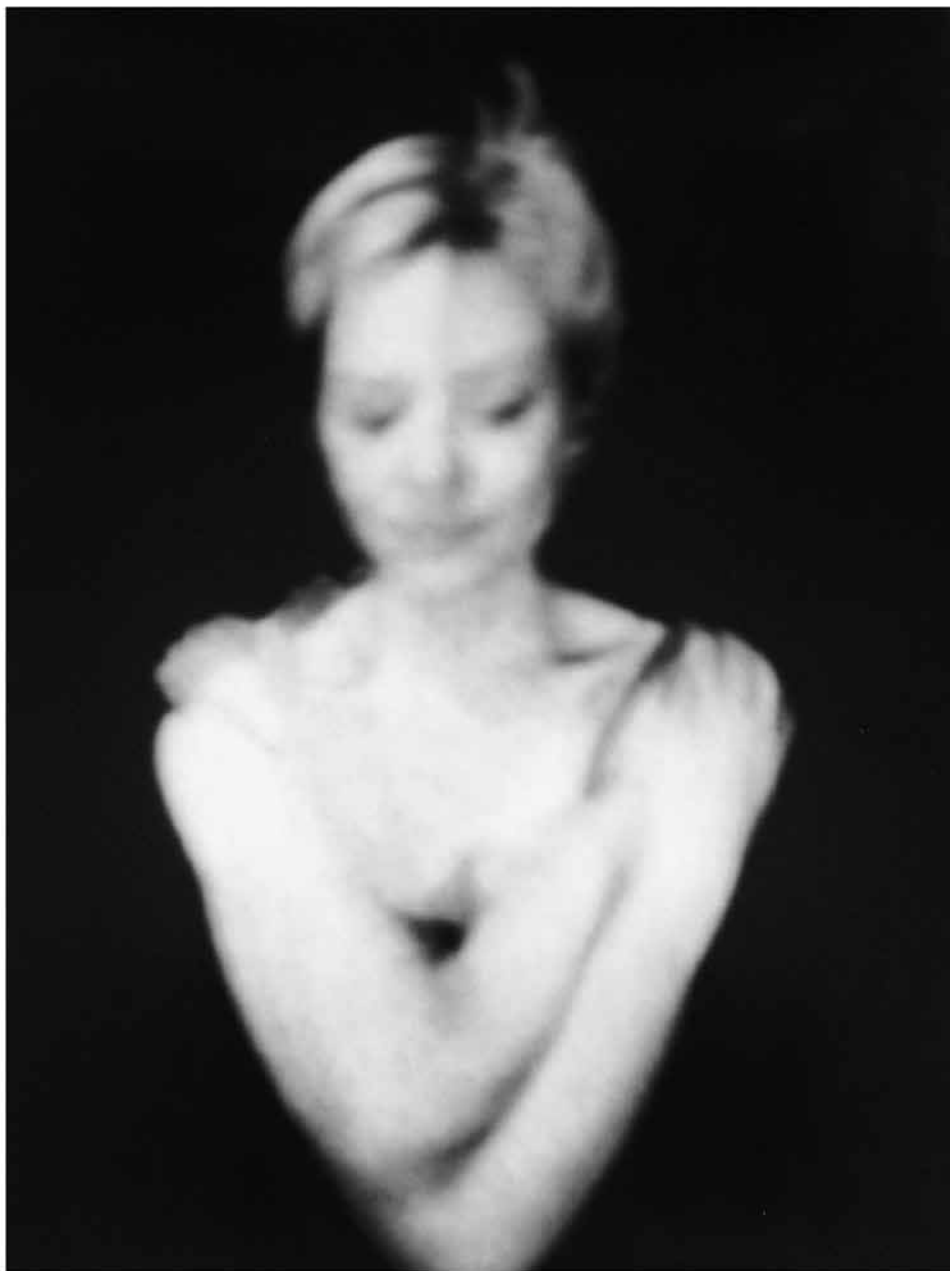
*Neill*



*Lisa*



*Steve*



*Nancy*



**BELOW** *Carol, and 15 minutes of Carol*

Mark McLoughlin's artistic output spans 40 years and includes painting, drawing, printmaking, sculpture, installation, video, billboard vandalism and photography. His artworks have been featured in galleries and museums across the country and are included in many private and corporate collections. His photographic images can be seen in many art publications throughout the U.S., Europe and Japan. He describes his current lifestyle as a “modified hermitage”, free from iPhones and social media.

**THANK YOU**

Jody Hanson  
Robert Campbell  
Gary Hill  
Paul Macapia  
Kathleen Garrett  
Carole Fuller  
Mark Strathy  
Donald Groscost  
Nelson Bradley

