



Traversing East

An exhibition of two contemporary photographers who both come from, participate in, and extend the tradition of Western landscape photography.

Michael Berman



Neil Folberg



Opening Reception: Friday, May 10, 5-7pm
Exhibition is on view through June 15.

Obscura Gallery presents *Traversing East*, an exhibition with Michael Berman and Neil Folberg, two contemporary photographers who both come from, participate in, and extend the tradition of Western landscape photography. Both artists now immerse themselves in Eastern landscapes to discover the unseen, and explore humanity's relationship to nature both physically and spiritually. New Mexican Michael Berman's ongoing project exposes the Mongolian Bogd Kahn Mountain landscape in its range of complex and diverse ecosystems. For the past three years, Michael has been photographing in the oldest government designated Protected Natural Area on Earth and has been detailing what is occurring to the landscape and wildlife amidst the ever-expanding surrounding community of Ulaanbaatar. American-Israeli photographer, Neil Folberg, who was originally born in California and moved to Jerusalem over 40 years ago, creates photographs which explore the relationship between man, nature, and the cosmos. The lucid landscapes of the Middle East share the range of topography found within the nearly untouched, serene terrain. The exhibition also includes his most recent series', *Taking Measure*, and *White Winds*, where the artist includes himself in vast, pure landscapes of the Faroe Islands and Iceland in which he considers the ultimate limits of knowledge and vision.

MICHAEL P. BERMAN



Michael Berman, *Approaching Summer Snow, Satai Khairkhan Uul, Mongolia, 2018, 22 x 30"*, archival pigment ink print, edition of 18.

Michael P. Berman has wandered the terrain of the American West, Mexico Norteno, and most recently, the extensive grasslands of Mongolia. To his art Berman brings an awareness of the complexity of the biological world; to the political and social dialogue of the West he brings his art as a catalyst to renew and heighten our perception of the land. He works on the things – mining, grazing, wilderness, timber, water, growth and the border – that impact the land. He now continues this tradition of working in depth with the landscape, with his ongoing project of photographing the grasslands of Mongolia. Mr. Berman's classically executed black and white photographs derive from and extend the tradition of Western landscape photography.



Michael Berman, 2016 *Mng L1006844 Wet Dunes, Kbbongoryn Els*, 2018, 22 x 30", archival pigment ink print, edition of 18.

In the summer of 2016 Willy Sutton and I travelled to the other side of the planet to photograph in Mongolia. We were encouraged and supported to take a look at the Tosonkhulstai Nature Reserve by Frank Goodyear and the folks who had supported our Wyoming Grasslands Project. This ongoing project is now in its third year.

Nothing speaks more to the future and past of Mongolia than Ulaanbaatar. A hundred years ago a seasonal ger camp surrounded trade compounds, Buddhist Monasteries, and the Zuun Khuree temple-palace complex. Today it is great city closing in on a million and a half people in which almost half the population of Mongolia lives. – Michael Berman



Michael Berman, (*Mongolia-L1001596*), 2016, 11 x 16.5", archival pigment ink print.

Above the city rises the Bogd Kahn Mountain. These mountains were declared a protected site in 1783, and it is oldest protected natural area on this planet. The long tradition Mongolia has of caring for the land is rooted in the "Ykh Zasag" laws of Chinggis Khaan. It has continued to this day with the designation of four types of Special Protected Areas by the Mongolian Parliament in the 1990's: Strictly Protected Areas, National Conservation Parks, Nature Reserves, and Monuments.



Michael Berman, (*Mng-0617-L1000639*), 2016, 11 x 16.5", archival pigment ink print.

These Protected Areas cover the complex and diverse ecosystems of Mongolia. A landscape that descends from 14,000 feet at Tavan Bogd mountain in the west across immense grassland steppes, mountains and rivers to 1,800 feet at Hoh Nur a small lake on the East border, and North to South from Taiga Forest to the Gobi Desert.

I am fascinated by the idea of a "Strictly Protected Area" for it is a rare thing for humanity to set aside a place for a wild ecosystems to thrive, but I also see the importance of the "Natural Reserves" as we strive to find a place for wildlife in an ever expanding human community. – Michael Berman, 2017



Michael Berman, *Man on a Motorcycle herding horses, Toson, Mongolia*, 2018, 11 x 16.5", archival pigment ink print.

Michael P. Berman was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2008 to photograph the remnant grasslands of the Chihuahuan Desert. His photographs are included in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Amon Carter Museum, and the Museum of New Mexico, among others. In 2013, he received the Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts in New Mexico and has also been a recipient of Painting Fellowships from the Arizona Commission on the Arts and the Wurlitzer Foundation. Berman's work has been published in several books including *Gila: Radical Visions*; *The Enduring Silence* and the first and third books of a border trilogy with writer Charles Bowden, *Inferno* and *Trinity*.



Michael Berman, *Two Birds, Nine Pots, Ej Khairkhan Uul*, 2018 (Mng 0717 L1006554), 11 x 16.5", archival pigment ink print.

Berman was born in New York City in 1956, and went west to Colorado College where he studied biology and worked with peregrine falcons before embracing his photographic exploration of the land. He lives in Southwestern New Mexico in the Mimbres Valley, and is a founding and current board member of the Gila Resources Information Project. He has received grant support for his photographic and environmental work from the McCune Charitable Foundation and Lannan Foundation.

NEIL FOLBERG



Neil Folberg, *Nahal El-Ai*, 2013, 22.5 x 30", archival pigment ink print, edition of 5.

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Neil Folberg's landscapes explore the relationship between man, nature, and the cosmos. A former student of the American landscape photographer Ansel Adams, Israeli photographer Folberg is known for his color landscapes of the Middle East and The Faroe Islands, as well as black-and-white techniques that champion the wizardry of his master teacher.



Neil Folberg, *Beit Shean Valley*, 2012, 22.5 x 30", archival pigment ink print, edition of 5.

Born in San Francisco, Folberg became a pupil of Adams at age 17, followed by his education at the University of California at Berkeley and individualized study with landscape photographer William Garnett. His earliest work consists of earthy black and white images that document a people's presence on their land, in Yugoslav Macedonia. In 1975 he married and the following year they relocated to Jerusalem, where he began producing lucid color landscapes. The images recall his mentor Ansel Adams, with their expansive view of the rugged desert of Israel, Egypt, and Jordan (*In a Desert Land*, Abbeville Press 1987).



Neil Folberg, *Comet Hale Bopp*, 1997, Israel, 11 x 10.5", archival pigment ink print, edition of 49

The color landscapes were followed by a return to black-and-white in a series of night skies amongst ancient ruins of the Middle East. This work was collected into the book, *Celestial Nights: Visions of an Ancient Land* winner of the New York Book Show Prize, First Place Photography, 2002.

Comet Hale Bop is among one of Neil Folberg's most compelling night images of the land and sky of Israel and the Sinai offered to the viewer as mystical points of entry and departure. Folberg sets an ancient land resonant with meaning—and the cradle to three major world religions—against the awesome and eternal spectacle of the night sky. Folberg's night landscapes carry an aura that is both earthly and divine, emphasizing the singular and poignant presence of objects against the backdrop of the infinite. His photographs describe places where the spiritual is at once near, imprinted in the forms of the arid landscapes, and far away in the dark, starlit recesses of space. - Aperture

Taking Measure, created in 2015, seeks the limits of knowledge and imagination, in an extension of *Celestial Nights*. Folberg includes himself in the photographs as a silhouetted figure to introduce the idea of taking measure of oneself in space and mind.



Neil Folberg, *Raising the Sun on the Winter Solstice*, 2016, 22.5 x 29.5", archival pigment ink print, edition of 12

The project began when Folberg traveled to the Faroe Islands in 2015 to photograph a solar eclipse. He experienced the enormity of such a natural phenomenon but was unable to see the eclipse through the clouds. This experience became a metaphor for the series in which he imaginatively tries to see beyond what can be known and measured. With a particular focus on the sun—the primary source of life—*Taking Measure* narrows in on humanity's relationship to the natural world. In the image, *Raising the Sun on the Winter Solstice* the artist has presented himself as the controller of the source of light as well as a presence within the light. Folberg's theme culminates in *I Am the Lighthouse*, where he is seen next to an unlit lighthouse with the sun hidden behind the clouds; yet another sun, bright and glowing, emanating from his face.



Neil Folberg, *I am the Lighthouse*, 2016, 23 x 29.5", archival pigment ink print, edition of 12

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Folberg has exhibited his work worldwide and his photographs are in collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Yale University Art Museum, Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, and the Israel Museum, among others. Among Folberg's other projects that culminated into books include a commission by Aperture to document synagogues in the Jewish Diaspora across the world in *And I Shall Dwell Among Them*, (Aperture Press, 1997). Evoking the colors and light of the French Impressionists in his innovative re-creation of their world resulted in *Travels with Van Gogh and the Impressionists* (Abbeville Press, 2005). *Serpent's Chronicle* (Abbeville Press, 2013) places humanity on the stage of nature in scenes that depict the Serpent's mythical version of Eden. Folberg lives in Jerusalem where he continues to produce work.



Neil Folberg, *White Winds*, 2018, 22 x 30", archival pigment ink print, edition of 8

For more information, contact Jennifer Schlesinger:
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THE GALLERY LOCATION AND HOURS

Obscura Gallery is located in the Santa Fe downtown historic district two blocks east of the revitalized Downtown Railyard district. Gallery hours are Tuesday – Saturday, 11-5pm and by appointment.

Parking is limited. Additional parking is available Monday – Friday from 8:00am – 9:00pm at the State Capitol Parking Facility municipal garage located at 485 Galisteo Street. There is also metered parking always available on Galisteo street next to the Parking Facility.

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