



IAN MARKUS

Fragments of the Frontier

A photographic exploration into the fading culture of ranching.



IAN MARKUS. *Matador 02*, 2024, 20 x 16, gelatin silver print, unique

Artist Reception:

Saturday, January 18, 2025, 1-3pm

Exhibition is on view January 18 - March 8, 2025

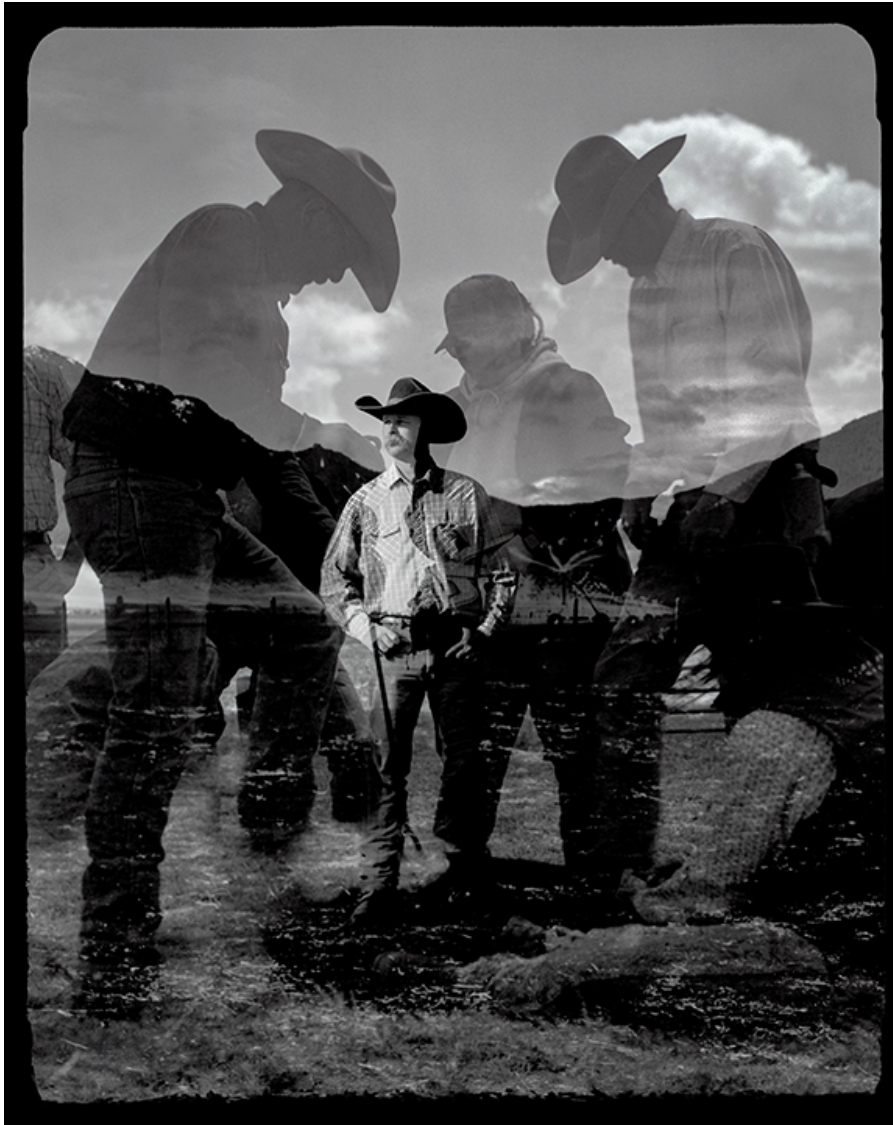
Obscura Gallery presents *IAN MARKUS: Fragments of the Frontier*, a photographic exploration of the fading culture of ranching in Montana. With imagery created from a 4 x 5" film camera, Ian composites two or more negatives in the darkroom to create ethereal, large-format gelatin silver prints. The resulting ghostly images give a visceral interpretation of the fading cowboy culture that Ian has encountered in the contemporary ranches of Montana.

Santa Fean Ian Markus is the son of the late Obscura Gallery photographer Kurt Markus, who had a long storied career including photographing cowboy culture, and publishing three cowboy monographs since the 1980s. Ian has witnessed this subject matter since he was a young boy accompanying his father on photographic expeditions in the West and assisting Kurt for many long hours in the darkroom. This work provides an insightful perspective into the current state of ranching, showing the juxtaposition of a practice that is facing numerous challenges in our contemporary climate.

225 Delgado Street. Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501 505-577-6708 info@obscuragallery.net

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"So, you're here to photograph the end?' a couple of cowboys asked me without any prompting. At the time, I didn't know how to respond.



IAN MARKUS. *Matador 062*, 2024, 20 x 16", gelatin silver print, unique.

"My father's photographs of the West and cowboy culture had always inspired me. They made me curious about what it was really like—not staged, not polished. I didn't want to dress anyone in new, starched clothes or have them stare meaningfully into the sunset. I wanted to capture life as it is now. That was why I was there." -IM

"It wasn't until I began reviewing contact sheets with Jennifer Schlesinger [Director, Obscura Gallery] that I realized there was more to my work at those ranches. The fading traditions of cowboy culture—the shift from horses to ATVs (or 'ram and jam,' as one legendary cowboy put it)—mirrored my own journey with photography. Like the cowboys adjusting to a new way of life, I was navigating my practice using film cameras, tools that require patience and a connection to the past." - IM



IAN MARKUS. *Matador 031*, 2024, 20 x 16", gelatin silver print, unique.

“The Graflex camera became the perfect medium to reflect this duality. It bridged the time between the cowboys my father photographed and the ones I met—generations still deeply connected to their heritage. To them, wearing that hat still means something.” –IM



IAN MARKUS. *Matador 015*, 2024, 20 x 16", gelatin silver print, unique.



IAN MARKUS. *Matador 042*, 2024, 20 x 16", gelatin silver print, unique.

Ian Markus (b. 1988) grew up in Kalispell, Montana and graduated from Montana State University with a focus on Graphic Design. The son of the late Kurt Markus widely known for his Cowboy and fashion photography, Ian was immersed in the world of photography at a very early age as he spent most of his life working alongside Kurt—whether in the darkroom or out on photo shoots—and those experiences shaped the artist that he is today. In 2009, Ian and Kurt collaborated on the documentary *It's About You*, a Super 8 film chronicling John Mellencamp's tour of baseball fields across America while recording his latest album. Celebrated for its creativity, the film was featured at SXSW and the Tribeca Film Festival. Ian has been working on his own photographic documentary about the fading Cowboy culture the past several years, and the show at Obscura Gallery is the debut of his first solo photographic exhibition.

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