

• FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE •

Christopher Russell

The Explorers

October 12 – November 10, 2018

Opening Reception: Friday, October 12th, 6 - 8 pm

Free and open to the public/ Artist in Attendance



Image: Christopher Russell, *The Explorers #30*, 2018, pigment print scratched with razor, metallic paint, 27 x 19 in. (68.58 x 48.26 cm)

David B. Smith Gallery is pleased to welcome back Portland, Oregon-based artist Christopher Russell for his third solo exhibition with the gallery. *The Explorers*, Russell's latest body of work, continues his conversation challenging the conventions and history of photography.

Russell's process-intensive works begin with photographing scenes from nature that he intentionally obscures with sheer fabrics, effectively destroying what would otherwise serve as a documentative image. Into these hazy, abstracted fields Russell laboriously scratches intricate designs into the emulsion of the printed image, adding paint to some areas. The result is multilayered, dreamlike works that come in and out of focus as the eye negotiates the underlying image and textural patterning of meticulously etched designs.

Before advances in digital technology made photography ubiquitous in modern life, pioneers like Carleton Watkins documented the American West with the analog equipment of the time. Russell describes Watkins as operating, "at the beginning of photography, when the medium commanded trust and certainty, a privilege the medium no longer enjoys." *The Explorers* considers the technological lineage of science and superstition, drawing parallels to early cartographers whose hand-drawn maps once served as scientific translation of the natural world, to Watkins whose images of the Columbia River Gorge piqued curiosities and intellects with the weight of fact, to today, where the abundance of digital manipulation has largely removed the preternatural aura photography once embodied.

Russell's interpretations of Watkins's historic images incorporate facets of photography, drawing, and painting to reintroduce imagination into the equation. Though far flung from the Master photographers of the 19th century, Christopher Russell recaptures the sense of magnetism that has largely lost-out to decades of technological dominance. Russell leaves us with the question, "How do we satisfy a nagging curiosity that can't be settled with search results?"

About Christopher Russell

Russell received his MFA from the Art Center College of Design (Pasadena, CA). Russell has been featured in exhibitions at the Hammer Museum (Los Angeles, CA) and selected group exhibitions include presentations at the The J. Paul Getty Museum (Los Angeles, CA), Los Angeles County Museum of Art (Los Angeles, CA), Norton Simon Museum (Pasadena, CA), Tokyo Institute of Photography (Tokyo, Japan), and the De Appel Arts Center in the Netherlands. His work is included in the permanent collections of The Getty, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Brooklyn Museum, and the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography amongst others. Russell is currently based in Portland, OR.

About David B. Smith Gallery

David B. Smith Gallery is committed to presenting intelligent and culturally relevant exhibitions in its Denver location, featuring the region's most important emerging talent alongside internationally recognized artists. Through its curatorial program, participation in art fairs, and extensive media coverage in publications such as *Art in America* and *ARTnews*, David B. Smith Gallery has cultivated a strong regional, national and international collector audience. *The New York Times* hailed the gallery as offering "an exciting contrast of cutting edge works" and *The Denver Post* declared that it is the "premiere commercial space" in Denver. The gallery also maintains an active publishing division, which produces exhibition catalogues and editions.