Molly LAMB: Home and Away
Christopher COLVILLE: Beyond Reckoning
September 15 – November 19, 2016

“In Their Purse Pockets” from Ghost Stepping, 2013.
Archival pigment print, 17 x 20 inches, edition of 10, 2 APs. © 2013 Molly Lamb.

“From the moment I met both Molly Lamb and Chris Colville, I was determined to work with and exhibit their photographs. Each has a unique vision and approach, unlike any other I’ve encountered. Their photographs expand the language of the medium and both artists create work with multiple layers of meaning, ranging from intensely personal to universal. These are artists that explore the very meaning of making pictures today.”

-Rick Wester, President

Rick Wester Fine Art will open its ninth fall season with two solo exhibitions by Molly Lamb and Christopher Colville. Both emerging photographers were featured in this past summer’s group show Lost In Space: Contemporary Photographers and the New
Landscape, which paired their parallel interests of employing landscape imagery to explore the narrative, personal and fundamental qualities of the photographic process. Despite working quite differently in photography – Lamb in the straight recording of the world she traverses, and Colville in an experimental manner– the two share a generational concern in expanding the lexicon of picture making in the 21st century.

And once the storm is over you won’t remember how you made it through, how you managed to survive. You won’t even be sure, in fact, whether the storm is really over. But one thing is certain. When you come out of the storm you won’t be the same person who walked in. That’s what this storm’s all about.
- Haruki Murakami, Kafka on the Shore

Molly Lamb, a photographer and a poet, draws upon her dual skills of lyrical expression to create suites of images thematically derived from her sense of place. Originally from Memphis, Tennessee, she has always identified as a Southerner. For Lamb, place is the marker of being, its existence redolent of the lives and nature that has passed through or taken hold there. The images in her first suite, Ghost Stepping, have been described as “ethereal meditations” and possessing a “sense of wordless deep feeling,” both tributes to the integumental framework of her writing. She has said the work is the result of “an internal conversation about the reach of the past into the present,” alluding to the belongings inherited from her family and the Southern landscapes which appear throughout.

Whereas Ghost Stepping is inextricably linked to the memories and histories of her past, the second suite, Let It Go, is an impressionistic sonnet to an uncertain future. The nuances of nature form a language of layered eloquence.

The third chapter of her exploration, Take Care of Your Sister, finds her revisiting the Mississippi Delta where her father grew up. Evident in the pictures is a mysticism and myth that permeates all of Lamb’s images. Unlike one of the better-known photographers from Memphis, William Eggleston, whose hyper realistic use of color creates a world of overall surfaces, Lamb’s American South is one of details, the basic elements of earth, water, fire and air perceived through a lens of unanswerable questions, bound emotion and a wondrous imagination.
The exhibition will feature the entire suites of Ghost Stepping (22 prints, 20 x 25 inches) and Let It Go (16 prints, 11 x 14 inches). Take Care of Your Sister (27 prints) will be represented by a selection of a dozen 17 x 20 inch prints and one enlargement (39 x 46 inches). Lamb’s images impart temporal but magical and emotive qualities that unabashedly seek definition while being clear in vision. Her work challenges us to look beyond the frame and to understand photography as a narrative written in a visual language.

The truth about the world, he said, is that anything is possible. Had you not seen it all from birth and thereby bled it of its strangeness it would appear to you for what it is, a hat trick in a medicine show, a fevered dream, a trance bepopulate with chimeras having neither analogue nor precedent, an itinerant carnival, a migratory tentshow whose ultimate destination after many a pitch in many a muddied field is unspeakable and calamitous beyond reckoning.

- Cormac McCarthy, Blood Meridian, or the Evening Redness in the West
The images comprising Christopher Colville’s Beyond Reckoning exude a complicated spirit, born of the desert from where they were made. The photographs reflect a vast, graceful beauty while embodying an intrinsically American volatility. These unique prints, each the result of a single fiery exposure, speak to a number of the issues on the minds of many today. By collecting used practice targets that are left as trash at often illegal firing ranges and using them as light modulators and screens in his work, Colville introduces the violent traces of an obsessive pastime through its cultural remnants. The targets themselves are records of complex motives. They include emotionally broad subjects from conventional bullseyes to wedding photographs; figurative targets in the shapes of assailants and “gangsta” figures; prototypical criminal body targets and coyotes. As human beings, the frightening identification with the figures is deep-seated and primordial, conjuring up primitive feelings of being either the hunter or the hunted.

A violent version of the photogram process, Colville places the targets on the paper with a measure of gunpowder which, when ignited, creates a negative image of them with the bullet holes and punctures exposing and burning the paper beneath. The heat transforms the silver as well, creating an eerie aura of an apocalyptic event, either the birth of creation or the end of time. Colville describes them as “luminous shadows whose clarity refute their violent creation. These images grow from a response to this physical landscape that holds a compressed history of violence exacerbated by our uncertain times.”

So adept at manipulating his explosive materials, Colville is able to depict images that mimic the desert landscape at night. His Dark Hours Horizons are seemingly long views, horizontally divided neatly by the far edge of some fantastic, hijacked world at night, imagined through the coupling of fire and paper, chemistry and skill. Apocalyptic in tone, the images are objects of distinctly photographic finesse, grainless and of infinite tone. They are reminders of our perceptive abilities or as Ralph Waldo Emerson stated, It is the eye which makes the horizon.

Colville presents his work individually and in composite groups of images ranging in size from but a few inches tall and wide to 32 x 24 inches for individual prints and up to several feet wide for the more complex installations.