

## NEWS RELEASE

Exhibition: Aspen Mays, *Tengallon Sunflower*

Dates: March 12 – April 30, 2016

Opening: Saturday, March 12, 3 – 6pm

Higher Pictures presents *Tengallon Sunflower*, a new body of work by Aspen Mays. This is the artist's first solo exhibition with the gallery.

Aspen Mays' art is influenced by her experience working with astrophysicists as a Fulbright Scholar in Chile. In previous works, Mays has excised the stars from archival photographs of the night sky, leaving fragile documents of what we cannot fully know, and photographed fireflies held inside the body of her camera in a gesture that relates their immediate, gentle glow to that of the stars burning light-years away. She describes her new series, *Tengallon Sunflower* as a meeting of logic and sensuality, pointing to an enduring fascination with concepts, both complex and seemingly graspable, that elude our understanding beyond the experiential.

Here, space between perception and knowledge is an underlying principle in an investigation of personal objects: Mays' great grandmother's bandanna—pale pink, printed with a starburst pattern—and a second vintage bandanna owned by Georgia O'Keefe—dyed indigo and accented with white dots—the kind of ubiquitous textile that seems to have no author or origin. Finding meanings in patterns and patterns in meaning play out across the two sets of bandannas, in which Mays has used pin pricks to meticulously transfer the starburst and dot designs from textile to paper. She completes the process in darkness, feeling rather than seeing her progress. Some record light passing through the pinholes and portions of others remain unexposed, holding only the perforations in the paper itself. The pieces dyed indigo become darker and richer the more they are exposed to oxygen, which is analogous to the darkroom processing of prints. Throughout the series, by using physical folds, multiple sheets of paper, and purposeful misalignments, Mays explores the logic of the natural world asserting itself in layers of human production. The exhibition's final paired prints could themselves be seen as the universe nodding back; Mays received a box of emulsion-free Ilford photographic paper, a random factory error ultimately allowing Mays to reaffirm connections and slippages between pattern, symmetry, reproducibility, and understanding.

The title of the exhibition, *Tengallon Sunflower*, comes from facing pages of a bandanna pattern book printed in Japanese. Taken together, the imperfectly translated design name "Tengallon" and "Sunflower" suggest a curious unit of measure.

Aspen Mays was born in 1980 in Asheville, North Carolina and received her MFA in Photography from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2009. She has had solo exhibitions of her work at the Center for Ongoing Projects & Research in Columbus, Ohio and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago. Her work has also been included in the recent exhibitions, *State of the Art* at Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, *Tales from a Dark Room* at the New Mexico Museum of Art, and *Double Back: Photographic Reflexivity* at the University of Maryland. She is currently Assistant Professor at California College of the Arts. Mays lives and works in Oakland, California.

For more information please contact Patrick Lloyd at 212.249.6100.