

## NEWS RELEASE

Exhibition: Aspen Mays

Dates: September 15 – October 27, 2018

Higher Pictures is pleased to present new work by Aspen Mays. This is the artist's second solo exhibition with the gallery.

In a series of large-scale black-and-white and smaller brightly dyed works, Mays pulls from her own archive of images documenting the aftermath of Hurricane Hugo, which hit her hometown of Charleston, South Carolina in 1989. Contemplating a future in which these storms become increasingly destructive and frequent, Mays was drawn to images of taped window panes—a pre-storm ritual seemingly more shamanic than practical in its ability to provide any protection. As Mays writes:

*I've collected images of Hugo's destruction for years, especially from newspapers and magazines, because even though I lived through the storm, my memory of it is so closely entwined with media images. I don't always remember what I saw and what is a photograph. I find patterns of storm taped windows very beautiful and the act of taping them, as a gesture, to be so futile - hope against hope that the ferocity of the event will somehow be mitigated by the tape keeping the outside out and holding the inside in or just maybe making it a little less bad.*

A suite of photograms, each over six feet tall, mirrors the arched windows of California Dreaming, a Charleston restaurant that appeared in a newspaper clipping on Hugo. The windows are taped in a starburst or asterisk pattern, one that recurs across Mays' work, with its allusions to symbology, astronomy, and imagery of the night sky. To translate the newsprint image into a life size photogram, Mays undertakes a labor-intensive process that requires her to recreate the window tapings to scale, a physical act fusing her lived memories of Hurricane Hugo and the many photographs of the event. A pendant series made with saturated fabric dyes references the colors of Doppler radar images, the eye of a hurricane and mediated, cartoonish depictions of violence.

Aspen Mays (b. 1980) received her MFA in photography from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2009. Solo exhibitions of her work have been mounted by the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago; Light Work, Syracuse; and the Center for Ongoing Projects and Research, Columbus. Mays was the recipient of a 2006 Rotary Fellowship and was a 2009 Fulbright Fellow. She lives and works in the San Francisco Bay Area, California, where she is Assistant Professor at California College of the Arts.

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