

HIGHER PICTURES

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NEWS RELEASE

Exhibition: Curran Hatleberg

Dates: May 7 – June 18, 2016

Opening: Saturday, May 7, 3 – 6pm

Higher Pictures is pleased to present the first solo show of photographer Curran Hatleberg. Over the past ten years, Hatleberg traveled extensively across the United States, following the tradition of the American road trip, taking photographs of the places and people he encountered along the way. Without an itinerary for his journeys or an agenda for his pictures, Hatleberg feels his way; he meanders through one town to the next, relinquishing control of the experience in large part to the people he photographs—where they take him, what they show him, what they choose to reveal of themselves. The resulting portraits of American life are full of palpable compassion and stirring moments of intimacy.

The work on view marks the first time Hatleberg lived and photographed in a single place for an extended period of time. These photographs were taken over six months in 2014 when he lived near the Oregon border in Humboldt County, California. The extremes he encountered fascinated Hatleberg. The breathtaking natural landscape of ocean cliffs and redwoods was often in contrast with the social realities of an area marked by industrial decline and the presence of illegal drug infrastructure. The pictures move in and out between the granular and the grand: from a jarring intimate scene of a man getting his head shaved, to a shaft of sunlight streaming through a soaring Redwood forest, to a sea of fiery red clouds suspended above it all. Within each frame, there is a push and pull. Snapshot-like urgency yields to an exacting attention to the details of each photograph. In one image, a young girl picks flowers in the same pink hue as the polka dots on her sweater, but her expression is curiously defiant, and just outside the frame a seated adult man is visible at the left edge, but his intention, mood and relationship are unknown to us, throwing the nostalgic scene into a kind of tenuous unease. In another, a crowd of spectators gathers at the edge of a field, the foreground dominated by two long, white hoses and discarded papers. What the crowd is actually watching, the main event, lies again outside the picture's edge, highlighting a central idea that peripheral American life, beyond the edges of mainstream culture, geography and social class, is robust and enthralling, much like Humboldt county itself. Hatleberg's project turns on these points of ambiguity. Each quietly transfixing scene describes and transcends its ostensible subject, blurring whether they are documents or dreams, calling attention to the capacity for remarkable, strange beauty in the everyday, yet overlooked, American life.

Curran Hatleberg (b. 1982, Washington, DC) received his MFA from Yale University in 2010 and currently teaches at Yale and Cooper Union. His work has been exhibited nationally and internationally, and he is the recipient of a 2015 Magnum Emergency Fund grant, a 2014 Aaron Siskind Foundation Individual Photographer's Fellowship grant, and the 2010 Richard Benson Prize for excellence in photography. Hatleberg's work is held in various museum collections, including the Center for Contemporary Photography, the Davison Art Center at Wesleyan University, the Williams College Museum of Art, and the Yale University Art Gallery. *Lost Coast*, his forthcoming monograph, will be released by TBW Books this fall.

For more information please contact Patrick Lloyd at 212-249-6100.