

CHRISTINA SEELY

*Perdita, In Finding(s)*

November 16, 2019 - January 11, 2020

Opening Reception: Saturday,  
November 16, 2019 6-8pm

**EUQINOM Gallery** is delighted to present *Perdita, In Finding(s)*, an exhibition of new work in various media by Christina Seely. The presented work is drawn from extensive research made over the past ten years in the Alaskan Arctic and on the Greenland ice sheet. This will be Seely's second solo exhibition with the gallery.

Seely's artistic and academic practice centers around the evolving ecological present makes, and climate change has

played a dominant role in her projects over the past decade. In those ten years, Seely has personally witnessed the earth-altering changes to the delicate landscapes during numerous expeditions to the Arctic, the Greenland ice sheet, the Alaskan wilderness and numerous other sites of severe climate evolution. In this current complex moment of dramatic political, cultural, and environmental flux, this work addresses the inherent tentativeness brought on by exponential change. Watching the destruction of these resources in real time, Seely aims to capture the magnitude through tangible objects including photography and video. At the same time, she acknowledges the futility of doing so; these objects can never fully express the vast scope of the landscape in reality or the true impacts of climate change on these regions.

The photograph is used here to allude to the disorientation of our human experience of climate change: how much can a photograph truly tell us? How can we fully comprehend what is largely unknowable? The photograph functions as a foundational prompt, referencing the "real world"; images represented serve as symbols of the natural world. These "symbols" are then set in conversation with familiar visualizations of measurement and organization associated with scientific and mathematical inquiry that tend to imply a sense of control (grids, scaling, graphs, data points, mapping, etc.). Through aesthetic and photographic familiarity, the project, at a glance offers a satisfying false sense of order and understanding that eventually culminates in a feeling of disorientation.

Seely uses this project to further establish herself in a research-based practice that is not reliant upon limitations within the history of photography. By using a wide range of media in addition to photographs, she cognitantly moves away from a more traditional photographic practice to one that is rooted in scientific inquiry and a personal, physical experience of the natural world. The show's title, *Perdita*, is Latin for "lost", as the project functions as a set of impossible riddles and cues that invite a search for intentional meanings and interconnections that cannot be found. The specific works presented are also titled in Latin, the language of the scientific community, and also a lost and problematic language that is historically loaded in meaning. One image, *Totius et part - Bubo scandiacus* (*Snowy Owl and Its Feather / Barrow, Alaska*), depicts a snowy owl staring down at us, distant in a grey-blue sky. The scale of the animal is hard to estimate against the vastness of the sky. Accompanying it as a diptych, a single owl feather belonging to this very owl is depicted at grander scale. The feeling upon viewing the piece is both infinite



and flat, disorienting the viewer. Another work, *Locus - 78.274541, 15.635231 (Locating Abandoned / Svalbard and Jan Mayen)*, is printed on newsprint and depicts images taken in Abandoned, a physical place in The Svalbard Territory, an archipelago far north of Norway. Seely's composited landscape of Abandoned shows a dim landscape that is nondescript, a non-place that has been pieced together. In the other images of Abandoned, viewers see the artist's hand pointing in each cardinal direction in the act of locating, serving as a compass stand-in.

A number of works in the exhibition nicknamed "bird grids" originate from an early trip to Alaska. Images depict flocks of migratory seabirds creating constant movement in the sky. Seely applies the digital language of cropping and adjusting images to translate an off-kilter way of seeing and of being that amplifies the chaotic-ness of lives caught in motion. The grid is a historical device used in mathematics, science and military language that inserts a sense of control and power when there is none. Viewers are left unbalanced, gazing into a bright blank sky. *Quantitare - glaciers (Exponential Ice, Gully Breen / Svalbard Territory)*, is a work comprised of 11 prints mounted together in a hypnotic exponential convergence. The glacier reminds us of existing climate challenges, the loss of ice, and the failure of photography to comprehend that magnitude and our inability to comprehend the scale of change that is currently underway. In a final piece, *Ordinatio (Mountain Arrangement 1)*, Seely creates an installation out of an arrangement of contrasting light and dark prints (stand-ins for day and night) of a repetitive mountain landscape that build into a an implied though unreadable message. The piece points to attempting to decipher something that is indiscernible, human activities impacts on peripheral landscapes. A final video installation will be featured in the back room of the gallery. The central video piece includes footage from the Greenland ice sheet in the summer of 2019, the hottest on record. Seely positions her own body in the piece, interacting with ice and the sparkling melt water as she works hard to hold onto small glistening pieces of ice as they melt against the heat of her fingers and hand, registering the kinetic energies of melting ice and the magnitude and multitudes of the landscape around her. It is a humbling moment, a reflection on our human vulnerability and power to impact.

Overall the exhibition activates a conversation about how we value, control and try to understand (for better or worse) the natural world. In evoking a search with inherent failure woven in, the project also suggests a need for humility by pointing to the impossibility of truly comprehending the fullness of nature or our place within the complexity of the larger planetary whole.

#### About Christina Seely

Christina Seely (b. 1976, Berkeley, CA) is an artist and educator whose photographic practice stretches into the fields of science, design and architecture. Her work has been exhibited nationally and internationally and is featured in many public and private collections including; The Museum of Contemporary Photography, The West Collection and The Walker Art Center. She has been an Artist in Residence at the Headlands Center for the Arts and Light Work, a Fellow at the MacDowell Colony, a participant on the Arctic Circle Program, and a recipient of a year long Public Arts Commission from the city of San Francisco. She received a 2017 John Gutmann Fellowship Award, 2014 Smithsonian Artist Research Fellowship and her first monograph *Lux*, was co-published in 2015 by Radius Books and the Museum of Contemporary Photography. She has a BA from Carleton College, an MFA in Photography from Rhode Island School of Design, and is an Assistant Professor in the Studio Art Department at Dartmouth College in Hanover NH.

#### About Euqinom

Founded in 2015, EUQINOM Gallery represents emerging and mid-career contemporary artists. The gallery is focused on presenting multidisciplinary work that expands the boundaries of photo-based practices. Ranging from the ephemeral to the documentary the program champions work that is rigorous in process and practice and demonstrates a lively engagement with photo and art histories. Director Monique Deschaines is a curator, gallerist, and educator. She is on the Board of Directors at SF Camerawork. Prior to founding EUQINOM Gallery, Deschaines was Associate Director at Haines Gallery. She has her MFA in photography from the San Francisco Art Institute and her BFA from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and at Tufts University, Cambridge.

Image Credit: Christina Seely, *Quantitare - glaciers (Exponential Ice, Gully Breen / Svalbard Territory)*, 2019 archival inkjet prints, 46.5 x 37.4 inches; 11 prints mounted, edition of 3 +1AP. Copyright Christina Seely, courtesy Euqinom Gallery, San Francisco.