

Gerald Peters Gallery to present *Land Use/Misuse: The Celebration and Exploitation of the American Landscape*
August 12 - October 1, 2011

"In the place of the old nature, rears up a new 'nature' of our own devising."
-Bill McKibben, 1989

The Gerald Peters Gallery is pleased to announce an important contemporary invitational exhibition planned for August 12, 2011 entitled, *Land Use/Misuse: The Celebration and Exploitation of the American Landscape*. Comprised of mostly paintings and photographs this landmark show will present varying perspectives by some of America's most visionary and celebrated landscape artists. This exhibition will cast a discerning eye on visions of landscape at the start of the Twenty-First century and how such visions are being informed, compromised, nurtured, and, perhaps, radicalized by polarizing changes in the environment and the global economy. Are such national crises and debates absorbing and forcing a re-interpretation of our historical myths associated with the American landscape or is the landscape conversely, still seen as a refuge from spiraling change?

For more than 150 years artists have depicted the American landscape with varying degrees of contemplative passion, dogged, romantic idealism and generosity of spirit. These artists were informed by landscapes that were vulnerable to a progressive opportunism that had its basis in morality and fundamentalism triggered by Manifest Destiny and the subsequent exploitation of natural resources. What they also had in common was that they were able to unearth- with equal parts precision and romance- the unpredictable character of the American West. Gradually, impressionistic language used to describe the unblemished countryside, words such as pastoral and idyllic were replaced following the years of westward expansion by more utilitarian terms such as acreage and progress.

While celebrating art and photography by contemporary artists throughout the country, we'll be exploring the evolving image of the West and how artists are responding to this ever-changing environment. How are artists today appropriating and accommodating a landscape once heralded as untrammelled and separate from civilization by the Romantic painters of the Nineteenth century?

For instance, according to Robert A. Sobieszek in his introduction to John Ganis' book of landscape photographs, *Consuming the American Landscape*, many Twentieth-century photographers, "sought to depict the wilderness in pristine isolation from human incursion. Nature. . . was seen as something completely alien to civilization, as something to be preserved, and sequestered from human reach or at least its visible signs."

Is such a response even possible today? That culture and the environment are still mutually exclusive, or, rather, "that all nature is experienced through the lens of culture"?

Conversely, Sobieszek refers to environmentalist Bill McKibben's classic 1987 book, *The End of Nature*, "that nature and culture have become so entropically merged that nature, as something separate from and unaffected by us, is impossible to consider or even imagine except nostalgically."

The intent of this exhibit is to depict not only the visual and environmental disfiguration of the landscape- polluted streams, mining sites, careless development, clear cut forests- brought on by humankind's centuries old punitive incursions into nature, but to herald as well, the integrity, inherent beauty and ageless mythos still intact in our landforms. With the American Frontier and many of its corroborative myths all but disappeared, how will artists, moving into the second decade of the Twenty-First century, interpret and rejuvenate these remnants of Eden? How will they help preserve for us, our sense of place?

The Gerald Peters Gallery, Santa Fe, is an obvious venue for such an exhibition and examination of contemporary landscape given our 35 year history and association with artists of the American West: from the early explorer artists and documenters of westward expansion, and late Nineteenth-century romantic landscape painters, to the Twentieth-Century modernists radicalizing of urban New York and remote Santa Fe, to our handling of contemporary American realists and abstract painters and sculptors. An inquiry into the state of landscape visioning today is a natural extension of our historic quest, and one we hope you will consider participating in. Works by renowned regional and national artists Chuck Forsman, Stephen Hannock, Brian Farrell, William Clift, John Alexander, Don Stinson, Karen Kitchel, Keith Jacobshagen, J. Henry Fair, will be among the many artists' work to be included, with many more to be approached.

We hope that you will consider joining this important collective exhibition and cultural examination of how our national identification with the American landscape is being preserved, or severely impacted, by cultural change.

For more information or to propose a submission, please contact Abigail von Schlegell, Director, Contemporary Art at the Gerald Peters Gallery, avonschlegell@gpgallery.com, 505-954-5724, www.gpgallery.com. –or- Evan Feldman assistant to the Director efeldman@gpgallery.com 505-954-5738