

:: GRANT WAHLQUIST GALLERY

Kate Greene: So Much Water So Close to Home

9/11/20 – 10/31/20

“First things first,” he says. He says something else. But I don’t need to listen. I can’t hear a thing with so much water going.

Grant Wahlquist Gallery is pleased to announce “So Much Water So Close to Home,” an exhibition of new photographs by Kate Greene. The show will run from September 11 through October 31, 2020.

As in the short story from which the exhibition takes its title, Greene’s photographs conjure a complex web of emotional registers with startling efficiency and intensity. A master of light and texture, Greene marries a resolute commitment to observed detail with formal experimentation, exploiting photography’s tenuous indexicality to create images that are visually exquisite and polyvalent in affect. Whatever their genre—landscape, domestic scene, still life, sculptural study—her photographs’ strange beauty functions as a lure to deeper consideration of the relationship between vision, knowledge, and authority, often from a feminist perspective. Featuring a selection of 11 photographs produced in the past two years, “So Much Water So Close to Home” resides where desire and danger coincide. As in Raymond Carver’s tale—a narrative of careless men and the women who love them—it manifests the feeling of navigating a world in which what we want may also be our undoing.

These aims are most visually apparent in three photographs that adopt found images of men holding recently caught fish from an archive Greene created upon discovering that such pictures were ubiquitous on dating apps. Greene printed these images in black and white and suspended them in water solo or in groups, or moistened and collaged them together. The resulting photographs acknowledge the cruel optimism of romantic and sexual pursuit—as described by theorist Lauren Berlant, cruel optimism is “the condition of maintaining an attachment to a problematic object in advance of its loss,” “when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your own flourishing.” They literalize the cliché that “there are plenty of fish in the sea,” brushing aside its surface-level optimism to reveal its depersonalizing and occasionally patriarchal undertones. A fish, after all, never wants to be caught, and is only reeled in by misdirection and violent force.

Capture, danger, and violence are also present in photographs of Comins Pond in central Massachusetts, the site of the disappearance and potential abduction of then 16-year-old Molly Bish. Bish’s remains were found three years later approximately two and a half miles from the pond, and her murder has never been solved. A young woman living in Massachusetts around the time of Bish’s disappearance, Greene has returned to Comins Pond at intervals throughout her career. Her most recent series of photographs of this landscape is collectively titled “Sight Unseen,” three of which are on view here. These landscapes are neither a visual index of Comins Pond nor

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symbolic allegories ripe for decoding. Photographed using infrared digital capture, they enact the pond's unseen history—its importance as the location of the vanishing of a real and beloved human person and of the artist's exploration of it in view of Bish's death—by making visible spectra of light ordinarily imperceptible to the human eye.

These two bodies of work, and Greene's overarching interest in the capacity of images to contain more than what they immediately depict or what we immediately see, are accompanied by studio studies and still lives of ropes, water, mesh screening, fish, and a found image of an eye with a degenerative condition. While each photograph in "So Much Water So Close to Home" operates with its own distinct logic, as an ensemble they do not suggest a narrative so much as create an atmosphere in which subjects transform and gain new charge as the viewer circulates among them. By employing multiple photographic strategies to examine how formal and affective gestures mutually inform and transform one another, Greene models a mode of seeing that is allusive and suggestive rather than dogmatic and conclusive. Rope catches, binds, and rescues; fish are caught, baited, feed, and are fed; water flows, drowns, and sustains.

Kate Greene received an MFA from the Yale School of Art and a BFA from Massachusetts College of Art and Design. Her first presentation at the gallery (two-person exhibition with Bill Albertini) was reviewed in the Portland Press Herald. The gallery's presentation of her work alongside Henri Paul Broyard at Art Los Angeles Contemporary 2019 received positive notice in ArtNews. Her work has also been featured in exhibitions at venues including the Institute of Contemporary Art, Maine; the Visual Arts Center at the University of Texas at Austin; the Rhode Island School of Design Museum of Art; the Guatephoto Festival, Guatemala City; Museum Dr888, Drachten, the Netherlands; Bodega Gallery, Philadelphia; Daniel Cooney Gallery, New York; and Eighth Veil, Los Angeles. ROMAN NVMERALS published a limited-edition book of her series *Pyrotechnics* in the Fall of 2016. Greene has taught widely, most recently as Visiting Assistant Professor of Photography at Maine College of Art.

The gallery is located at 30 City Center, Portland, Maine. Gallery hours are Wednesday through Saturday, 11 am to 6 pm, and by appointment. For more information, visit <http://grantwahlquist.com>, call 207.245.5732, or email info@grantwahlquist.com.