

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Sarah Christianson
When the Landscape is Quiet Again:
North Dakota's Oil Boom

Exhibition Dates: February 12 – April 19, 2014

Reception: Thursday, February 13, 6-8pm

Panel Discussion: "What the Frack?!"

Thursday, April 10, 6-8pm



Natural gas flare from oil well adjacent to cattle pasture, White Earth River Valley

In 1973, during North Dakota's second oil boom, then-governor Art Link declared, "When we are through with that and the landscape is quiet again...let those who follow and repopulate the land be able to say, our grandparents did their job well. The land is as good and, in some cases, better than before."

Forty years later, another oil boom is underway in western North Dakota—"The Bakken." This one is fueled by horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing techniques (fracking). Oil companies are working at breakneck speeds with little oversight to drill an estimated 48,000 new wells there. This has brought an overwhelming wave of people, jobs, and revenue to this once economically depressed region.

The economic benefits can't be denied, but in the wake of several recent high-profile oil spills and explosions, the environmental costs and impacts are becoming harder to ignore. Over the last year, photographer Sarah Christianson has been documenting the effects of the oil boom on her home state.* Her color photographs bear witness to the transformation of a quiet agrarian landscape into an industrialized zone dotted with well sites, criss-crossed by pipelines, lit up by natural gas flares, and contaminated by oil and saltwater spills. Christianson examines how the scars from previous oil booms are healing and what new wounds are being inflicted in an attempt to answer the question: what happens when this boom busts—*when the landscape is quiet again.*



Well site carved out of bluffs near the Badlands



Vertical well abandoned in 1983, S. of Williston

SF Camerawork is pleased to host the debut of Christianson's latest project, hot on the heels of the release of her first book, *Homeplace* (Daylight Books, 2013). *When the Landscape is Quiet Again* will be on view from February 12 through April 19 in our gallery at 1011 Market Street (at 6th). An opening reception with the artist is scheduled for Thursday, February 13 from 6-8pm. All events are free and open to the public.

This exhibition presents an important perspective in the debate over our nation's dependency on oil. A panel discussion—"What the Frack?!"—will also be held on Thursday, April 10, from 6-8pm at SF Camerawork to inform the public about the growing pains of oil development in North Dakota and what this could mean for California if Governor Jerry Brown approves new regulations for fracking in the state. Panelists include Will Rostov, an attorney from Earth Justice who works on cases involving fracking, and the "Don't Frack California" team from the Bay Area chapter of the Sierra Club, along with Christianson moderating the panel and speaking about her experiences creating this project.

*This project was funded by an Individual Artist Commission grant of the San Francisco Arts Commission and an Investing in Artists grant from the Center for Cultural Innovation. Additional support for printing the photographs was provided by RayKo Photo Center and in-the-field assistance was given by the Dakota Resource Council, the Killdeer Mountain Alliance, and the Northwest Landowners Association.



Pipeline constructed on land seized by eminent domain



View from a bedroom window, near Cartwright

About the Artist:

Sarah Christianson (b. 1982) grew up on a four-generation family farm in North Dakota. Immersed in that vast expanse of the Great Plains, she developed a strong affinity for the landscape and its stories. This childhood experience has had a profound effect on her work, as she enjoys documenting the Midwest and her personal experiences there. Her work has been exhibited internationally and can be found in the collections of several institutions in the Midwest and of the National Museum of Photography in Copenhagen. She received an MFA in photography from the University of Minnesota in 2009. Since then, Christianson has been living in San Francisco. Her first book, *Homeplace*, was recently published by Daylight Books (Fall 2013). She is also the recipient of grants from the San Francisco Arts Commission and the Center for Cultural Innovation.



Drilling rig near Little Missouri National Grasslands

About SF Camerawork:

Founded in 1974, SF Camerawork's mission is to encourage and support emerging artists to explore new directions and ideas in the photographic arts. Through exhibitions, publications, and educational programs, we strive to create an engaging platform for artistic exploration as well as community involvement and inquiry.

1011 Market Street (at 6th)
415-487-1011
www.sfcamerawork.org
Wednesday – Saturday, Noon to 5pm (also by appointment)

Contact

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