

leylines

written by Ricardo Reverón Blanco

Landscapes have been historically documented by a white-cis-male gaze, so it becomes refreshing to undermine such a tradition in Eva L Jonas' *The Natural, Rural and Remote* and Feiyi Wen's *Through the Mouth of the River*, which culminate in a reconsideration of who documents the natural world, to whom these images are for, and what it means to be enthralled by their romanticisation. Ultimately, both Jonas and Wen's practices coalesce in nuanced investigations of one's place in the world; whereby looking outwards into natural realms one captures the inner human experience. Instinctively, both exhibitions interact with each other through the way paths and mountain outlines lead the eye from room to room, acting as leylines that ground visitors into the terrain of Serchia's gallery spaces:

*"Leylines work to uncover and trace occulted trajectories, believed (by some) to form a network of ancient trackways across the landscape, interconnecting with points of both historical and sacred importance."*<sup>1</sup>

It is this sanctified and romanticised view of rurality that Jonas aims to interrogate within her most recent series, which in doing so, becomes a photographic study of gestures, places and (un)familiar settings which denotes and diagrams the multiple ways in which we return to nature to seek out romantic solace. This is most evident in *Research Assemblage* where the artist's process becomes a centred pillar for building up and solidifying the objects and relics that make-up rurality's sensationalist elasticity. The process of restaging images from activity-based resources becomes a binding thread that informs Jonas's aesthetic intuition and practice, most evident through the image of a hand manoeuvring a kite that flies away and in view from a kite reference book. Acting as the epicentre of the exhibition space, the research is in direct dialogue with the works that orbit around it, such as those pinned on the foundations of a wooden structure that trace *Mountain Line* directly opposite.

Rooted in Tao's beliefs of oneness and humanity's connection to the natural world, Wen's photographic eye finds opportunities to depict humankind through sheer rurality. More gesturally, Jonas traces the interactions humans have in these landscapes by investigating what makes one belong in the environments they are situated in; gestures become memories, and the fabric of the land that one once stood on remembers, tracing the marks of their once passerby. Similarly, Jonas finds activities that remind us of innocent and romanticised memories one has when returning their body to nature, from climbing trees to fruit picking, the body begs for an idealised moment that once was.

From Wen's *Seeing a Pine Tree from your Bedroom Window* one could argue that the camera misremembers, introducing textural and photographic abstractions that lure the eye into seeing new visual queues that blur and cause us to choose what narratives we choose to remember. Exemplified notably by the sequence inside the vitrine, Wen further reveals the often neglected details within her work through printing and photographic differentiations that train our eyes to look slower and more

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<sup>1</sup>Thurgill, James. 2015. "A Strange Cartography: Leylines, Landscape and "Deep Mapping" in the Works of Alfred Watkins" *Humanities* 4, no. 4: 637-652.

deeply. This visual trick urges us to return our bodies to nature so that we can experience seeing a pine tree beyond the bedroom window and see it clearly once again.