

Mark McKnight  
*Hunger for the Absolute*  
February 2 – April 24, 2021

Earth you know is round but seems flat

You can't trust  
Your senses.

You thought you had seen every variety of creature  
but not

this creature.

—

When I met him, I knew I had

weaned myself from God, not  
hunger for the absolute. O unquenched

mouth, tonguing what is and what must  
Remain inapprehensible —

Saying *You are not finite. You are not finite.*

–Frank Bidart, “Hunger for the Absolute”

Park View / Paul Soto are proud to announce *Hunger for the Absolute*, a solo exhibition by Los Angeles-based photographer Mark McKnight. This is the artist's debut with the gallery following our announcement of his representation last May. *Hunger for the Absolute* opens on Tuesday, February 2 and runs through late April.

Mark McKnight continues to expand the bounds of landscape photography and portraiture in black-and-white photographs that animate his subjects in new and radical ways. The artist has developed a signature style in which he manipulates Modernist modes of seeing, repurposing aesthetic methods that traditionally emphasized rational and heroic qualities. In McKnight's visual world, natural landscapes and urban backdrops serve as lively stages for queer and Brown friends and intimates. These spaces also perform as pictorial subjects in themselves, containing personal and familial residue.

McKnight's exhibition comprises a selection of works from his recent monograph, *Heaven is A Prison*. In these photographs, the artist revisits the high desert landscape of his youth to depict a sexual encounter between two men. Shot with a large-format camera, his protagonists physically echo McKnight himself, and one another — Latinx, hirsute, and outside conventional European standards of beauty so often idealized even in the queer community. Obscured by vantage points or drenched in shadow, these two men appear both anonymous and archetypal, desirous participants within a familiar yet abstracted world. They are depicted in deep and saturated prints that possess a tonal richness, enhancing a sense of mystery.

These images are punctuated by photographs of nature, devoid of human life, which absorb and produce their own affective charge. All of the works are hung in loose constellations or groupings that suggest a poetic relationship to time, opening up interpretive space. Animist-like, landscape and body appear to rhythmically and ecstatically entwine, rendering each indistinguishable.

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MARK MCKNIGHT (b. 1984, USA) currently lives and works in Los Angeles. His work has been exhibited at Aperture Foundation, New York City; Museum of Contemporary Art, Tucson; California Museum of Photography; Riverside Art Museum; Shulamit Nazarian Gallery, Charlie James Gallery, Roberts & Tilton Gallery, M+B Gallery, Luisotti Gallery, and The Pit Gallery, all in Los Angeles; James Harris Gallery, Seattle; Koppe Astner, Glasgow; and Klaus von Nichtssagend Gallery, New York, which will stage an exhibition of McKnight's work concurrently with ours that opens on February 26. His works are in the public collections of Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), and The Henry Art Gallery, Seattle. McKnight's first monograph, *Heaven is a Prison*, was published by Loose Joints in September 2020, with support from the Light Work Photobook Award.

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