

H. H. BENNETT, LENA HENKE AND CARS

14/09 – 21/10/2012 Preview: Friday 14/09
19:00

Duo show:

Henry Hamilton Bennett and Lena Henke

An Introduction to The Beauties and Wonders of Western Scenery

18—:

In the middle of nowhere, soon to become somewhere, the frontier was insistently forced forward amid rocks and riverbeds and pine trees and the dodging feathers of the indigenous people of America squatting in the bushes. As the civil war was wrapping up Henry Hamilton Bennett, photographer, took a picture of his crippled right hand to accompany his application for a war veteran's disability pension.

Photography was a radical idea. The camera was the first machine to steal the world. Early photographers like Bennett were working at the frontier of imaging and would go on to change the way we see everything, including ourselves. Being among some 3000 listed photographers in the United States in 18—, Bennett had a 30-year window of professional solitude before the Kodak Box Camera was introduced to the herd.

18—:

Henry Hamilton Bennett made his career in his modest hometown of Kilbourn City, Wisconsin, and put his interests to work on the immediate surroundings, which, cut from the right angle, would manifest into spectacular images.

Columns of Stone / Carefully Arranged Boulders /
Carved Islets / Prosaic Rocks

With self-built cameras, Bennett returned to the same sites over and over to perfect his studies. He developed sensitivity for depth and drama understanding that the inclusion of human scale would add awe and wonder to the compositions. When photographing caves he sometimes constructed wooden platforms that would carry him out to a desired

viewpoint. He went as far as whitewashing cave walls to allow for faster exposure.

His subjects were the natural sculptures of the landscape.
His subjects were nature's own monuments, right in his own backyard.
His objective was to frame the sculpted subjects of the natural site.

The prints peddled by Bennett became proofs as much as mementos. The landscape soon attracted visitors who came to see the sights with their own eyes, carried on fashionable steamboats upriver to remote stretches previously the sole domains of raftsmen.

Sightseeing was born after photographers had first recorded the sights.

18—:

Bennett also pioneered another essential photographic principle. He designed and constructed an instantaneous shutter, and was in 18— among the first cameramen to capture fast moving objects and force them to stillness.

At a time when no one had seen anything but the moon and sun suspended in mid-air, his first photos were claimed to be falsifications and montages. But it was a true sensation, also to the inventor himself, when he laid eyes on the imprint of a man caught midflight between a precipice and a monument of stone. Or when the tossed ropes of the raftsmen were frozen to the negative plates like lines drawn in air.

19—:

Lena Henke is also from home, a small village somewhere in Germany.

20—:

Her group of grey, greyblack and black columns, fiberglass and suspended fabric sculptures have permanently solidified and will make moving about the photographs more difficult. And underneath their arches there is nothing, there is nothing, there is a string curtain and there is perfume and deodorant.

Note:

During the exhibition the main gallery space will be used for daytime car parking.



About the artists:

Lena Henke (born 1982 in Warburg, Germany) lives and works in Frankfurt am Main and New York. This summer she was featured in her first two institutional solo shows: "Hang Harder" at the NAK. Neue Aachener Kunstverein and "Core, Cut, Care" at the Kunstverein Oldenburg, both in Germany.

Recent and upcoming exhibitions include Real Fine Arts, New York (2012); "STEPHEN", Pro Choice, Vienna (2012); "The Gap", Philosophische - Theologische Hochschule Sankt Georgen, Frankfurt (2012); "FLIP", Art Metropole, Toronto (2012); "If I had ... my axe", Kunst Raum Riehen, Basel (2012); KW69 #3, "Kalte Gesellschaft", KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin (2011); "Where Language Stops", Wilkinson Gallery, London (2011); "Schlangen im Stall", Galerie Parisa Kind, Frankfurt (2011); and "Andrei Koschmieder puts:" Real Fine Arts, New York, USA (2011).

Her artist book "FIRST FACES " is forthcoming this year from Mousse publishing.

Henry Hamilton Bennett (born 1843, Farnham, Canada; died 1908, Kilbourn City, USA) was an American photographer famous for his pictures of the natural phenomena of the Dells of Wisconsin River and the surrounding region taken between 1865 and 1908. The popularity of his views helped turn the Kilbourn City (later renamed Wisconsin Dells) into a major tourist destination.

His work was included in the 1963 photo exhibition "The Photographer and the American Landscape" at MoMA, New York City, curated by John Szarkowski.

