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ArtReview



Art Reviewed



PULP Festival



Artists and Poets



Pierre Bismuth



For Real



The Feminist Avant-Garde of the 1970s



Yngve Holen *World of Hope*



Sequences VII



Martial Raysse



Intelligent Machinery



Sergei Tcherepnin *Vice Versa Cave*



Ali Emir Tapan *There Is Another World*



Rupert Ackroyd *Cathedral Blocks and Thistle Seeds*



The Symptom of Art



Five Issues of Studio International



David Douard *S'*



Adam Pendleton *New Work*



Kapwani Kiwanga *Kinjiketile Suite*



Maud Sulter *Passion*



Doris Salcedo



Mark Ruwedel *Pictures of Hell*



Luis Roldán *Eidola*



Elizabeth Orr *Loss Lead*



Hank Willis Thomas
Unbranded: A Century of White Women, 1915–2015



Brian Maguire
The Absence of Justice Demands This Act



Josephine Pryde
lapses in Thinking By the person i Am



Francis Alÿs *Relato de Una Negociación*



Cao Guimarães *Depois*



Kyle Morland *Node*

Mark Ruwedel *Pictures of Hell*

Gallery Luisotti, Santa Monica 3 April – 30 May

The photographs of Mark Ruwedel bear an old-fashioned veneer. They are usually silver gelatin, exquisitely printed, and underneath each image one finds the title of the photo in graphite lettering. The photographs might as well come leather-bound and wrapped in a century of dust, such is their resemblance to projects by Timothy O'Sullivan, Carleton Watkins and other nineteenth-century photographers of the western United States. Like those figures, Ruwedel is inspired by the West as an illusion of destiny created at once through belief in religious providence and as a vast promise of potential wealth.

Ruwedel's efforts, however, are far from anachronistic. The visual strategies that he finds in the rich history of landscape photography gain power and sophistication through his employment of the principles of conceptual art, the lessons of 1970s earth art and recent trends in environmentalism that coincide with our increased awareness of global warming. In other words, it has never been more relevant to take unapologetic photographs featuring the often-devastating impact of humans on the natural landscape. And Ruwedel, taking his cues from Joe Deal, Lewis Baltz, Robert Adams and other New

Topographics photographers from the 1970s, is among the leading documenters of the contemporary landscape.

Ruwedel tends to work on any given series of photographs for many years at a time, sometimes decades, and his most recent body of work, *Pictures of Hell*, began during the mid-1990s. The series starts from a simple premise: to explore the history of how places received their names, specifically names that have to do with the devil or hell. Ruwedel sets out to find all of the Devil's



Devils Gate, High Rock Canyon, Nevada, 1997, gelatin silver print on archival board with graphite lettering. Courtesy the artist and Gallery Luisotti, Santa Monica

Gates, Hell's Gates, Devil's Punch-bowls, Devil's Throats, Devil's Speedways and Devil's Backbones that are to be found – and there are many. For all the promise held out by the western United States, the reality of the landscape, as speculators and homesteaders actually experienced it, was brutal, dangerous and often barren.

The deadpan approach of arranging photographic subjects into types, or grouping them by their names, naturally taps into a recent history of photographers such as Bernd and Hilla Becher and Ed Ruscha. Ruwedel learned the lessons of such projects well and, like earlier photographers, lets the nature of the scene and its subsequent classification by humans present its mysteries with little intervention from the photographer. Some places, for instance *Devil's Punchbowl #1* (1999), are quite beautiful, leading one to think the name was more circumstantial than existential, while other photos, such as *Hell (Chuckwalla Valley, California)* (1996), seem to fit their appellations quite well.

Ultimately the lesson of the series is that when it comes to place names, 'Hell' or 'Devil' simply means inhospitable to humans. On this logic, openness to human habitation is good, while resistance to human advancement is bad. For Ruwedel, the irony is clear. As the seas rise and the planet warms, the devil turned out to be human all along. *Ed Schad*



Devils Gate, High Rock Canyon, Nevada, 1997, gelatin silver print on archival board with graphite lettering. Courtesy the artist and Gallery Luisotti, Santa Monica