

# Review: Ron Jude's jaw-dropping photographs at Gallery Luisotti put the awe back in awesome

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How cheapened the term “awesome” has become, punctuating every mundane exchange from coffee order to workout high-five. A visit to Ron Jude's ravishing show at Luisotti presses the reset button, recalibrating our scale of significance and restoring to awe its rightful measure of stunned respect.

There are just six large photographs in the show (all from 2017), each a view of pristine, unpeopled landscape. "Sea Cliff" is edge-to-edge rock face, a rippling skin of pocks, veins and wrinkles, clefts and shadows. However formidably solid, the stone is also ever in flux and reads

as such, as an evolving chronicle of erosion. In another picture, crisp white light graces the curved inner wall of a lava tube, affording us a revelatory glimpse of a space primordially secret and raw.



The prints have a lush, velvety surface and Jude locates an extraordinary range of tones between whites searing in their intensity and blacks hushed and dense. "River" whips up a brilliant froth of glass and silver, its overhanging trees a soft, arching curtain of flannel tufts.

In both texture and tonality, the piece could pass for a charcoal drawing. All of the photographs measure 56 by 42 inches, large enough to practically stand inside, aptly scaled to the power represented within.

Jude, based in Eugene, Ore., has long examined the construction of memory, story and history, through image fragments that resonate with one another but don't necessarily weave into a linear narrative. Here, his encounter with place feels intimate — the pictures are steeped in emotion, in awe — but also deliberately depersonalized. They form part of a series that he titles "12 Hz," after the lower limit of sound audible to the human ear. What we can't perceive is vast, and that geological, cosmological story, while not ours exactly, has become our responsibility since our presence began to alter it. Acts of homage and acts of witness, these photographs induce the requisite wonder and gratitude to spur a much-needed sense of accountability.



Gallery Luisotti, Bergamot Station, 2525 Michigan Ave., Santa Monica, (310) 453-0043, through Nov. 17. Closed Sunday and Monday. [www.galleryluisotti.com](http://www.galleryluisotti.com)