

VAS WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

April 10, 2021

PRESENTED BY VISUAL ART SOURCE AND FABRIK

The Museum of Art & History Reopens by Jody Zellen

**Museum of Art & History, Lancaster, California,
continuing through May 9, 2021**

Ken Marchionno

300-Miles to Wounded Knee: The Oomaka Tokatakiya,
Future Generations Ride

Amir Zaki

Empty Vessel Excerpts

Eileen Cowin

What it takes to survive a crisis or the imaginary
Richter scale of rage

Golden Hour

Images from the Museum of Art & History's permanent
collection; California Photography from the Los Angeles
County Museum of Art



Klea McKenna, "Born in 1824 (4),"
from the series "Automatic
Earth," photograph. Part of the exhibition
"Golden Hour"

Photographic images of all kinds now fill the Museum of Art & History (MOAH) in Lancaster, CA. While many of the spaces at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) have been demolished for the new construction, it is fortunate that MOAH recently opened its space to the public for the presentation of works from LACMA's vast collection. The exhibition, "Golden Hour," includes works by more than seventy artists who explore myriad aspects of California, be it the cityscape, landscape, its history or an imagined future. Traditional black and white images are juxtaposed with large-scale digital prints in vivid colors. The exhibition spans genres and materials to give us an insightful introduction into a wide range of photographic practices. Highlights include Laura Aguliar's "Three Eagles Flying" (1990), and Andrew Freeman's "Zegwaard Hall, Saint Vivian Catholic Church, Independence, California" and "Boy Scout Building, Bishop, California" (2005), both from his "Manzanar Architecture Double Series." Mid-century master Edward Weston is represented by the beautifully tragic "Wrecked Car, Crescent Beach" (1939).



Amir Zaki, "Concrete Vessel 53," photograph

Supplementing the LACMA side of "Golden Hour" are works from MOAH's own collection that include Naida Oslin, Thomas McGovern, Osceola Refetof, Darryl Curran, Sheila Pinkel and Nancy Webber among others. While the works from LACMA begin to tell a story of documentary and formal photography in California, the works from MOAH illustrate a contrasting wealth of more experimental approaches.

These two survey shows are complemented by three solo shows. Amir Zaki, presents excerpts from his "Empty Vessel" series. The emptiness of skate parks serves to emphasize the monumentality of their architecture. Using GigaPan technology, Zaki composites thousands of photographs together to create a seamless final scene. The pictures seem "real," yet the smooth collaging makes for an image that feels slightly off and unbelievable. In "Concrete Vessel 63," "Concrete Vessel 89" and "Concrete Vessel 53," the concrete architecture appears sculptural. Zaki lets the forms undulate, which allows the shadows to highlight the discrepancies between shapes. These are juxtaposed with closely cropped images of broken pottery that compare and contrast monumental scale with table-top sized objects. Also on display is an artist's book Zaki created, adding depth to this intriguing body of work.



Eileen Cowin, "Time of Useful," photograph

Eileen Cowin tries to make sense of the pandemic in "What it takes to survive a crisis or the imaginary Richter scale of rage" (2020). Her exhibit opens with "Time of Useful Consciousness" (2014/2020), in which a startled young deer is frozen in an urban alleyway at night. Lost perhaps, and definitely out of context, this picture encapsulates how many of us have felt during the last year. A grid of small images entitled "You Good?" are printed on paper and casually tacked to the wall. "You Good?" explores the different ways pandemic isolation has affected the artist. The grid, which reads like the pages of a book, includes images of masks and hand washing, newspaper headlines and TV news reports in addition to images from television series like "Law and Order." Cowin documents the surroundings of her bedroom/office, the books she has read as well as images of spaces that reflect the changing light. Images of loss and longing pervade. She even includes a photograph of a half-filled glass of water, which begs the trope of the glass half full or half empty. Here it serves as

a metaphor for the time spent in isolation, as well as for the uncertainty of the times to come. This intimate work gets under your skin in the way it documents our new reality. Also on view is Cowin's short video "A Sudden Sense of Dislocation," a fragmented narrative of an undocumented family living in a trailer at the edge of a wooded area. The video expresses a mother's love for her son as they face the challenges and uncertainties of border crossings.



Ken Marchionno, photograph from "300 Miles to Wounded Knee: The Oomaka Tokatakiya, Future Generations Ride"

From 2004 to 2009, Ken Marchionno participated in a 300-mile horse ride that takes place every December in North and South Dakota. Run by the Lakota Indians, the journey begins at the site of Sitting Bull's death and ends at the site of the Wounded Knee massacre. During this yearly journey, Marchionno not only documented the trip, but became part of the ride's extended family. The exhibition, "300 Miles to Wounded Knee: The Oomaka Tokatakiya, Future Generations Ride" occupies the main gallery space, filling it with photographs and video recording different aspects of the ride, as well as the people Marchionno encountered. For the artist, it was important not be treated as a tourist or outsider. He rode with the Lakota on what

evolved into a symbolic journey. While at first his primary role was to document it photographically as a solo project, Marchionno ended up creating the "Future Generations Teen Photojournalism Project," teaching photography to Reservation teens on the ride. Some of their work is incorporated into the exhibition.

What becomes key in Marchionno's exhibition is who and what is framed, and how a physical journey can be translated into images that display the personal intensity and intimacy of the trip. Marchionno carefully choreographs the images, leading us to discover the people, the landscape and different weather conditions of the ride as the photographs unfold. Less a narrative, it is more a building of a relationship that the artist first shaped out of his own experience. The video is included not only to provide context, but to record the difficulties the group encountered along the way. The images include portraits of participants with their horses, the group riding in all conditions along roads and trails, in sun and in snow. Family moments are included because for the Lakota Indians the ride is also a way to reclaim their history and is an homage to their ancestors. Large photographs are interspersed with grids of smaller images to create a flow along the walls that parallels the journey of the ride and the natural exchange of personal stories that surely occurred. Marchionno is an insightful photographer who is trusted by his subjects. That reciprocity comes through in the exhibition. Not only is "300 Miles to Wounded Knee: The Oomaka Tokatakiya, Future Generations Ride" documentation of a special journey, but also a testament to the importance and power of photography.

Jody Zellen is a LA based writer and artist who creates interactive installations, mobile apps, net art, animations, drawings, paintings, photographs, public art, and artist's books. Zellen received a BA from Wesleyan University (1983), a MFA from CalArts (1989) and a MPS from NYU's Interactive Telecommunications Program (2009). She has exhibited nationally and internationally since 1989. For more information please visit www.jodyzellen.com.