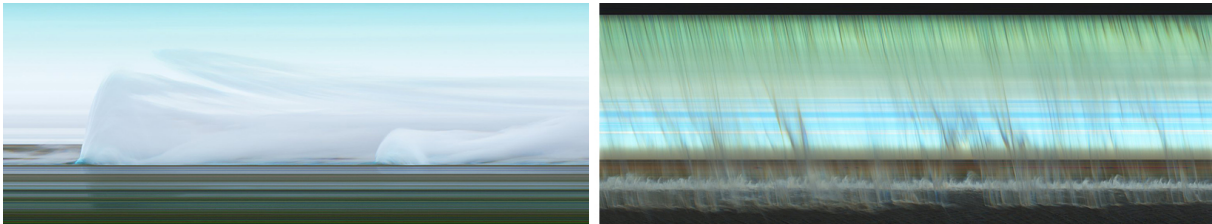


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Art Now LA

Jay Mark Johnson, *Íslenskir Fossar*  
"Capturing and Transforming the Atmosphere and Landscape"  
William Turner Gallery  
April 8 - May 27, 2023

by Jody Zellen



Many of the ten large scale color photographs that make up Jay Mark Johnson's current exhibition *Íslenskir Fossar* depict Iceland's volcanic landscape, specifically raging waterfalls and geysers captured using slit scan technology—a digital way of using multiple exposures to create one image. The subject is recorded through a "slit" a thin slice that only allows a small portion of the image to be exposed resulting in a succession of horizontal or vertical bands that often appear animated or even blurred.

Johnson has been making pictures with this technology for the last decade, exploring what he calls timeline photography—a way to capture motion—presenting moving objects like trains, people walking and ocean waves as they traverse space within a single image. His process turns the natural world into evocative abstractions. Though based on reality, his pictures have an otherworldliness.

His works are panoramic in proportion and consist of striations of color that appear to extend across the composition moving from left to right. In this body of work (from 2021), Johnson transforms glaciers and geysers into abstractions that accentuate the way light is refracted off particles dancing in the sea and the sky. The horizontal bands approximate colored pixels that have been dragged across the surface and recall the striped paintings of Gerhard Richter, as well as some of the digital manipulations by photographer Rory Donaldson and video works by Golan Levin.

*GEYSER #1* (Haukadalsvegur, Iceland), (all works 2021), is surreal. In this image, a huge amorphous white shape emerges from a colorful ground fusing into the sky above, its white coloration reflecting the blue of the sky, as well as the tones of the sea. The lower portion of the image is composed of long horizontal stripes ranging from gray to brown to blue with bits of red, green and even yellow. These bands cascade across the image implying motion and are in contrast to the undulating form that rises above.

In *SELJALANDFOSS #4*, (Rangàrthing Ekstra, Iceland), Johnson's image is a melange of water and sky presented as a layered abstraction that unfolds across the horizon. Across the center of the image is a wide band of light blue, bisected by lines that are a pinkish-white and recall clouds. Above this is a green gradient and below, a receding ground presented in more earth-toned colors. Covering these colors is a veil of blurred vertical lines that flow up and down somewhat diagonally across the image as if spray from crashing waves or streams of rain falling from the clouds.

The exhibition also includes two earlier works depicting Stewart Falls, shot in Sundance, Utah in 2019. *STEWART FALLS #43* and *STEWART FALLS #6* are dizzying and expressive photographs that turn the powerful movement of raging waterfalls into colorful abstractions that suggest the force and awe of nature.

In his works, Johnson embraces the camera's ability to capture and transform the atmosphere and landscape, presenting instants that represent something unfolding over time. He has learned how to manipulate 'slit-scan' technologies to create incredibly beautiful and colorful abstractions that, although derived from nature, come across as digital fabrications.

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