

John Davies “The British Landscape”

L. Parker Stephenson Photographs

Ends in 67 days
Closed Today (Tuesday)

L. Parker Stephenson Photographs celebrates its representation of John Davies (b. 1949) with the first solo exhibition of his work in the United States. Nominated for the Deutsche Börse prize in 2008, Davies is best known for his 1980s photographs



documenting the broad, complex and changing topography of industrial and post-industrial Britain. Over a dozen large vintage and modern gelatin silver prints have been selected for presentation from his series *The British Landscape* (published in book format by Chris Boot, 2006).

John Davies' engagement with documentary photography emerged as a response to the economic and social upheavals taking place in the UK in the late 1970s and 80s. This important transitional era was examined in the Museum of Modern Art New York's 1991 exhibition and accompanying catalog, *British Photography from the Thatcher Years*, which presented the work of John Davies, Paul Graham, Chris Killip, Martin Parr and Graham Smith. Davies' exhibited images from *A Green and Pleasant Land* examined changes to the environment wrought on it by industrialization and urbanization. This 1986 title was the first book published by Dewi Lewis while he was Director of the Cornerhouse art center.

Working through long-standing British traditions of painterly and literary scenes,

Davies utilizes the sharp descriptive power of large format photography for his fine gelatin silver prints to include a range of details that exceeds a complacent reading of the terrain, emphasizing instead its flux. He honors and preserves the layers of cultural history while the past is regularly erased and replaced. Tensions between Arcadian nature and engineered economy are also illustrated, informing an understanding of the earth as both symbolic identity and as a resource. Viewed from an elevated perspective, the pastoral lanes, Gothic cathedrals, railroad bridges, coal factories, nuclear power plants and apartment towers captured in Davies' images relate to classical landscape painting as well as the precision of map-making. His style has been credited as influential to contemporary artists, among them, Andreas Gursky.

Davies' continued focus on the evolution of rural and urban environments throughout Western Europe over the course of almost 40 years has resulted in over twenty monographs and dozens of solo and group exhibitions. His most recent book, *Shadow: Slag Heaps of Northern Europe*, (Edition Loco) was published in 2016. The V&A Museum, London and the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris are both presenting his work from their collections in current group exhibitions. The Towner Art Gallery in Eastbourne also has his prints on view through 2018.

In addition to institutions throughout the UK such as the Barbican Art Gallery, Tate Britain, Tate Liverpool, the British Council, Arts Council of England, the National Museum and Galleries and the National Library of Wales, Davies' work has been collected or exhibited by international museums including MoMA NY and SFMoMA; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; and MAXXI in Rome among many others in Austria, Belgium, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Switzerland and the Netherlands.