

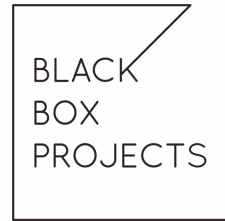
PRESS RELEASE

Black Box Projects
at
London Art Fair
Stand P21
22-26 January 2020



Approach, Vertical Flyer, 2009, C-type print on Fuji Crystal Archive, 127 x 162.6 cm, Edition of 3 plus 1 artist proof, Copyright Steve Macleod, courtesy of Black Box Projects

For their second time at the London Art Fair, Black Box Projects will present a solo booth of work by British photographer Steve Macleod. Macleod is inspired by the Pictorial movement popularised in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. For a Pictorialist, a photograph, like a painting, drawing or



engraving, is a way of projecting an emotional intent into the viewer's realm of imagination. His works often utilise chiaroscuro elements of light and shade creating a melancholic, expressive mood.

Exhibiting works from as early as 1992 and as recent as 2019, the gallery will show four series including *Blackwater*, *Nil*, *Hala* and *Indigo*. These series are all photographic at their base, born from a vintage, large-format, analogue camera and shot on film, but varied in process finishing in vastly differing results.

NIL

Nil is a series of work made between 1992-2005 inspired by the area of the Scottish Highlands where Macleod grew up. The First World War devastated many Highland villages to such an extent that in the post-war census the return of many soldiers was listed as NIL. With the loss of so many able-bodied young men, rural communities diminished, and people slowly drifted away from their lands, rural industry and crafts. Whole communities disappeared, and places became forgotten.

In 1992 Macleod began creating a photographic response to these losses; the traces of abandoned communities in the Highland landscape. He engaged with current residents in a collaborative approach to the photographic works. Creating silver gelatin prints he obliterated the image with black oil stick, inviting them to uncover the image below with their hands, in turn placing their own identity on the landscape and resurrecting a connection that commemorates the past yet connects us with the present.

BLACKWATER

By methodically visiting the same sites along the Blackwater river course in Essex, Macleod repetitively shot the same subjects through the seasons in direct relation to the way he felt, translating his emotional state through the lens. Always waiting for just the right moment, shooting at dawn and dusk, until each object or detail of foliage was caught within its own atmosphere.

In this cathartic process, he used the changes in light and atmosphere as a form of expression for his changing moods, finding solace in the landscape. Macleod's emotionally charged photographs of dark woodlands have a sombre weight yet a profoundly meditative quality. In stark contrast, the bleached out, ethereal images represent the artists high, frenetic moods. During these moments, Macleod pushes the boundaries of his photography. Objects become unreadable, and we are forced to squint into the glare.

HALA

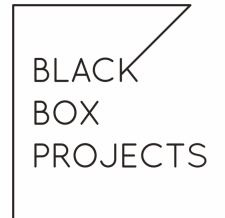
Hala, drawn from the Arabic word for 'aura', comprises 30 large-scale photographs created in the United Arab Emirates, inspired by a collection of images by British explorer Sir Wilfred Thesiger.

Macleod created this series of landscapes, devoid of human presence, which embody his Pictorialist ideology. As his photographs have always been characterised by landscape's direct relationship to his own psychological state, this time it was translated through the lens by the pouring of coloured paint into the bellows of the camera. This performative act, which renders the bellows subsequently unusable, results in the landscape being saturated with a surreal, coloured haze. The brooding and dark images of his previous work have been put aside in favour of a body of work that explores colour, light and a landscape of vast emptiness. The resulting pictures speak of redemption - a journey from desert lowlands to a stark and exposed summit - an exploration towards wellness and light.

INDIGO

Steve Macleod latest series is *Indigo*. It consists of 20 images shot in the Scottish Highlands and realised as silver gelatin prints toned with hot selenium to give the images an inky blue hue. *Indigo* never started as a photography project but was borne out of an extended period of time Steve Macleod spent in hospital, many years ago. During his time there, he would have recurring dreams about indistinct mountain forms shrouded in inky blues and hazy purples - colours which are often associated with deep cognitive depressive states. These were not places the artist had visited in his native Scotland nor were they past memories - they were nameless, reoccurring visions. During his time in the hospital Macleod kept a diary and after every dream he would draw the shapes he saw. Several years later Macleod noticed patterns in his landscape work where he was drawn to mountain ranges in the Scottish Highlands. The indigo dreams had subconsciously worked their way into his landscape projects in the same way that memories pop in and out of our thoughts. Macleod was unconsciously reconstructing something that he had dreamed of and had continued to be drawn to, manifesting as *Indigo*.

As well as a landscape photographer, Macleod is an educator - a regular lecturer and speaker on photography subjects, he is a respected industry professional with twenty-five years' experience. He is a Visiting Professor at UCS East Anglia; a Trustee of the Queen Elizabeth Scholarship Trust (QUEST); on the Patrons Board at the National Portrait Gallery, London; a Trustee on the Board for National Open Art and Lifetime member of Frontline Club in London. He also operates a successful mentorship programme for emerging artists.



About Black Box Projects

Black Box Projects is a contemporary photography gallery that is committed to working with artists who push the limits of traditional photographic practice. The gallery does not keep a permanent space, instead it arranges project-based exhibitions in order to tailor the experience to the individual needs of the artist and the work to be shown. It aims to be a pioneer of the changing gallery model, as well as presenting a transparent working model with artists, clients and other gallerists that fosters community, creativity and collaboration. Kathlene Fox-Davies, Anna Kirrage and Jim Edwards are the Directors of Black Box Projects. Collectively, they have nearly 50 years of experience in the art world.

www.blackboxprojects.art

For further information please contact:

Anna Kirrage anna@blackboxprojects.art

07815934072