

BOB KOLBRENER: 50 Years in the West

Exhibition Prospectus



© Bob Kolbrener (b. 1949 –), *Spring Rain, Yosemite National Park, CA*, 1972, gelatin silver print, 23 ¼ x 29 ½", Collection of the artist

BOB KOLBRENER: 50 Years in the West

Fact Sheet

// POINT OF CONTACT

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// EXHIBITION TOUR

Available 2019 and on.

// EXHIBITION CONTENTS

Bob Kolbrener: 50 Years in the West showcases fifty-six prints from Kolbrener's decades of travel in the American West. Kolbrener shoots in medium and large format and prints *"the old fashioned way"* using traditional darkroom techniques. These gelatin silver prints contemplate *"man's encroachment into nature,"* capture *"short lived weather phenomena,"* and explore iconic landscapes in the American West.

// INTERPRETIVE MATERIALS

Text for labels, introductory and supporting panels and a gallery guide. A master list of photographs is also provided for easy reference.

// SPACE REQUIREMENTS

Approximately 262 feet of wall space, with a wall height of 10 feet.

// EXHIBITION FEE

\$6,000 for 12 weeks.

// ADDITIONAL COSTS

Prorated packing and crating, shipping, and etcetera.

// CREDITS

Collection of the artist
Gift of the artist
Booth Western Art Museum permanent collection, Cartersville, GA

// Exhibition Description

Bob Kolbrener: 50 Years in the West consists of fifty-six black and white gelatin silver prints taken from 1968 to 2018. Bob Kolbrener presents half a century of traditional, darkroom photography featuring iconic Western subjects. Printed the “old fashioned ways” on selenium toned paper from medium and large format negatives, **Bob Kolbrener: 50 Years in the West** presents a celebration of traditional black and white darkroom processes.

Kolbrener was born in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1942. While he enjoyed photography as an amateur and hobbyist, it was not until Kolbrener’s first trip out West in 1968 that he knew he wanted to pursue further training. During this fateful trip, Kolbrener was introduced to the works of Ansel Adams, the famous American landscape photographer and environmentalist. Inspired to learn more about photography, Kolbrener attended a workshop by Ansel Adams the following year. Kolbrener would continue his instruction in photography by attending classes with photographers such as Imogen Cunningham and Wynn Bullock. In 1973, Kolbrener became an assistant at the Ansel Adams Workshops in Yosemite, and just four years later was invited to become an instructor. Kolbrener’s aesthetic and subjects are connected to this history of photography and his early instructors. Even so, Kolbrener’s extensive knowledge of Yosemite, the American West and other California based photographers allows him to create unique photographs of highly iconic subjects.



Controlled Burn & Dodge #1, Yosemite National Park, CA,
1999, gelatin silver print, 28 ½ x 23 ½", Collection of the artist

Bob Kolbrener: 50 Years in the West is more than a retrospective. The exhibit explores the concept of “returning,” whether it be to locations or specific subjects. While Kolbrener’s specific subjects and compositions change, the locations of the American West are returned to over the decades, offering new insights into the West and Kolbrener’s masterful style. One favorite location of Kolbrener, Yosemite National Park, is present in every decade of his work. As Kolbrener says, “*I have always responded to the grand, ephemeral gestures of Nature. Where there is lightning, fog, or winter storm, I am alive with emotion.*”

Kolbrener’s photographs capture fleeting moments in nature, from rushing waterfalls and misty mountains to snow laden trees and shadowy vistas. While landscapes — from the California coastline to national parks like Yosemite — feature predominantly, the exhibition highlights Kolbrener’s diverse interests, such as figural and architectural photography, along with his more humorous pieces, such as ironic road signs.

// Subjects and Themes

Yosemite National Park is an important thread in Kolbrener's work, one to which he consistently returns. Kolbrener first experienced the work of Ansel Adams at the Best's Studio in Yosemite, which is fitting considering the two artists' connection to the Park and interest in the American landscape. Kolbrener exclaims his "*cameras demand to come out*" while in the Park. In his photographs of Half Dome and Bridalveil Fall, there is the semblance of portraiture. The iconic vistas, natural formations and sites in Yosemite are themselves referential to the collective of the Park due to their iconic profiles, in many cases popularized through Adams and other photographers. Kolbrener is careful to not replicate works previously done in the Park, instead finding a new perspective that shows the dynamism of nature, whether it is in the rushing waters of rivers and waterfalls, the delicate haze of water vapor on the wind or the stillness of snow and its ability to transform a well-known location into something entirely new.



Bridalveil Fall, Yosemite National Park, CA,
1973, gelatin silver print, 28 ½ x 24 ¼",
Collection of the artist



9/9/99 #3, CA, 1999, 23 ¼ x 29
⅓", gelatin silver print,
Collection of the artist

Kolbrener is well-known for his ability to capture **Ephemeral** moments, such as: crashing waves across the Western coastline, thunderstorms, mist and fog, and unique **Patterns** in desert sands and cloudy skies. Kolbrener says "*The most common misunderstanding of landscape photography is thinking, 'I bet you had to wait a long time for that.' And the answer is, 'Quite the contrary!'*" Rather, in order to capture these brief, transitory moments Kolbrener utilizes quick thinking, drawing on his decades of experience.

The American West is more than just its landscapes and includes the many peoples that live, work and play in this region of the United States. Kolbrener's work in the West also includes photographs of ironic road signs, portraits, a series of nudes of his wife Sharon, and architecture. As Kolbrener explains, "*In my early trips into the American West, I was really looking for Ansel Adams-like photographs. And I realized very quickly that the great moments in nature, weather-related situations, didn't happen very often. In order to stay photographically active, I had to find other things to photograph.*"



Rodeo, WY, 1983, gelatin silver print,
15 ⅓ x 15 ⅛", Collection of the artist

As such, **Travel**, both to and from the West is central to Kolbrener's story. In these photographs, the wit and imagination of Kolbrener shines through, while still remaining true to his artistic vision and interest in the interplay between nature and time, and nature and humanity. A brief moment of natural beauty, such as a rainbow or stark desert landscape, is paired with a reminder of humanity's **Encroachment** into the landscape, such as a road sign or water basin.

By exploring the relationship of human interaction and the Western landscape, Kolbrener's photographs show that the mark of human activity remains present, even in the absence of people. When Kolbrener does include figures in his photographs of landscapes and the natural world, there still remains the feelings of openness, vulnerability and even strength, as the vastness of the landscape comes out in stark relief through the inclusion of the human figure.



Arrow & Rainbow, UT, 1981, 19 ⅓ x 15 ½", Booth Western Art Museum permanent collection, Cartersville, GA



The Great Basin, NV, 2012, gelatin silver print, 12 ½ x 19 ⅓", Collection of the artist

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