

ArtReview

'Widening the Lens': A Corrective for Landscape Photography

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Justine Kurland, *The Pig Roast (Apache Junction, Arizona)*, 2001, inkjet print, 76 x 102 cm. © and courtesy the artist

What belongs in a landscape, and who in front of a camera? The genre is about more than just the nineteenth-century notion of the sublime

A luminous photograph in the Carnegie Museum of Art shows two figures on a patch of sand. One, a child, digs with a stick, while the other, an adolescent wearing a grungy outfit, beaded choker and nose ring, minds a pig on a spit. In this inkjet print by Justine Kurland, titled *The Pig Roast (Apache Junction, Arizona)* (2001), there is a quietude atypical of survival scenes, as well as a staginess in the way the

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adolescent's hands are gathered in her lap, the pristine condition of her shoes and the look of cautious amusement she gives the skewered animal. The image comes from Kurland's *Girl Pictures* series (1997–2002), which depicts groups of young women playacting as vagabonds in wildernesses across North America, trekking through terrain like the male adventurers in a Jack Kerouac novel and injecting a convivial presence into the bleak American landscape found in, say, Robert Frank's roadtrip photographs.



Sky Hopinka, *Cowboy Mouth 2 (Yoiréreginagere)*, 2022, inkjet print with hand scratched text and UV laminate, 102 x 102 cm. © and courtesy the artist

Like Kurland, David O. Alekhuogie performs an act of reparative restaging in his series *to live and die in LA* (2021). On two inkjet-printed canvases, the blue and red waistbands of a man's exposed underwear and low-slung pants are blurred and interposed behind palm fronds and other foliage growing in locations where,

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according to the wall text, Black men have had violent encounters with the Los Angeles police. Under Alekhuogio's lens, the stacked waistbands – targets of a moral panic during the early 2000s – turn into a radiant backdrop, reframing the Black male body as a site of intimacy rather than paranoia. Elsewhere, in the three sequenced prints that make up Dionne Lee's *Casting* series (2022), the artist's hands reach in from the left of one frame and appear, in the next two frames, to drop a rock onto pebbled ground, staking a claim to the land in a magnificently opaque and noninvasive manner. Agential and expressive, they stand in for the Black citizen who was banned from American national parks, the exhibition materials inform us, until the Civil Rights Act of 1963. A similar opacity is found in Sky Hopinka's inkjet print *Cowboy Mouth 3 (Siniwagüreginagere)* (2022), in which two figures and a row of trees, backlit and inscrutable against a pale blue sky, are haloed with lines of poetry. In lieu of distinct markers of identity, the artist's verses etched on the print do the work of reinscribing Indigenous subjectivity onto the tableaux of America.

Widening the Lens: Photography, Ecology, and the Contemporary Landscape at Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, through 12 January 2025