

# Parrish Opens “Thomas Joshua Cooper: REFUGE,” Creating a Trio of Solo Photography-Based Exhibitions

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by Pat Rogers

The Parrish Art Museum opens the exhibition “Thomas Joshua Cooper: REFUGE” on May 5, 2019 with the new monumentally scaled photography show creating a trio of solo shows devoted to international photographers presented in the museum’s special exhibition galleries.

Opening in March 2019 was “[Renate Aller: The Space Between Memory and Expectation](#)” which presents 12 large-scale archival prints by the German-born photographer. Drawing from her ongoing series “Ocean | Desert” and “Mountain Interval,” the exhibition links disparate landscapes through the continuity of horizon line. Vistas include the Atlantic Ocean, sand dunes in New Mexico and Colorado and mountain ranges in Alaska, Switzerland, Italy and Nepal.

Also opening in March 2019 was “[Jean-Luc Mylane: A Matter of Place.](#)” The exhibition presents nine monumental photographs by the French artist, juxtaposing natural environments with the man-made as well as contrasting stillness and motion, calm and tension within compositions that evoke mystery and the metaphysical. Made in New Mexico and Texas, the artworks were gifted to the Parrish by the artist and the Lannan Foundation.

“[Thomas Joshua Cooper: REFUGE](#)” presents worlds closer to home with photographs of coastal and inland waterways along the Eastern seaboard and the Hudson River made by the American-born and Scottish-based photographer. The exhibition is anchored with 21 images of seascapes and interior landscapes he made on the East End of Long Island during his 2016 exploratory commission sponsored by the Lannan Foundation with the Parrish Art Museum.

“Thomas Joshua Cooper: Refuge” is the artist’s first solo exhibition in an American museum in nearly two decades. It opens at the Parrish on May 5 and continues on view through July 28, 2019. His work has been the subject of over 95 solo shows presented around the world as well as exhibited in over 80 group shows.

Cooper’s photographs can be found in over 50 public collections worldwide including The Art Institute of Chicago; The J. Paul Getty Museum; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Museum of Contemporary Art (Chicago); Museum of Fine Arts (Houston); The Modern Art Museum (Fort Worth); Nimes Museum of Contemporary Art (France); The Polaroid Collection (Frankfurt); Princeton University Art Museum (New Jersey); The Tate Gallery (London); and The Victoria and Albert

Museum (London). Lannan Foundation holds the single largest collection of work by the artist, who is the founding head of photography at the Glasgow School of Art.

Cooper's images, made primarily along the coastal and inland waterways of the world, are steeped in the history of place, yet timeless in their aesthetic, according to the Parrish.

"For Cooper, the relationship between history and ecology—from the Hudson River's fresh water arterial to Long Island's diverse waterways—holds great personal significance as a visual and emotional continuum of his sense of place in the world," noted Parrish Director and exhibition curator Terrie Sultan. "These places, divergent in topography and habitat, share specific importance to both Native Americans and successive waves of immigrants. Each has been a significant socio-economic driver for trade, manufacture, and shipping, and has nurtured nascent artist communities in the 19th and 20th centuries."

Inspired by the tradition of late 19th and early 20th century landscape photographers such as Timothy H. O'Sullivan (1840-1882), Carleton Watkins (1829-1916), and Edward Weston (1886-1958), Cooper's images are scaled in the scope of a grand vista yet granular in detail. Made with a 19th-century large format camera, the 49 photographs in "Thomas Joshua Cooper: Refuge" relay both depth and beauty.

Each location is recorded with a single negative taken with the 1898 AGFA field camera that Cooper has used since 1968. Meticulously hand printing his images, the selenium-toned gelatin silver prints are redolent with sumptuous detail and resonant tonalities, notes Sultan. These details can especially be seen in the granular texture of pebbles and shells blending into the shallows in *Gardiners Bay, Orient Point, 2016/2017*, and in the movement of the wave and sea spray overtaking the shore in *Incoming tide - Looking East, The North Atlantic Ocean, Montauk Point, 2016/2018*.



“Incoming tide – looking east – North Atlantic Ocean, Montauk Point, New York” by Thomas Joshua Cooper, 2016/18. Selenium-toned gelatin silver print; 20 x 24 inches. Collection of the artist. Courtesy Parrish Art Museum.

Cooper’s photographs are made after a period of immersion in a specific site and are considered records of the artist’s personal connection made to the land and its history. His process involves extensive research, exploration, and often arduous travel to raw, undomesticated environments on the periphery of civilization, explained the Parrish in an exhibition release.

The images are made in specific locations under particular light and weather conditions but remain void of identifying elements except for the artist’s naming conventions. Photographs such as *Evening – Last light – “slight wind” A front garden*, 2016/2018, and *Noontime – The Shinnecock Canal*, 2016/2017, epitomize Cooper’s ability to recover or infuse meaning into commonplace, forgotten or seemingly anonymous locations, offered the Parrish.

The Hamptons-based photographs were made over a course of 10 days. Cooper traveled the local area, immersing himself in an internal dialogue about the region’s environment, history, as well as the culture from Native Americans to Dutch and English settlers to the artist community that originated in the late 19th century and thrives today, relayed the museum.

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated publication. Terrie Sultan provides an overarching essay examining Cooper’s creative approach to image making, placing him within the context of history. David Kastan, George M. Bodman Professor of English at Yale University and noted Shakespearean scholar, contributes a philosophical musing on the nature of landscape photography. In a special section of book, former Parrish curatorial associate Michael Pinto shares his diary entries that document of his daily travels with Cooper.

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**BASIC FACTS:** “Thomas Joshua Cooper: Refuge” is on view May 5 to July 28, 2019. “Renate Aller: The Space Between Memory and Expectation” is on view March 24 to July 28, 2019. “Jean-Luc Mylane: A Matter of Place” is on view March 24 to July 28, 2019.

A private preview for Parrish Members for all three exhibitions takes place on Saturday, May 4, 2019 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. and features Parrish Art Museum Director Terrie Sultan in conversation with Thomas Joshua Cooper. A reception immediately follows. Attending the Conversation is on a first-come, first serve as the talk is expected to draw full capacity.

Not a Parrish Member? Not a problem. Click [here](#) to join.

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