

MEDIA RELEASE

Flat Earth

Lois Conner

curated by Leandro Villaro

On View: By appointment only, Tuesday, November 30–March 31, 2021, 2–6pm

Opening Reception: Tuesday, November 30, 6–8pm

Public Program: Sunday, December 14, 6pm (free, in-person). RSVP: info@penumbrafoundation.org

Upcoming Publication: *Elliptical* (forthcoming, Penumbra Foundation, 2022). For inquiries and pre-order details, write to info@penumbrafoundation.org

Penumbra Foundation is pleased to present *Flat Earth*, a solo exhibition by renowned New York City-based artist Lois Conner, showcasing a selection of twenty-three multi-panel landscapes and seventeen vintage platinum prints.

Conner has been photographing in Asia, Europe and America since the 1980s. Her photographs are astounding in their composition and detail, and confirm the possibility of an image that is both specific and general in regards to time, place and history.

Inspired by hand-scroll Chinese paintings and seduced by the exquisite tonal and quality reproduction of the platinum printing process, Conner's meticulous contact-printing practice suggests simplicity. Yet it conceals the complex technical and formal decisions she makes with remarkable clarity of purpose.

We are delighted to inaugurate Penumbra Foundation's Gallery Space with this exhibition, a celebration of Conner's art and working philosophy. The selected images have been intentionally decontextualized from their original bodies of work to offer a reading of a universal landscape. Through their physicality, visual rhetoric and silent narrative, the images make visible a profound understanding and respect for the genre, the medium (photography) and the documented places (with their particular cultures and histories). Conner's photographs invite us to slow down and look carefully. And it is in this way that we might discover, in the space between the subject and object, her persistent gesture of searching.

About the multi-panels

These multi-panels landscapes were made with a 7x17in banquet view camera and are original prints made with silver gelatin fiber based paper in direct contact with the 7x17in negative. Conner made these prints between the 1980s and 2021.

About the camera

The banquet view camera was produced by Korona, Folmer & Schwing and Kodak from 1915 to 1929. It was originally used for making pictures of people at banquets, hence its name. It uses a single negative: 7x17in, 8x2in or 12x20in, depending on the format of the camera.

About the platinum prints

A platinum print is one of the most subtle and beautiful of all photographic printing processes. In a finished print, inert platinum metal is embedded in the fibers of the paper rather than the silver being suspended in the gelatin emulsion. Because viewers do not peer through a veil of gelatin, the final platinum print is, in some ways, similar to an ink, charcoal, or pencil drawing. Conner made these 5x7in and 8x10in platinum prints between the 1970s and 1990s.

About the artist

Lois Conner is known for her large-scale panoramic photographs. She has received numerous grants, exhibits widely, and her work is featured in many esteemed publications. Most recently, Conner received the Pollock-Krasner Award for Artists (2020) and the Rosenkranz Foundation Fellowship for Photography (2019). She was awarded the Anonymous Was a Woman Fellowship (2007), and grants from the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation (1984), the New York State Council on the Arts (1983) and the National Endowment of the Arts (1979). Conner's work is part of the traveling exhibition *Civilization, The Way We Live Now* in Australia, New Zealand and France (2020-2021), and was exhibited in the inaugural exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston (2020). Conner has had numerous solo shows in Asia and the United States. Her work was featured in group exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (2012 and 2017) and in the exhibition *Pictures by Women: A History of Modern Photography* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York (2010). Recent books include *Lotus, Trees and the Jiangnan Landscape*, Hangzhou (2019), *A Long View*, Shanghai Center of Photography (2018), and *Lotus Leaves*, Wairarapa Academy, New Zealand (2018).

Conner has been teaching photography for over thirty-five years and is currently a visiting artist at Fordham University. She taught at the Yale University School of Art for more than a decade, and at other institutions including Princeton University, Sarah Lawrence College, Cooper Union, Bard College, Stanford University, the New School, the School of Visual Arts and the China Academy of Art in Hangzhou, China.

About Penumbra Exhibition Gallery

Penumbra's Exhibition Space is a new gallery dedicated to presenting work that advances historic and alternative photographic processes in ways that are as conceptually and socially relevant as they are materially driven. The goal of this space is to foster conversations about the role of photography in contemporary society through curated exhibitions and collaborations.

About Penumbra Foundation

Penumbra Foundation is a non-profit organization that brings together the Art and Science of Photography through education, research, outreach, public and residency programs. Its goal is to be a comprehensive resource for photographers at any level, artists, students, professionals, historians, researchers, conservators and curators. Penumbra specializes in advancing the use of historic and alternative photographic technologies for contemporary image-making.

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