



H A V A S U F A L L S

TERRI
LOEWENTHAL

CURATORIAL STATEMENT

Eleanor Harwood
August 2021

The way Terri Loewenthal creates images, using multiple vantage points in one composition, brings us back to the dawn of photography. As far back as antiquity, painters were using the camera obscura to sketch out forms on canvas. They would use the optical device to cast their subject onto the canvas, then, if they desired, they would reposition it and use it again to continue adding elements. As they threw each image onto the gessoed fabric, they were able to angle it, skew it, and decide where it looked best within the overall composition. Loewenthal's technique is similar, although her layers happen concurrently. Her approach is akin to a master painter, more like Vermeer than Ansel Adams. Loewenthal's photography is a fascinating move forward in the genre of landscape photography, converging historical movements in both painting and photographic image making.

Commercial photography was introduced in 1839 in France and Britain. By 1852 France had achieved its goal of documenting its conquests in the book *Egypt, Nubia, Palestine and Syria: Photographic Pictures Collected During the Years 1849, 1850, and 1851* by Maxine Du Camp. In 1861 Carleton Watkins, an American, was heading out into the American West with survey teams to document Yosemite. In 1862 he was exhibiting his images as fine art at the Goupil Gallery in New York. The British Pictorialists (late 19th century and early 20th century) moved photography into a painterly realm using combination printing (a technique compositing images) and introducing blurring as an artistic choice rather than a poorly made image (consider Julia Margaret Cameron's soft-focus portraiture). Ansel Adams' photographs of Yosemite

were first published in the Sierra Club's bulletin in 1922. His images, along with those of the Pictorialists and their artistic liberties, are some relevant historical predecessors to Loewenthal's work.

Nearly one hundred years later, Loewenthal pulls from these movements, bringing a rare female voice to the history of landscape photography. What we see in so much contemporary landscape photography is a veering into the journalistic and a penchant for producing prints and images that are technologically impressive but lack imaginative force. The image is meant to soothe and evoke calm, be journalistic, descriptive, and non-confrontational. Loewenthal's work is radically different. Though it is photo-based, the way she approaches image making is inventive and imaginative. She conjures her own vision of landscape in a single exposure, utilizing the real landscape around her in order to construct her own imagined place. Brilliantly hued filters paint areas of her images, acting as both a record of how she felt in that specific wild place while making the image, but also very literally coloring how we feel when we see the image.

Loewenthal's work is Fauvist Photography if there were such a thing. The term "Les Fauves" translates to "wild beasts," which feels exactly right for Loewenthal's images of wild places. Her use of color has the ability to supersede the image it tints, impressionistically and brilliantly painting distinctive areas of each terrain. Loewenthal has the psychological and intuitive dexterity to pull out details in a landscape and amplify elements with her color choices. These works are about sensation and feeling, about being in a place and responding to it with a keen perceptive awareness, and using color temperature as a mode of expression. She offers a novel way of seeing and feeling place in marked contrast to her predecessors. In doing so, she nudges us to consider what we experience as fact or fallacy, subtly moving us toward the idea that landscapes are full of many histories, truths, and complexities.

ARTIST STATEMENT

Terri Loewenthal

This is what it means to be an inhabitant of the West in 2021: sweltering in preternatural heatwaves, rationing water usage, and either running from wildfire or searching for air that's safe to breathe. There can be no question that the environmental problems we currently face are the inevitable endgame of the extractive ideology of Manifest Destiny ("this place is ours to consume, from sea to shining sea"). We know we should leave oil in the ground, adopt plant-based diets, and convert our buildings to intelligently store heat, cold, and water for when we need them most. We know this, and we also witness daily that knowledge isolated from emotion, imagination, and experience is not enough.

When I'm in wild spaces beyond the male gaze, knowing and being known, seeing and being seen take on an entirely different character. The smallest inquiry into a place becomes inherently relational: how do these beings of rock and river and sky receive me, and how do I receive them? What does it feel like in the mind, body, and heart to nurture a complex and deep relationship with the earth, rather than attempt to control and define it?

These images are a response to that inquiry. They are created not from an idea or preconceived image of what

nature “looks like”; they are born from deep within the experience of what it feels like to sit and be with nature. For me, representational imagery often fails to convey the full-bodied experience of a place. Heightening the experience of it through color comes closer to truth. The Havasupai people call themselves Havasu Baaja, the “people of the blue-green waters”—the waters themselves are a source of belonging. For these images, I used the milky turquoise of the mineral-laden Havasu waterfalls as a starting point for exploring what it feels like to be here.

Staying present with our surroundings in times of vast environmental degradation requires taking care of wild spaces, in ways that go beyond conventional conservation. It requires intimacy, the building of genuine relationship. The saturated compositions I create with my custom optics allow me to offer an expression of relationship with land that is alive, exuberant, and thriving with coexistence. It’s my attempt to indicate the spirit of a place, to offer the love and respect that all beings need to a waterfall. The reverence and play connect me backwards and forwards in time—to the impulse we respond to when we visit the ocean to scatter ashes of a loved one, or get married in a grove of ancient trees, or blow a dandelion for the sheer joy of watching the seeds float away.





STAYING WITH THE TROUBLE

Donna Haraway

“The task is to make kin in lines of inventive connection as a practice of learning to live and die well with each other in a thick present. Our task is to make trouble, to stir up potent response to devastating events, as well as to settle troubled waters and rebuild quiet places. In urgent times, many of us are tempted to address trouble in terms of making an imagined future safe, of stopping something from happening that looms in the future, of clearing away the present and the past in order to make futures for coming generations. Staying with the trouble does not require such a relationship to times called the future. In fact, staying with the trouble requires learning to be truly present, not as a vanishing pivot between awful or edenic pasts and apocalyptic or salvific futures, but as mortal critters entwined in myriad unfinished configurations of places, times, matters, meanings.”

Excerpt from
*Staying with the Trouble:
Making Kin in the
Chthulucene*, p.1



Mooney Falls, 2020
Archival Pigment Print, 40 × 30 inches





Monica Westin

BECOMING-
WITH:

COPRESENCE
IN
TERRI
LOEWENTHAL'S
HAVASU FALLS

The Havasu Falls photographs place the viewer in a state of dramatic and sustained disorientation, beginning with their earthly subject: the fundamental ambiguity of a canyon's location in what we call the landscape. The horizon in a canyon changes with varying levels of the water that flows below it; the walls of a canyon are both above and below the earth. Canyons challenge our assumption that what we call the ground is a stable place.

Loewenthal's photographs extend this disorientation into their formal composition. Each image consists of many points of view, refusing the viewer a fixed location from which to look out at the landscape with the kind of gaze that surveyors and other historically male photographers have long used to turn an image into property. Instead, Loewenthal places the viewer into a multiplicity of positions at once—most gazing upwards from the canyon in a fundamental position of humility rather than sublime awe. The sky in these photographs is only available in small patches for the viewer to orient herself, keeping her in close proximity to the movements of earth and water below.

The denial of a singular, fixed, Cartesian subject extends from space into time, positing visual theories about what it would be like to live in multiple chronologies at once. Loewenthal's rivers aren't just a destabilized horizon, but a way of measuring time itself, the way that it expresses itself as a force that shapes the landscape, flowing through biological life and geologic change.

How would a canyon experience time, as it wears away over centuries, watching delicate biological life come and go? Loewenthal's colors suggest not just the concept of a living, multiple landscape, but also a way of envisioning being in many times at once, from brightly technicolored daylight washes, to patches that are washed out like faded family snapshot albums. The trees, especially, that populate the Havasu Falls photographs are faded in comparison to earth and sky, and often

translucent, like ghosts hosting the land. Against all this, the water is detailed and painterly, the ever-changing subject that continues to flow through our own time, when the trees are alive, and the canyon's time, when the trees disappear in the blink of an eye.

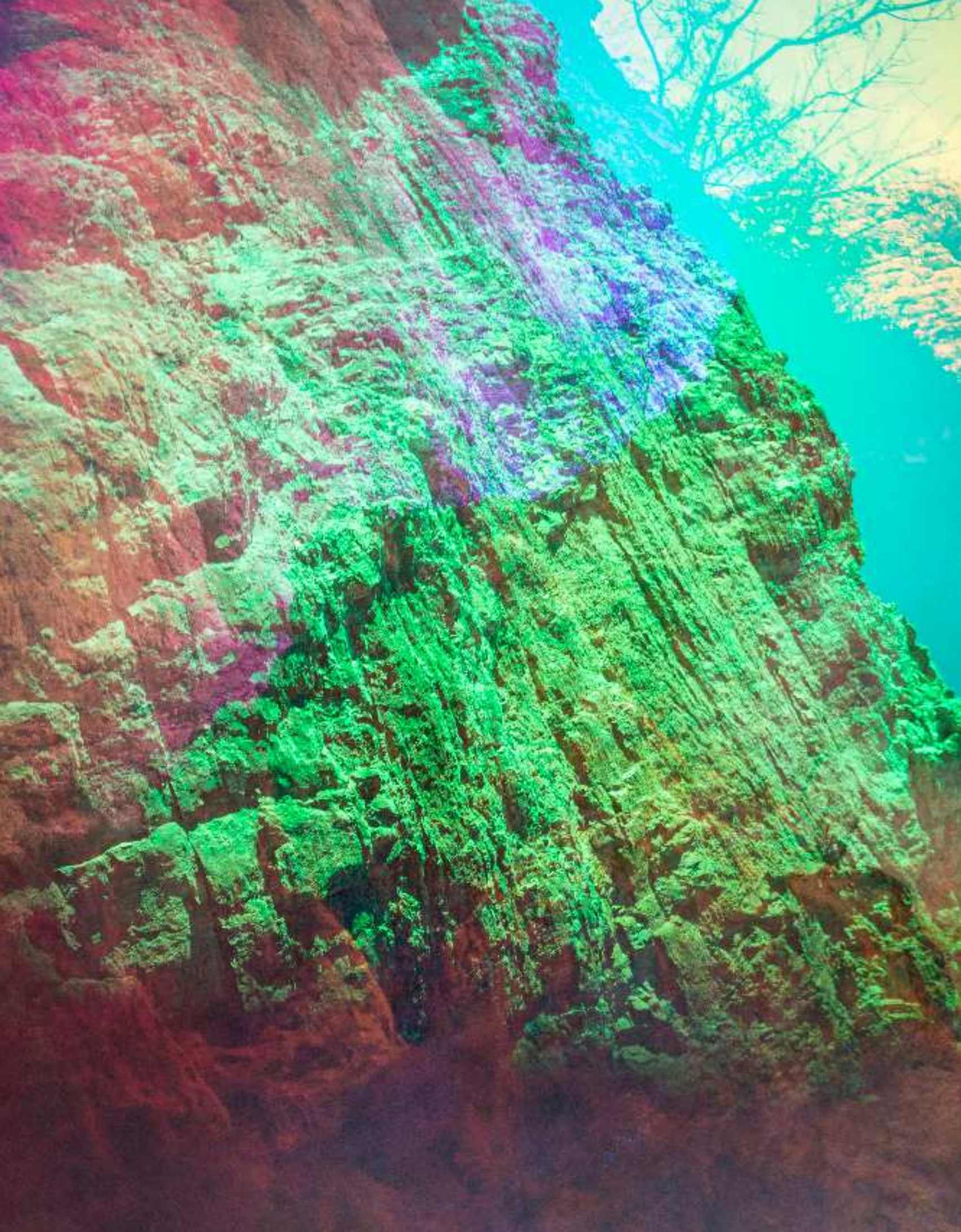
In short, the Havasu Falls photographs lay out a model of visual, temporal, and subjective copresence, across subject, composition, and emotion. But there is another kind of copresence hovering here as well, a kind of challenge that Donna Haraway has described in her definition of the word copresence: "We become-with each other or not at all. That kind of material semiotics is always situated, someplace and not noplacé, entangled and worldly... mortal earthlings in thick copresence."¹ Soliciting absence into vivid copresence is the deepest work that the Havasu Falls photographs do, asking us to really imagine an entangled, multiple, way of being that is truly not separate from everything that grounds us.

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Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, p.4



Aztec Amphitheater, 2020
Archival Pigment Print, 42 × 56 inches





Max Goldberg

WHAT
HOLDS THE
WATER,

WHAT
HOLDS THE
LIGHT

This past spring Terri wrote me from Highway 33 outside Ojai. “It’s just so crazy how little time it takes to be truly out there,” she observed. “I’m the only one for days.” She had gone all that way to begin writing a statement about the present photographs made at Havasu Falls. Many artists find it necessary to cover ground in order to do their work, but I still find remarkable the lengths Loewenthal goes to find out not only what the pictures want to do but also what they want to say.

One thing is clear: these photographs want no part of the picturesque. Slipping the ordinary dualism of observer and subject, they look to participate in their surroundings. It was around five years ago that Loewenthal, then grappling with a basic need to make new sense of her camera in the age of Instagram, began to experiment with colored glass, reflectors, and other age-old optical interventions I still prefer not to understand. All of these elements are physically balanced (maybe choreographed is a better word) in the space of a single exposure. What you see is what she got. Process became practice, leading to increasingly tricky terrain. With these photographs made on Havasupai land, the extraordinary patience required of her technique reveals itself to have a strong ethical dimension as well.

While Loewenthal tangles with legacies of landscape photography, I confess that I am just as likely to see her work in relation to papier-mâché, prayer flags, and most especially music. The logic of rhythm and refrain, harmonics and hooks—to say nothing of a swelling chorus!—is all over these photographs, which aren’t so much interested in documenting Havasu Falls as tuning to its hidden frequencies. The abandon of the compositions doubles as a reminder that most wavelengths are invisible to human eyes. Always there is some measure of hush—that spindly tree climbing the spine of Havasu Falls seems to watch over the whole series—to be found resting in the razzle dazzle.

The desert is characterized not only by its aridity but also by the amazing resourcefulness of the plants, animals, and



Havasus Falls, 2020
Archival Pigment Print, 64 × 48 inches

people that thrive there. Perhaps it's with them in mind that Loewenthal's pictures seem so adept at finding—I want to say scenting—the possibility of water. The falls themselves appear almost subdued, merging with rock or quietly humming in some unassuming corner of the rectangle. Walt Whitman similarly found the glory of Niagara Falls in a larger field of awareness, wondering over “that afternoon...that five minutes’ perfect absorption of Niagara—not the great majestic gem alone by itself, but set complete in all its varied, full, indispensable surroundings.” In these photographs, the spectral presences are where the action is, whether ghost rivers revisiting old canyon haunts or the great wash of sky painting the scene below. Loewenthal understands the complex emotions likely to be stirred by an altered view of an altered climate. But joy is there no matter what we think, and it's just not in these photographs to decline the gift.

Somewhere along the way I began to see Loewenthal's landscapes addressing themselves to a basic question for our earthly predicament: How do we find balance where there is none? For me the calm with which her photographs make discoveries suggests that just asking the question may provide some ballast. In Linda Hogan's powerful book, *Dwellings: A Spiritual History of the Living World*, to which I owe the title of this appreciation, she writes about the great and mysterious generosity of the natural world, tragically unrecognized by generations of colonizers. She considers how language cannot hear, still less speak for, the unaccountable forces animating the wider world: “So we make our own songs to contain these things,” she writes, “make ceremonies and poems, searching for a new way to speak, to say we want a new way to live in the world, to say that wilderness and water, blue herons and orange newts are invaluable not just to us, but in themselves, in the workings of the natural world that rules us whether we acknowledge it or not.” There's a choice there, and Loewenthal's photographs make plain as day the wild beauty to be found in the simple art of acknowledgment.





“IN THE
PAST
WE LISTENED
TO
PHOTOGRAPHS.”²

There is no grace in the West like water. When exploring these mountains, forests, valleys, and deserts, there is often an audible gasp or reverential murmur, upon encountering water in the wild. Its existence has always been seen as a benediction.

Terri Loewenthal's new series, Havasu Falls, seems to be searching for the West's aqueous fountainhead. The waterfalls and canyons she explored on the Havasu Creek in Arizona evade the casual tourist. You cannot pop in and take a picture. It's known to be physically strenuous to find these places. The canyon itself is older than the neighboring Grand Canyon, and the Havasupai people (their name means "people of the blue-green waters") were farming in these fertile valleys for at least four centuries before the Spanish touched ground. In these photos we're glimpsing the pre-western world, seeing this land before the disaster of "us." The image layering in these photos feels geological, the earth shifting over time, the erosions and eruptions continue to build onto each other.

Loewenthal's photographs resist making statements. The single exposure capturing multiple moments, multiple views, imbues a sense of time elapsing that is the antithesis of the traditional frozen moment type of photography (the antithesis of what Roland Barthes famously called, "fatality," in photographs). These photos are alive and subverting on their own supposed objectivity. They stand in opposition to static perfection, or a patriarchal discourse. They make space for movement and instability. The word that keeps coming up for me is "aleatory"—this word is more commonly used in music, and it describes a state of chance. It implies an unpredictability in a practice that when applied to a photograph, feels unapologetically wild. These photos are not only aleatory in praxis (Loewenthal cannot predict what the image will be as she captures it), but aleatory in effect. They shift and seem possessed of an ongoing-ness. They will never directly tell you what they are. You must participate.

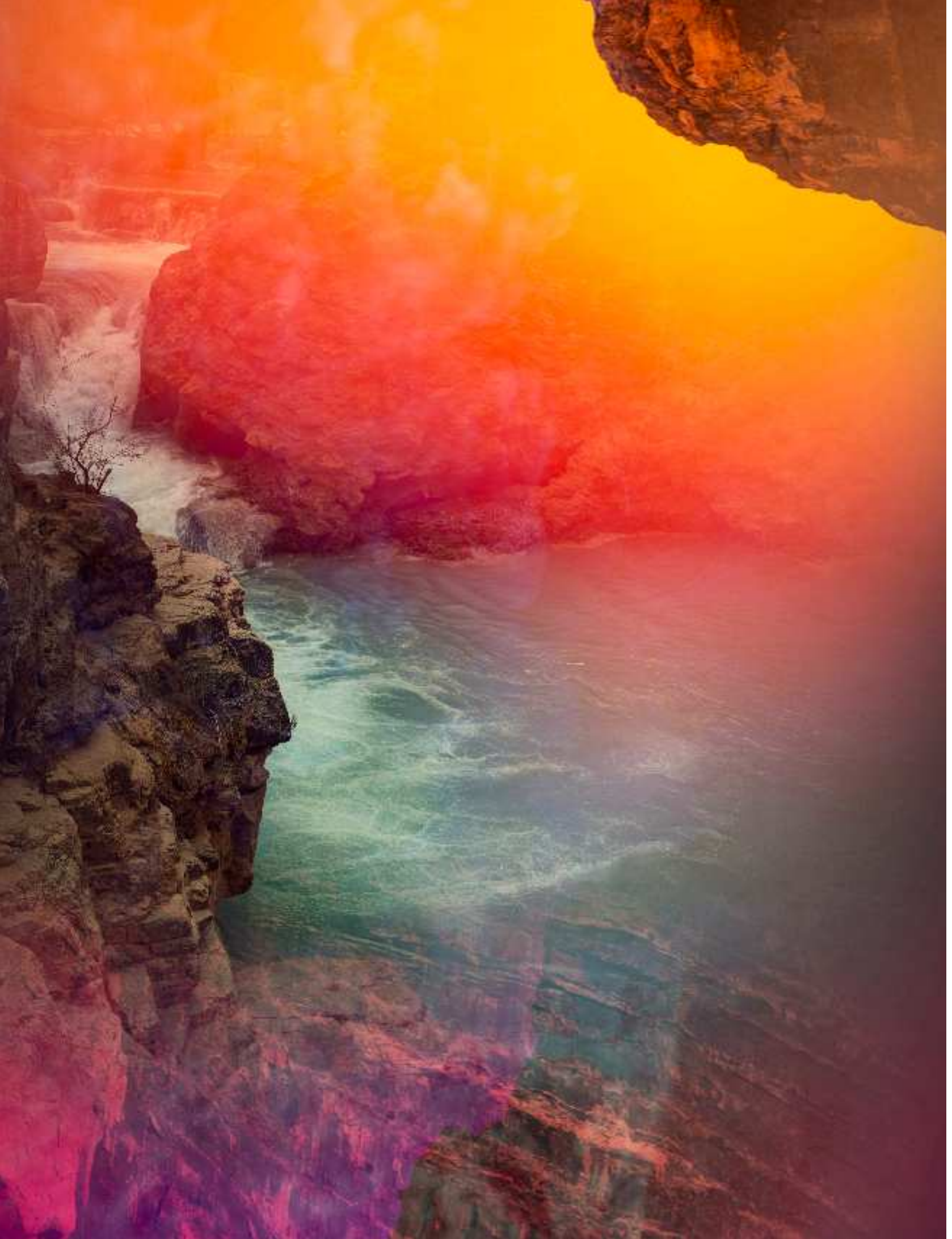
We know water is a finite resource. The Colorado River (and its tributaries like Havasu creek), is drying up. Historically, the river bled into the Sea of Cortez in Mexico, but since the 1990s the water has only made it to the ocean once. We know the echo of violence in the West. For all the polychromatic vitality in her photographs, their mystic purity, there is sadness in Loewenthal's work, as there should be when one is a witness to ephemera and its attendant losses. Like writing, capturing a photograph is a hedge against amnesia, and the remembering of these supernaturally beautiful places is a compassionate act. I do think in Loewenthal's case it is also melancholic, in Julia Kristeva's meaning of the word: "a sorrowful pleasure." When I look at Loewenthal's work, a lament yawns open in my gut: What happened here? And how? I suspect I'll never know, but I am listening to her work for answers.

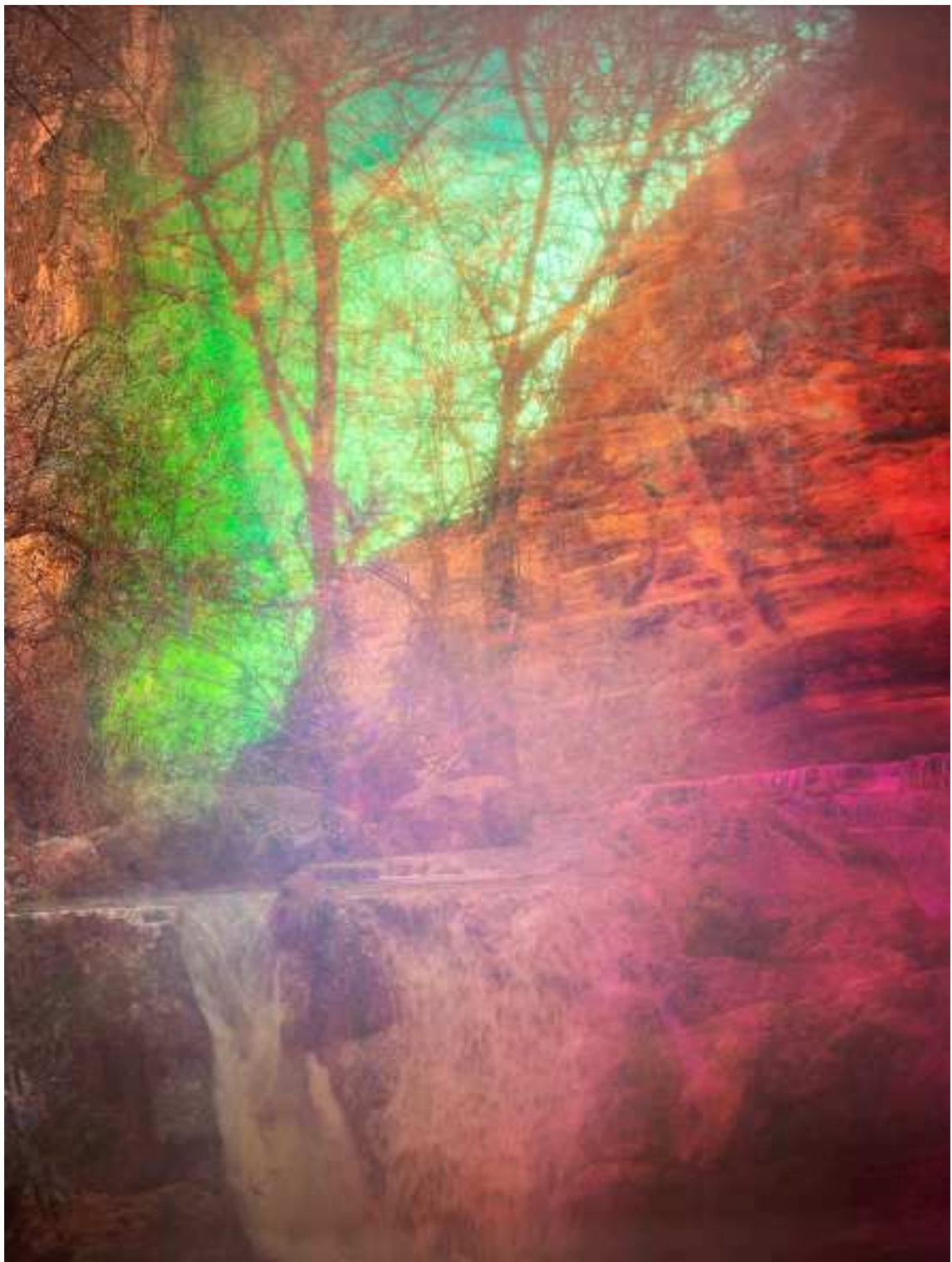
2

Title from the poem
"Photograph" by
Barbara Guest



Little Coyote Canyon, 2020
Archival Pigment Print, 30 × 40 inches





Beaver Canyon, 2020
Archival Pigment Print, 40 × 30 inches





AT LEAST PEOPLE ARE TALKING ABOUT IT.

Ann Friedman

A few weeks ago, I met a friend's sister who was visiting from Salem, Oregon. When I asked her about life under the heat dome, she responded that at least people are talking about it. This winter, when a rare ice storm knocked out the power in Oregon for more than a week, it barely made national headlines. Maybe because Texas was going through its own rare ice storm and subsequent outage at the time. Maybe because it's impossible to keep up with the pace of destruction.

How many climate emergencies am I missing every single week? I wondered. And can it even still be called an emergency if it's normal, expected, just one in a series of violent disasters? I thought of last summer's derecho in Iowa—another devastating, localized weather event that was a national news blip. A derecho is the climate version of the big battle scene in a Marvel movie, blending hurricane-force winds with several tornadoes at once, plus torrential rain. It tore a straight line through Cedar Rapids on August 10 last year, ripping up houses and trees and power lines as it went.

This particular event was more than a headline to me because my dear friend Bridget lives there. Exactly a year ago today, she was texting me from her car—the only place she could charge her phone—on her third day without power. Her husband and kid went to stay with relatives, but she is an essential worker and couldn't leave. On the 15th, with every business in town still shuttered, she was living on stale bread, cucumbers from the garden, a bag of chex mix. On August 18, she told me “I'm so tired of dragging tree limbs to the curb.” On the 19th, the same day I finally found a local pizza place that had reopened and would deliver to her, the power came back on.

For months, she said, everything smelled like sawdust as 669,000 felled trees were slowly chainsawed

Originally published
on August 13, 2021 in
The Ann Friedman
Weekly newsletter



Hualapai Canyon, 2020
Archival Pigment Print, 30 × 40 inches



Watahomigie Point, 2020
Archival Pigment Print, 30 × 40 inches

and cleared away. The resulting woodchips and sawdust killed much of the grass and plants they blanketed. The insurance money ran out fast. The FEMA funding never showed up. People who were already on the margins are struggling even more, living with even less. Even for those who can afford it, it's nigh impossible to rebuild: Contractors are overbooked, and building materials are scarce thanks to Covid supply chain issues. This blazing summer feels even hotter with 70% of the city's trees gone. And yet.

"I feel really self centered even talking about it," she told me this week. "It was a really scary event, but at the same time I feel like I shouldn't even dwell on it because everyone else is suffering." Whirling fire tornadoes in Northern California. Siberia in flames. Floods in Nebraska; even worse flooding in northwest Turkey and Hubei province, China. A tropical storm brewing off the coast of Florida. Take your pick of horrors from the "Related Articles" sidebar.

The IPCC report that garnered so many headlines this week arches over these devastating local disasters to present a single, doom-laced narrative. "You'll learn the world is ending, and you will not know who to blame," writes Emily Atkin. Well, you'll learn humans are to blame. But you knew that already. Just as you already knew that humans—different humans than the ones to blame, it should be noted—are to suffer. Are suffering already in the smoke-choked skies and hip-high waters.

I'm squinting into the middle distance, trying to find the space between disasters that are too small to matter and a report that is too big to comprehend. That middle distance is the only place I think I'll find a sense of hope and resolve rather than resignation and despair. What is possible after the power's finally back on, but before total and permanent doom sets in? I don't know. At least people are talking about it.









“The history of landscape photography is rife with men behind cameras attempting to offer the definitive view of a particular land feature. (Think of Ansel Adams’ iconic images of Half Dome and Carleton Watkins’ famous compositions of Yosemite.) This kind of image-making seeks to capture, as in “possess,” an objective version of the natural world that does not (and has never) existed. As a woman seeking to reimagine the genre of landscape photography, my work overlaps multiple vantage points and shifts colors into oversaturated hues, exposing the fallacy of a single objective view and offering a rich, sublime subjectivity in its place that is faithful to the lived complexity of human-and-land interactions. Each of my images is a single-exposure, in-camera composition that utilizes special optics I developed. The result is not a “made-up” image, but rather one that reflects the truth of countless multiplicities: the human capacity for intimacy with land; our connection to a reality that is not merely factual but also arises from emotion and imagination; and our longing for wild, transformative experiences within and without the psyche.”

—Terri Loewenthal



Beaver Falls, 2020
Archival Pigment Print, 56 × 42 inches

EXHIBITION INDEX



Havasus Falls, 2020
Archival Pigment Print
40 × 30 inches - Edition of 3 + 2 AP
64 × 48 inches - Edition of 3 + 2 AP



Hualapai Canyon, 2020
Archival Pigment Print
30 × 40 inches - Edition of 3 + 2 AP
42 × 56 inches - Edition of 3 + 2 AP



Watahomigie Point, 2020
Archival Pigment Print
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HAVASUPAI DONATION INFO

A portion of proceeds from the sale of these works will be donated directly to the Havasupai Tribe.

From their COVID-19 Relief Fund page on [gofundme.com](https://www.gofundme.com):

The Havasupai Reservation is located in the bottom of the Grand Canyon and is the most remote reservation in the lower 48. The village of Supai, where 426 of the 769 Havasupai Tribal Members live, is accessible only by foot, horseback, or helicopter. An additional 25 Tribal Members live in the satellite community of Supai Camp, a historic and continuous settlement of the Havasupai People located within their aboriginal territory in what is now known as the Grand Canyon National Park. Roughly 75 percent of the jobs on the Havasupai Reservation are tied to the tourism economy, and this economy is fragile with roughly 15 percent unemployment. Roughly 15 percent of the community is elderly, and many are diabetic or asthmatic, and thus particularly vulnerable to Coronavirus.

Due to the rapid spread of Coronavirus and COVID-19 in the United States and Arizona, the Tribe has had to temporarily suspend tourism within the Reservation in order to protect Tribal Members from the spread of this pandemic. Thus, the tourism revenues the Tribe relies upon to run its government, and its Tribal Members depend upon to feed their families and their animals, has been disrupted.

Prevention is paramount because the Tribe does not have a permanent doctor or nurse on the Reservation, and they do not have a single ventilator or hospital bed. With such a small Tribe, the spread of this disease within the Canyon and Supai Camp could be devastating to the Tribal community and to the continued viability of the Havasupai People. Any contribution will help and will be greatly appreciated by the Tribe and the Havasupai People.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Terri Loewenthal has exhibited at diverse venues including Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (San Francisco, CA), Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (Berkeley, CA), San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art (San Jose, CA) and Booth Western Art Museum (Cartersville, GA). Her work is included in many collections, public and private, including the City of San Francisco, McEvoy Foundation for the Arts, Fidelity Investments, Facebook and Instagram. She has been featured in many publications including *Aperture*, *Harper's* and *Wired*. She is also founder of The Chetwood, a residency program that provides housing for artists visiting the Bay Area, allowing them to create lasting community with supportive peer networks outside of typical art-making structures. Loewenthal is a frequent collaborator with many Bay Area arts organizations including Creative Growth (Oakland, CA) and has been an active musician for over a decade; her bands Call and Response, Rubies and Shock have performed extensively nationally and internationally. Terri has a Bachelor of Arts from Rice University in Houston, Texas and is originally from Washington, D.C. and South Florida.

ABOUT THE GALLERY

Eleanor Harwood Gallery opened September 2006 in the Mission District and is now located in San Francisco's premier gallery complex, the Minnesota Street Project. The gallery specializes in work with complex craft and concept, focused on painting, drawing, sculpture, textiles and photography by emerging to mid-career artists. The roster includes artists that are represented in major American and European collections. The gallery actively promotes and encourages career growth for represented artists.

Havasu Falls

September 11–October 30, 2021

Eleanor
Harwood
Gallery

Book typeset in Arizona Flare by
Dinamo type foundry

Design by
Brankica Harvey

Printed by
Edition One Books

Installation photographs by
Shaun Roberts