

# Survey of Work by Renowned Photographer Scott McFarland

Vancouver Art Gallery



Scott McFarland, *View of Vale of Health, Looking Towards Hampstead (edition 3/5)*, 2007. Ink jet print, 69 x 108 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Regen Projects, Los Angeles.

October 3, 2009

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October 3, 2009 – January 3, 2010

## Vancouver Art Gallery

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The Vancouver Art Gallery will present a major exhibition of work by Scott McFarland, the renowned Canadian photographer whose images challenge the fundamental idea of what a photograph can be. On view from October 3, 2009 to January 3, 2010, the exhibition, *Scott McFarland*, is comprised of more than 60 rigorously composed large-scale photos produced over the past seven years, including 14 works presented for the first time.

“Over the past twelve years, Scott McFarland has produced a significant body of work that has been widely exhibited in North America and Europe and has positioned him as a prominent figure in the current generation of artists working with photography,” said Vancouver Art Gallery director Kathleen Bartels. “His subtly manipulated images brilliantly reflect his

personal experience of selected landscapes over multiple visits, challenging the commonly held notion that photographs are limited to the representation of isolated moments in time.”

Embracing techniques of digital manipulation, McFarland's strikingly beautiful landscapes are composites of numerous photos, seamlessly stitched and layered to create exquisitely detailed large-scale works. Positioning his camera in a single spot, he rotates it slowly, taking numerous photos of sections of the same location over long periods, sometimes up to a year or more. He then uses a digital photo editor to combine multiple exposures into extremely sharp and detailed images that appear at first glance to be created in the single click of the shutter. Questioning the assumption that photographs represent decisive moments, the artist's images promote the medium's ability to depict complex realities of space and the passage of time.

“Scott McFarland's landscape photographs depict natural environments transformed by humans to suit their desire for leisure, rest and contemplation,” said Grant Arnold, Audain Curator of British Columbia Art. “Often making reference to the work of artists such as John Constable and Johann Erdmann Hummel, his images propose a parallel between the transformation of nature by human hand and the choices implicit in the act of making a photo.”

For his images, McFarland is drawn to landscapes where the environment is tamed by the whims of humanity. In his compositions of these quasi-natural spaces, the human factor is a metaphor for the photographic process and the necessary selections and omissions that must be made when creating an image. Landscapes included in the exhibition include the artist's photographs of private gardens in Vancouver's posh west side; the Huntington Botanical Gardens in San Marino, California; public spaces and the zoo in Berlin, Germany; Hampstead Heath, a large pastoral park in central London; and rustic scenes from southern Ontario.

Although his extraordinarily crisp landscapes seem flawless initially, further inspection reveals subtle abnormalities – foliage and flowers which blossom at different times of the season are pictured in the same environment or shadows place the sun at a wide variety of angles within the same frame. By creating these intentional inconsistencies the artist undermines traditional ideas of the photographic image and how it represents the world.

Scott McFarland divides his time between Vancouver and Toronto and exhibits his work internationally. He was featured as one of three artists in the Museum of Modern Art's *New Photography 2007*, an exhibition of work by the most important new photo-based artist. Recent solo exhibitions include shows at Monte Clark Gallery in Toronto and Vancouver, Regen Projects in Los Angeles and Union Gallery in London. McFarland's work is also included in many collections, including the Museum of Modern Art; K21, Düsseldorf; Centro de Arte Salamanca, Spain; the Albright-Knox Museum, Buffalo; and the Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

*Scott McFarland* is organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery and curated by Grant Arnold, the Audain curator of British Columbia Art.

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