

DOLBY CHADWICK GALLERY

Barbara Vaughn

Uncharted Waters

November 2 — December 2, 2017

Dolby Chadwick Gallery is pleased to announce “Uncharted Waters,” an exhibition of new work by Barbara Vaughn, on view from November 2 to December 2. Over the past five years, Vaughn has explored abstraction and different modes of seeing by photographing harbors, lagoons, and canals in locations across the world, from Greece to California. Each split-second, closely cropped capture of the surface of a given body of water—and its consequent reflections—features elliptical and biomorphic forms, undulating movement, and an often bold color palette. The subject matter is not immediately recognizable as water, let alone the natural world.

The works in “Uncharted Waters” utilize these same processes, but incorporate narrative elements that furnish them with a new and urgent subtext. Vaughn describes these photographs as her response to the current political landscape and to a changing national mood. Together, they communicate the seismic shifts of the past year, with each individual work speaking to a specific issue at stake. To underscore this lost-at-sea climate, portions of the show are installed on top of nautical charts that span the gallery walls.

The unpredictability and volatility of the contemporary moment is shown to be literally in the water in *Turbulence*, a polyptych from 2017. Here, jagged and highly charged forms, created by a wind-abraded surface, are in stark contrast to Vaughn’s typically smooth, fluid oscillations. Like electrical currents, the photograph’s vibrating lines surge through our bodies, signaling a changing tide.

Topical issues are addressed in works such as *Fake News* (2017), in which the viewer is immediately confronted by bold white lines that vertically twist and snake. Underneath this ostensibly highlighted visual information, however, is a shadowy undercurrent comprising gray and blue forms. This image asks us to consider the relationship between what is immediately thrown into focus, and what is actually occurring below the surface. Other issues are taken up by *Mexican Wall* (2017), which features a diverse suite of color blocks representing locations around the world—a reference to the immigration debate—and *Pride* (2017), whose palette evokes the rainbow flag adopted by the LGBT community.

Environmental degradation is the mainspring of the “Marine Debris” series, which offers a complicated tableau of the beautiful and the tragic. Vaughn explains how she previously avoided shooting trash in the water, waiting for it to float out of her frame before clicking the shutter. In this series, she boldly embraces this detritus in an effort to document such noxious intrusions—and our offending role—in an otherwise beautiful convergence of water, wind, and light. A percentage of proceeds from the sale of this series will be donated to ocean-conservation organizations.

Water, Vaughn’s chosen subject matter, speaks to us all, sounding an alarm. By shoring up our convictions, and our exasperations, it prompts a call to action.

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Barbara Vaughn was born in 1960, in Philadelphia, PA. She earned her BA from Princeton University and later studied fine art photography at the International Center of Photography in New York. Vaughn has photographed leading figures in the entertainment, business, and art worlds, and her work has appeared in high-profile books and periodicals such as the New York Times, Time, Vanity Fair, Vogue, and Art in America. Her fine art has been exhibited in galleries across the United States as well as abroad. This will be Vaughn's third solo exhibition at the Dolby Chadwick Gallery.