



THE MYSTICAL LANDSCAPE IN THE DIGITAL AGE

🕒 April 16, 2015 📁 ART, z 📍 Sabeena Khosla

We recently checked out **Los Ojos**, a new art space in Bushwick. While their current group photography show is small, it showcases some pretty big talent from artists Mark Dorf and Chris Mottalini. In divergent ways, Dorf and Mottalini have constructed photographs that reflect the sublime in an understated capacity. Both do so by focusing on landscapes that allow a spiritual

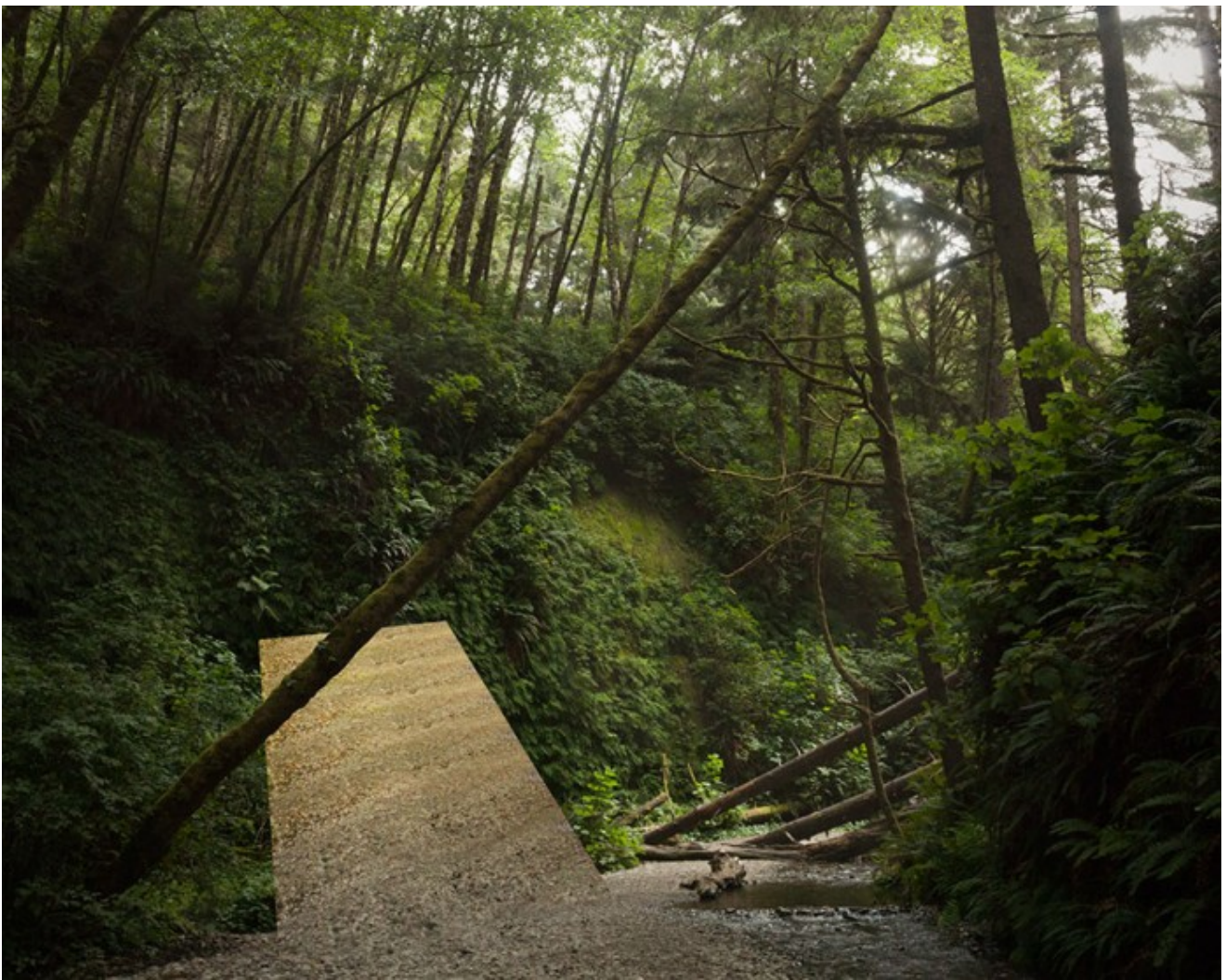


presence to take shape in the artificial.

Mark Dorf overlays and incorporates digital constructions into photographs he takes of natural landscape. His work has taken him all over the world, which has allowed him to explore the harmony between digital technology and nature. Rather than fret about technology hindering our experience of the world around us, Dorf looks for ways to depict how nature can mesh with technology. He knows “digital technology is here to stay” so rather than fight it, he works to harmonize our fascination with landscapes with the technologies we are accustomed to.

His series *//_PATH* uses raw data from 3D scans of objects in the landscapes he photographs, such as rocks, dirt, and plants. In other words, instead of a series of scans making the photograph something we can easily recognize, it is “the raw, non-manipulated or refined mesh.” However, it still retains a connection to realized landscape. And what’s more, the colors and the way he merges the different sets of scans create dreamlike, mystical scenes. As Dorf puts it, “[landscape] is the oldest set of symbols that we as a collective human species know and I think that we will forever, in some way perhaps not directly, return to the landscape for inspiration.”





Meanwhile, Chris Mottalini paid a visit to Thailand a few years back and was immediately drawn to both urban and rural landscapes. In *NightLights*, currently on display at Los Ojos, the photographs retain a haunting quality as he captures street lamps at nighttime. He is looking to portray “what happens when these strangely, unintentionally sculptural light sources interact with the sweltering, color-saturated tropical night.” The bright white of the lamps provide the only source of light in the photographs and the result gives them a ghostly presence, underscored by the omission of individuals.





This is further explored in his other two collections from Thailand: *BackStreets* and *PlantLife*. The former gives viewers a chance to see Bangkok without the swarm of people, and the latter

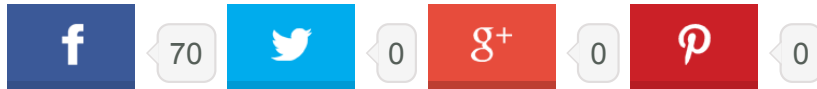


transforms the local vegetation into what Mottalini calls “natural architecture.” Taking people out of the composition is a recurring technique of Mottalini’s and a constant choice of Dorf’s: by removing people, their landscapes take on a bodily, surreal form. The artists ask us to contemplate not how we live in the world necessarily but where we inhabit and what can be gained from our locales on a spiritual level.

Their work is on display at **Los Ojos** until April 19th. To view more of their pieces, click **here** and **here**.

WORDS BY **Sabeena Khosla**

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