

Ville Kansanen

## FUTURE PRIMITIVE

March 02 – April 13, 2024



Marshall Gallery is pleased to present a solo exhibition of contemporary Finnish artist Ville Kansanen. Comprised of enigmatic photography, sculpture and video installation made from the barren lakebeds of California, Kansanen’s physical practice alludes to a history of primitive art and celestial reverence. *Future Primitive* marks the artist's first collaboration with the gallery and first solo exhibition in California.

In his recent work, Ville Kansanen uses our most ubiquitous visual medium, photography, anachronistically as if it were a cave painting or a megalith, activating primitive installations of wood, sand, rock, and twine. Through this process, he creates and explores a “*space for the imagination*”, what he often refers to as a *superspace* where time is irrelevant. “*In my work, photography is a proxy for a transcended physical reality. A place where matter is rendered translucent and blurred; where spans of time are merged into single moments.*” In a process that echoes a primordial unity with nature, Kansanen creates earthworks that are often activated by the horizon and the time-expanding capabilities of his camera.

The front gallery displays select works from *NUMEN* (2015-2021), a series of photography, video, and installation-based land art intended to simulate and interact with natural phenomena revered by our early ancestors. In *NUMEN*, alignments and installations are made within this exploratory space and the resulting photographs become “*explicit portrayals of the supernatural, projecting myths onto perceptual reality.*” These spaces

take on a surreal or even hallucinatory nature in time-based and multiple exposure works that are created at night in the pitch-black vastness of his desert studio. The back gallery, transformed into a nocturnal space, includes additional photographic and video works showing constructions that appear as some form of ancient machine made for praising the stars or tracking lunar movements.

Among the two-dimensional pieces on view are sculptural works including *'Land Reformation'* (2024); Executed for the first time, an installation designed as a communal ritual where gallery visitors cast dry lakebed sand onto water to create new land, mimicking the act of world creation throughout the exhibition. In an age of all-consuming screen-based technophilia, there is something quietly alluring about Kansanen's humble use of earthen materials and their intentional arrangements within the landscape. The captivating aesthetics of his work is, perhaps, a result of the fact that they provoke more questions than provide answers. The meaning of each construction is left to the viewer's imagination as if one had just stumbled upon some ancient ritual site sandblasted by time. An array of marks that signify human presence, but the purpose of which is fleeting.

Ville Kansanen (b.1984) is a Finnish multidisciplinary artist based in California. He works with photography, video, installation, sculpture and land art. His work has been featured in several print and online publications; such as American Photo Magazine, GUP Magazine, SFAQ and Diffusion Magazine. Ville's awards include a Hopper Prize and a Lucie Award. His first monograph was published by Datz Press in 2022 followed by an exhibition at the Datz Museum of Art, South Korea. He has exhibited internationally with non-profit institutions and private galleries.

Image: Ville Kansanen, *Stars/Moon #8*, 2019. Archival pigment print.