

CHRIS McCAW

b. 1971, Daly City, CA
Based in Pacifica, CA



Artist portrait courtesy of J. Paul Getty Museum

BIOGRAPHY

Chris McCaw has been getting his hands wet in the darkroom from the age of 13, and since then he has been unable separate his personal life from his photographic life. In a constant state of production of photographic work from that early age, he continues to be excited about the medium. The early years involved self taught explorations in skateboarding/ zine /punk scenes with a fisheye lens and Tri-X through the mid-late 80's. After high school he learned everything he could about photography. Finally he fell in love with the simplicity of large format cameras, and in 1992 got his first 4"x5". The following year he fell in love with the platinum/palladium printing process and even larger cameras. After working the boundaries of analogue photographic mediums with his *Sunburn* project, Chris continues to rethink traditional use of photographic materials such as his work with instant pack films. Still building his own cameras, he is currently manipulating the mechanics of how cameras record time.

ABOUT THE WORK

Over nearly two decades, California-based artist Chris McCaw has perfected an inventive technique of exposing gelatin silver papers in camera, creating other-worldly, one-of-a-kind landscapes that uniquely trace and sometimes re-interpret the sun's movement. In his iconic "Sunburn" and "Heliograph" pieces, prolonged exposures burn and scar the photographic paper as the sun is magnified by his custom-built camera apertures. A balancing act between science and art takes place as McCaw's compositions must account for the season, weather, and the earth's rotation to create his elegantly sliced vistas. The result is an ongoing body of work that anchors his process in the history of photography earning international exhibitions and notable placement in public and private collections.



- SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2024
 - Marking Time, Marshall Gallery, Santa Monica (Getty PST Exhibition)
- 2023
 - Into the Sun, Datz Museum of Art, South Korea
- 2018
 - New Works, Candela Gallery, Richmond, VA
- 2017
 - Time and Tides, Haines Gallery, San Francisco, CA
- 2016
 - Direct Positive, Yossi Milo Gallery, New York, NY
- 2012
 - Marking Time, Yossi Milo Gallery, New York, NY
- 2011
 - Ride into the Sun, Stephen Wirtz Gallery, San Francisco, CA
- 2010
 - Sunburned, Stephen Wirtz Gallery, San Francisco, CA
- 2008
 - New work from the Sunburn Project, Michael Mazzeo Gallery, NY
 - Sunburn, SF Camerawork, San Francisco, CA
 - Sunburns, Duncan Miller Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
- 2003
 - Powerhouse, Family Farm and Travelogue, Image/Imatge Gallery, Orthez, FR

- RECENT GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2023
 - Touch the Sun, Marshall Gallery, Santa Monica, CA
 - Ansel Adams in Our Time, De Young Museum, San Francisco, CA
- 2022
 - Time's Relentless Melt, Princeton University Art Museum, Princeton, NJ
- 2021
 - Ansel Adams in Our Time, Portland Art Museum, Portland, OR
- 2020
 - Ansel Adams in Our Time, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AR
 - ONE: An Exhibition of Unique Objects, Transformer Station, Cleveland, OH
 - Photography to the Test of Abstraction, FRAC Normandie Rouen, Rouen, France; Micro-Onde, Centre d'art contemporain de l'Onde, Vélizy-Villacoublay, France; and Centre Photographie D'Île De-France, Pontault-Combault, France

- 2019
 - A Cure For Everything, Haines Gallery, San Francisco, CA
 - Fundamentals, Black Box Projects, London, UK
 - Painting with Light, Yossi Milo Gallery, New York, NY
 - The Polaroid Project, Musee McCord, Montreal
 - The Sheltering Sky, Palo Alto Art Center, Palo Alto, CA
 - The Polaroid Project, National Museum of Singapore, Singapore
- 2018
 - Ansel Adams in Our Time, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA
 - The Polaroid Project, C/O Berlin, Berlin
 - The Polaroid Project, Museum fur Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, Hamburg
 - 10,000 Fahrenheit, San Francisco arts Commission, San Francisco, CA
 - New Territory: Landscape Photography Today, Denver Art Museum, Denver, CO
 - Way Bay 2, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley, CA
 - The Polaroid Project, WestLicht Museum for Photography, Vienna
- 2017
 - The Basilisk, Nicodim Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
 - The Polaroid Project, Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, TX
 - Sea Views, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, Netherlands
 - Low Fidelity, Center for Photographic Art, Carmel, CA
 - Phenomenon, Bolinas Art Museum, Bolinas, CA
- 2016
 - A Matter of Memory: Photography as Object in the Digital Age, George Eastman Museum, Rochester, NY
 - Retro-spective: Analog Photography in a Digital World, MOCA, Jacksonville
 - The Sun Placed in the Abyss, Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, OH
 - Berkeley Eye: Perspectives on the Collection, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley, CA
 - I Am the Sun, Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL
 - In the Digital Age, George Eastman Museum, Rochester, NY
 - Touch the Sky: Art and Astronomy, Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY
 - This is a Photograph, Penland Gallery, Penland School of Crafts, Penland, NC
 - Defying Darkness: Photography at Night, Museum of Photographic Arts, San Diego, CA
 - Look Inside: New Photography Acquisitions, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas, Austin, TX
- 2015
 - Photography and the Scientific Spirit, John Michael Kohler Arts Center, Sheboygan, WI
 - The Memory of Time: Contemporary Photographs at the National Gallery of Art, Acquired with the Alfred H. Moses and Fern M. Schad Fund, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC
 - Light, Paper, Process: Reinventing Photography, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA
- 2014
 - Modern Alchemy: Experiments in Photography, Heckscher Museum of Art, Huntington, NY
 - After Ansel Adams, Museum of Photographic Arts, San Diego, CA

- 2013
 - Reality Check, Bakalar & Paine Galleries, Massachusetts College of Art and Design, Boston, MA
 - With a Trace: Photographs of Absence, Akron Art Museum, Akron, OH
 - Currents: Photographs from the Collection of Allen Thomas Jr., Contemporary Art Museum of Raleigh, NC
 - Landmark: The Fields of Photography, Somerset House Trust, London, UK
 - Light Sensitive: Photographic Works from North Carolina Collections, Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, Durham, NC
- 2011
 - Sun Works, Berkeley Art Museum, Berkeley, CA
 - Bending the Light, Oakland International Airport Exhibition, Oakland, CA
 - Heavens: Photographs of the Sky and Cosmos, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO
 - Seeing is Knowing: the Universe, Perlman Teaching Museum, Carleton College, Northfield, MN
 - Out of the Dark Room, Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, Ireland
 - Pure Photography, Post Production and Mixed Media, Phoenix Art Museum, Phoenix, AZ
 - California Continued: New Approaches in West Coast Photography, Smith Anderson North, San Anselmo, CA
 - EcoArchive: Meditations on Time and Nature, Intersection for the Arts, San Francisco, CA
 - Open Season, Flanders Gallery, Raleigh, NC
- 2010
 - The Edge of Vision: Abstraction in Contemporary Photography, Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ
 - Redisplay of the Photography Collection, Victoria & Albert Museum, London
 - Past Forward: Marking Time in Recent Photography, Honor Fraser Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
 - Exposed: Today's Photography/Yesterday's Technology, San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art, CA
 - Elemental, photo-eye Gallery, Santa Fe, NM
 - Edges of Light: Explorations of the Photographic Process, ArtsBenicia, Benicia, CA
 - State of Mind: A California Invitational, Museum of Photographic Arts, San Diego, CA
 - An Autobiography of the San Francisco Bay Area Part 2: The Future Lasts Forever, SF Camerawork, San Francisco, CA
 - Burning Desire, Michael Mazzeo Gallery, New York, NY
- 2009
 - Surface Tension: Contemporary Photographs from the Collection, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY
 - The Edge of Vision: Abstraction in Contemporary Photography, Aperture Gallery, NY
 - 10 × 10 × 10: An Invitational Exhibition, San Francisco Arts Commission Gallery, San Francisco, CA
 - Transmutations, Michael Mazzeo Gallery, NY
 - Landmark, Haines Gallery, San Francisco, CA
 - Keeping Time, Photographic Resource Center, Boston, MA

- SELECTED PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, TX
Berkeley Art Museum, Berkeley, CA
Center for Creative Photography, Tucson, AZ
Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, OH
Crocker Art Museum Sacramento, CA
Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, VA
Davison Art Center, Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT
George Eastman House International Museum of Photography, Rochester, NY
Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX
J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA
Library of Congress, Washington D.C.
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY
Monterey Museum of Art, Monterey, CA
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX
Museum of Photographic Arts, San Diego, CA
National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC
Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO
Nevada Museum of Art, Reno, NV
North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, NC
Oakland Museum of California, Oakland, CA
Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, PA
Portland Art Museum, Portland, OR
Princeton University Art Museum, Princeton, NJ
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Santa Barbara, CA
Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC
National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC
University of Oregon, Eugene, OR
Victoria and Albert Museum, London, England
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY

- RECENT SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 2022
 - McCaw, Chris. "Cirkut." Datz Press 2022
- 2020
 - Brandt, Mathew; McCaw, Chris; Riepenhoff, Meghann. "Element." Yoffy Press 2020
- 2019
 - Campany, David. "On Photographs." Thames and Hudson 2019
 - Plethora Magazine, Issue Number 9 2019
- 2017
 - "Universe: Exploring the Astronomical World." Phaidon 2017
- 2016
 - Knoblauch, Loring. "Chris McCaw, Direct Positive @ Yossi Milo." Collector Daily 28 March 2016.
 - Latimer, Bronwen. "Artistry and chemistry: A new way to look at the old practices of photography." Washington Post. 28 March 2016.
 - Bourland, Ian. "Critics' Picks." Artforum 18 March 2016.
 - Newman, Clemency. "A Heliocentric Fixation." Guide to Unique Photography 48. 2016.
- 2015
 - Harren, Natilee. "Light, Paper, Process: Reinventing Photography," Artforum. September 2015
 - Harlan, Becky. "When the Sun Burns a Hole in Your Photo." National Geographic: Proof 18 June 2015
 - Ollman, Leah. "'Light, Paper, Process' an inventive subversion of photography," Los Angeles Times 1 May 2015
 - Adamek, Pauline. "'Light, Paper, Process: Reinventing Photography' at the Getty – Los Angeles photo exhibition review." Arts Beat LA 30 April 2015
 - Schoener, Allon. "Light, Paper, Process: Reinventing Photography at The Getty." Cultural Weekly 30 April 2015
 - Wallis, Brian. "'Light, Paper, Process: Reinventing Photography.'" ArtForum 2015
 - Riefe, Jordan. "Lights! Camera! Bodily Fluids! Photographers bend the rules." The Guardian 17 April 2015
 - Keats, Jonathon. "Darkroom, Redux? Chemistry Bests Megapixels at the Getty's New Photography Show." Forbes 14 April 2015
 - Dillon, Stephen. "Photographer Chris McCaw Uses the Sun to Burn Its Own Image." Artsy 27 February 2015



- SELECTED PRESS

- [As A.I. Becomes Harder to Detect, Photography is Having a Renaissance, New York Times, 2024](#)
- [Back to the Future, Foam Magazine, 2018](#)
- [Rematerializing Photography, Leah Ollman, Art in America, May 2017](#)
- [National Geographic's blog-PROOF June 2015](#)
- [LA Times, review of "Light, Paper, Process," Lea Ollman, 2015](#)
- [New Yorker, What does a photograph sound like? July 2014](#)
- [New York Times, exhibition review, Ken Johnson, 2012](#)
- [New Yorker, exhibition review, 2012](#)
- [Anne Kelly about publishing the book 10/2012](#)
- [Daily Serving, exhibition review, Allie Haeusslein, 2011](#)
- [Square Cylinder Artist Profile, 2011](#)
- [Photo-Eye Gallery interview with Anne Kelly about the Sunburn series, 2010](#)
- [Story on National Public Radio's \(NPR\) website, 2010](#)
- [New Yorker Exhibition Review, Vince Aletti, 2008](#)
- [Underground Art Galleries, SF Chronicle, 2008](#)
- [Chris McCaw's Scorched Photography, LA Times, 2008](#)
- [LA Times, Lea Ollman, 2008](#)