

SAM SHMITH CHERRY SPRINGS

ARC
ONE

3 NOVEMBER - 5 DECEMBER 2015

OPENING THURSDAY 5 NOVEMBER, 6-8PM



Sam Shmith, *Untitled (Carlisle Drive East 2)*, 2015, pigment print, rag paper, 91.5 x 137 cm.

New York City-based Australian artist Sam Shmith returns to Melbourne this November to present *Cherry Springs*, his sixth solo exhibition and fourth at ARC ONE Gallery. An opening reception will be held Thursday 5 November, 6-8pm.

Cherry Springs continues Shmith's exploration into the modern experience of the sublime, previously explored in his earlier photographic series (including *Plate Glass* (2013), *In Spates* (2011) and *Synthetics* (2009)). Here, the artist draws conceptual parallels to the notion of 'modern winter,' established by the author Adam Gopnik;

*"The world of the safe window and the world of the white wilderness outside — always in the end merge and become one in the modern mind. [...] Winter is hard; the cold does chill [...] and we oppose that threat with the quiet heroism of comfort. Central heating, double paned windows, down coats, heated cars."*¹

Shmith's established visual language, the vehicles and homes which permeate his sublime landscapes, describe this synthesis of experience so integral to his world view;

*"Our envelope, as I have called it, the cultural insulation that separates us from nature, is rather like the window of a lit-up railway carriage at night."*²

Cherry Springs, by extending Gopnik's 'modern winter' beyond the earthly ambit, folds a contemplation of the cosmos into Shmith's evolving thematic focus. In 2013, Shmith made repeat visits to the series' namesake, Cherry Springs State Park, a small 'dark sky preserve' in rural Pennsylvania. The park is centred on an astronomy field, a disused runway, which serves as a campground and 'open planetarium.' There is an amphitheatre, where 'tours of the universe' are conducted nightly, the seats pitched up towards the sky.

While contemplating the stars and the existential truths they present can invoke a feeling of 'apeirophobia' – a fear of the infinite – Cherry Springs State Park, in distinctly American ways, anaesthetises the experience; the cosmos is made into a spectacle, sweetened to the point that we that we can stomach it.

The thirteen works included in this exhibition follow the artist's contemplative journeys as they unfolded from his visits to the park in 2013. The images shift dramatically in perspective; from the earth's surface to the edge of space, from recollected experiences to imagined ones. The function of the work is expansive; Shmith is considering us in the widest possible contexts of time and space, the series is an invitation for us to go with him.



Sam Shmith, *Untitled (Kittinger, descent 2)*, 2015, pigment print, rag paper, 114.5 x 91.5 cm.

Shmith has held six solo exhibitions and has been curated into several group shows, including *Light Works* (the National Gallery of Victoria, 2012) and *Gifted Artists* (the National Gallery of Australia, 2014). His work has been acquired by a number of important public institutions, including the National Gallery of Australia, the National Gallery of Victoria, Parliament House Art Collection, Canberra, Patrick Corrigan Collection, Murray Art Museum, Artbank, Macquarie Group Collection, as well as private collections throughout Australia and the United Kingdom.

Shmith was the winner of the Macquarie Group Emerging Artist Prize in 2012 and the Patrick Corrigan AM Acquisitive Award in 2009. His work was acquired by the Murray Art Museum in their 2010 National Photography Prize. He been a finalist in several prestigious visual arts awards including the Josephine Ulrick & Win Schubert Photography Award (2010, 2011 and 2014) also in the William and Winifred Bowness Photography Prize (2013), the Blake Prize for Religious and Spiritual Art (2013) and the Albury Art Prize (2012).

Shmith has been a recipient of development grants through both the Australia Council for the Arts and Arts Victoria. In 2015, he was offered a Residency Fellow position at the Saltonstall Foundation for the Arts in New York.

For all enquiries, interviews and images please contact ARC ONE Gallery at mail@arc1gallery.com

1. Adam Gopnik, *Winter: Five Windows on the Season*
2. Northrop Frye, *Creation and Recreation*