

LESLIE SACKS CONTEMPORARY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 12, 2012

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Joanne Lefrak: *Treasure Sites*

Exhibition Dates: January 12 – February 23, 2013
Opening Reception: January 12, 5:00pm-7:00pm

Leslie Sacks Contemporary is excited to announce an exhibition of works by Joanne Lefrak entitled *Treasure Sites*. Lefrak, based in Santa Fe, NM, scratches intricate drawings into Plexiglas. When illuminated, the pieces cast shadows onto the wall behind them. Against the wall, these drawings come alive and can suddenly be viewed in stunning, nearly photographic detail.

Lefrak's "plexi-drawings" are rich in detail and borrow much from the school of Photorealism with their painstakingly reproduced visual details. Like the Photorealists, Lefrak starts her process first by capturing images on her camera and then using the photographs as templates for her drawings. The medium of Plexiglas completely transforms the experience of the piece from that of traditional Photorealist work. It removes depth and color to reproduce a purely linear composition. In this way, Lefrak has reinvigorated a classic medium (drawing) through the use of contemporary materials (Plexiglas).

Lefrak's subject matter also merges past with present. Her drawings depict locations that have rich histories. These locales tell stories about the past, revealing memories, mysteries and myths about a place. An island harbors the legend of Blackbeard; a Santa Fe plot of dirt that is revered as holy; and plot of land in New Mexico marks the site of the first atom bomb test. These works speak to the fact that history can be felt, even if it can no longer be seen.

There is more to Lefrak's historical sites than immediately meets the eye, much as there is more to her etchings than one can grasp at first glance. Like these places, the work reveals itself to the viewer slowly through close examination. The drawings themselves cannot be observed, but only seen through their shadows projected against the wall. Devoid of color, the thin sheets of Plexiglas seem to float, hovering, and so take on a haunting, ephemeral quality that mimics their content. The viewer is forced to look through the pieces to view the drawings, rather than look at the etchings directly. Much as the present cannot exist without the past, the etching cannot exist without its shadow and vice versa. They are two parts of one whole.

In *He Will Come Again*, 2012, Lefrak recreates a rocky harbor inlet from the Isles of Shoals. Pirate lore tells the story that Blackbeard abandoned his 14th – and final – wife on one of these islands off of New Hampshire. Promising to come back to collect her, the infamous pirate buried his treasure on the island as well, leaving it as a sign of assurance that he would return. But he did not. Blackbeard was killed in battle shortly thereafter and his wife would die alone on the island. Locals maintain that her ghost still haunts their coves and that she can be heard calling to Blackbeard in the wind. As evidence that this story is true, there is another tale claiming that silver pieces – evidence of pirate treasure – have washed up on the islands' shores.

Black Hole (Inside), 2012, is part of Lefrak's Trinity series, named for the Santa Fe site where the first atomic bomb test took place on July 16, 1945. Decades later, Trinity remains mildly radioactive, making the location a testament to the fact that the past is still present in invisible ways. The events that transpired there affected the world, yet the site is kept off limits save for two days a year, when tourists are allowed to visit. Trinity, appropriate to its name, has therefore become a destination for pilgrimage, and acquired an almost holy quality. *Black Hole* depicts the eerie image of a surplus store in Los Alamos, where objects used in the making of the atomic bomb are sold.

Joanne Lefrak's work has been included in exhibitions at MASS MoCA, Boston; the New Mexico Museum of Art, Santa Fe; and the Center for Contemporary Art, Santa Fe. Her work will be featured in an upcoming 2013 exhibition at the New Mexico Museum of Art, Santa Fe.

Hi resolution jpeg's available upon request