

Prospect and Refuge Series Statement

According to Jay Appleton's theory of prospect and refuge, two of our most basic and deep-rooted needs are for opportunity and shelter. We are attracted to those landscapes or environments that would seem to afford both, and we are wary of those that would seem to withhold either. This plays a role, if an unconscious one, in our experience of the environment and in our aesthetics.

In the piece titled *Prospect*, the combination of the ocean with the studio is a marriage of prospect and refuge and the metaphoric associations of the two. In the case of prospect these associations are adventure, excitement, and a feeling of freedom. For refuge they are safety, comfort, and a looking inwards. Prospect and refuge are not mutually exclusive in a binary sense but they are at times in conflict with each other, and this conflict, to my thinking, is central to much of what we want and work for.

There is a correspondence, for me, between the prospect and refuge conflict and the tension between illusion and materiality that I see as intrinsic to the medium of photography. The latter has long been a subject of my work. By illusion I am referring broadly to the power we invest in photographs to tell us the truth about the world, to be a record of it, to "capture moments," as it is said. By materiality I am referring to the stuff of photographic objects, their actual truths: ink, paper, frame, and physical context.

The tension between illusion and material is exhibited in these works most notably by the different ways in which paper is used to construct images. In the piece titled *Refuge*, for example, the image of the wooded scene was printed onto over 150 pieces of paper and then physically cut and affixed to walls and objects within an architectural space. The room itself was then photographed and the resulting image printed onto a single sheet of photo paper. In the case of the former, the physical properties of paper are acknowledged. In the case of the latter (and this applies to the majority of photographs), everything about the presentation is designed to deny that the paper exists at all. What matters and is emphasized is the illusion, or, if you like, the lie.

To my thinking, these tensions relate not only to how we read images but also to how we experience the world. Materiality, like refuge, refers to what is here and now, what is in front of us, what we can see and touch. Illusion, like prospect, refers to what we would prefer to believe, or, to put it more positively, what we can imagine. Neither, without the other, is quite satisfactory.

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