

RAY MORTENSON: MEADOWLAND

Vintage Prints 1979-1980

September 15 – November 26, 2016



DuPont Chemicals, Linden, 1979



Hudson Generating Station, Jersey City, 1979



Worthington Pump, Harrison, 1980

L. Parker Stephenson Photographs is pleased to announce its representation of Ray Mortenson. This inaugural presentation at the Gallery also marks the first time Mortenson's best known series, *Meadowland* (1979-1980), is exhibited as a group. Vintage prints of most of the thirty-seven images published in Lustrum Press' lauded 1983 book will be on view. Please join us for the **opening reception on Wednesday, September 14th** from **6-8pm** and a book signing of ***Meadowland*** on **Saturday, September 17th** from **11am-1pm**.

Ray Mortenson (b. 1944) has been exploring industrial zones, isolated natural areas, and neglected urban neighborhoods along the metropolitan corridor of the United States' Northeast since the late 1970s. In this early project, spanning 10 months from 1979-1980, Mortenson surveyed the 8,000+ acre marshland located in New Jersey a few miles from New York City. Produced during a vibrant period in American photography, following the landmark *New Topographics* exhibition at the George Eastman House and just prior to John Szarkowski's *American Landscapes* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, this project offers an unguided tour of a borderland which, for over a hundred years, has straddled the complex co-existence of nature and industry.

*Any landscape is composed not only of what lies before our eyes
but what lies within our heads.¹*

Mixing personal observation with the precise detail of the documentary genre, *Meadowland* can now be seen as an historical marker of an economic high altered by the 1970s oil crisis and subsequent shifts in manufacturing and production in the United States. Mortenson's fascination with entropy, neglect and decay is countered by the formal compositions of these exquisite, intimate prints.

The book, *Meadowland*, was one of the last publications by Ralph Gibson's Lustrum Press (1970-1984) which published monographs of then-unknown photographers such as Larry Clark, Mary Ellen Mark and Danny Seymour. Historian Gerry Badger called Lustrum "arguably the best of the small American photobook publishers of the 1970s."

Mortenson's work is included in the permanent collections of the Addison Gallery of American Art; the Art Institute of Chicago; the Canadian Centre for Architecture; the Center for Creative

Photography; the Cleveland Museum of Art; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of the City of New York, among others. He has participated in numerous solo and group exhibitions around the country since 1981.

1. D. W. Meinig, "The Beholding Eye" in *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979.

For additional information or to request images, please contact the Gallery at +1 212 517-8700 or by email at info@lparkerstephenson.nyc