



ARPI AGDERE **PUNCTUM**

AUGUST 8 - SEPTEMBER 20

OPENING RECEPTION **AUGUST 8 7-10 PM**

Haphazard is pleased to present a solo exhibition of photographs by Arpi Agdere titled "Punctum". The body of work presented in this exhibition contains at its core an element that harkens back to a tradition at the origins of photography shared by William Henry Fox Talbot and Mathew Brady: the landscape. While landscape suggests the concerns of pictorialism – that is to make a photograph look like a painting - Agdere's work is reminiscent with the work of other contemporary photographers who are concentrating on what is called the "social landscape". Her images contain distinct signs of a caustic, suburban civilization that seems to be encroaching on the Southern California landscape that Agdere calls home. Two elements are at work in these pictures, first Agdere is a studio artist who uses photography and not a photographer per-se and the second is psychedelics.

We see the photographic chemical effects redolent of an acid drenched psychedelic aesthetic that appears both chaotically random and highly composed. Agdere's interpenetration of the SoCal landscape with psychedelic liquidity suggests a "social landscape" but one in existential crisis. The work seems to be still in its darkroom liquid state – in-media-res – a space both microcosmic and macrocosmic simultaneously; visually they are at the flash point of evaporating into fields of abstract chemical space of Martian reds, acid yellows and purple haze. This creates a sense of contingency and metamorphosis that allows both chance elements, and highly calculated compositional

effects to share the same stage in a strangely collected manner, as if we were viewing the most banal Los Angeles suburb through the eyes of time traveler – perhaps the hero of *La Jetée* still wandering and whose eyes have not yet adjusted to the baking California light of 2015.

In *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes takes Ferdinand Saussure's categories for language and re-applies them to photography in a manner that is succinct, complex and elegant. Studium is the linguistic, political or historical analysis of a photograph that we are all accustomed to reading and Punctum is the aspect of photography that touches one personally and emotionally in ways that perhaps are not analyzable or controllable by reason. Barthes uses the word to "wound" – the Punctum "wounds" you thereby establishes a relationship with you that is intimate - but it is a "wound" that resonates so deeply, or opens up memories and desires that are so physically present that one needs to return to this "wound" and to keep rediscovering what else might lie there.

The black hole that figures prominently in the images owes its origin to early 20th century when photographic negatives were often destroyed by punching a hole through them with a paper puncher and then carefully archived. This strange act was performed on thousands of negatives from the Farm Security Administration that were deemed unfit or not usable by administrators, such as Roy Stryker who supervised the Information Division. Agdere deploys the same "negation" but now treated as a sign – in effect working in counterpoint with the psychedelic colors to create a polyphonic orchestration of signs and images that beautifully take us into the "punctum," that is the title of the exhibition. Agdere's landscape is punctuated with the horror of place and the nostalgia for another. The escape velocity for Agdere seems to be located on the same planet whose landscape is strangely mundane and alien, full of things familiar and strange, and full of wonder and wound.

Bio: Arpi Agdere is an artist whose focus is in the photographic medium. Originally from Turkey, Istanbul, she lives in Los Angeles and received her BFA from Art Center in 2013.

