

The Velocity of Loss

We are thrilled to present John Divola's second solo exhibition at the gallery, *The Velocity of Loss*, featuring part of his ongoing and most recent project at *George Air Force Base (GAFB)*, focused on the abandoned housing complex at the decommissioned military base in Victorville, California—approximately seventy miles from Los Angeles, on the southwestern edge of the Mojave Desert.

At the heart of the exhibition is *Daybreak* (2015–2020), a series of 8x10 inch (20x25 cm) silver gelatin contact prints made at dawn, just as the title suggests. *Daybreak* is the result of Divola's long-term engagement with the GAFB site, much like his earlier series such as *Vandalism* or *Zuma*—though his work at GAFB has surpassed his interventions in Malibu or in abandoned residential properties around Los Angeles. The site also served as the location for other series, including *Dead Mirrors*, *Survey*, *Blue with Exceptions*, *Enso: 36 Right-Handed Circumference Gestures*, *Terminus*, *Voyager*, and a collection of Gigapan photographs.

In *Daybreak*, Divola captures the dynamic interplay between early light and decaying architecture, transforming the remnants of domestic space into poetic meditations on presence, absence, and time. Declared a Superfund Site in 1990 and abandoned in 1992, the buildings in GAFB have been gutted for recyclable copper piping, vandalized by teenagers and co-opted for paintball war games. Each of these interventions layer onto the building's surfaces and add texture to Divola's formal compositions. His own modifications are yet another layer, a meditative response to the shapes and tones of the abandoned spaces.

As he states, "Each photograph represents an index of multiple gestures: the design of the architect, the labor of the builders, the traces of past occupants... my own painting and installations, and ultimately my gestures of selection." These images transcend simple documentation; they are complex artifacts shaped by physical, visual, and emotional interventions within a space marked by time and abandonment. In the work titled *I_2017_4*, Divola materializes this practice with hand-drawn notations directly on the photographed wall—marking the time, date, and circumstances of that particular photograph. Circles indicate the location of sunspots at 8:58 AM, precisely fourteen minutes before the shutter was released at 9:12 AM. These annotations stretch the photograph's temporal boundary, making visible the layers of time that inform the image.

This preoccupation with time—its passage, perception, and emotional resonance—extends beyond photographic technique. Some works in this exhibition raise existential questions at the core of human experience: the fleeting nature of life, the persistence of memory, and our smallness within the vastness of existence. Wall inscriptions such as *Sleep Without Dreams* offer a particularly loaded reflection—suggesting a state where the unconscious mind goes silent. This absence can feel either strangely peaceful or deeply unsettling. *Who Could Love Me* poses another raw, vulnerable question. Over time, these themes feel increasingly personal, growing more present with age and inviting a quiet meditation on time and memory.

Also on view are digital works from *Blue With Exceptions* (2020–2025), presented on a screen and accompanied by soft jazz music. The digital images appear in roughly

chronological order, creating a rhythm that echoes the transformation of the site itself. In this body of work, Divola captures the layers of human and natural intervention—peeling paint, fallen down trees, debris and markings —while also introducing a new dimension: the inclusion of AI-generated imagery.

In these recent works, Divola inserts AI-generated images that contrast with the crumbling rooms. These images appear vibrant, extremely detailed, and verge on the unreal. He primarily uses blue flash lighting, though he occasionally punctuates it with pink or orange—giving the series its title, *Blue With Exceptions*. This gesture heightens the sense of abstraction, transforming walls into planes of color, intensifying the tension between artificial perfection and physical decay. Through this juxtaposition, he reveals the complexity of the medium and embraces its inherent contradictions.

Daybreak and *Blue With Exceptions* ultimately reflect Divola’s commitment to activating the photographic medium as a site of layered engagement—material, emotional, conceptual. His images resist categorization, embracing what he calls “the messy complexity” of photography, where truth resides not in clarity, but in process, gesture, and the intensity of observation.