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John Divola's Exploration of Existential Themes of Isolation and Desire Comes to Yancey Richardson

Photography, Exhibition Announcements



May 29, 2023

Hesper Cane

Throughout his 40-year-long career, **John Divola** incessantly explored photography's conceptual properties and the medium's powers in building perspective. Divola's artistic and psychological experiment with the *Vandalism series*, comprising photographs after he vandalized vacant homes, demonstrated that suggestive

potential. Simultaneously, the series indicated a practice rooted in exploring, traversing, and centering on the aesthetic and existential qualities of the California wilderness.

Yancey Richardson announced an exhibition displaying two iconic series of John Divola from the 1990s – *Isolated Houses* and *Dogs Chasing My Car in the Desert*, which sum up his devotion to the California landscape.



John Divola – 10F15 from the series *Dogs Chasing My Car in the Desert*, 1996-1998

Isolated Houses

Born and educated in California, John Divola devoted much of his focus towards the land itself, and two of his photography series showcased in the exhibition – *Isolated Houses* and *Dogs Chasing My Car in the Desert* – serve as a testament to his **delicate observation often occurring on the road**. Intending to demystify his strategy, John Divola stated:



The desert is not empty. However, it is vacant enough to bestow a certain weight to whatever is present. Add this to a heightened awareness of your own presence and the desert can take on an existential quality.

The sublime John Divola discovered in the desert resulted in a series of photographs titled *Isolated Houses* created in the high desert of Southern California between 1995 and 1998, including the east end of the Morongo Valley Basin, Wonder Valley, and surrounding the town of 29 Palms. Although formally presenting a study in the geometry of the landscape, the images allude to **the magnitude of nature** compared to **the insignificance of human interventions**.



Left: John Divola – N34°08.199' W115°55.170', 1995-1998, from the series *Isolated Houses* / **Right:** John Divola – N34°11.965' W115°54.308', 1995-1998, from the series *Isolated Houses*



Dogs Chasing My Car in the Desert

Isolated Houses prompted the birth of another series started in



1996 when Divola noticed dogs chasing his car back and forth and decided to capture their futile attempts. A motorized 35mm camera and high-speed film produced a series of black and white photographs captured in motion. Reminiscent of the great Eadweard Muybridge whose pioneering work on stop motion photography fundamentally changed art history, Divola's pictures celebrate **the animal's physicality and limitless endurance**. Contrary to Muybridge's experiments conducted in controlled circumstances, Divola executes the series from a moving car, allowing spontaneity to affect the final result.



John Divola – D23F30 from the series Dogs Chasing My Car in the Desert, 1996-1998

John Divola at Yancey Richardson

John Divola earned a B.A. from California State University, Northridge, in 1971 and an MFA from the University of California, Los Angeles, in 1974, where he studied under photographer Robert Heinecken. Since 1988, Divola has been a Professor of Art at the

University of California, Riverside. Reflecting on the work of an artist such as John Divola, a widely-exhibited artist who was featured in two Whitney Biennials and had three retrospectives arranged thus far – at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, and the Benton Museum of Art, California – solidifies the timelessness of his work. The capacity of Divola's photographs to entrance audiences never seems to fade, and one of the reasons lies in **the universality of his themes unencumbered by specifiers.**

The exhibition devoted to John Divola's series *Isolated Houses* and *Dogs Chasing My Car in the Desert* at Yancey Richardson in New York will be on view **from June 1st until July 7th, 2023.**

Featured image: John Divola – D24F17 from the series *Dogs Chasing My Car in the Desert*, 1996-1998. All images are courtesy of the artist and Yancey Richardson.

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John Divola

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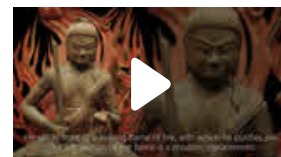
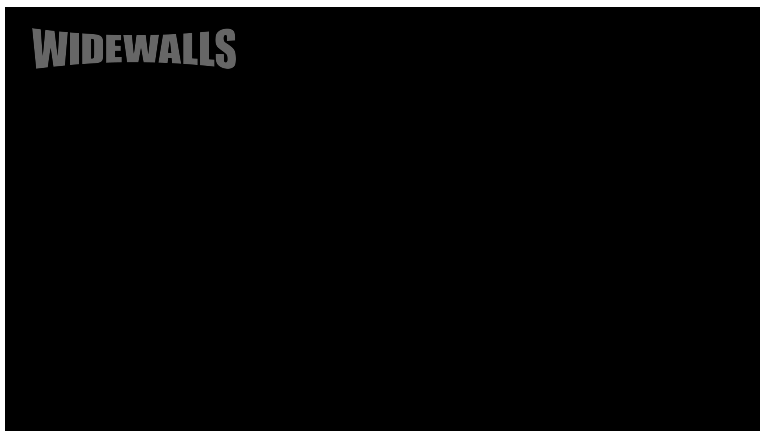
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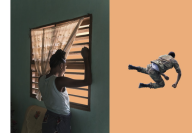


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