

Mitch Epstein
Old Growth
 September 5 – October 19, 2024



Mitch Epstein's newest series of photographs, *Old Growth*, continues the artist's career-long exploration of American culture and the nation's fraught relationship with the natural world. The exhibition will be on view at Yancey Richardson from September 5 through October 19, 2024. An opening reception will be held on September 12, from 6 – 8pm, with an artist walkthrough at 5:30pm. Following the exhibition at Yancey Richardson, *Old Growth* will be on view in a solo show at Gallerie d'Italia in Turin, Italy from October 16 through March 2. Steidl will publish a monograph of the series, due to be released in August 2024.

From 2017–2024, Epstein traveled across America, photographing some of the country's most ancient trees, among them bigleaf maples, eastern white pines, moss-covered cedars, sequoias, bristlecone pines, and bald cypresses. Old growth forests are crucial for human survival in our fight against climate change, as they hold significantly more carbon than replanted saplings. Yet humans have destroyed more than 95 percent of America's irreplaceable original forests.

Using a large format camera to describe the exquisite details of our arboreal ancestors, Epstein brings the forest to the gallery, creating an immersive environment that enables the viewer to absorb the sculptural beauty of trees and the multiple dimensions of biosystems that have flourished in the wild for centuries or millennia. These photographs evoke an other-worldly mystery. In the one photograph that contains a human figure, *Congress Trail, Sequoia National Park, California, 2021*, we gain some sense of the epic proportions of these life-giving trees.

This series is also an inquiry into the concept of time. *Old Growth* underscores the tension between the medium of photography – the camera can record its subject in a split-second – and the forests depicted, which have potentially infinite lifespans. This oscillation between the instant and the ancient, between human mortality and cosmic perpetuity, resonates through the exhibition. *Old Growth* articulates the forest's resilience and fragility, highlighting the need for us to act now to realign our relationship to these precious natural resources. "It is not about how we can save trees," says Epstein, borrowing from ecologist Suzanne Simard; "It is about how the trees might save us."

Forest Waves, a new multi-channel video and sound installation by Epstein, will premiere in the project gallery. The piece takes viewers through four seasons in the Berkshires forests in Massachusetts. Epstein uses careful juxtapositions of visual and sonic rhythms and formal compositions to propel and disorient as we venture deep into the woods of his childhood. Through image and sound, we engage with a complex ecological network that, left to itself, can endure for millennia. How, the work asks, might this vibrant infinitude help us understand the relatively short timeframe of human life? Sound is integral to this piece. Epstein brought tonal musicians Mike Tamburo and Samer Ghadry into these same woods, where he filmed and recorded them improvising in response to the wilderness that surrounds them. Less performance than sonic communion, their music seems to emerge from the forest rather than impose itself upon it. Through its kinetic depiction of flora and fauna, and its mix of instrumental and ambient sound, *Forest Waves* engulfs the audience, offering a visceral, awe-inducing connection to wilderness.

Born in 1952 in Holyoke, Massachusetts, Epstein lives and works in New York City. His work has been collected by major museums, including the Art Institute of Chicago; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Metropolitan Museum, New York; Whitney

Museum of American Art, New York; The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; J Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; Tate Modern, London; and The Victoria and Albert Museum, London. He has worked as a director, cinematographer, and production designer on several films, including *Dad*, *Salaam Bombay!*, and *Mississippi Masala*.

Epstein has won numerous awards including the Cooper Union Alumni Association Augustus Saint-Gaudens Award (2023); the Prix Pictet Photography Prize (2010); the Berlin Prize in Arts and Letters (2008); and a Guggenheim Fellowship (2003). Epstein's seventeen books, most published by Steidl Verlag, include *Recreation* (2022); *Property Rights* (2021); *In India* (2021); *Rocks and Clouds* (2017); *New York Arbor* (2013); *Berlin* (Steidl/The American Academy in Berlin 2011); *American Power* (2009); and *Family Business* (2003), winner of the 2004 Kraszna-Krausz Photography Book Award.

Contact: Cortney Norman, cnorman@yanceyrichardson.com | Press contact: info@yanceyrichardson.com

Image above: *Bigleaf Maple, Olympic National Park, Washington, 2021*, from the series *Old Growth*. Archival pigment print, 72 x 58 inches.