

## Joan Kaufman: Surface Tension at Lonsdale Gallery

Mankind has assumed dominance over nature, exploiting and manipulating the elements in the name of progress. In doing so, we have essentially alienated and isolated ourselves from the natural world – the external landscape as well as our internal selves – in our concrete jungles. This has led to rising societal grievances. Re-establishing connection with nature and the consciousness that accompanies it, could help society on many levels.

Joan Kaufman's work examines the relationship between man and nature, particularly the sentimentality and intimacy that could, and to an extent does, exist between us.



Joan Kaufman, *Surface Tension with Root Series 2.2*, 2015, inkjet print on photo rag, 54 x 45 inches. Image courtesy of Lonsdale Gallery.

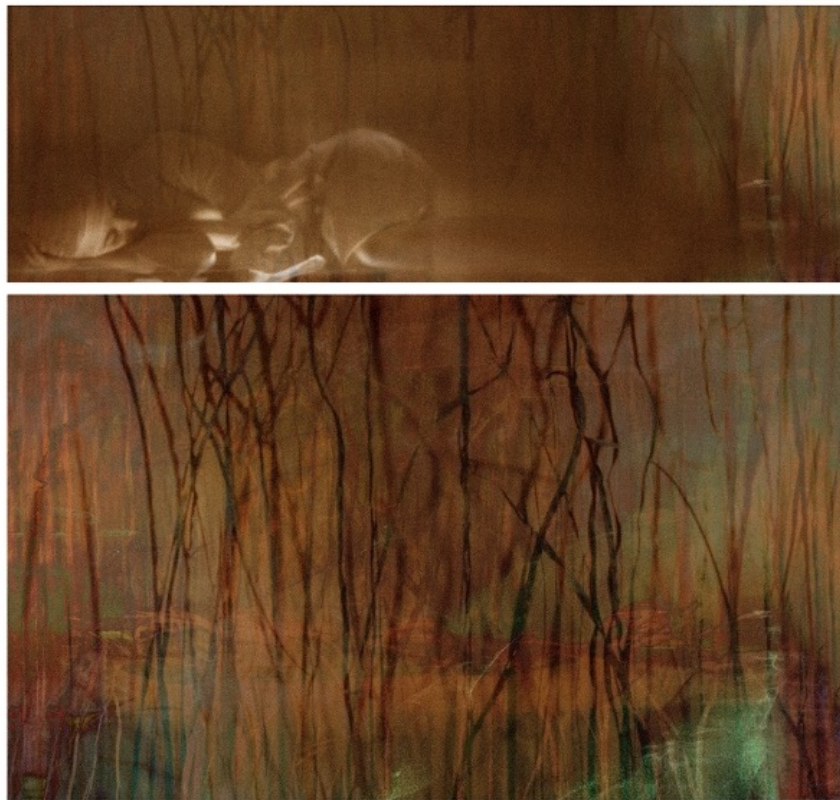
*Surface Tension* is a collection of photographic works laden with intricate and subtle details that go beyond the traditional medium. Much like her previous series, "Cloud Cover" and "In Between," that explored the same theme, she combines human and natural imagery into sublime dreamscapes suggesting the realistic and the illusory. She cleverly manipulates analog photography using textile screens, lighting techniques, and numerous other methods to simulate naturalistic elements like long billowing grass, linear crystalline pillars, and the nebulous paths of the nervous system. The abstractive depictions and contrasting rays of light leave much for the viewer to decipher in this replicated natural world.



Joan Kaufman, *Surface Tension, Root Series 1.4*, 2015, inkjet print on photo rag, 58 x 48 inches. Image courtesy of Lonsdale Gallery.

Simultaneously, several of the works contain an explicitly human element beyond the actual use of photographic effects and the clever representation of nature. Several of them contain faint traces of handprints that fade beneath the translucent colors. They appear in fetal or sleeping positions, swaddled in blankets composed of light illuminating some of the indistinct features. The resulting effect is tranquil and protective, as if the person is submerged beneath a

surface layer of water without any sense of harm or tension. It creates the serenity of a dreamscape imbued with wonderment, as well as an apparent, almost maternal sense of warmth and security. But in some pieces the contrasting of the solemnity of the bodies and the enigmatic foreground alludes to conflict between humanity and nature. Even though nature is the omnipotent force that supports every facet of our existence – a dynamic that has time and time again been explored through our cultural, philosophical, and scientific knowledge – it is often overlooked when it interferes with today's society, but finding a compromise between both realities is ultimately necessary to ensure the survival of both.



Joan Kaufman, *Surface Tension, Root Series 1.2*, 2015, c-print, 39.75 x 42 inches.  
Photo courtesy of the artist.





Joan Kaufman, *Surface Tension, Root Series 1.3*, 2015, c-print, 39.75 x 42 inches.  
Photo courtesy of the artist.

Simon Termine

\*Exhibition information: May 11 – June 12, 2016, Lonsdale Gallery,  
410 Spadina Road, Toronto. Gallery hours: Wed – Sun, 11 – 5 pm.

<http://www.artoronto.ca/?p=34244>