

Derek Boswell
& Scott Waters

Sleepscapes

20 July - 15 September, 2019

Opening Reception:

Thursday, 25 July from 7:00 - 8:30pm

BACK COVER

FRONT COVER



INSIDE FRONT COVER

*Sounds of the seas grow fainter,
Sounds of the sands have sped;
The sweep of gales,
The far white sails,
Are silent, spent and dead.*

*Sands of the days of summer
Murmur and die away,
And distance hides
The long, low tides,
As night shuts out the day.*

–Pauline Johnson, “Good-Bye,” 1912¹

INSIDE BACK COVER

GLENHYRST ART GALLERY

20 Ava Road, Brantford ON
519-756-5932
glenhyrst.ca
info@glenhyrst.ca

GALLERY HOURS

Tuesday – Friday: 10am – 5pm
Weekends: 11am – 4pm
Admission is free

Cover Image:

Derek Boswell, *Vessels* (2019)

Notes

1. Pauline Johnson, “Good-Bye,” *Flint and Feather* (Toronto: Musson Book Co. Ltd., 1922), 132.
2. Patrick J. Gallacher, “The Cloud of Unknowing: Introduction,” *University of Rochester Middle English Text Series*, <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/gallacher-cloud-of-unknowing-introduction> (accessed 6 June, 2019).
3. Scott Waters, Artist Statement (May, 2019).
4. Ibid.
5. Derek Boswell, “About Derek Boswell,” *lensculture* (n.d.), <https://www.lensculture.com/baipin> (accessed 6 June 2019).





About the Artists

Derek Boswell (b. 1994) is a London-based social documentary photographer and visual artist. A graduate of Bealart, one of the best-known secondary-schools fine art programs in Ontario, with alumni including Greg Curnoe, Jack Chambers, and Jason McLean, Boswell earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology from King's College, Western University. In 2018, his work appeared in the exhibition "My Backyard" at Westland Gallery, and he is a feature subject for a CBC documentary about emerging artists in Ontario.

Scott Waters (b. 1970) is a Toronto-based visual artist born in Preston, England. After serving in the Canadian Armed Forces, he received a Master of Fine Arts degree from York University and later joined the Canadian Forces Artists Program (CFAP). For his work as an official war artist in Afghanistan, Waters received the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal. Waters's work has been shown in galleries and museums throughout Canada, the United States, and Europe, including the McMichael Art Gallery, Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Canadian War Museum, Beaverbrook Art Gallery, and La Galerie de l'UQAM.

Image: Scott Waters, *Chapter V: The hermit Life. I am the solitary life that forms all things and by which all things receive that life without which there is no life*, ink on aquarelle (2019)

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The night and its darkness preoccupy writers, poets, and artists. They use it for its power over our imaginations, and also as a metaphor for experiences including melancholy, fear, isolation, loss, and, of course, death. For example, in her short poem *Good-Bye*, Six Nations poet Pauline Johnson alludes to the end of a summer's day and the approaching night as a little death. In this exhibition, artists Scott Waters and Derek Boswell explore the aesthetics of night and its potential for unexpected meaning. When darkness falls, these artists venture out into the streets, woodlands, and neighbourhoods to observe how the night invents new experiences, sensations, and ways of seeing the world. Boswell and Waters do not exploit our nearly-universal fear of the night, as Hollywood horror films such "Nightmare on Elm Street" or "The Blair Witch Project" do, but approach it as a strange, often misinterpreted, and beautiful entity. For both artists, looking into the night is an encounter with endless possibility.

Waters' drawings are shot with flash photography during walks along the river valley near his home. Two central themes occupy Waters' work. First is the use of sites of transition such as trails, highways, and constructions zones as metaphors for revelation, for new ways of understanding the world. That being said, it is not the night that influences Waters so much as the concept of *nothingness* that the night refers to. For instance, the 14th century Christian mystic text *The Cloud of Unknowing* describes darkness as both the limit of meaning and its potential limitlessness. During contemplative prayer, the faithful practice divesting their minds of all images and ideas in order to reach a state of nothingness, a "nothing and a nowhere" akin to nirvana, where they encounter the divine wonder of God.² "I am pulled towards images that show a point of departure or change," he writes, "of the dark that surrounds us, and of the illumination that might occur on the other side of the known."³ For Waters, these types of unknowable voids in our consciousness are precisely where we can encounter new states of being. His drawings are small glimpses into the void—he renders the invisible visible, revealing people, places, and things seldom witnessed.

The second theme in Waters' work is his use of citation, which appears in the source photographs used for his drawings and the titles of the drawings themselves. To this end, titles such as *What appears in the night is the night that appears* and *This one was a failure, and it had to be, because it was written by a pillar of salt* are, according to Waters, "a means to gather evidence — a means to understand the world."⁴ These citations also read as a diary of vernacular experience—of walking, reading, thinking and interpretation. To this end, each drawing is a short story that makes up a larger whole, a narrative of emotion and experience captured with pen and ink.

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Scott Waters, *Buildings tower. The light comes. To know the source of such things is to know our place in the world*, ink and acrylic on aquarelle (2017)



Scott Waters, *This one was a failure, and it had to be, because it was written by a pillar of salt*, ink on aquarelle (2016)

Boswell uses analog photography to represent spaces that are commonly overlooked or taken for granted, be they sites of suburban development or urban sprawl, from cities as large as Ottawa or towns as small as Komoka. His work taps into our subconscious memories, given that these seemingly unrecognizable sites may appear uncannily familiar and could almost exist anywhere in Canada, let alone Southern Ontario. "So many places lack an overt incentive to visit them," says Boswell, "Yet, objects of aesthetic pleasure exist covertly in these locations [...] when that object is viewed in an alternative context – through photographic composition, rather than the naked eye – it has the power to be just as captivating as any other sight."⁵ Like Waters, Boswell approaches the night for its potential to reveal new ways of seeing through creative expression. And it speaks to the unusual power of photography to arrest the banal and make it appear monumental.

For instance, in the photograph *Vessels* (2019), Boswell uncovers a Maritime-Ontario trailer positioned in the corner of a parking lot set against a backdrop of tall pine trees then documents it. The camera's brilliant flash of light illuminates an otherwise dark landscape at the very moment the artist himself discovers beauty in the strangest of places—the trailer's pale blue lettering matches the dark sky above and the subtle tones of the grass below; intersecting diagonal lines from the trailer, the grass, the pavement, and the tree tops serve to tightly balance and unify the composition; all the while transforming the trailer—a machine that hauls freight—into an autonomous art object. Completely still, yet remarkably dramatic, photographs like *Vessel* prove that while others are sleeping the night can be sublime.

Evolutionary scientists argue that our nearly universal 'fear of the dark' is, in actuality, an instinctual apprehension of the night. The darkness of night makes human beings vulnerable to threats we cannot see, be they poisonous flora, preying animals, or unknown terrain. As Boswell and Waters suggest in this exhibition, the night holds a captivating mysteriousness that struggles to be put into words; the unfamiliar or unexpected hidden by the dark can produce extraordinary visions which compel us to take a different look at where we live and who we are.

Matthew Ryan Smith
Curator



Derek Boswell, *Havenwood*, analog photograph (2018)

Derek Boswell, *Four Houses
and a Home*, unincorporated area,
ON, Canada (2019)

