

Photographs of Contemporary American West Gifted to Joslyn

Joslyn Art Museum is excited to announce a gift of sixty-six photographs from Greg MacGregor's (American, born 1941) eight-year-long project retracing Meriwether Lewis and William Clark's trip from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Northwest (1804–6). As a documentarian of the American West, MacGregor has long been interested in this mission, known as the Corps of Discovery Expedition. No artist accompanied Lewis and Clark, thus their travels were not documented in real time. While researching later attempts to illustrate the explorers' journey, MacGregor was disappointed that nearly all photographers had depicted the West as suspended in time, devoid of evidence of the growth of civilization since the early-nineteenth century. Turning to Lewis and Clark's journals as guidebooks and for thematic inspiration, MacGregor endeavored to capture the region in question as it existed in front of his camera.

While MacGregor's images offer moments of the sublime, he understands the American West as a place in flux and is careful not to obscure the marks of human intervention. Casino riverboats, telephone poles, mobile homes, razor-wire fences, and billboards all make cameos in these photographs. Of particular concern for the artist is the impact of commerce and industry on water resources and their natural flow patterns. As such, aspects



Greg MacGregor (American, born 1941), *Ryan Dam and Falls during low water runoff, Great Falls, Montana*, 1995, silver gelatin print, 16 x 20 in. (40.6 x 50.8 cm), Gift of the artist, 2022.2.33

of the built environment related to water, such as bridges and dams, feature prominently in MacGregor's work. In avoiding romanticism, MacGregor reminds us that the landscapes he photographs have been shaped by the needs and desires of their inhabitants.