

LINDA CONNOR

From Two Worlds



April 27-June 30, 2013

Curated by Anne Veh

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FROM TWO WORLDS, a solo exhibition of photography by Linda Connor, presents two seemingly divergent bodies of work. *Dark Forces* reveals Connor's fascination with the time worn monasteries encountered in Tibet and Northern India. Presented as large-scale photographs, some printed on silk, the imagery reveals iconography of the enlightened and the terrifying, and spiritually charged deities that protect and guard the sacred spaces they occupy. *The Olson House*, made famous by the American painter Andrew Wyeth, is a portfolio of quiet and haunting images of interior spaces and landscapes devoid of human presence, yet filled with history and reference.



Torma of the Senses, Ladakh, India, 2002 (printed 2013).
Courtesy of the artist and Haines Gallery.



Katas and Cloths, Ladakh, India, 2005 (printed 2012).
Courtesy of the artist and Haines Gallery.

DARK FORCES

Linda Connor in conversation with Curator Anne Veh, March 21, 2013

Dark Forces is a body of work that has emerged slowly over the years with a trip to Tibet and numerous visits to Ladakh, India. In these works, I approach Buddhist iconography found in the age-old monasteries, marked by destructive elements, both natural and human inflicted. Even through the ravages of time and the desecration from the Cultural Revolution, the demonic guardians and sacred deities retain their power and presence, transcending time and politics.

These photographs show traditional offerings, such as the Torma's, sculpted from barley flour and Yak butter, ceremonial Kata's, brocaded silk fabrics used to adorn the meditation chapels, thankas or sacred paintings, and magnificently detailed wall murals.

During my last trip to Ladakh in 2011, I returned to a 14th Century meditation cave on the cliffs behind the village of Saspol. There I spent quite a bit of time photographing a particularly beautiful wall mural portraying *Avalokitesvara*, the Great Bodhisattva of Compassion, a figure with a thousand arms who vows to free all beings from suffering. I began to fall into its quiet power, photographing the painting's various details. It was only after I returned home and developed my film that I saw a poetic connection between this figure and the grandeur in the Himalayan landscape, knowing one is embedded in the other.

The work is a celebration of Mystery. The mysteries of another time, of another culture, and of an unfamiliar iconography, and my hope is that the work will provide a visceral presence and sustain a wordless resonance.

THE OLSON HOUSE PHOTOGRAPHED BY LINDA CONNOR

Excerpts from the essay by Wanda M. Corn

The Olson House sits on a gentle hill near the seashore in Cushing, Maine, its clapboards deeply weathered and the inside rooms mostly empty. It is the kind of old house one comes upon along the New England coast, a building steeped in the history of rural life. Its last inhabitants, Alvaro and his sister Christina Olson, worked and lived off the land and sea until they died within a month of one another in 1967-68. They are buried alongside their relatives in a tiny graveyard at the foot of the hill.

Nearby a new stone marks the grave of the artist Andrew Wyeth who died in 2009. Beginning in 1940, Wyeth painted the Olsons and their farm off and on for thirty years. Most famously, he included a spectral image of the house and its barn on the horizon in *Christina's World*, a painting of 1948, acquired soon thereafter by the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Christina had a degenerative disease that paralyzed her legs and lower torso; she used her arms to drag her inactive body around her circumscribed domain. By painting her from behind and against the hill, Wyeth created a lasting image of human longing.

It is this aura that Linda Connor confronted when the Cincinnati Art Museum commissioned her to photograph the site in 2006 and installed her contemporary images as a counterpoint to an exhibition of Wyeth's earlier watercolors and drawings of the house and owners. A seasoned San Francisco photographer who had spent summers in Maine as a youth, Connor imprinted her own vision on the site. Wyeth's Olson house was often melancholy and wistful, a site of human decay and hardship; Connor's Olson house is mysteriously alive and animated. Using her favorite tool, an 8 x 10 view camera, Connor brings out the uneven and tactile textures of wood and glass burnished with age. In the few photographs where she referenced specific paintings by Wyeth, she created elegant, tonal renditions of sites he had painted: the hayloft, a wire basket on a hook, a roofline seen through an upstairs window, a doorway from the attached shed where Alvaro worked leading into the kitchen where Christina cooked. On other occasions, Connor self-consciously paid homage to well known photographers such as Walker Evans, Frederick Sommer, and Charles Sheeler, and gave a nod to some of her own early work. But generally she followed her own instincts and made light as much a protagonist as the building. In a house of many windows, she found reflections animating walls, dark rooms leading into luminous ones, and light caressing tools and shells. In photographing the exterior of the house, she corralled



The East Side...after Walker Evans, from The Olson House, 2006 (printed 2012). Courtesy of the artist and Haines Gallery.

available light to soften and dematerialize the structure so it seems more a vision than a thing.

Wanda M. Corn is the Robert and Ruth Halperin Professor Emerita of Art History at Stanford.

Excerpts of this essay were reprinted with the author's permission from *The Olson House* © 2012 Datz Press.

About the artist

Connor is a professor at the San Francisco Art Institute and has taught there for over 40 years. She is the recipient of the Guggenheim fellowship and three National Endowment for the Arts grants. She has had solo exhibitions at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago; and Center for Creative Photography, Tucson. Her work is included in significant collections including The Art Institute of Chicago; di Rosa; Museum of Modern Art, New York; J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles. In 2008, Chronicle Books published *Odyssey: The Photographs of Linda Connor* in conjunction with a traveling retrospective exhibition. In 2002, she founded PhotoAlliance.

Front Cover: *Library of Prayer Books, Ladakh, India, 2007.*
Courtesy of the artist.

WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

All works Courtesy of the artist and Haines Gallery unless otherwise noted.

Dark Forces

Decorated Goat Hoof, Tibet,
1993 (printed 2013)
Archival pigment print
29.5 x 34 inches
Edition of 15

Dosing Monk and Black-necked Crane, Phiyang Monastery, Ladakh, India, 2003 (printed 2013)
Archival pigment print
29.5 x 34 inches
Edition 1/15

Ceremonial Masks, Ladakh, India, 2003 (printed 2013)
Archival pigment print
29.5 x 34 inches
Edition 1/15

Horrific Fragment, Tibet, 1993 (printed 2013)
Archival pigment print
29.5 x 34 inches
Edition 1/15

Monk Lighting Butter Lamp, Tibet, 1993 (printed 2013)
Archival pigment print
29.5 x 34 inches
Edition 1/15

Offering Alter Mural, Hemis or Himalayan Monastery, Ladakh, India, 1998 (printed 2013)
Archival pigment print
29.5 x 34 inches
Edition 1/15

Banner, Hemis Monastery, Ladakh, India, 2003 (printed 2008)
Archival pigment print
50 x 40 inches
Edition 1/5

Bardo Mural, Thiksey Monastery, Ladakh, India, 1985 (printed 2013)
Archival pigment print
50 x 40 inches
Edition 1/5

Damaged Mural with Skulls, Tibet, 1993 (printed 2013)
Archival pigment print
50 x 40 inches
Edition 1/5

Desecrated Mural of Nagas, Tibet, 1993 (printed 2013)
Archival pigment print
50 x 40 inches
Edition 1/5

Torma of the Senses, Ladakh, India, 2002 (printed 2013)
Archival pigment print
50 x 40 inches
Edition 1/5

Library of Prayer Books, Ladakh, India, 2007
30 x 40 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Avalokitesvara, Ladakh, India, 2011 (printed 2013)
Archival Print on Silk
60 x 40 inches
Edition of 5

Chapel of Vajratara with dung, Tibet, 1993 (printed 2013)
Archival Print on Silk
60 x 40 inches
Edition of 5

Citipati Thangka, Tibet, 1993 (printed 2013)
Archival Print on Silk
60 x 40 inches
Edition of 5

Katas and Cloths, Ladakh, India, 2005 (printed 2012)
Archival Print on Silk
60 x 40 inches
Edition of 5

Katas, Tibet, 1993 (printed 2013)
Archival Print on Silk
60 x 40 inches
Edition of 5

Religious Festival, Phiyang Monastery, Ladakh, India, 2005 (printed 2012)
Archival Print on Silk
60 x 40 inches
Edition 1/5

Footpath Himalayas, Ladakh, India, 2002
2 Platinum Prints
25.5 x 21 inches
Edition 1/5

Avalokitesvara: The Great Bodhisattva Of Compassion, 14th C. Meditation Cave, Saspol, Ladakh & Ladkhi Landscapes, India, 2011
Archival Pigment Prints
Hand Bound into Linen Covered Artist Book
18.75 x 15 inches
Edition 4/25

The Olson House

The East Side...after Walker Evans, from The Olson House, 2006 (printed 2012)
Archival Pigment Print
34.25 x 29 inches
Edition 1/5

Morning Light, from The Olson House, 2006 (printed 2012)
Archival Pigment Print
34.25 x 29 inches
Edition 1/5

Christina's World with Shell...after early Linda Connor, from The Olson House, 2006 (printed 2012)
Archival Pigment Print
29.25 x 34 inches
Edition 1/5

Egg Basket, from The Olson House, 2006 (printed 2012)
Archival Pigment Print
29.25 x 34 inches
Edition 1/5

Spirit Legs, The Olson's with Wyeth, from The Olson House, 2006 (printed 2012)
Archival Pigment Print
34.25 x 29 inches
Edition 1/5

Salt Water Cove, from The Olson House, 2006 (printed 2012)
Archival Pigment Print
29.25 x 34 inches
Edition 1/5

Olson's Family Graveyard, from The Olson House, 2006 (printed 2012)
Archival Pigment Print
29.25 x 34 inches
Edition 1/5

Dory in Loft...after Andrew Wyeth, from The Olson House, 2006 (printed 2012)
Archival Pigment Print
34.25 x 29 inches
Edition 1/5

Privy Collage...after Frederick Sommer, from The Olson House, 2006 (printed 2012)
Archival Pigment Print
34.25 x 29 inches
Edition 1/5

Doors and Window...after Charles Sheeler, from The Olson House, 2006 (printed 2012)
Archival Pigment Print
34.25 x 29 inches
Edition 1/5

Night Rooftop..."End of Olsons", from The Olson House, 2006 (printed 2012)
Archival Pigment Print
34.25 x 29 inches
Edition 1/5

North Star and Meteor, from The Olson House, 2006 (printed 2012)
Archival Pigment Print
34.25 x 29 inches
Edition 1/5

PUBLIC PROGRAM

Wednesday, May 29, 7:00pm

Artist Talk in the Gatehouse Gallery

Linda Connor presents a selection of images and the inspiration behind her work, in conjunction with the exhibition. \$10 General Public/ \$5 di Rosa Members. Please RSVP via email to meagan@dirosaart.org or 226-5991 x27

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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