



Richard Learoyd / Fraenkel Gallery

Richard Learoyd's "Yosemite IV (BGV)" (2018) is on view at S.F.'s Fraenkel Gallery.

CHARLES DESMARAIS' ART PICK

Yosemite.com calls it "the view that Ansel Adams made famous." It is Tunnel View, the prospect from a park overlook that has provided untold thousands of passenger-side documentarians the best place to stand for the iconic Yosemite Valley snapshot.

But the photograph of that scene, seen here in reproduction, is by neither Adams nor an amateur. And it's not the original shot, framed by the great Carleton E. Watkins in 1869, long before a road was built to the spot where he planted his tripod.

This version, on view at Fraenkel Gallery through Dec. 22, is the central picture in the exhibition "Richard Learoyd: Work From Two Rooms." Watkins made a 16- by-20-inch contact print from a so-called mammoth plate negative of equal size. Learoyd's photograph, made this summer, is a contact print, too. It is 4 feet high and nearly 6½ feet wide, exposed on negative film ordered specially from the manufacturer.

I am only mildly entertained by the idea of a new picture that self-reflexively incorporates 150 years of unimaginative photographic redoubling. Yet there is no denying the spell cast by the object itself, a technical tour de force that draws the viewer ever closer, gorging on detail, mapping trails and climbs possible only in the hiker's eye.

"Richard Learoyd: Work From Two Rooms":

10:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Tuesdays-Fridays; 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturdays. Through Dec. 22. Free. Fraenkel Gallery, 49 Geary St., S.F. 415-981-2661. <https://fraenkelgallery.com>