

# Catherine Opie

15 October – 15 November 2008

Private view Tuesday 14 October 2008, 6-8pm

Following her major mid-career survey at the Guggenheim Museum, New York, Stephen Friedman Gallery is proud to present an exhibition of new work by American artist Catherine Opie.

For the past twenty years Opie has wandered the North American continent, photographing communities and deserted urban landscapes in a desire to document the played-out ideal of the American dream. From her early studio portraiture of transsexual and queer communities to her polaroids of urban American life from *In and Around Home*, Opie's contemporary take on classic genres builds a conceptual montage of contemporary American identity.

The exhibition title, *The Blue of Distance*, is inspired by Rebecca Solnit, a writer on photography and landscape. Here, Opie continues her investigation with two new series of work capturing the remote beauty of the Alaskan landscape. Created using a digital camera without manipulation, these colour photographs document immense and sublime landscapes free from any trace of humanity. *The Blue of Distance* is an installation of eight photographs taken at different times of the day on a boat trip to Glacier Bay. They impart a poetic, semi-abstract vision of blue monochromes, where sky and water meet the horizon. In *Edge of Time*, a series of nine photographs taken on the same boat trip, Opie focuses her lens on a cliff face overlooking the water, where millennia have shaped and etched the rock face. In each series, the photographs are hung half an inch apart, with the horizon line running continuously at the same level, creating panoramas that completely immerse the viewer.

Moving beyond the territory of the body and the 'man-made', Opie taps into feelings about wilderness and being lost within it. The emphasis on the horizon line, a potent symbol in American culture, underlines notions of time, space, and uncharted territory. This is momentarily disrupted, however, by two distinct and monumental photographs hung at either end of the gallery where the landscape is punctuated with signs of life: tourists visiting a waterfall; a grizzly bear surrounded by a pack of wolves. This sudden dislocation shifts the sense of reality, causing the viewer to see themselves in the third person. Photographed at such a distance these tiny figures are engulfed by the environment, their presence surreal and insignificant in comparison to the vast and enduring terrain. Transcending documentation, the wild Alaskan landscape, colonised and disputed by mankind, becomes a signifier of the internal geography of the American psyche.

Catherine Opie has exhibited in museums worldwide. Recent solo exhibitions include *Catherine Opie: American Photographer*, Guggenheim Museum, New York (2008); *Catherine Opie: 1999 & In and Around Home*, Aldrich Museum, Ridgefield, CT (2006) touring to the Orange County Museum of Art, California, Cleveland Museum of Contemporary Art, OH, Weatherspoon Art Museum, Greensboro, NC; *Catherine Opie: Chicago (American Cities)*, MCA Chicago, Chicago (2006). Recent group shows include *Global Feminisms*, Brooklyn Museum, New York (2007); *Into Me/Out of Me*, PS1 Contemporary Art Center, Long Island City, NY (2006); *The Unhomely: Phantom Scenes in Global Society*, curated by Okwui Enwezor, 2<sup>nd</sup> International Biennial of Contemporary Art, Seville, Spain (2006) and *Universal Experience: Art, Life, and the Tourist's Eye*, curated by Francesco Bonami, MCA, Chicago, IL touring to the Hayward, London (2005).

Stephen Friedman Gallery will be participating in Frieze Art Fair, Stand D4 from 16 – 19 October 2008

Forthcoming exhibition: **Mamma Andersson** 28 November 2008 – 17 January 2009

Gallery hours are: Tuesday to Friday, 10am-6pm and Saturday 11am-5pm  
For further details please contact Charlotte Nourse on +44 20 7494 1434