



Installation view of Kai Wasikowski's NSW Visual Arts Emerging Fellowship presentation, Artspace, Sydney, 2018. COURTESY: THE ARTIST. PHOTO: ZAN WIMBERLEY.

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KAI WASIKOWSKI

"Foot falls echo in the memory/down the passage we did not take/towards the door we never opened..." American poet and essayist T.S. Eliot wrote in his set of poems *Four Quartets* in 1936. Using the journey through this mysterious garden scene, Eliot warned his readers of post modernity's looming dangers – exploring ideas of labour, environment, production and human destruction. Decades later in our present, these concerns described in Eliot's impermanent world still loom over humanity, and our relationship with the natural world.

Attuned to the acoustics of our time, Sydney-based artist Kai Wasikowski prompts a similar vein of philosophical and poetic reflection in his photographic landscapes. For the artist, nature and its importance to our survival serves as both concept and concern. Within his surreal dreamscapes, layers of nature emerge from foggy and mysterious rivers and seabeds. In the midst of these seemingly static scenes, movement lurks in the background. In the case of the *Realtree* (2018) works, red laser dots zero in on their target, catching on the trees and bushes in this pristine, almost too-perfect landscape. These images depict a danger zone and Wasikowski places us on high alert. In an era where human-made climate change threatens the elemental status quo, Wasikowski uses the metaphor of this earthly conflict zone to reveal and conceal, in equal measure, a narrative about humankind's effect on nature.



His message and its delivery are timely, complex and nuanced, befitting of our even more complex world. It's with no surprise that over the past year, his work has been recognised and celebrated by local and international art communities. Following his 2017 win at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Art's Schenberg Art Fellowship (worth \$40,000), Wasikowski has been featured in a number of high-profile exhibitions, including The Australian Centre for Photography's *Oceans from here* (2018) and Sullivan+Strumpf Singapore's *Tromp L'oeil* (2018).

At the end of 2018, Wasikowski was one of the featured artists in the NSW Visual Arts Emerging Fellowship. In the year to come, Wasikowski tells me that his eyes are set on expanding his profile overseas. He will undertake a residency in China at the Three Shadows Photography Art Centre, a contemporary art space dedicated solely to photography and new media. He is also currently negotiating the details of exhibiting in China. If 2018 is any indication of his professional trajectory, one gets the sense that 2019 will be epic.

Micheal Do

LEFT: Kai Wasikowski, *Realtree #4*, 2018. Inkjet print, 90 x 115cm.

ABOVE: Kai Wasikowski, *Moments of love and apathy #1*, 2017. Inkjet print on cotton rag, 96 x 143cm.

COURTESY: THE ARTIST.

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