

# BOMB

## Mark McKnight

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In Mark McKnight's photographs, the material of the terrestrial world merges with a celestial aspect. Dark bodies, asphalt, oily birds, decomposing stone, and dimpled flesh all radiate from a field of tarry shadow. The literal darkness corresponds to a figurative one, a subtle intimation of the entropic path of matter—what McKnight calls, after Simone Weil, its “decreation”—into lower states of order. Yet the terms of this rebirth are distinctly non-hierarchical. Animate and inanimate matter mutually inscribe upon one another. His images propose a queer ecology that eschews the boundaries of a reductionist or essentialist biology and look, rather, at the ligaments—a stream of piss into water, the pucker of a cave's opening—that bind the living and nonliving. The effect is to animate both his personal circle and inert matter with the revitalizing fecundity of mothering.

While the gesture of McKnight's work is heavenward, the vantage is downward, turning to the cleft, nook, pile, or crease. These are chthonic images, inflected internally toward a charged, private space—not the springlike locus amoenus of the pastoral but an intimate enclosure created within exchanges of empathy and care.

McKnight's gaze is attuned to the transcendent but not inured to the politics of howbodies and lands are abused, policed, and degraded. His photographs look lovingly at stretch marks, scars, blotches, and burns, at marred landscapes and fleshly bodies in repose. They propose a counter to the history of erasure and violence that's been visited upon bodies like his own, and they find a redemptive beauty in the land despite our breaches of the natural contract. The threat is not trivialized but rather put in context beside the main event: the alchemical feat of turning matter into light, which McKnight looks to as an emancipatory act.



...if water forgets how to play mirror, 2018, gelatin silver print, 32 × 40 inches. Images courtesy of the artist.