

November 22, 2011

Flagler Welcomes Photographer Mark Ruwedel

The Crisp-Ellert Art Museum and Flagler College are pleased to present "Shelter," an exhibition of photographs by Mark Ruwedel that will include works from his series "Desert Houses," "Dog Houses," and "Dusk." The exhibition kicks off on Thursday, Jan. 12 at 7 pm with a conversation between the artist and Flagler Assistant Professor of Art History Dr. Chris Balaschak. An opening reception will be held on Friday, Jan 13 from 5 until 9 pm, and the exhibition will be on view through Feb. 24, 2012.

For over 25 years, Mark Ruwedel has photographed the open landscapes of western North America. His interest in documenting evidence of the West's ancient inhabitants, as well as relics of the great industrial race to conquer the West, has resulted in an impressive photographic record of the way humankind has altered and adapted to the natural landscape.

In previous series, Ruwedel has documented sites to help better understand the American West as a palimpsest of cultural and natural histories. More recently, Ruwedel has turned his camera to the uninhabited structures that litter the high desert fringes of Southern California. These images of the landscape bear the mark of a more recent history: ad hoc structures, abandoned and in varying states of decay. The black and white images from "Desert Houses" and "Dusk," as well as the color images from "Dog Houses," present "an inventory of a particular, and poignant, form of vernacular architecture" that the artist claims are "both humorous and tragic, alluding to the fragility of human endeavor in a harsh environment."

Ruwedel's work pays homage to survey photographers such as Carleton Watkins and William Henry Jackson, who documented the vast Western landscape under the auspices of the government during the 19th century. He has been equally, if not more, influenced by photographers such as Lewis Baltz, who recorded the banal industrial structures of a developing 1970's suburban landscape, as well as Robert Smithson and Michael Heizer, who made their own marks upon the land through their earthworks. Thus, while ostensibly documentary in nature, Ruwedel's photographs are anchored within a deeply conceptual framework. In the essay "Written on the Land," Ann Thomas claimed that throughout Ruwedel's oeuvre we find an "intellectual inquiry that governs the overall scope and content of his work, such as his engagement with issues related to time (historical and geological), to technology and change, as well as to their impact upon the surface of the earth."

Born in 1954 in Kutztown, Pennsylvania, Mark Ruwedel received a BFA from Kutztown State College and an MFA from Concordia University in Montreal, Quebec. His photographs have been the focus of solo exhibitions at Palais Rameau in Lille, France, Nevada Museum of Art in Reno and Winnepeg Art Gallery in Canada, among others.

Additionally, his works have been included in group exhibitions at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Tate Modern, London, Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington D.C. and the Vancouver Art Gallery. His photographs are represented in the collections of the J. Paul Getty Museum, Princeton Art Museum, St. Louis Art Museum, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, among many others. Ruwedel is currently a Professor of Photography at California State University in Long Beach, CA.

For more information, please contact the museum at (904) 826-8530 or by e-mail at crispellert@flagler.edu. For information on future exhibitions and events, please visit our website at www.flagler.edu/crispellert. This exhibition was made possible with the support of the Tourist Development Council of St. Johns County.

“Ideas and Images: Scholars and Artists in Residence” is a new program at Flagler College. Throughout the academic season the College will feature an international composition of artists and authors, introducing a fresh and creative component to the greater St. Augustine community. Each event is free and open to the public. Call (904) 819-6282 or visit www.flagler.edu/our-community for more information. If you are a person with a disability and need reasonable accommodations, please contact Lynn Francisco at 904-819-6460. Sign Language Interpreters are available upon request with a minimum of three days’ notice.

For Flagler College news and events visit www.flagler.edu/our-community.

Upcoming presentations in the “Ideas and Images” series include:

- February 2, 2012: Fiction Writer and Essayist John Domini
- March 20, 2012: Sculptors Enzo Torcoletti and Joe Segal