

REVELATION

MICHAEL O'NEILL

DECEMBER 1, 2023 - MAY 4, 2024

MAYER GALLERY

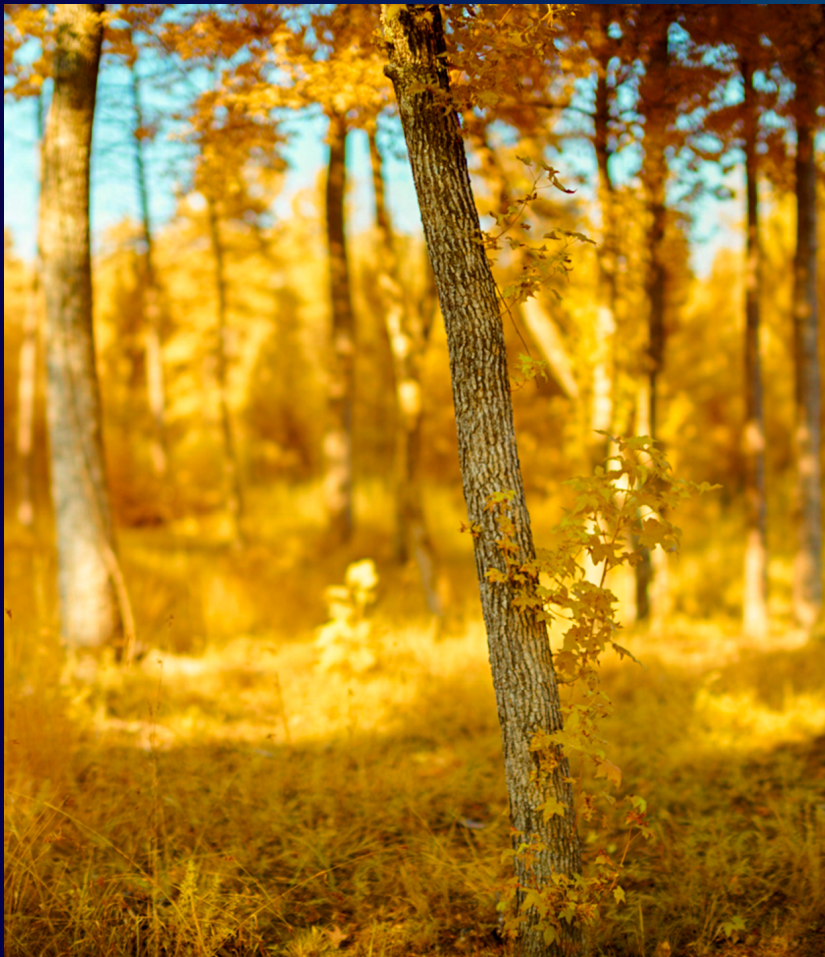


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Curatorial Statement

More commonly associated with the literary arts, particularly notable writers like Isabel Allende, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Toni Morrison, and Salman Rushdie, **Magical Realism** reveals the hidden undercurrents of magic and fantasy in the worlds we create and occupy. Distinct from, but related to Surrealism, Magical Realism was first applied to the visual arts in the 1920s – usually to painters like Maxfield Parrish, Giorgio de Chirico, and René Magritte who created haunting, mysterious, dream-like canvases, and commercial prints. Photographer Michael O'Neill's infrared landscapes are part of a strong tradition of magical realism in the visual arts. Using the tools and technology of photography, the artist captures the enigmatic and often unnoticed wonders of the “real” world with his various lenses. He explores the meaning and impact of color using a converted camera that is sensitive to ultraviolet, visible, and infrared light.

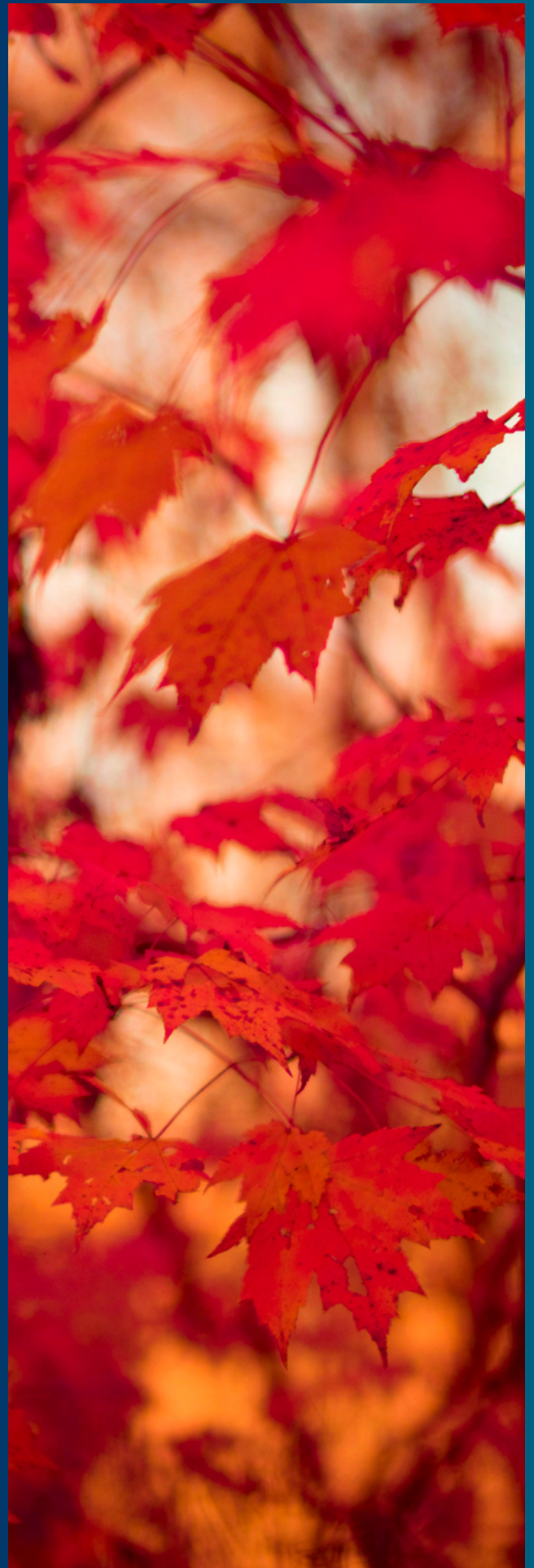


Curatorial Statement

The photographic tradition of magical realism includes such notable photographer as Susan Kae Grant, Carolyn DeMeritt, Elijah Gowin, Jennifer Schlesinger, Keith Carter, Debbie Fleming Caffery, Antone Dolezal, and Heather Evans Smith, to name just a few currently working in this rich tradition. In a world of increasingly fragile landscapes, threatened by climate change and overpopulation, it's important to look closely at what might not be immediately apparent, to spend time in nature noticing the intricacies of hidden worlds that may soon disappear entirely.

Interestingly, O'Neill's background in creating theatrical backdrops reinforces our understanding of nature as a culturally constructed system. Image makers are now using increasingly sophisticated human and artificial intelligence technology in their representations of the more-than-human world. Human understanding of nature or the natural world, often incorrectly thought of as separate from although tangential to the human species, is informed by the way one perceives and interacts with their environment. Through his use of other-worldly colors and subversion of typical museum-style framing of his photographs, O'Neill reminds the viewer that they aren't looking through a window or portal into a "real" landscape; rather, they are looking at one artist's creative interpretation of what was before his camera and then manipulated by technology to produce a final image. O'Neill uses photography to call attention to the beauty and the threats to our fragile environment – threats that may begin at the microscopic level but have lasting impacts on what the world will look like in the future.

Revelation supports the mission of the Turchin Center to showcase creative responses to local, regional, and global climate change. All of Michael O'Neill's ethereal landscapes were made in the South. The land bears the ongoing scarification of a deeply troubled history at the same time the photographs reveal the beauty of what yet may be lost if we do not find a more equitable way to care for the lands of which we are the current stewards.

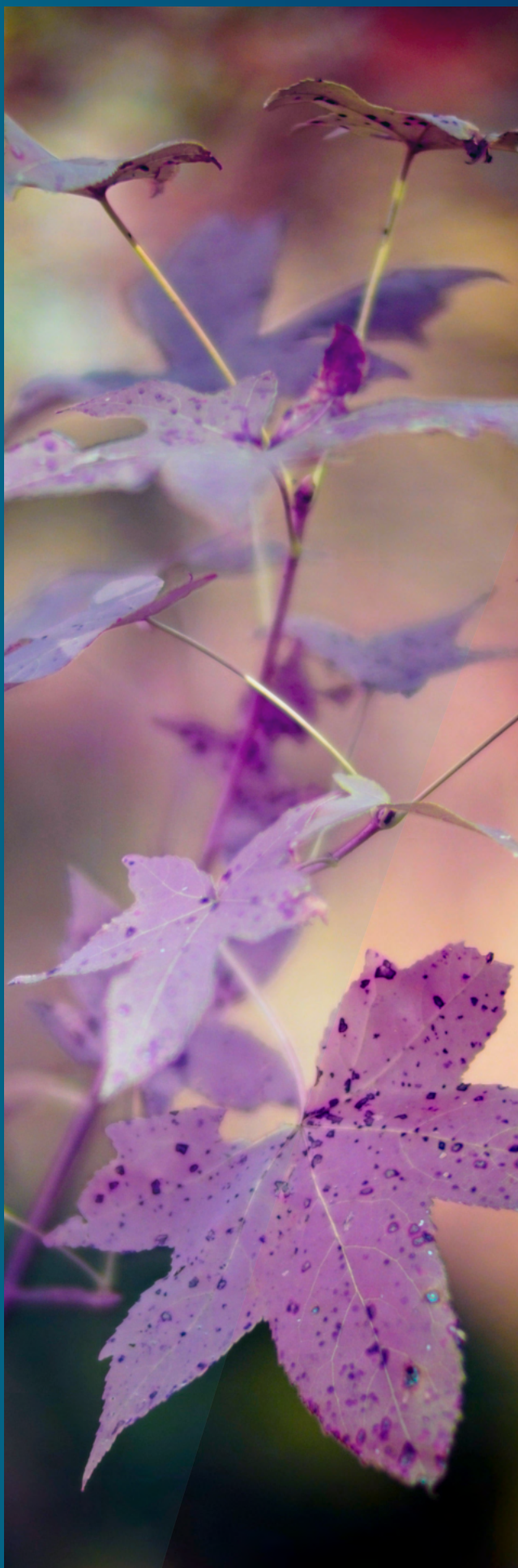


Artist's Statement

My perspective on photography, its roles, and responsibilities, has changed quite a bit since I began working with the lens. I started my journey as a commercial photographer, using the camera to try to represent the reality of objects and people for marketing purposes. What interests me now is my ability to make things happen through the introduction of a camera, as well as the ability to reveal what would normally be left unseen. These images are my biggest departure from traditional representation, using technology to capture energy that is outside our perception, revealing the magic that is all around us.

— Michael O'Neill





Artist Biography

Michael O'Neill is the new Director of Development and an instructor of photography at the Light Factory Photo Arts Center in Charlotte, North Carolina. He has an MFA in photography from New Mexico State University in Las Cruces and a BA in Psychology from Wake Forest University in Winston Salem, NC. He teaches photography and visual literacy at Queens University in Charlotte where he designed the new darkrooms at the Sarah Belk Gambrell Center for the Arts and Civic Engagement; he has over 15 years of experience teaching photography. O'Neill is a board member of the OBRA Collective; he has exhibited his artwork across the country and has work in the permanent collections at the Betchler Museum of Modern Art, the Palace of the Governors in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and Queens University in Charlotte. His photographs have been published in the *Pinhole Journal*, *Len's Journal*, and the *Poetics of Light* by Eric Renner and Nancy Spencer.

Invitation to Create

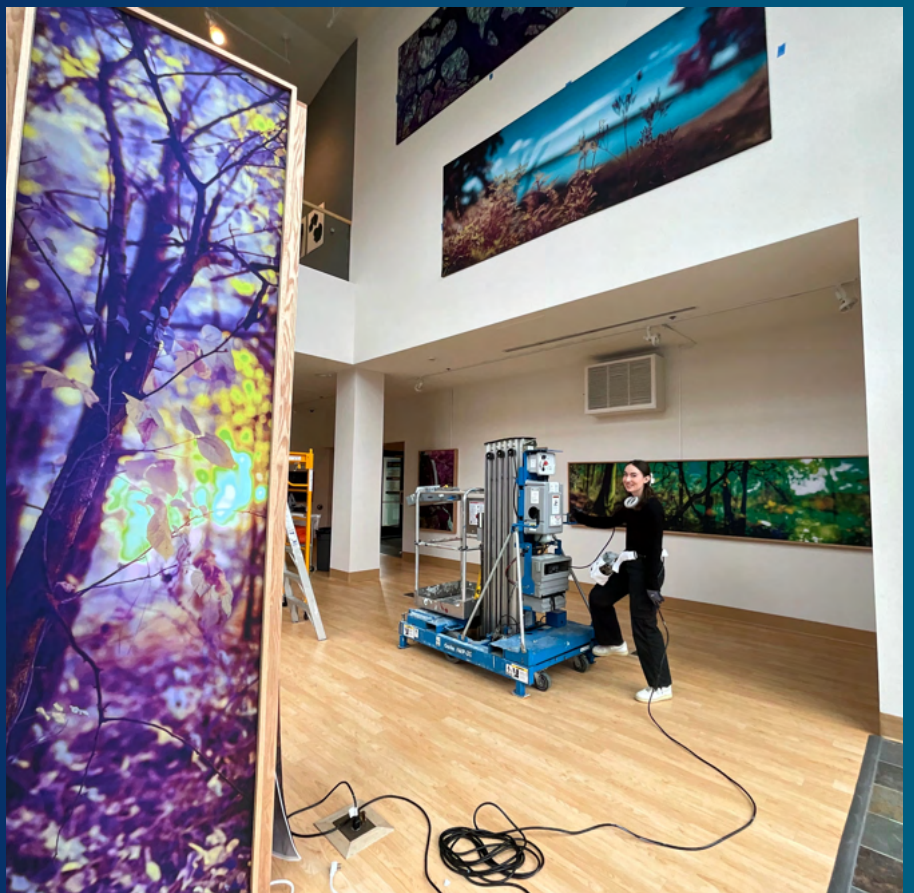
Michael O'Neill's use of color invites us to reimagine our relationship with the landscape in his photographs. By creating images that render the environment in "other-worldly colors," we are encouraged to step beyond what we know in order to think about the subject differently.

How might you use color as a method to encourage a deeper connection to something you care about?

Try visualizing a place that is significant to you. What colors do you typically associate with this place? What happens to your perception of this place if you imagine it in a completely different color?



Behind the Scenes



Installation Images



Installation Images



**Selected works
in the exhibition**





Michael O'Neill
Killian Road, 2021
 Print on fabric

Michael O'Neill
G Tree, 2023
 Print on fabric

Michael O'Neill
Tree Pillar, 2023
 Print on fabric



Michael O'Neill
Purple Maple, 2020
 Dye sublimation print on aluminum

Additional Resources

Santa Fe Art Photographer:
Michael O'Neill

Michael O'Neill Instagram

Michael O'Neill LinkedIn

Queens Magazine
Summer 2019

Lenscratch Fine Art Photography
Magical Realism

The Light Factory
Photo Arts Center

Queens Magazine
Winter 2017

Artists and Climate Change



THANK
YOU

FROM THE TURCHIN CENTER FOR THE VISUAL ARTS

The Turchin Center for the Visual Arts at Appalachian State University engages visitors from the university, community, nation and beyond in creating unique experiences through dynamic and accessible exhibition, education, outreach and collection programs. These programs inspire and support a lifelong engagement with the visual arts and create opportunities for participants to learn more about themselves and the world around them.

SHARE YOUR WORK WITH US AT #TCVAATHOME !



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