

ARTILLERY

CHRISTOPHER RUSSELL

by Cooper Johnson ·

May 25, 2016

Christopher Russell has made several series of works by scratching the outlines of objects or patterns into photographs of dreary nature scenes, empty domestic interiors, and even high-contrast images of lens flare. In his latest show, “Ersatz Infinities,” Russell continues to explore the relationship between viewer and image, but he now broadens his investigation into the territory of digital imagery.



Christopher Russell, *The Falls XXX* (2016), courtesy of the artist and Mark Moore Gallery.

Unlike with his previous work, the base photographs of “Ersatz Infinities” have only traces of scene, subject or object. Each photo is washed out, filtered into a monochrome. Harsh lens flare has been subdued into a gentle scattering of light. But as the original image drifts into immateriality, floating somewhere between physical space and pure color, the work prompts us to ask new questions about sensation and the experience of place.



Christopher Russell, *The Falls XXXIII* (2016), courtesy of the artist and Mark Moore Gallery.

In the scratched images of “Ersatz Infinities,” Russell is no longer adding objects into the physical space of the underlying photograph, or playing off of their features, but seems more interested in the compression of depth and space into a single surface or screen. The flat, polygonal landscapes and geometric abstractions of “Ersatz Infinities” often include patches of stippled images, where a grid of marks in varying thicknesses indicate depth, light and space. However, in the cold numerical precision of the spacing and placement of each mark, is an intimate moment, a record of human touch. Russell creates these moments in larger compositions too, by making imperfect copies of otherwise identical images, as in the side panels in *The Falls XXVII* (2016).

Russell once expressed that when he started working with digital printing, part of the “preciousness” of the medium of photography seemed to disappear. Maybe this also applies to a general trend in photography, but as Russell’s images become more digital, it’s as if Russell is trying to hold on to something for us, even if it is only through small, delicate acts of violence. To whatever extent there is a sense of loss, Russell’s work evokes complex feelings, tensions and aesthetic considerations.

Christopher Russell, "Ersatz Infinities," April 16 to June 18, 2016, at Mark Moore Gallery, 5790 Washington Blvd., Culver City, California 90232, www.markmooregallery.com.