



Born

1973, Stuttgart, Germany

Education

Högskolan för Fotografi och Film Göteborg, Sweden; University of Essen, Germany; MFA, University of California, Los Angeles, CA

Lives and Works

Los Angeles, CA and Cologne, Germany

About the Artist

Florian Maier-Aichen's digitally altered photographs are closer to the realm of drawing and fiction than documentation. He embraces difficult techniques, chooses equipment that produces accidents such as light leaks and double exposures, and uses computer enhancements to introduce imperfections and illogical elements into images that paradoxically are visually right, though they are technically wrong. Often employing an elevated viewpoint (the objective but haunting "God's-eye view" of aerial photography and satellite imaging), Maier-Aichen creates idealized, painterly landscapes. Interested in places where landscape and cityscape meet, he chooses locations and subjects from the American West and Europe. Looking backwards for his influences, Maier-Aichen often reenacts or pays homage to the work of the pioneer photographers of the nineteenth century, sometimes even remaking their subject matter from their original standpoints. Always experimenting, he marries digital technologies with traditional processes and films (black-and-white, color, infrared, and tricolor), restoring and reinvigorating the artistry and alchemy of early photography.

Teaching Connections

Media and Materials

digital manipulation, photography

Key Words and Ideas

abstraction, composition, history, information, landscape, maps

Related Artists

Vija Celmins, An-My Lê, Julie Mehretu, Hiroshi Sugimoto, James Turrell

Photography used to be like alchemy. It was a medium of the few, and now it has turned into a mass medium. Maybe it's kind of reactionary to turn backwards to try to establish its artistry again but the most interesting part of it is process and texture. The digital camera is basically like a dead black box without anything else left.

DISCUSS

Before Viewing

- Consider the relationship between documentary photographs and photographs as art. Do photographs always reflect reality or truth? Can a photograph be fictional? Discuss these questions using examples of photographs from the news, art history, and popular culture.
- How has digital technology influenced the way we take photographs? How has photography changed since the nineteenth century?



Untitled (St. Francis Dam), 2009. C-print, 71½ x 93 inches. © Florian Maier-Aichen, courtesy Blum & Poe, Los Angeles, and 303 Gallery, New York

While Viewing

- Make a list of the tools and techniques that Maier-Aichen uses to alter or manipulate the images he photographs. Consider how his process encompasses the practices of traditional and contemporary photography.
- Pause on one photograph and discuss how the image conveys Maier-Aichen's interest in transforming a photograph back to an "unfinished" state. In what ways does the work reflect a more open-ended and less over-determined approach? How does the image open up your own mythmaking?

After Viewing

- How does Maier-Aichen reimagine the art of landscape photography? In what ways is his work related to early landscape photography? How does it differ? What do his images suggest about our relationship to nature and to technology?
- Maier-Aichen photographs painted maps and describes them as being very imprecise images that just give you an idea of a place and leave everything up to your imagination. How do these images relate to the other photographs he creates?

CREATE

- Alter a postcard image to fictionalize or reinterpret a familiar tourist or local destination.
- Consider how the methods of photography and topography represent place and location. Research photographs of a location in your neighborhood (or take them yourself) and find a map of that same location. Combine the two types of images to create a work of art that simultaneously represents and abstracts that place.



Rügenlandschaft, 2007. C-print, 42¾ x 75¼ inches. © Florian Maier-Aichen, courtesy Blum & Poe, Los Angeles, and Gallery 303, New York



Above June Lake, 2005. C-print, 86 x 72 inches. © Florian Maier-Aichen, courtesy Blum & Poe, Los Angeles, and 303 Gallery, New York.