

Kipp Wettstein Photographs

July 9 - August 7, 2011

Artist Reception Saturday July 9th - 5 to 7 p.m.

Artist Talk Sunday July 10th 12:30 p.m.



Landscape has always been part of life for [Kipp Wettstein](#) (b. 1979). Growing up in a U.S. Forest Service work camp on the north rim of the Grand Canyon and subsequently moving to the glaciated suburbs of Juneau, Alaska, Wettstein has always been faced with overwhelming landscape. But it wasn't until he began high-altitude firefighting in the mountains of Oregon and Colorado that his appreciation for landscape evolved into a direct pursuit: to understand the relationship between modern society and our collective ideas of 'nature.' During his two-years working in the photography department of The New Yorker magazine, his questions about landscape began to crystallize.

After leaving The New Yorker in 2005, he began work with photographer **Robert Polidori** documenting the devastation of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. Polidori's body of work, titled "After the Flood," was featured in The New Yorker and as a special exhibit in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Wettstein's experience in New Orleans raised more questions about place, history, expectations, and ultimately our society's collective literacy in its interpretation of landscape.

In addition to his ongoing large-format project in the Great Basin of the southwestern United States, Wettstein, has attracted some attention for his handmade, purpose-specific, **large-format cameras** which will be on display at the exhibit.

THE PROJECT - Kipp Wettstein



"For Water Will Not Do" investigates the history and legacy of Mormon settlement in the Great Basin of America—the sprawling, arid landmass including Utah, Nevada, Oregon, and California—during the second half of the nineteenth century. This project focuses on a single river within the Basin, the Colorado River. The story of the Colorado and its relationship to today's American society can only be understood through a historical lens, through the sudden Mormon settlement and subsequent waves of

westward expansion.

The mark of Wettstein's own out-cast Mormon ancestors and their facilitation of the westward expansion is written in the ghost towns along the Colorado, but the whole story is much more complicated, enduring, and ever-changing. It is about a declining river and an environmental disaster; it is the setting of harsh beauty that is home to nearly thirty-four million Americans. This body of work attempts to understand the historical and cultural forces that led to the extraordinary effort to 'tame' a landscape. It is also a record of a complex environment in an unprecedented transitional state with a large slice of American culture inescapably in tow.