



Brett Van Ort Discusses his Photographic Series 'Minescape,' Currently on View at Venice Arts Gallery

LOS ANGELES, CA – (NOVEMBER 29, 2012)

Artist's Talk:
Thursday, December 6, 7–9pm

Exhibition Dates:
November 10–December 19, 2012



On Thursday, December 6th, from 7:00 to 9:00pm, Venice Arts Gallery will host artist Brett Van Ort as he discusses his series 'Minescape,' which explores the lasting impacts of war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the devastation that landmines inflict on both landscapes and people for years after conflicts subside. The event is free and open to the public.

This interactive artist's talk is held in conjunction with Van Ort's solo exhibition at Venice Arts Gallery, which features large-scale, interactive photographs exploring Bosnian and Herzegovinian landscapes still infected by the specter of landmines, 15 years after the war concluded there. Pairing lush, alluring landscapes with stark photographs of prosthetic limbs and the landmines themselves, Van Ort asks us to consider our own relationship with the hidden, man-made dangers embedded within the natural world. Venice Arts Gallery is excited to wrap up its yearlong investigation of the elements of our natural world—earth, wind, fire, and water—by presenting Van Ort's solo exhibition.

Leftover munitions and landmines from the wars in the early 1990s still litter the countryside in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Van Ort traveled there in late 2009 to photograph areas that were once the front lines of the Bosnian War.

About the project, Van Ort writes, "As an avid hiker and backpacker, raised in an American city, I have always found nature to be easily packaged, conquerable, and pleasurable

CONTACT:

Elysa Voshell
Gallery & Public Programs Manager
310.392.0846
elysa@venicearts.org

VENICE ARTS

1702 Lincoln Blvd.
Venice, CA 90291

www.venicearts.org

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to roam through and explore. The inherent fear of wilderness in all of us has subsided as we have constructed our urban environment over the past few centuries. I chose to photograph the former front lines of the Bosnian War as a way of challenging this lack of fear. When we are forced to recognize the power of nature, in the form of a natural disaster or, in this case, a man-made disaster; we feel the trepidation our ancestors dealt with on a daily basis.



While working in the fields in Bosnia, I was told by workers from NGO Landmine Survivors Initiative not to wander into rural areas without a guide. Numerous people told me the safest place to be was on a road or on the tarmac. Fourteen years after the conflict ended, caution had to be taken with every step.

As the vast majority of the mining was undocumented or known only to foot soldiers who fought in the areas, many innocent civilians continue to lose their lives. According to the Mine Action Centre for Bosnia and Herzegovina (BHMIC) just over 3.5% of the country was still contaminated by landmines in 2009. Today, 2.8% of the country is still considered a minefield.



However, many of the de-miners in the field estimate roughly 10% of the country can still be deemed a landmine area. They feel that nowhere in the countryside is safe as they may clear one area but a torrential downpour may unearth and move landmines. These unearthed landmines find their way into vicinities that were deemed safe weeks, months, or even years ago. BHMIC also continues to find areas at one time considered safe that now require additional de-mining activity.

This work displays the regenerative power of nature and the devastating effect that landmines inflict on a populace. Human beings have an almost insatiable appetite to expand, explore, conquer, and transform nature into civilization. Ironically, in this instance, it is a man-made killing machine that keeps the setting in its natural state."

Minescape will be published as a book by Daylight in March 2013.



All photographs above by Brett Van Ort from his series "Minescape"

About Brett Van Ort

Brett was born in Washington D.C. and raised and schooled in Texas. He moved to Los Angeles, California after obtaining an undergraduate degree in film. He worked as a camera assistant and camera operator for several years on various films, documentaries, commercials and television shows. Brett soon found still photography as a more personal, creative outlet that allowed him to pursue and tell stories that he felt passionate about.

Spending his summers on the farm where his mother grew up instilled a great respect for nature in him from a young age. He has always been interested in land, the outdoors and how we as humans use the environment to both our benefit and detriment. Many of his personal projects focus on the landscape, and our interaction with our environment.

Brett splits his time between Los Angeles and London but finds himself in various locations around the world pursuing stories and photographs he feels are important.

About Venice Arts

Venice Arts runs education and mentoring programs in documentary photography, filmmaking, and multimedia primarily targeting Los Angeles area low-income youth. Venice Arts also implements regional, statewide, and international projects with both adults and children; runs the Institute for Photographic Empowerment, a collaboration with the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism; presents exhibitions, public programs, and workshops for adults centered around documentary photography and film at the Venice Arts Gallery; and consults on media arts, visual storytelling, and arts education with organizations and groups locally and internationally. Venice Arts will celebrate its 19th Anniversary Gala on November 3, 2012, from 5–8pm. To find out more about Venice Arts, visit www.venicearts.org.

Location & Hours

Venice Arts Gallery
1702 Lincoln Blvd., Venice CA 90291
310.392.0846

Monday–Friday, 10am–6pm & by appointment
Gallery & Public Programs are free and open to the public.