

NEWS RELEASE

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Moments, Photographs and Sculpture by John Ruppert, on View through July at Adkins Arboretum

China's strange, misty mountains and a tall cascading waterfall in Iceland greet visitors to Adkins Arboretum Visitor's Center in *Moments*, an exhibit of large, superbly crafted photographs by internationally known artist John Ruppert on view through July 29. There will be a reception on Sat., June 25 from 3 to 5 p.m. to meet the artist and learn about his fascination with the effects of changing light, shifting atmospheres, moving water, and ever-evolving geological forces.

When Ruppert takes a photograph, he's not just trying to capture a beautiful scene. What interests him more is how the landscape got to be the



*John Ruppert, "Sea Cave/The Iceland Project 2012-13"
archival print, 10 3/4" x 40"*

way it was at that very moment in time. On a visit to an island in Maine, he found boulders along the water's edge worn smooth by centuries of wave action. During an artist's residency in Iceland, he photographed glaciers where gritty stains in the ice traced the patterns of melting water.

A full professor and former chair of the Department of Art at the University of Maryland, College Park, Ruppert is best known for his cast-metal sculptures, including a huge aluminum pumpkin on view outside the Visitor's Center. His interest in the physical process of casting with molten metal parallels his passion for exploring how landscapes change over eons of geological time as well as in fleeting moments of shifting light and atmosphere.

Ruppert is an experimenter. He freely tries things out. Most of the images in the show are composites of several photographs digitally "stitched" together in his computer. The show's title, *Moments*, refers to how the photos, taken one after another, actually show the landscape over several moments of time combined into one image.

But it's not just the physical changes of the landscape that he's exploring. He's also giving a taste of how it feels to be in that landscape by presenting his photographs in several different ways.

While on a team-teaching visit to China, Ruppert traveled to the Zhangjiajie Mountains, whose peculiar pillar-like shapes emerging from fog were made famous by classic Chinese brush painting. To give a sense of the luminous light emanating from the fog, he printed his images of the shadowy mountains directly onto tall aluminum plates. Light reflects softly off the aluminum, and as you move, it magically shifts with you.

Two photographs of rocks and water on the edge of an island in Maine received a very different treatment. Here the images are on shiny sheets of acrylic.

"I wanted to play up the light being reflected off the water and the transparency of looking through the water," Ruppert explained. "The acrylic carries kind of a wet look and, being very reflective, you get reflected in it as well."

This kind of mischief runs through all of Ruppert's work. While his images continually call to mind the grand and sublime beauty of traditional landscape art, there are always paradoxes and comic elements. The towering cascade he photographed in Iceland is broken up into segments like frames in a film, emphasizing the time it takes for the water to fall. A volcanic crater vent he shot on the same trip is repeated four times to experiment with how different its colors look next to the contrasting hues he inserted as backgrounds.

A particularly odd thing happens in one of the water photos from Maine when both the breeze and light changed.

"You can see this little weird thing here is a moment when the water was like this, and then this is another moment," Ruppert said, pointing to a junction of mismatched ripples and reflections. "A lot of times, when you stitch things, there are funny little artifacts of the process."

For Ruppert, photography has become a kind of drawing tool that he can use to hint at the forces continually shaping his landscapes. By merging the instants of time caught in several photos, he plays with both space and time to create compelling glimpses of the earth's constant state of transformation.

This show is part of Adkins Arboretum's ongoing exhibition series of work on natural themes by regional artists. It is on view through July 29 at the Arboretum Visitor's Center located at 12610 Eveland Road near Tuckahoe State Park in Ridgely. Contact the Arboretum at 410-634-2847, ext. 0 or info@adkinsarboretum.org for gallery hours.

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Adkins Arboretum is a 400-acre native garden and preserve at the headwaters of the Tuckahoe Creek in Caroline County. Open year round, the Arboretum is the region's resource for native plants and education programs about nature, ecology and wildlife conservation gardening. For more information, visit adkinsarboretum.org or call 410-634-2847, ext. 0.

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