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## BAMPFA Mounts Exhibition of Photographs of Deep Springs College by Sam Contis

On View May 3–August 27, 2017

### MATRIX Presentation Marks First Solo Museum Exhibition of Work by Rising Bay Area Artist



(Berkeley, CA) April 18, 2017—This spring, the UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive ([BAMPFA](#)) will open the first museum exhibition of work by the emerging Bay Area artist Sam Contis. The exhibition will present a series of photographs that provide a glimpse into the isolated world of Deep Springs, an alternative liberal arts college located in the California desert that remains one of America's last exclusively male institutions of higher learning. On view from May 3 through August 27, [Sam Contis / MATRIX 266](#) is the latest installment in BAMPFA's [MATRIX Program](#), which introduces Bay Area audiences to rarely seen work by exceptional contemporary artists.

An Oakland-based artist whose work explores the mutability of gender, Contis was granted access to photograph scenes of daily life at Deep Springs College, a school where Socratic educational methods are coupled with intensive manual labor and near-total isolation from society. Founded in 1917, the college is located in a secluded valley on the California-Nevada border, where students participate in [UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY ART MUSEUM · PACIFIC FILM ARCHIVE](#)  
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the operations of a working farm and cattle ranch. In addition to Contis's recent images, the exhibition will also include archival photographs from the school's early history, inviting viewers to reflect on the historical continuities in the rituals of daily life found in its small, all-male student body.

Capturing the breathtaking beauty of Deep Springs College's remote desert setting, Contis's photographs are a powerful exploration of the relationship between masculinity and the iconography of the American West. The subtly androgynous portrayals of her subjects complicate the mythology of the ruggedly masculine cattle rancher, recalling instead the ambiguous gender roles that often existed in the mostly male communities of the early American frontier. Contis's exhibition at BAMPFA coincides with the presentation of a companion set of images from her work at Deep Springs College that will go on view at New York's [Klaus von Nichtssagend Gallery](#) on May 12.

"BAMPFA is proud to be the first museum to mount a solo exhibition of work by Sam Contis, a promising new voice in the Bay Area photography scene whose images challenge our understanding of American masculinity in fresh and engaging ways," said BAMPFA Director and Chief Curator Lawrence Rinder, who curated Contis's MATRIX exhibition. "As an artist who complicates traditional modes of thinking about gender, space, and physicality, Contis exemplifies the MATRIX Program's commitment to spotlighting creative voices who expand our appreciation of art and society."

In conjunction with the opening of *Sam Contis / MATRIX 266*, BAMPFA will host an [artist's talk](#) with Contis on Wednesday, May 3 at 12:15 p.m., during which the artist will discuss her experience documenting the cloistered community of Deep Springs College. The talk is free with museum admission. The exhibition coincides with the publication of *Deep Springs*, a book-length photo essay by Contis that will be available at the BAMPFA store this spring.

In conjunction with the opening of *Sam Contis / MATRIX 266*, BAMPFA will host an [artist's talk](#) with Contis on Wednesday, May 3 at 12:15 p.m., during which the artist will discuss her experience documenting the cloistered community of Deep Springs College. She will also return to BAMPFA on Saturday, May 6 at 4:00 p.m. for a conversation with Deep Springs alumnus Abdramane Diabate. The conversation will be followed by a book-signing. Both talks are free with museum admission. The exhibition coincides with the release of Contis's first monograph, *Deep Springs*, published by MACK, that will be available at the BAMPFA store this spring.

### **Support**

*Sam Contis / MATRIX 266* is organized by BAMPFA Director and Chief Curator Lawrence Rinder. The MATRIX Program is made possible by a generous endowment gift from Phyllis C. Wattis and the continued support of the BAMPFA Trustees.

### **Above**

1) Sam Contis: *Cover*, 2015; gelatin silver print; 12 x 9 ½ in.; courtesy of the artist; 2) Sam Contis: *Echo*, 2015; gelatin silver print; 8 ¾ x 7 in.; courtesy of the artist.

### **Visitor Information**

#### Address

2155 Center Street, Berkeley, CA 94704

#### Hours

Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Fridays and Saturdays, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Information  
bampfa.org  
(510) 642-0808

#### Gallery Admission

\$12 general admission

\$10 non-Berkeley students, disabled, 65+

Free for BAMPFA members; UC Berkeley students, faculty, staff, and retirees; 18 & under + one adult

Free First Thursdays: Free gallery admission on the first Thursday of each month

#### **Social Media**

[facebook.com/bampfa](https://facebook.com/bampfa)

[twitter.com/bampfa](https://twitter.com/bampfa)

[instagram.com/bampfa](https://instagram.com/bampfa)

#### **About BAMPFA**

Internationally recognized for its art and film programming, the University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA) is a platform for cultural experiences that transform individuals, engage communities, and advance the local, national, and global discourse on art and film. BAMPFA is UC Berkeley's primary visual arts venue with screenings of some 450 films and presentations of up to twenty exhibitions annually. BAMPFA's mission is to inspire the imagination and ignite critical dialogue through art and film.

The institution's collection of more than 19,000 works of art dates from 3,000 BCE to the present day and includes important holdings of Neolithic Chinese ceramics, Ming and Qing Dynasty Chinese painting, Old Master works on paper, Italian Baroque painting, early American painting, Abstract Expressionist painting, contemporary photography, and Conceptual art. BAMPFA's collection also includes more than 17,500 films and videos, including the largest collection of Japanese cinema outside of Japan, impressive holdings of Soviet cinema, West Coast avant-garde film, seminal video art, as well as hundreds of thousands of articles, reviews, posters, and other ephemera related to the history of film.