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## Romantic, Post-Apocalyptic Photographs by the Artist Who Caught Sally Mann's Eye

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While studying graphic design as an undergraduate at California College of Arts (CCA), Christopher Russell branched out into photography in pursuit of artistic freedoms. The transition was cemented on the occasion that he exhibited a series of works in a hallway at CCA, where they were seen by none other than Sally Mann, who loved them. Perpetuating his own photographic dialogue ever since, a graphic quality remains present in Russell's works, a result of the way he physically digs into the picture plane, scratching away at the uppermost layer of his photographs. This incisive layer of nature motifs and animal silhouettes, in his words "a romantic overlay," is the means through which Russell attempts to "draw out some of the narrative possibility that [he sees] in the image." Now the artist has translated this narrative into words in a large, handcrafted manuscript titled GRFALWKV—the centerpiece of his newest show at Culver City's Mark Moore Gallery.

Russell describes GRFALWKV as "mining what's in my own head and putting it into a book." Rather than following a traditional storyline with a point of climax, the five chapters follow the artist's stream of consciousness regarding the "notions of finality," each one building upon its antecedent. Incorporating elements of popular culture, history, and art theory, the book focuses on catastrophe, trauma, and end-of-the-world scenarios. Complementary photographic works surround the tome, featuring a post-apocalyptic world where bright white starbursts are indices of explosion and similarly rendered wolves and birds have inherited the earth. Ruminations of death and rebirth, the photographs begin as outdoor scenes, often treetops soaked in sunlight, which are subjected to Russell's razorblade. Cutting and scraping away at the surface, he literally and figuratively leaves viewers with harmonious expressions of the transience of life.



Left: Christopher Russell  
Explosion #7, 2014  
Mark Moore Gallery

# GRFALWKV



Right: Christopher Russell  
GRFALWKV, 2013-2014  
Mark Moore Gallery