

• FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE •

**Christine Nguyen and Chris Oatey**  
*Indexing Nature*

January 20 — February 17, 2024  
**Opening Reception: Saturday, January 20, 5 – 8 pm**  
Free and open to the public | Artists in attendance

David B. Smith Gallery is proud to present *Indexing Nature*, a two-person exhibition by Denver-based artists Christine Nguyen and Chris Oatey. Presented in the Main Gallery, *Indexing Nature* will feature large scale works on paper that each artist created in unique conversation with both natural and manmade environmental factors.

Sunflowers harvested in late summer are the focus of Christine Nguyen's mixed media cyanotypes. Stemming from her *Stars, Constellations, and Sunflower* series, an ongoing body of work started in 2014, works featured in *Indexing Nature* capture her annual process of cultivating, harvesting, and recording sunflowers via cyanotypes exposed in the evening sun. Newly developed in this recent collection of sunflower works, Nguyen has incorporated salt crystals and hand-applied silver leaf onto the surface of the cyanotypes, permanently encrusting works with natural crystalline forms and precious metal adornment. Indicative of Nguyen's work, the macro and micro worlds collide in her sprawling compositions, where traces of pollen, star clusters, and fractal geometry become indistinguishable from one another.

With the use of his car, paper, and a parking lot, Chris Oatey drives over a blank sheet of paper to record the erosion and wear of local manmade environs. Once imprinted onto the sheet, back in his studio Oatey uses carbon paper to highlight the parking lot texture, the marks of his own hand recorded during the process. These parking lot etchings comprise half of Oatey's works in *Indexing Nature*, while the rest are compositions wherein the reused carbon sheet, infused with remnants of marks made in the studio, becomes a repeating form that builds the image. Where the carbon paper initially served as a means to highlight marks collected from the ground, its function changes when its overall shape becomes a central visual element of Oatey's abstract works.

Traces of the world, both from cultivated flora and constructed urban scenery, are recorded and translated into sizable works on paper in *Indexing Nature*. Though inspired by opposing subject matter, Christine Nguyen's organic plant life and Chris Oatey's concrete and heavy machinery, works exist harmoniously in atmospheric conversation with one another, highlighting the visual similarities of loose gravel to cosmic dust. Materially focused and process-heavy, Nguyen and Oatey work in tandem to offer new insights into the categorization and cataloging of natural scenery.



Christine Nguyen, *Stars, Constellations, Sunflowers 2023-4*, 2023, silver leaf, salt crystals, and cyanotype on cotton paper, 77 x 50 in. (195.6 x 127 cm)



Chris Oatey, *Flower Wheel (Summer)*, 2023, carbon on paper, 44.75 x 25 in. (113.7 x 63.5 cm)

### **About Christine Nguyen**

Christine Nguyen was born and raised in California and currently resides in Aurora, CO and also works in Long Beach, CA. She is a lover of animals, plants, and nature.

Nguyen received her B.F.A from California State University, Long Beach and M.F.A from University of California, Irvine. Exhibitions of her work have been shown nationally and internationally. Her works can be found in various collections such as the J.Paul Getty Museum Department of Photographs, Getty Research Institute, Armand Hammer Museum, Grunwald Center for Graphic Art, Los Angeles World Airport's Collection, Cedars-Sinai in Los Angeles, CA; Burger Collection, Hong Kong; The Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Hanoi, VN; Long Beach Museum of Art, Kleefeld Contemporary Art Museum in Long Beach, CA; Cleveland Clinic, Cleveland, OH; and Microsoft Collection.

Nguyen has completed artist residencies at Montello Foundation, NV; Pacific Bonsai Museum, WA; Gyeongju Int. Residency Art Festa 2018, S. Korea; Theodore Payne Foundation, CA; BaikArt with Cemeti Art House, Indonesia; U.S Dept. of Interior-BLM Eastern Interior AIR, Alaska; Wildfjords (WFAR), Iceland; Montalvo Art Center, CA; Tamarind Institute, NM; and the Headlands Center for the Arts, CA. Nguyen is currently a 2022-2024 Redline Artist in Residence in Denver, CO.

### **About Chris Oatey**

Chris Oatey has a BS in Cartography from the University of Colorado, Boulder and MFA from Otis College of Art and Design. He has had numerous solo and group exhibitions throughout the U.S. including Abundant, Bountiful, and Beautiful at the Long Beach Museum of Art and Paperworks at the Craft and Folk Art Museum Los Angeles (CAFAM). He has received a grant from The Durfee Foundation, a residency fellowship from the Ucross Foundation, and was the recipient of the Friends of Contemporary Art + Photography Prize from the New Mexico Museum of Art. His work is currently featured at MCA Denver as part of the Octopus Initiative lending library.

With a practice situated in a space where predetermined structures invite random forces to assist in their making, Oatey's finished works serve as documentation of this process, engaging in a dialogue with the mechanically reproduced image. Informed by a cartographic sensibility, he produces a wide range of works from the intricately hand-drawn to the raw, immediate recording of his everyday surroundings, skillfully documenting surface textures in and out of the studio. His work highlights the unexpected and overlooked aspects of both materials and ordinary sites, and carbon paper allows him to slow down the reception of the work whether he uses it to create imagery or sculptural installations.

### **About David B. Smith Gallery**

David B. Smith Gallery is committed to presenting intelligent and culturally relevant exhibitions in its Denver location, featuring the region's most important emerging talent alongside internationally recognized artists. Through its curatorial program, participation in art fairs, and extensive media coverage in publications such as *Artforum*, *Art in America*, and *ARTnews*, David B. Smith Gallery has cultivated a strong regional, national and international collector audience. *The New York Times* hailed the gallery as offering "an exciting contrast of cutting edge works." The gallery also maintains an active publishing division, which produces exhibition catalogues and editions.

David B. Smith Gallery is a member of the New Art Dealers Alliance (NADA).

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