

**Jake Longstreth**  
**FREE RANGE**

gregory lind gallery



**Idaho Falls** 2006, acrylic on panel, 36 x 36 inches

“A place belongs forever to whoever claims it hardest, remembers it most obsessively, wrenches it from itself, shapes it, renders it, loves it so radically that he remakes it in his own image.”

-Joan Didion, *The White Album*

I first met Jake Longstreth back in 2012 when he had just moved from New York to Los Angeles. As a gallery director, I meet a great deal of aspiring artists who have just relocated and are working to build their burgeoning careers on the West Coast. Rarely do I meet people who are as industrious and easygoing as Jake. I was immediately taken in by his keen eye and witty intellect—qualities that shined through the way he conducted himself and in the stories he shared. It wasn't until after my first studio visit with Jake that I realized I had already come into contact with his paintings six years prior. His earlier work had caught my eye when working with Gregory Lind Gallery on a previous exhibition that I had curated. When I realized that Jake was an artist whose work I had noticed back in 2006, my respect and appreciation quickly solidified.

This early work of Jake's is comprised of photo-based paintings extracted from the Californian and American landscape. Made between 2005-2009, these paintings depict examples of corporate retail architecture—a Burger King or a Home Depot, for instance. The buildings are presented from vantage points, which subtly re-contextualize their sense of purpose and place. Occasionally, a slim portion of the composition gives way to some uncultivated, uninhabited terrain or the simplicity of shopping center landscaping. What emerges from these bold paintings is the artist's amused exploration of these replicated environments' stupefying sameness.

The painting *Idaho Falls* (2006) is one of the early works from this period. It initially reads as a realist painting, meticulously rendered, yet the scene reveals a dreamy sense of displacement. The Toys R Us in the image exists in our collective imagination as much as it does down the street. This displacement is also exemplified in the painting *Crematory* (2008) where a manicured concrete pathway frames a lawn freshly cut in a checkerboard-pattern. Here, the grass presents a world that is seemingly accessible only for its own manufactured purpose.

In the distance, rolling hills disappear into the horizon. The austerity of commonplace structures interrupts the natural environment, not as a commentary on corporate culture or as an adulteration of natural spaces but rather to represent the peripheral connections we unconsciously develop with our environment.

Over time, multiple visits to his studio revealed a new body of work, some of which appears here in *Free Range*. I was excited by the risk I felt he was taking with the not-so-trendy subject matter of pure landscape. The initial series, *Particulate Matter*, a collection of small-scale solitary landscapes are solely composed from memory and imagination, however they inescapably resemble some of California's bleaker and dustier regions. In these works, the artist draws from the general influence of living in Los Angeles and traveling across the West's vast open spaces. These landscape paintings are not a caricature of nature, but a respite from hyperbole. Sky and land are contrasted in style and technique. Landmasses are comprised of small, brittle brushstrokes in varied shades of earth tones, while the enigmatic gradations of the sky illuminate a spectrum of moods and tones, both obvious and subtle. Jake's landscapes are a sublime, slightly sour, rendering of light and space. As an overall body of work, Jake's paintings coalesce the despair found in Robert Adams' photographs, the flatness and sparse detail of Alex Katz, and the lucidity of early David Hockney. In a final gesture, Jake then floats the canvasses in frames, often finished in a smoggy grey—a complimentary tone, both formally and conceptually, to the overall palette of the series.

A selection of these paintings as well as new, larger scale works has been brought together for the exhibition *Free Range*. The term “Free Range,” which denotes a method of farming as it relates to the production of meat, eggs and dairy, has become yet another ethical colloquialism along with other eco-conscious catch-all phrases like “fair-trade,” “green” and “organic.” In its appealing and marketable vagueness, “free range” could be ascribed to a general worldview. Jake uses the term to illuminate what these paintings might poetically evoke. The artist might also be considering “Free Range” as a conscious riff on our collective vision of the “open range”—evoking limitless possibilities, both spiritual and capitalistic—a drive as productive as much as it is heedless.

In *Trailhead Lot 1* and *Trailhead Lot 2* (2014), mountains and clouds dwarf a tiny parking lot, inserted almost as an afterthought, at the bottom

of the paintings. In these larger works, Jake's tiny hatch-like brushwork is less prevalent, and the sky appears as a more dominant element of the composition. But this is deceiving; the paintings stubbornly maintain their roughly 50/50 split between sky and land. The added elements of a cloud and a parking lot provide a new perspective that is unconditionally terrestrial yet teeming with animation.

In the series entitled *Suppression* (2014), the artist depicts smoke clouds billowing from mountains — a presumed forest fire or other sinister event. As dramatic as the fires may be in relation to Jake's overall tranquil scenes, they are a matter of course, and appear in these landscapes due to an ambiguous mix of natural processes and our own faulty stewardship. The plumes are painted harmoniously with the hues and tones found in the mountains from which they emerge. They portray a landscape for which we all have some varying frame of reference.

In these recent paintings, the artist frees himself from the confines of painting from a photographic image, and instead works from the unbound realm of the creative mind. From the small-scale, immaculately detailed landscapes dominated by a refined and unwavering sky, such as in *Blackberry Bramble* (2014) and *Los Angeles Diptych* (2014), to the larger-scale works that expand in both scale and focus, Jake is establishing himself as a contemporary painter of lyrical landscapes. In these works, Jake has created paintings that really seem to breathe. The paintings presented here in *Free Range* locate themselves in a discernable place, at an indiscernible time of day. They are like windows into a post-pastoral world. To look through these windows is to be enchanted by the artist's defiance of any idyllic sense of nature all the while retaining a veritable respite from the big city—an imagined place to find perspective and see the world anew.

Jake combines aspects of realism and abstraction through a palette suggestive of stagnation and renewal. His singularity emerges out of his ability to escape the dregs of manifest destiny and environmental unrest, putting a sense of sovereign timelessness back on the map. These landscapes are not loaded with politics, scandal, or representation. Instead, the vistas of Jake's paintings place the artist in the position of testing the possibilities of how to see the world. Today, the concept of free range exists within an increasingly urbanized world. On one side of the hill, a parking lot. On the other side, the potential of the unknown. This is Jake Longstreth's perpetual landscape. The concept of "free range," is after all, an illusion.

*Michael Smoler is a poet, artist, and currently a director at Blum & Poe in Los Angeles. He is the former owner/director of High Energy Constructs, an exhibition and performance venue previously located in Chinatown.*



**Crematory** 2008, acrylic on panel, 48 x 48 inches

**Free Range** 2014, oil on canvas, 60 x 40 inches









**Suppression** 2014, oil on canvas, 60 x 40 inches



**Trailhead Lot 1** 2014, oil on canvas, 60 x 40 inches



**Trailhead Lot 2** 2014, oil on canvas, 60 x 40 inches







**Suppression 3** 2014, oil on canvas in artist frame, 17 x 13 inches



**Particulate Matter 36** 2013, oil on canvas in artist frame, 17 x 13 inches

**Particulate Matter 17** 2013, oil on canvas in artist frame, 17 x 13 inches







**Blackberry Bramble** 2014, oil on canvas in artist frame, 19 x 15 inches



**Los Angeles** 2014, oil on canvas in artist frame, 19 x 15 inches

**Los Angeles Diptych** 2014, oil on canvas in artist frame, 19 x 33 inches



# JAKE LONGSTRETH

Born 1977 in Amenia, NY  
Lives and works in Los Angeles, CA

## EDUCATION

2005 MFA California College of the Arts, San Francisco, CA  
1999 BA Lewis and Clark College, Portland, OR

## SOLO AND TWO PERSON EXHIBITIONS

2015 *Free Range*, Gregory Lind Gallery, San Francisco, CA  
2014 *Jake Longstreth*, TRUDI Gallery, Los Angeles, CA  
2014 *Jake Longstreth and Sean McFarland*, Evergold Gallery, San Francisco, CA  
2013 *Particulate Matter*, Monya Rowe Gallery, NY, NY  
2011 *Pastures*, Gregory Lind Gallery, San Francisco, CA  
2008 *All it is*, Gregory Lind Gallery, San Francisco, CA  
2006 *Wabi Ranch*, Gregory Lind Gallery, San Francisco, CA

## GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2014 *Landscape City*, Eagle Rock Center for the Arts, Los Angeles, CA  
2013 *Being Paul Schrader*, Monya Rowe Gallery, NY, NY  
2012 *Decade, Celebrating 10 Years*, Gregory Lind Gallery, San Francisco, CA  
2010 *Skeptical Landscapes*, Herter Gallery, University of Massachusetts, Amherst  
*The Rule of Typical Things*, Gregory Lind Gallery, San Francisco, CA  
2009 *One To Many*, Partisan Gallery, San Francisco, CA  
*Group Show*, Samuel Freeman, Los Angeles, CA  
2008 *Group Show*, Hatch Gallery, Oakland, CA  
2007 *"Real" Space*, Mahan Gallery, Columbus, OH  
2006 *James Chronister and Jake Longstreth*, Gallery of Urban Art, Emeryville, CA  
*Material World*, Alliance Française, San Francisco, CA  
2005 *Cream from the Top*, Benicia Arts Center, Benicia, CA  
*MFA Exhibition*, CCA, San Francisco, CA  
*Other Planes of There*, Adobe Bookshop, San Francisco, CA  
*Human Zoo*, Lobot Gallery, Oakland, CA  
2004 *Murphy and Cadogan Fellowship Awards*, San Francisco Arts Commission, San Francisco, CA

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Chambers, Matthew. "An interview with Jake Longstreth." <http://gallery-trudi.tumblr.com>  
Chun, Kimberly. "An interview with Jake Longstreth," *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 5, 2014  
Editors. "Artist Explores The Inevitability Of Climate Change In Dreamy Painting Series," *The Huffington Post*, Arts & Culture, December 14, 2013  
Joliet, Laure. "Studio Visit With Jake Longstreth," *Sight Unseen*, November 8, 2013  
Heinrich, Will. "Inaugural Group Exhibition," *The New York Observer*, Arts, September 30, 2013  
Indrisek, Scott. "Jake Longstreth's Beautifully Dissonant, Monastically Simple Landscapes," *Blackbook*, Arts & Culture, December 19, 2013

Putrino, Matt. "Jake Longstreth's "Particulate Matter," *Nothing Major*, July 5, 2013  
Szpakowski, Michael "Michael Szpakowski on Jake Longstreth," *Turps Banana*, Issue 13, July 2013  
Bigman, Alex. "Pastures," *artpractical.com*, October 2011  
Richardson, Trevor, *Skeptical Landscapes*, catalog, 2010  
Helfand, Glen. "Jake Longstreth," *Artforum*, March 2009  
Cebulski, Frank. "Jake Longstreth at Gregory Lind Gallery," *Artweek*, March 2009  
Gannon, Victoria. "Jake Longstreth: All it is," *KQED Arts*, January 27, 2009  
Review. "Jake Longstreth," *daily serving.com*, January 21, 2009  
Beardshear, Kristi. "A Concrete View," *Artslant*, December 29, 2008  
Zarobell, John. "Jake Longstreth: Dystopian Exurban Landscapes," *Stark Guide*, December 22, 2008  
Baker, Kenneth. "Anemic Realism at Lind," *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 20, 2008  
Fee, Georgia. "Interview with Jake Longstreth," *Artslant*, December 2008  
Gentile, Jordan. "Cold structures-with even colder vibes," *The Other Paper*, June 7, 2007  
Valdez, Sarah. "Jake Longstreth," *Art in America*, May 2007  
Leaverton, Michael. "At Home on the Range," *SF Weekly*, January 17, 2007  
Baker, Kenneth. "Landscapes, real and imaginary, seen in the light of day," *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 6, 2007  
Helfand, Glen. "Jake Longstreth," *Critics' Picks*, *artforum.com*, December 2006

#### PUBLICATIONS

2015 Smoler, Michael. *Jake Longstreth: Free Range*, solo exhibition catalogue, Gregory Lind Gallery, San Francisco, CA  
2013 *New American Paintings, Pacific Coast Edition*, Open Studios Press, Cambridge, MA  
2008 *New American Paintings, Pacific Coast Edition*, December, Open Studios Press, Cambridge, MA  
2005 *New American Paintings, MFA Annual*, Open Studios Press, Cambridge, MA

#### AWARDS AND RESIDENCIES

2008 Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant  
2007 Artist in Residence, Kimmel Harding Nelson Center for the Arts, Nebraska City, NE  
2004 Murphy and Cadogan Fellowship Award

#### COLLECTIONS

Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, CA  
Whitney Museum of American Art Library  
Fidelity Investments, Boston, MA  
The Capital Group Companies, Los Angeles, CA

On the occasion of the exhibition:

**Jake Longstreth: *Free Range***

February 5 - March 14, 2015

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