



For Immediate Release - June 18, 2018

Obscura Gallery Presents

KURT MARKUS: MONUMENT VALLEY 2002-2017

Opening Reception: Friday, September 7, 2018, 5-7pm

Exhibition is on view September 7 – October 13, 2018



Kurt Markus, *Monument Valley, Utah*, 2011, 8x10", gelatin silver print.

Obscura Gallery proudly presents our first solo photographic exhibition in our new gallery space with Santa Fe photographer Kurt Markus. Kurt will be exhibiting his exceptional silver gelatin prints of Monument Valley, taken from 2002-2017. The exhibition opens with a reception on Friday, September 7, 2018 from 5-7pm at Obscura Gallery, 1405 Paseo de Peralta, Santa Fe, New Mexico. The exhibition is on view through October 13, 2018.

1405 Paseo de Peralta, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501 info@obscuragallery.net

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THE EXHIBITION:

Monument Valley is located at the four corners region spanning Utah and Arizona on the Navajo Nation Reservation. Tse'Bii'Ndzigaii, the Navajo name for Monument Valley meaning 'clearing among the rock', spans five square miles with fragile pinnacles of rock of sandstone that tower up to 1,000 feet. For hundreds of years, the Navajo have raised livestock and farmed small quantities of crops in the valley. Not just a place of habitation and livelihood, Monument Valley has significant meaning to the many Navajo who took refuge in the valley when forced out of Canyon De Chelly by the U.S. Army during the "Long Walk." An 1868 treaty allowed their return to their ancestral homeland and established the Navajo Reservation. Other parts of Monument Valley have been added to the Navajo Reservation over time. Today, an estimated 100 Navajo people live in the valley today. Monument Valley became popular with Hollywood when John Ford's first of many movies, *Stagecoach*, was shot there in 1938, starring John Wayne, and making him a star, as well as putting Westerns in a respected film genre.

Kurt Markus made his first trip to Monument Valley in 2002, thanks to an assignment from *Conde Nast Traveler*, British edition. Kurt confessed he had no idea what he was in for on that first visit, thinking it a tourist's destination and a backdrop for director John Ford's well-know Westerns. For Markus, the John Ford film, *The Searchers*, "touched a rawness that, if you know a bit of the West you could watch John Wayne rage across the landscape and not be embarrassed by bad costumes and corny dialogue. Ford finally made the film only he could have made."



Kurt Markus, *Monument Valley, Utah*, 2002, 11x14", gelatin silver print.

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Kurt was heartened by the fact that Ansel Adams, in spite of his back and forth relationship with the Southwest, had spent little time there. *“Thank God! Had he made it his other Yosemite, I would never have taken a camera to Monument Valley. Ansel’s shadow is long, wide and deep and most of us live and work within it; sadly, almost pitifully, many of us are also happy in his shadow; we put our tripods where his were, we wait for the same clouds and storms. But since Ansel touched so little of what Monument Valley offers, I have been emboldened to leave my mark on the place.”*



Kurt Markus, *Monument Valley, Utah*, 20x24", archival pigment ink print.

He writes: *“With or without clouds there is always something calling for my eye. The monuments seem to be placed by an unfathomable design, giving this 50- square-mile Tribal Park an intimate sense of scale. Monuments that tower a thousand feet close up still manage to impose themselves’ even at a distance. I’m coaxed to take witness of every condition there is, to see what might be revealed; as unimaginative as it seems to say, Monument Valley is reborn moment by moment, changing, forever new. Worthy of a life’s romance and discovery.”*



Kurt Markus, *Monument Valley, Utah*, 2002, 11x14", gelatin silver print.

Of his work and process:

"I come from an earlier era, pre-digital, and have seen no reason to quit the kind of photography that has challenged and nourished me since I began making pictures, in earnest, four decades ago. In that time, I have grown comfortable with film's limitations, even to the point of embracing them. Now, as then, I understand that the most difficult picture to make, successfully, is one created with the utmost simplicity. No gimmicks or intellectual overlays or concepts. Just a straight-ahead representation of what I have framed. Look with my eyes first, roughly decide where to put the camera and what lens to use, find the corners of the picture, retreat under the dark cloth, emerge, expose."

"Most of the time when I'm trying to make a landscape I don't need to work that fast. I'll chase clouds and light, for sure, but what I enjoy most is to let the land and sky leak into me, maybe guide me to a picture I might not have otherwise seen. Look with my eyes first, roughly decide where to put the camera and what lens to use, find the corners (got to locate those sometime because they will define the photograph). Retreat under the dark cloth. There's the image, already 4"x5" big on the Linhof ground glass, upside down and reversed. You really get the sense of what the picture will be. It's not a snapshot."

"Monument Valley is the one place that will always be there for me. No matter the comings and goings of the world's players, Monument Valley persists, in its own and uniquely quirkiness, delighting me, renewing me, challenging me, simply carving out pieces of my heart, for safe keeping. Thank you, Navajo Nation, for making Monument Valley what it is, without pretense or visible intent to modernize your sacred land. May that Wild West rocky road that drops down into the valley serve as the gateway to something more spiritual, a descent into another time."

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THE ARTIST:

Kurt Markus is an internationally acclaimed photographer, film maker, and writer. He is widely published, including *Vanity Fair*, *GQ*, *Rolling Stone*, *Travel + Leisure*, *New York Times Magazine*, *Outside*, *Esquire*, *Conde Nast Traveler*, *Texas Monthly*, *People*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *Men's and Women's Health*, *Vogue*, *Flair*, *German Elle*, *House and Garden*, and *Best Life*, among many others. He has done advertising campaigns for such clients as: Armani, BMW, Sony, Levi's, Timberland, Calvin Klein and Nike.

His monographs include three volumes on cowboys: *After Barbed Wire*, *Buckaroo*, and *Compuncher*; a book on boxers for which he traveled to New York, Dublin, Havana and Mexico City. In addition, under his own imprint, he published a book featuring the sand dune photographs of Brett and Edward Weston; as well as publishing a small volume in Japan, showcasing a fashion shoot in New Mexico in the spirit of Georgia O'Keeffe.



Portrait of Kurt Markus at Monument Valley, by Maria Markus

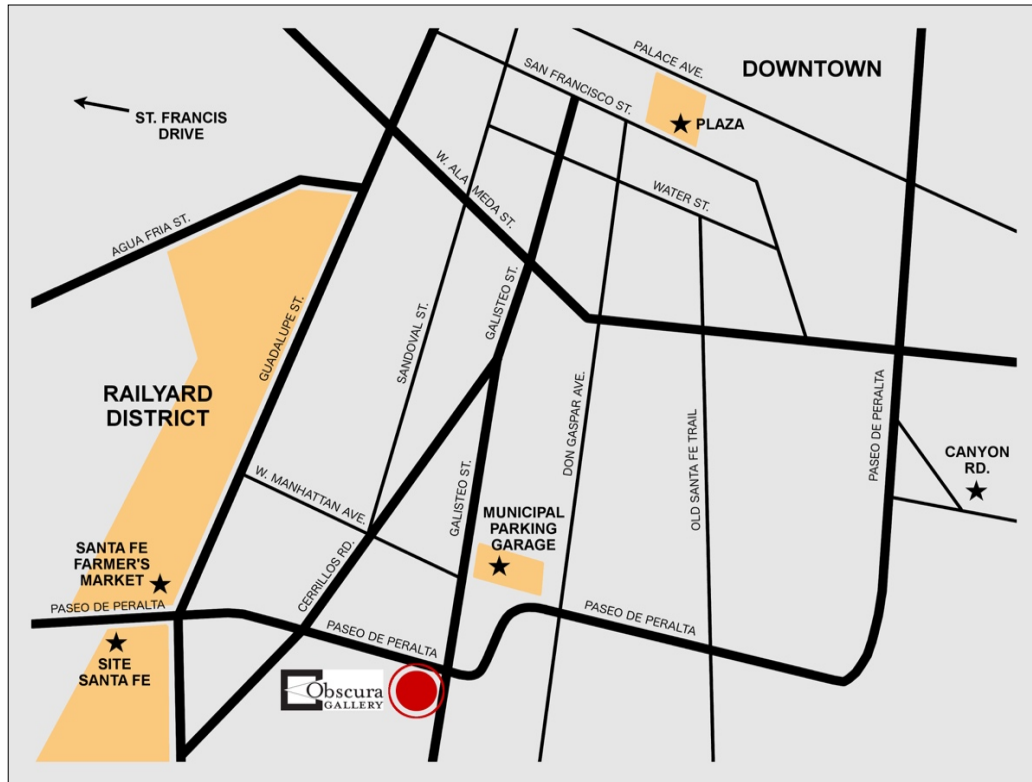
Kurt has directed and shot music videos for Jewel, Tori Amos, and John Mellencamp. He and son Ian completed the documentary film "It's About You", made during Mellencamp's 2009 summer tour and recording sessions in blues legendary locations. An edited version opened for John on his 2010-2011 solo tour, and the full-length version premiered at the South by Southwest festival in 2011; it was also screened in Nashville and Dallas before opening theatrically in New York and Los Angeles, to positive reviews.

In 2010, Kurt Markus wrote the screenplay *Deep Six*. It has gone on to win Los Angeles Cinema Awards' "Merit Award" and Los Angeles Movie Awards' "Honorable Mention." He has since penned a second screenplay, "Honor Code", a narrative drama set against the backdrop of the My Lai, Vietnam, massacre.

Kurt and his wife and agent of 30-plus years, Maria, moved to Santa Fe, New Mexico in 2014, after having spent the previous 25 years in northwest Montana, where Kurt was born and raised. He has a daughter, Jade, by a first marriage, and two sons, Weston and Ian (also photographers), with Maria.

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Obscura Gallery is located in the Santa Fe downtown historic district two blocks east of the revitalized Downtown Railyard district. Gallery hours are Tuesday – Saturday, 11-5pm and by appointment.

Parking is limited. Additional parking is available Monday – Friday from 8:00am – 9:00pm at the State Capitol Parking Facility municipal garage located at 485 Galisteo Street. There is also metered parking always available on Galisteo street next to the Parking Facility.

For more information contact Jennifer Schlesinger at:

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