



MICHAEL P. BERMAN: *The Gila at 100*



Obscura Gallery, Michael Berman, the New Mexico Museum of Art, and WildEarth Guardians will celebrate all that's exceptional about our beloved Gila Wilderness on its 100th birthday.

MAY 17, 2024

Celebration and Talk, 3pm

Gabe Vasquez, Laura Paskus, Elizabeth Hightower Allen and Michael Berman
New Mexico Museum of Art, St. Francis Auditorium

Artist's Exhibition Reception, 5-7pm

Michael Berman at Obscura Gallery

Exhibition is on view May 17 - June 29, 2024

Obscura Gallery, Michael Berman, WildEarth Guardians, and the New Mexico Museum of Art present a celebration event and a photographic exhibition on May 17 that will honor all that's exceptional about our beloved Gila Wilderness on its 100th birthday. On May 17 at 3pm at the New Mexico Museum of Art St. Francis Auditorium, the celebration event will bring together unique voices and perspectives on the Gila Wilderness' long history of inspiring advocacy through storytelling and art. Following the talk at the Museum, the photographic reception will be held at Obscura Gallery from 5 - 7pm at 225 Delgado Street, Santa Fe.

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A hundred years ago, Aldo Leopold cooked up a fine idea in the Gila and we tagged these end-of-the-line places with the moniker "Wilderness" – so a celebration is in order. And an opportunity to come closer to that ideal. -Michael P Berman

The 3 pm May 17 celebration talk at the St. Francis Auditorium will feature celebrated photographer Michael P. Berman, as well as other contributors from the anthology *First & Wildest: The Gila Wilderness at 100*, published in 2022 by Torrey House Press. A Guggenheim Fellow, Berman uses his art as a catalyst to renew and heighten our perception of the land by bringing awareness to the complexity of the biological world through political and social dialogue of the West. His photographs appear throughout *First & Wildest*, and his 2012 monograph *Gila: The Enduring Silence*, published by Museum of New Mexico Press, reflects his explorations of its wildest corners.

The event will also include Elizabeth Hightower Allen, the anthology's editor and a contributing editor at *Outside* magazine, and Albuquerque-based journalist Laura Paskus, senior producer of the NMPBS series, "Our Land: New Mexico's Environmental Past Present, and Future" and author of the 2020 book "At the Precipice: New Mexico's Changing Climate," and editor of the forthcoming anthology, "Water Bodies: Love Letters to the Most Abundant Substance on Earth," from Torrey House Press.

Joining via video will be U.S. Representative Gabe Vasquez, from New Mexico's Second Congressional District, who is leading the effort to designate the Gila River as Wild and Scenic in Congress. An avid hunter, angler, and friend of the Gila, Vasquez is founder of the Nuestra Tierra Conservation Project and co-founder of the pioneering New Mexico Outdoor Equity Fund.

With stories of place-based connection, we'll celebrate the wonders of this country's first wilderness, and we'll think boldly about what's needed to protect this special place for the next 100 years.

Following the talk at the Museum, the photographic reception will be held at Obscura Gallery from 5 - 7pm at 225 Delgado Street, Santa Fe. **A portion of the Obscura Gallery proceeds from the sales of Michael Berman's artworks will be donated to WildEarth Guardians to continue their work in the Gila Wilderness.**

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Michael Berman, *Gila Black Mountain*, 2024, 12 x 12", Gelatin silver photo, pigment, and acrylic on aluminum. Signed on plate recto. Each plate is unique.

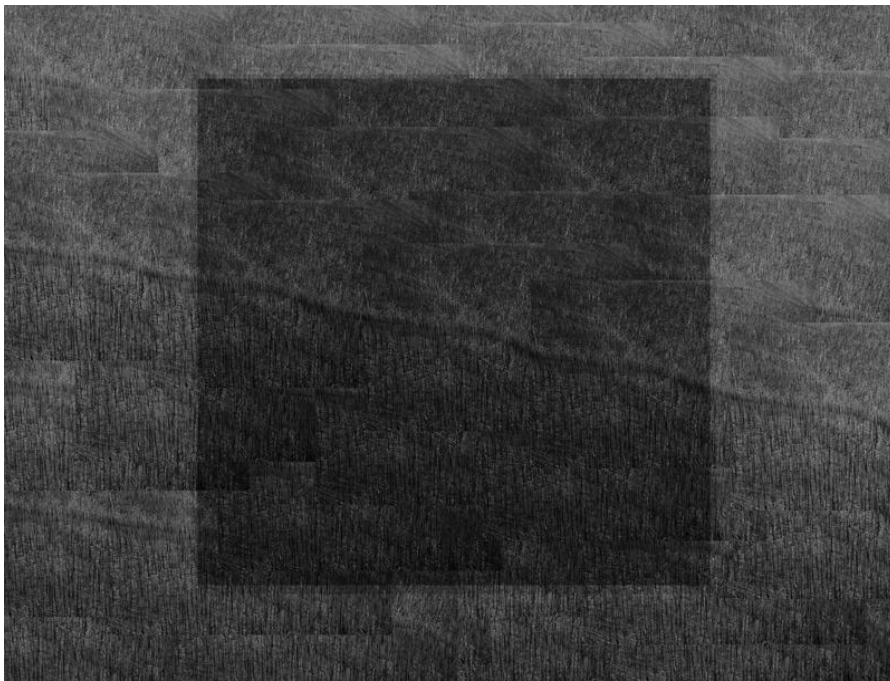
"At this historical political, social, ecological moment, so much is framed in terms of wins and losses. As we're celebrating the win of 100 years of Wilderness, I think it's safe to say no one victory is ever only triumph, and no forfeiture only ever defeat. The Gila has given us so much, but there is so much yet to be determined in terms of what a new paradigm of land management looks like that meets the threats of the 21st century. The Gila is the landscape to inspire that vision, and Michael Berman's photographs provoke that sense of possibility and wonder, calling on us to look deeply at all that is wild, and ask ourselves, 'What is my responsibility to this land?'" -Leia Barnett, Greater Gila New Mexico Advocate, WildEarth Guardians

The Gila Wilderness area is located within the Gila National Forest in Southwest New Mexico and was designated on June 3, 1924. "One hundred years ago, Aldo Leopold held with conviction that wilderness is a value unto itself and a precious resource to be protected. He also had the influence and power of persuasion to effect change," said Gila National Forest Supervisor Camille Howes. "He argued for large swaths of land to be set aside for ecosystem function and recreation, where man is only a visitor. Convinced of his wisdom, the Southwestern Region of the Forest Service answered the call for protection by designating the Gila Wilderness."



Michael Berman, *Sycamore*, 2024, 33 x 48.5", Five plates – each archival pigment ink print, pigment, and acrylic on aluminum. Signed on plate recto. Unique.

Here is a question: Which place has created more security for the American people, Trinity or the Gila Wilderness? both cannot be the future. Nuclear weapons and wilderness write two different endings for Homo Sapiens. Whatever answer is given to this question exposes who we are and what kind of world we will help create. - Charles Bowden



Michael Berman, *Gila Composite*, 2024, 26 x 34", Carbon pigment composite print. Edition of 4. Signed and numbered recto.

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Michael Berman, *Gila Black Mountain*, 2024, 12 x 12", Gelatin silver photo, pigment, and acrylic on aluminum. Signed on plate recto. Each plate is unique.

Wilderness is not a word, nor is it manifest in a photograph. It is more. It is this world without us and the one thing we fear most: an affirmation of our insignificance. This ideal of wilderness is an experiment we have not yet tried. – from Michael Berman's *Perdido* publication, Museum of New Mexico Press, Santa Fe, NM 2019

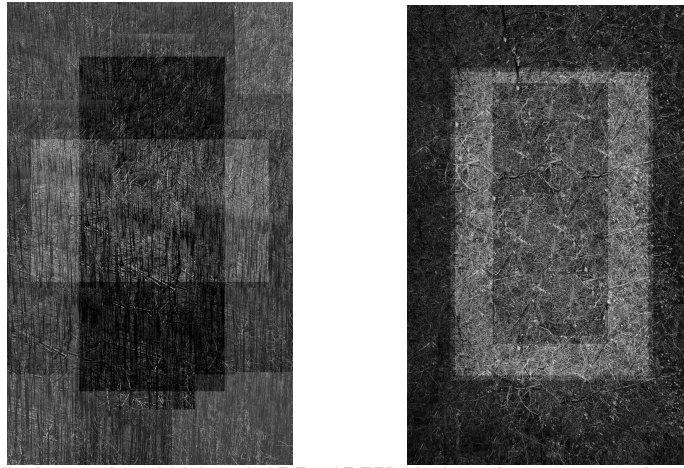


Michael Berman, *Gila Hum*, 2024, 18 x 27", Carbon pigment print. Edition of 4. Signed and numbered recto.

Michael P. Berman is no stranger to the Gila Wilderness. Living in Southern New Mexico, photographing in and around the area for years, culminated into the book, *Gila* (University of New Mexico Press, 2012) with over a 100 of his photographs and essays by the likes of Charles Bowden and many others. Berman is known for wandering the terrain of the American West, Mexico, Norteno and the extensive grasslands of Mongolia. Mr. Berman's classically executed black and white photographs participate in and extend the tradition of western landscape photography; each body of work is distilled from extensive exploration of a cohesive landscape over time. After completing a series of photographs he then cuts up the negatives and prints and uses them as the basic medium for installations and paintings. The works in this

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exhibition consist of both traditional black and white prints, alongside Berman's well-known 'plates' in which he uses mixed media on aluminum to combine both his photographs, acrylic, and varnish. In addition he 'composite' photographs, all of which he uses from his original images of the Gila to re-create a new visual representation that conjure up the emotional response felt while living and breathing within the Gila Wilderness.



Michael Berman, L and R: *Gila Composites*, 2024, each 25.5 x 15.75", Carbon pigment composite print. Edition of 4. Signed and numbered recto.

For me that territory is the mountains and canyons north of where I live – the Gila and Aldo Leopold Wilderness. And it is here again and in all seasons that I have lit out. Honestly I've never felt the magic of the place so deeply ... and yet been bedeviled by how poor a job we ... the collective we, all of us, myself included ... do when it comes to protecting the land. We are part of something greater than ourselves. And the trick, in these times, is to be quiet enough to perceive our place in where we are and what is actually out there. –Michael Berman



Michael Berman, L and R: *Gila Crest Trail*, 2024 and *Gila Black Mountain*, 2024, each 12 x 12", Gelatin silver photo, pigment, and acrylic on aluminum. Signed on plate recto. Each plate is unique.

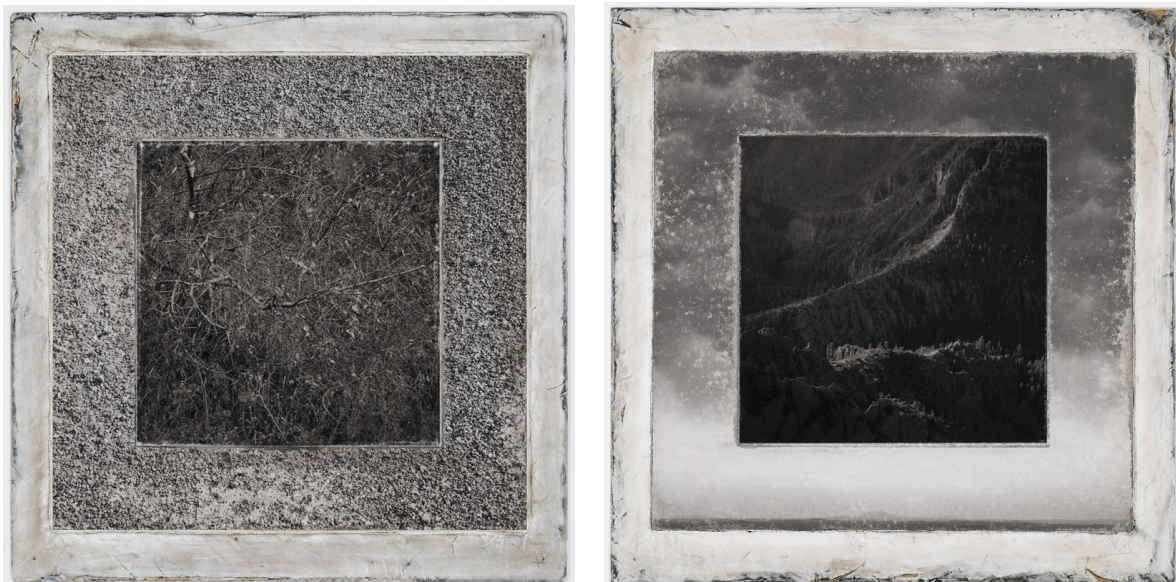
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Michael Berman, *Sapillo*, 2024, 18 x 27", Carbon pigment print. Edition of 4. Signed and numbered recto.

Michael P. Berman was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2008 to photograph the remnant grasslands of the Chihuahuan Desert. His photographs are included in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Amon Carter Museum and the Museum of New Mexico. In 2013, he received the Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts in New Mexico and has also been a recipient of Painting Fellowships from the Arizona Commission on the Arts and the Wurlitzer Foundation; his installations, photographs, and paintings have been reviewed in *Art in America*, and exhibited throughout the country. Berman's work has been published in several books including *Gila: Radical Visions*; *The Enduring Silence* and the first and third books of a border trilogy with writer Charles Bowden, *Inferno* and *Trinity*. His most recent book, published by Museum of New Mexico Press, available October 2019, is *Perdido: Sierra San Luis*.



Michael Berman, L and R: *Gila Granny to Pelican*, 2024 and *West Fork*, 2024, each 12 x 12", Gelatin silver photo, pigment, and acrylic on aluminum. Signed on plate recto. Each plate is unique.

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Mr. Berman was born in New York City in 1956, and went west to Colorado College where he studied biology and worked with peregrine falcons before embracing his photographic exploration of the land. He lives in Southwestern New Mexico in the Mimbres Valley, and is a founding and current board member of the Gila Resources Information Project. He has received grant support for his photographic and environmental work from the McCune and Lannan Foundation.



Michael Berman, *Gila Hum*, 2024, 12 x 12", Gelatin silver photo, pigment, and acrylic on aluminum. Signed on plate recto. Each plate is unique.

WildEarth Guardians works to protect and restore the wildlife, wild rivers, wild places, and health of the American west. The year 2024 is the 100th anniversary of the first ever designated Wilderness area in the world - the Gila Wilderness. This year we are working with federal agencies, local partners, communities, and tribes to not only celebrate the centennial of the Gila Wilderness, but more importantly, we are working to identify the needs and associated policy asks to ensure a protected and cooperatively managed Greater Gila Landscape for the next 100 years. Our New Mexico and Arizona Gila Advocates are working at grassroots and grassroots levels to move power toward a call for a change in federal land management mandates for the Greater Gila landscape, which includes the Gila and Apache Sitgreaves National Forests and the Gila Wilderness. WildEarth Guardians envisions a wild and intact Greater Gila where the land is managed with climate resilience and biodiversity as top priorities, and where ecosystems, water, wildlife, plant species, and cultural values are permanently protected for future generations.

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