

"Mr. Rome tends to steer away from conventionally picturesque scenes. He likes to shoot off the path into the sort of dense, messy, ordinary growth that the trail is designed to quickly bypass. At first, the square, medium-size prints may look like formalist exercises in which the all-over textures created by tree trunks, branches and leaves produce the photographic equivalent of a Jackson Pollock painting. Study them for a bit, however, and a mysterious interior complicated by shadows and sunbeams and quickened by some spiritual immanence emerges. Perhaps this is the way the woods looked to Thoreau and Emerson: subtly alive with pantheistic energy". KEN JOHNSON, the New York Times.

Artist's Statement

"Oculus", Photographs from within Giant Redwoods and Sequoias.

Early in my career, I photographed pre-industrial cultures and their artifacts, using the camera as a means to make anthropological and archaeological connections to the here-and-now. Beginning in the early 1980s, I worked on projects photographing ancient art treasures in Latin America as well as contemporary trance rituals in Haiti and Indonesia. These experiences sensitized me to patterns of imagery within nature, and provided insight into the artworks and cultures I had been capturing on film. In Indonesia in the late-1980s, I photographed Balinese trance rituals: people taking themselves out of this world, into another. Even in the middle of the California forests, or the Florida everglades - places I have visited often over the last decade-- I searched out zoomorphic and anthropomorphic images, transformative patterns that create a visual bridge between two worlds. The longer I have looked at the natural world, the more I have imagined a hidden text within those patterns. This has been the foundation for much of my work.

The series, "Drawn from Nature" 2009, used patterning as a device to allude to connections between geology and anthropology. For this work, I found ancient limestone fossil beds and contemporary animal tracks, which were photographed to suggest something similar to cave drawings.

The latest group of pictures, "Oculus" are images made from within giant redwoods and sequoias. The redwoods and sequoias have over their long lives been recurrently struck by lightning, eventually carving out their hard central cores. These mammoth trees, some up to five thousand years old, though hollow, remain alive. I have been photographing from within these trees using the openings as apertures, framing the sky. These works are not meant to be a photographic description or documentation, but instead to act as a catalyst designed to function as a portal from a recognizable world to something original and unexpected.

From my earliest days as a photographer I have thought about the ways Art manifests a need to create order out of what is essentially without order -- seeking knowledge, and inspiration, from the chaos of nature. This work

is meant to draw connections between these two states - and find the bridge between them.

Stuart Rome. Philadelphia. 2014

