

Oakland artist transforms Calif. landscapes into psychedelic photographs

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Michelle Robertson

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Michelle Robertson, SFGATE

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Terri Loewenthal, Psychscape 20, Tioga Peak, Calif., 2018.

Terri Loewenthal, Psychscape 20 (Tioga Peak, CA) 2018 [Show More](#) [Show Less](#)

When viewing an Ansel Adams' photograph of Yosemite, one experiences the natural world at a distance. "This is nature. And it's beautiful because you're not there," writes photographer Mark Klett of Adams' opus in "Yosemite in Time: Ice, Ages, Tree Clocks, Ghost Rivers."

"That's such a contrast to my work," says [Terri Loewenthal](#). The Oakland-based artist sees her psychedelic landscapes as "extending an invitation" to "step inside and move beyond the confines of our everyday perceptions."

Doubled mountain peaks mingle with beatific skies. Rock faces explode in hot pinks and ecstatic yellows. Loewenthal's images come from the same lineage as an Adams or Watkins landscape — if Adams or Watkins had worked in an alternative reality where vistas shape-shifted and kaleidoscopes served as viewfinders.

Loewenthal calls her photos "Psychscapes," a multivalent portmanteau (Psychedelic landscapes? Psychological escapes?).

A selection of her work appears next month in "Surreal Sublime: Contemporary Landscapes" at the San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art (the exhibition opens June 23).

It took about four years of experimentation for Loewenthal to devise her method. Without revealing all of her secrets, she said the process "involves composing reflections of the 360-degree landscape ... and using filter to shift colors." The images, though optically layered, are single exposures.

The landscape studies bubble from a personal wellspring: After college, Loewenthal's rental house burned down. She hit the road with a minor insurance payout, her mom's 35mm camera and set out alone to explore the country and to learn to make pictures.

It was in this year that Loewenthal "fell in love with photography — and California's backcountry."

"Mine is a sensitive approach to photography," she says. "It's always been an attempt to process my surroundings more deeply."

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