

# KATE WERBLE GALLERY

83 VANDAM STREET NEW YORK, NY 10013

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## **Storm King Art Center Presents Large-Scale Biochar Installation by Luke Stettner April 22, 2015**



Luke Stettner, *a,b,moon, d* (installation in progress), 2015. Courtesy of Storm King

Storm King Art Center presents a large-scale outdoor installation by Luke Stettner, accompanied by new work inside the Museum Building, as part of Storm King's annual *Outlooks* series, which invites an emerging or mid-career artist to create a new, site-specific work. The outdoor installation is made using biochar, a kind of charcoal that is used to enhance soil. The works inside the Museum Building include photographs shot by Stettner, and found photographs, as well as a sculpture that he will create on site. The exhibition will be on view concurrently with *Lynda Benglis: Water Sources*, which includes large-scale sculptures and fountains installed outdoors, and other sculptural works installed inside the Museum Building. *Outlooks: Luke Stettner* opens May 16 and remains on view through November 29, 2015.

Storm King Curator Nora Lawrence explains, "Stettner's work engages with the passage of time, with natural forces, and with the intersections between visual art, poetry, and memory. We are thrilled to present a project with Stettner at Storm King. We feel that the subtleties of his presentation and process will draw audiences to new areas of concentration within our site."

Stettner's piece—across its indoor and outdoor components—is entitled *a,b,moon,d*, a phrase that originated from a toddler's confusion of the letter "C" with a crescent moon. Stettner created the outdoor component of *a,b,moon,d* after viewing photographs of archaeological digs and aerial diagrams of ancient architectural complexes, and observing how their geometric forms recall pictographic languages or a long-forgotten ancient code.

Stettner was inspired by the 500-acre Storm King landscape, especially the many fallen trees he came across while walking Storm King's grounds. For the exhibition, he has filled large, sculptural trenches with biochar, a sustainable and soil-enhancing type of charcoal made from wood in a carbon-negative process called pyrolysis, which he made in collaboration with a small farm in Vermont. The pieces of biochar preserve the integrity and original look of the trees used, resembling burnt pieces of wood. Stettner has arranged the biochar into a series of geometric patterns over an 80-square-foot expanse on Storm King's South Fields. The trenches range in length from one to 48 feet, and are visible from Storm King's

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Museum Hill. The dark expanses of biochar are in dramatic contrast to the lively green grasses of the open fields and rolling hills surrounding them. Charcoal is one of the earliest, most rudimentary drawing materials, so, in this way, the installation in the South Fields can be viewed as a drawing as well as a sculpture.

Stettner states, “The work I am making for Storm King derives from repeat visits to the Art Center and the generative conversations I have had with Nora Lawrence, David Collens [Storm King Director and Chief Curator], and Mike Seaman [Director of Facilities and Conservation Specialist], among others. I consider the exhibition to be a collaboration between the staff that maintain Storm King, the Museum Building, and its surrounding topography; myself; and the cyclical changes that occur in nature.”

Inside the Museum Building are a series of works relating directly to the outdoor installation. These include a sculpture built on site, made of concrete and discarded mobile phones, and photographs. Some of the photographs were shot by Stettner; others he collected from books and scanned, removing the half-tones in the scanning process. Stettner then printed all of his digital imagery—both scans of books and original photographs—with an inkjet printer, re-photographed these simple digital prints with 35-millimeter film, and then printed them in a darkroom onto silver gelatin paper. This re-imaging process created material equivalency between all the images. Many of the silver gelatin photographs display the traces of a human presence on natural surfaces—rocks and dirt, for example. The subjects of the photographs are anonymous, removed from their origin, unidentifiable—contributing to the overall feeling within Stettner’s project of tapping into something from an irretrievable past.

*Outlooks: Luke Stettner* will be the third in this exhibition series, which invites one emerging or mid-career artist to create a new, site-specific work to be installed at Storm King for a single season. Artist Virginia Overton was the second artist to be featured in the annual *Outlooks* series. In 2014, she presented a 500-foot-long thin brass sculpture in an expansive, central, rolling field. In 2013, artist David Brooks inaugurated the series with his work, *A Proverbial Machine in the Garden*, which comprised a 1970s-model Dynahoe tractor, buried beneath Storm King’s iconic landscape.

Lawrence adds, “With the *Outlooks* series, we aim to demonstrate innovative ways in which contemporary artists are engaging with natural spaces, and thus create a bridge between twentieth- and twenty-first century art production at Storm King.”

*Lynda Benglis: Water Sources* is co-curated by Storm King’s Director and Chief Curator, David R. Collens, and Curator Nora Lawrence, and includes more than a dozen outdoor sculptures—some recently created and on view for the first time—as well as a selection of sculptural works installed throughout six galleries in the Museum Building.

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