

JEAN PAGLIUSO

Fragile Remains II



Mosque #5 (Djenne), 2008, silver gelatin print on Japanese mulberry paper, 24 x 35 1/8 in



Machu Picchu V, 2003, silver gelatin print on Japanese mulberry paper, 23 3/4 x 19 1/4 in

From May 23 through June 23, The Drawing Room is pleased to present two solo exhibitions in a single installation, juxtaposing Jean Pagliuso's silver gelatin photographs of ancient sites with hand-built stoneware sculpture by Toni Ross. A separate press release is available for **TONI ROSS Contained. Unbound.** This joint presentation draws attention to the artists' shared sources of inspiration and the unique path each forged in the studio following a spontaneous trip they took to Egypt in 2010. Their travels in Egypt, and later to Burma, fostered a friendship enriched by artistic and intellectual exchanges rooted in their mutual interest in the resonance of ancient cultural landmarks. The gallery's combined presentation considers the impact their travel experiences had on their individual practices, and in particular on the aesthetic affinities in their work.

Jean Pagliuso's *Fragile Remains* series examines the mystery and grandeur of temples, landscapes and sacred ruins across the globe. Over the last two decades Pagliuso's travels have taken her to ancient sites in Cambodia, Peru, India, Burma and Mali, among other countries. Undertaking excursions by caravan, riverboat and on foot, she has explored some of the most sanctified – and often the most remote – places on earth, camera in hand. Printed in her New York studio, the resulting photographs combine age-old darkroom techniques with Pagliuso's distinctive use of translucent papers brushed with silver emulsion – a process that evokes 19th century travel photography when the medium was in its infancy. The delicate materiality of Pagliuso's photographs mirrors the fragile nature of these precious sites, some now so broken or divided by political conflict they exist in the whole only through the print medium.

In Burma (since 1989, Myanmar), Pagliuso traveled by boat through a narrow canal flanked by paddy fields and water buffaloes to reach the Shwe Indein Pagoda Complex, a Buddhist enclave. Located

along Inle Lake, this complex is home to more than 1,000 small hand-built stupas, or zedis. In contrast to the thousands of golden stupas found throughout Asia, the towers here are sun bleached and largely unrestored, many of them leaning at angles, overgrown with bodhi trees, and their decorative finials fractured or toppled to the side. Capturing the declining beauty of this otherworldly place in *Zedi I* and *Zedi IV*, Pagliuso fixes her ephemeral imagery in a glistening veil of silver that feels suspended within sheets of handmade mulberry paper. At times, prompted by an expansive vista, the artist combines two negatives, printed on individual sheets and joined to create one transcendent panorama.

In Cambodia, the vast 12th century temples at Angkor Wat (now called Ta Prohm) were abandoned in the 17th century, leaving parts of this holy site largely untouched. Pagliuso was mesmerized by the visual impact of enormous silk cotton trees that have grown there in the intervening years, coiling around the ornate carvings and sacred architecture of what was once the largest preindustrial city in the world. This fractured environment provided a magical, if somber, testament to the human spirit that is palpable in the artist's 1997 photograph, *Ta Prohm VII*.

In 1999 her tours through India brought her to the Group of Monuments at Hampi, parts of which have been in continuous use since the 7th century. Here among the sprawling ruins of what was once the capital city of the Vijayanagara Empire, Pagliuso captured the timelessness of the enigmatic Virupaksha Temple. As if bearing witness to the soulfulness and devotion with which our ancestors lived and worshipped, Pagliuso marries the breathtaking sense of immortality with the rich poetics of her photographic eye.

Born in California, Jean Pagliuso embarked on a career in photography in 1969, after receiving her degree in fine art at UCLA. She rose quickly in the field of fashion photography and soon her ambitions broadened to include collaborations with the film director Robert Altman as well as Paramount Pictures, Universal Studios, Warner Brothers and 20th Century Fox. Her work has been exhibited widely throughout the United States and Europe. Jean Pagliuso divides her time between New York City, Santa Fe and Sagaponack, New York, where she summers with her family.

Gallery hours: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday 10-5; Sunday 11-5

For further information and reproduction quality images, please contact Janet Coleas at 631.324.5016 or info@drawingroom-gallery.com