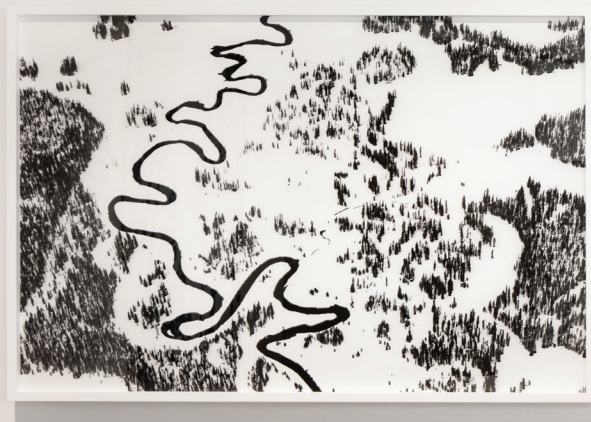


{ ARTS & CULTURE }

A FLEETING SEASON

words by LUCY LEA TUCKER

TUCK FAUNTLEROY



PHOTOGRAPHY: COURTESY OF TAYLOE PIGGOTT GALLERY



Known best for his photography of interior and architectural design work, Tuck Fauntleroy recently unveiled a decade-long project of fine art images in his *Waterline* exhibit at Tayloe Piggott Gallery in Jackson, Wyoming. The series depicts contrasts of simple, strong, dark seams intersecting snowy meadows, taken from elevated aerial perspectives. Fauntleroy chose to photograph an ephemeral time in winter—when the rivers are thawed and visibly running, but the remainder of the landscape is blanketed in snow. His project involved an incredible amount of planning to capture nature's activity in these still, captivating moments. From organizing flights to mapping and surveying landscapes,

to the short-lived weather window, Fauntleroy acknowledged that this was a challenging series—one that he worked on for over ten years. He came and went with the project. Although it may sound clichéd, it was all about being at the right place at the right time.

RIVER INSPIRED

The concept of *Waterline* stems from Fauntleroy's passion for being on the water. Growing up in a small town on the Chesapeake Bay, Fauntleroy was raised outside and fly fished on the local rivers. After college, Fauntleroy drove out West to Jackson, Wyoming, on a fishing trip. He stayed longer than expected that first summer—fishing, camping, and living out of his car. Loving life in

the small town of Wilson, Wyoming, Fauntleroy's first job was working the register at Hungry Jack's General Store. Then, he began shooting outdoor and adventure photos for editorial and commercial purposes and slowly, after putting in the time (almost 20 years), his technique improved and evolved. Ultimately, he transitioned to his current profession as an architectural, design, and fine art photographer. Aside from a few photo classes at Bucknell College, Fauntleroy is self-taught. Inspired by nature and the pristine spaces of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, he explains, "I've always loved the look and experience of rivers, especially the beautiful lines they draw in certain places."

ABOVE: From Fauntleroy's recent exhibit at Tayloe Piggott Gallery in Jackson, Wyoming.



PHOTOGRAPHY: COURTESY OF TAYLOE PIGGOTT GALLERY



AERIAL PERSPECTIVE

The *Waterline* series has a specific focus on Western rivers photographed via airplane. When Fauntleroy first conceptualized the project, one of his friends happened to be a flight instructor. Invitations to fly alongside this friend began to shape his thinking about the project. On the second flight, luck was on his side with an unpredicted spring snow over a thawed river. About these perfect conditions, Fauntleroy says, "Since these rivers freeze and snow over in the winter, you have to time it during a very brief window each spring when the creeks have thawed and are fully flowing but the ground is still covered in deep winter snowpack. This timing varies drastically depending on mountain range, elevation, aspect, and seasonal temps." Eventually, the freebie flights ended, forcing Fauntleroy to hire pilots to take him on aerial shoots ranging anywhere from two to four hours and costing around \$400 an hour. "It can take over half an hour to

fly from the airport in Jackson to many of these locations," Fauntleroy explains, "and then you are just getting to where you want to be, praying the conditions are right. Once in Yellowstone, I would work with pilots to get the right elevation, angles, and perspective. We would fly over one meadow, taking in the same scene over and over. Eventually, I would get the composition and scale I wanted with the rivers entering and exiting the frame in the right places." On most flights Fauntleroy succeeded, but some days in the air provided no shots at all. For someone raised as a fly fisherman, Fauntleroy was well conditioned to the whims of nature and this helped him manage his expectations for each outing.

FLOWING BLACK RIBBONS

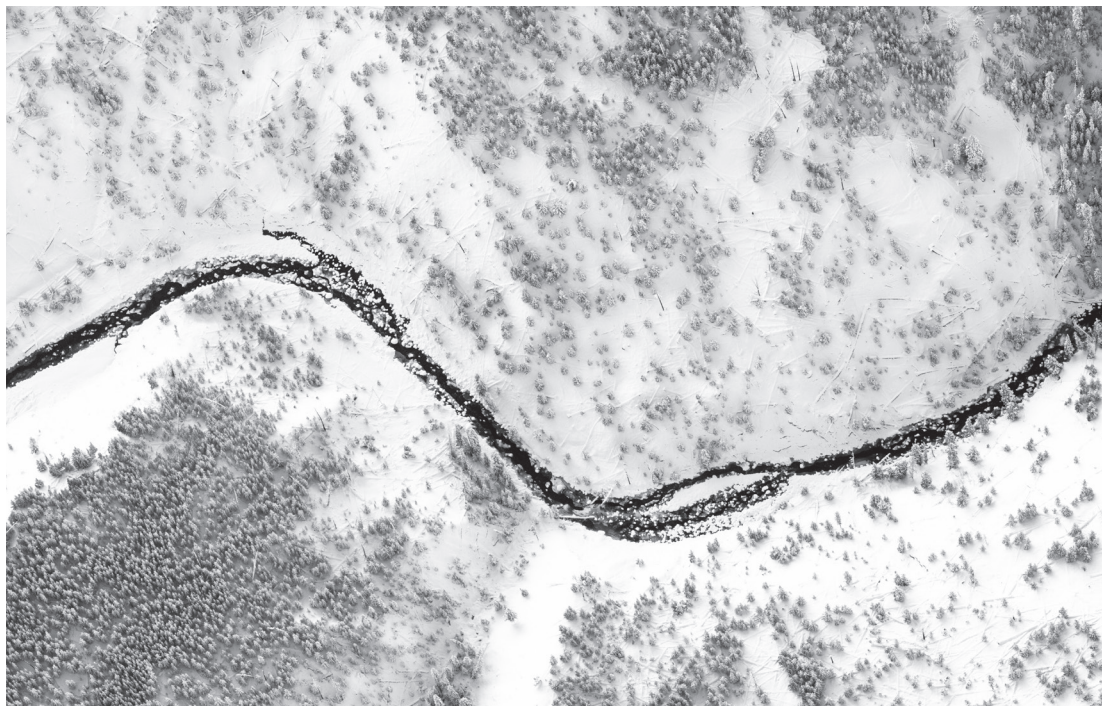
Using traditional topographic and digital Google Earth maps of the Greater Yellowstone area, Fauntleroy sought natural spaces that measured up to his vision of black, flowing ribbons of tributary

waters weaving through fields of white snow. There was quite a bit of mapping involved in Fauntleroy's project to identify the highly specific compositions of nature that he wanted to capture. For instance, flat, treeless meadows make the river wind in more intricate, interesting patterns. His project took on more meaning with the challenge of finding these remote places. The locations in his work are, for the most part, unidentified—high-elevation meadows intersected by meandering streams. He concedes, "You are deep in Yellowstone where there has been no human activity all winter—a few weeks or even days into this transition and those moments are gone. Once the snow starts to go, it goes fast."

GRAYSCALE PROCESS

The landscapes Fauntleroy chose to document draw the viewer's eye through the whole composition. Lines enter and exit the frame, accentuating the curves of the streams. While composing the

ABOVE: Tuck Fauntleroy. *Waterline I*, ed. of 3, 2008-2017 Archival pigment print, 53 1/3 x 80 in.



images is challenging, Fauntleroy didn't crop or tweak any of these photographs—he used 100% of what was captured in the frame. Taking the shots aerially from a plane and not using a drone, his approach is more naturalistic. The initial image from a digital camera is always in black and white, and then the computer within the camera applies color. By the time one looks at the photograph, the color information is present. Fauntleroy turns that color file into a grayscale file to produce his final black and white photograph. He says, “Before the photographs turn to grayscale—my photos look black and white to the eye, as they naturally exist.”

PURE BLACK AND STARK WHITE

Fauntleroy doesn't consider himself a traditional landscape photographer. He explains, “These are photographs of landscapes for sure—just a different take. Often, people don't know what the [*Waterline* series] images are—or that they are even photos. They are abstract and different. Hopefully they get people thinking.” The aesthetic is purely black and white—balancing negative and positive spaces within a frame—simple, dynamic, and graphic. Blur your eyes and the work resembles calligraphy flowing across stark white paper with inky, black elegant lines—delineating a winding stream amidst the backdrop of a snowy meadow. Fauntleroy says that he is drawn to these moments for a host of reasons: “I love the look and feel of high-contrast scenes. The play of negative and positive space makes for a very graphic aesthetic, which is simple and clean at the same time. It's a combination effect in my head—these seasonal changes in the mountains, this fleeting passage of time—it's a scene someone might never otherwise come across.” After viewing the *Waterline* series, perhaps one will better appreciate and embrace fleeting moments in nature. Fauntleroy might be high above, shooting as a stream starts to rush with snowmelt during winter's reluctant surrender to spring.

PRICEPOINT/DIMENSIONS

There are nine images in the *Waterline* series. The large-format photographs are printed and framed at a custom boutique printer in Los Angeles, California. Thin, white maple frames are handmade for each print, matching the white of the frame to the white of the images. The images are deliberately framed in a minimalist style without a mat or border to best display the contemporary look and feel of Fauntleroy's work. Images are also available unframed as prints.

PRINTS: From \$2,800 (20" x 30" - 12 editions) to \$12,000 (53" x 80" - 3 editions). All prints are signed, numbered, and in limited editions of 12 or fewer.

ALL ARTWORK IS AVAILABLE THROUGH TAYLOE PIGGOTT GALLERY.

EXHIBIT: tayloepiggottgallery.com/exhibition/73/exhibition_works/263 

ABOVE (top to bottom): Tuck Fauntleroy. *Waterline IV*, ed. of 8, 2008-2017 Archival pigment print, 40 x 60 in.; Tuck Fauntleroy. *Waterline IX*, ed. of 10, 2008-2017 Archival pigment print, 26 1/2 x 40 in.

PHOTOGRAPHY: COURTESY OF TAYLOE PIGGOTT GALLERY