

New York Exhibition

Jean-François Bouchard

EXILE FROM BABYLON

January 26 – March 11, 2023



Jean-François Bouchard, *Tree of Life* (2022), Archival Pigment Ink, 54 x 36 in.

Arsenal Contemporary Art New York is pleased to present *Exile from Babylon*, Jean-François Bouchard's second solo exhibition in the gallery.

For this new body of work, the Canadian artist documented a squatters' camp in California. Driven by homelessness, drug addiction or libertarianism, some Americans choose to reject modern society - Babylon as they call it - to form unlikely communities of squatters and wanderers seeking collective refuge. On a decommissioned military base in the desert, the community photographed by Bouchard lives without any form of local government and without any basic services such as running water, electricity, or garbage removal. On inhospitable grounds, they established themselves in shanties, makeshift tents, shipping containers, crumbling recreational vehicles, and even dens dug into the ground.

For *Exile from Babylon*, Bouchard has elected to represent the community's grueling reality metaphorically through a series of still life photographs of trees. Each is adorned with garbage and debris that were either thrown at them or carried through the harsh desert winds. Collectively, these surreal post-apocalyptic scenes testify to vast disparities that exist in our modern societies and the quest of fascinating characters for a sense of fulfillment derived through absolute freedom and how it is acquired at a great personal sacrifice.

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