



CLEARING

Ryan Foerster
Artforum, December 2019
(author: Julian Cosma)

ARTFORUM



Ryan Foerster, *Skate*, 2018, digital C-print, 30 x 40".

NEW YORK

Ryan Foerster

BAXTER ST AT THE CAMERA CLUB OF NEW YORK

126 and 128 Baxter St

November 6–December 20, 2019

Bataille thought the freedom to dispose of excess—psychically, materially—was a sign of sovereignty. Ryan Foerster’s multimedia exhibition, “A MECCA BLUR,” presents an alternate vision that seeks to reconstruct a world from the discarded and forgotten. His C-prints, emulsified or layered with playful clip art, occupy most of the small gallery. Yet they are broken up by a video of the artist photographing rocks along the East River (à la Sam Samore’s surveillance footage, but softer, more intimate) and various sculptures, such as *Support Structure* and *Support Structure 123*, both 2019, assembled from scavenged materials including bamboo poles, string, and wire.

The ocean laps the edges of the show. *Skate*, 2018, placed near the entrance of the gallery, captures the titular fish belly-up, with little figures and symbols

cavorting atop its sodden grave. In many of his abstract photographs, Foerster uses the corrosive properties of water to unearth their latent painterliness. Take *Compost Print*, 2014, which was drenched by rain, among other elements. It looks like a satellite view of an archipelago in the throes of heat death: Infernal pockets of violet, orange, and yellow burn through flat islands of black that are bordered by a mottled, chartreuse sea.

Such colors seem like the result of a delicate balancing act between the aleatory process of decomposition and the artist’s careful sourcing of refuse. We see this most clearly in his chemigrams, which he made while working as a lab technician between 2011 and 2014. One of his duties was to use unexposed photo paper to clean the color processor; once done, he was left with blackened, exposed sheets. He would then take them to his Brooklyn home in Brighton Beach and subject the pieces to the great outdoors. In *Garden*, *Compost Prints 5*, 2014, a teal lens partially covers a splenic purple circle—perhaps a mark left by the bottom of a planter. Train your eyes on the work’s surface, and other indexical marks appear—little bits of leaves, dirt, and unidentifiable debris, adding to his art’s protean, hermetic allure.