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JULY 22, 2009

ENERGETIC ARTWORK

EVERYTHING COMES BROKEN EXHIBIT AT MCA

Gene Davis

The Museum of Contemporary Art Denver is hosting a photography exhibit detailing the changing landscape of the West.

The show, however, doesn't feature the typical rolling mountains, majestic sunset photographs that many expect with a West – themed exhibit. Instead, MCA Denver has invited Kevin O'Connell to create a body of work concerning renewable energy landscapes and the changing nature of the West as it responds to the growing need for resources.



KEVIN O'CONNELL. UNTITLED (DETAIL), 2009, ARCHIVAL PIGMENT INK PRINT, 48 X 72 IN (122 X 183 CM). COURTESY ROBISCHON GALLERY.

To create the body of work for *Everything Comes Broken*, O'Connell journeyed to wind farms in Colorado and surrounding areas. He captured images of energy-producing mechanisms such as wind turbines and transmission networks.

Working against the pastoral myth that typically accompanies alternative energy, O'Connell depicts these large machines as towering monuments in a tense relation to their natural surroundings, says a press release from MCA Denver.

Along with the photographs, O'Connell's exhibit features a sound installation and three short videos. The so-called artistic response to the evolving terrain of the West is a natural fit for MCA Denver; it's both thought-provoking and captivating on a visual level.

O'Connell, a trained civil engineer and attorney, has been a photographer of the American West since 1989, focusing mainly on his home state of Colorado, according to MCA Denver.

O'Connell said in his artist statement that his photographs in the MCA Denver exhibit aren't intended to make a definitive statement about the economic value, efficiency or public policy wisdom of wind energy. However, he goes on to say that he is insulted by the lack of regulation and oversight of wind energy development.

For the exhibit, I wanted to introduce the viewer to the immediate physical presence of modern wind farms to deconstruct the pastoral myth that has arisen along with them, he wrote. I find myself conflicted and troubled over the manner in which utility scale wind energy development is taking place in the West.