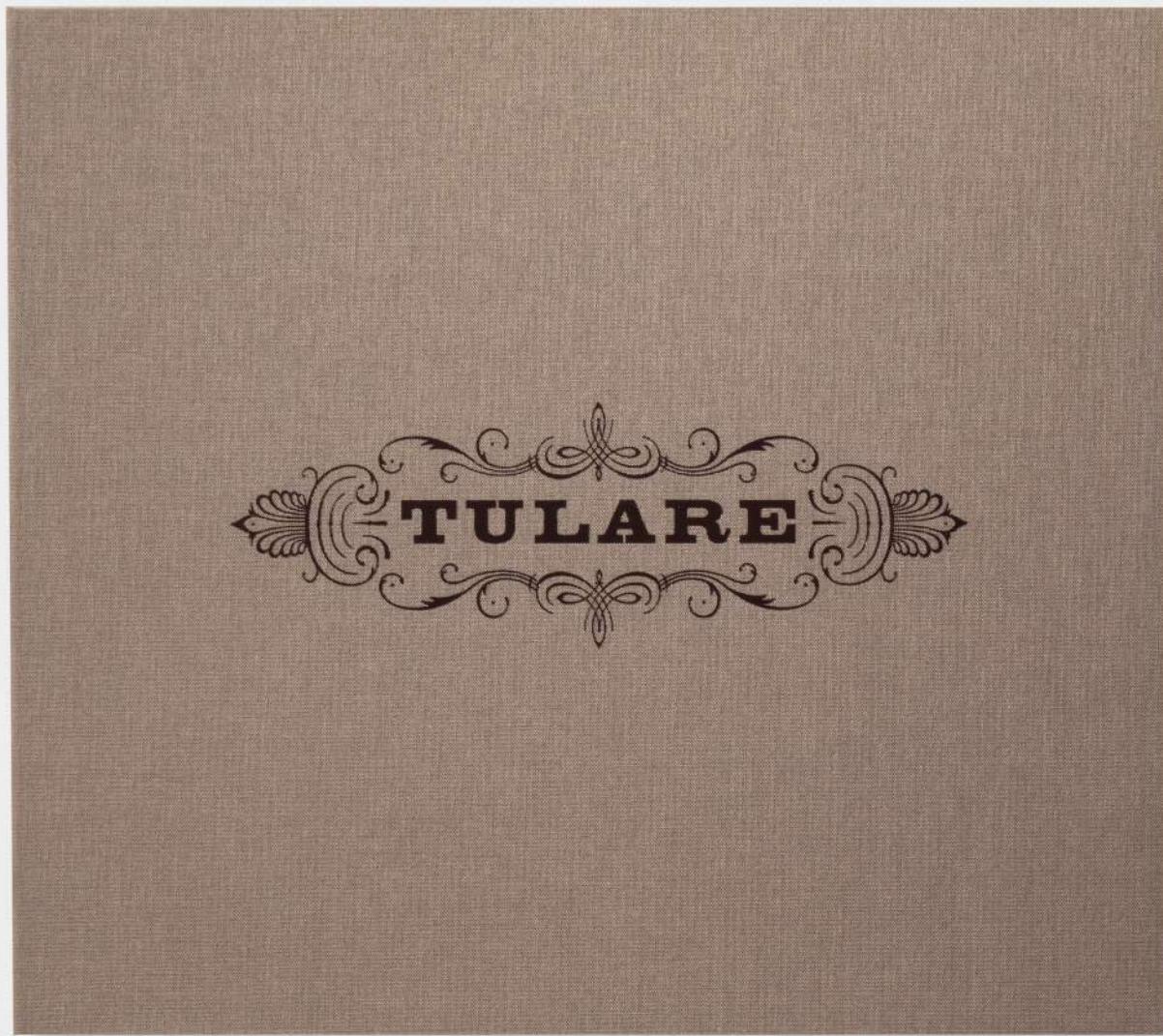


NINO MIER  
GALLERY

# JAKE LONGSTRETH

## TULARE





*TULARE* (Print Portfolio), 2020

This work is accompanied by a certificate of authenticity signed and numbered by the artist  
Book, custom box and twenty fine art photo prints  
\$5,000.00 (+\$3,000.00 for framing editions)









*H. S. W.*

**TULARE**

SCENES FROM CALIFORNIA'S CENTRAL VALLEY.

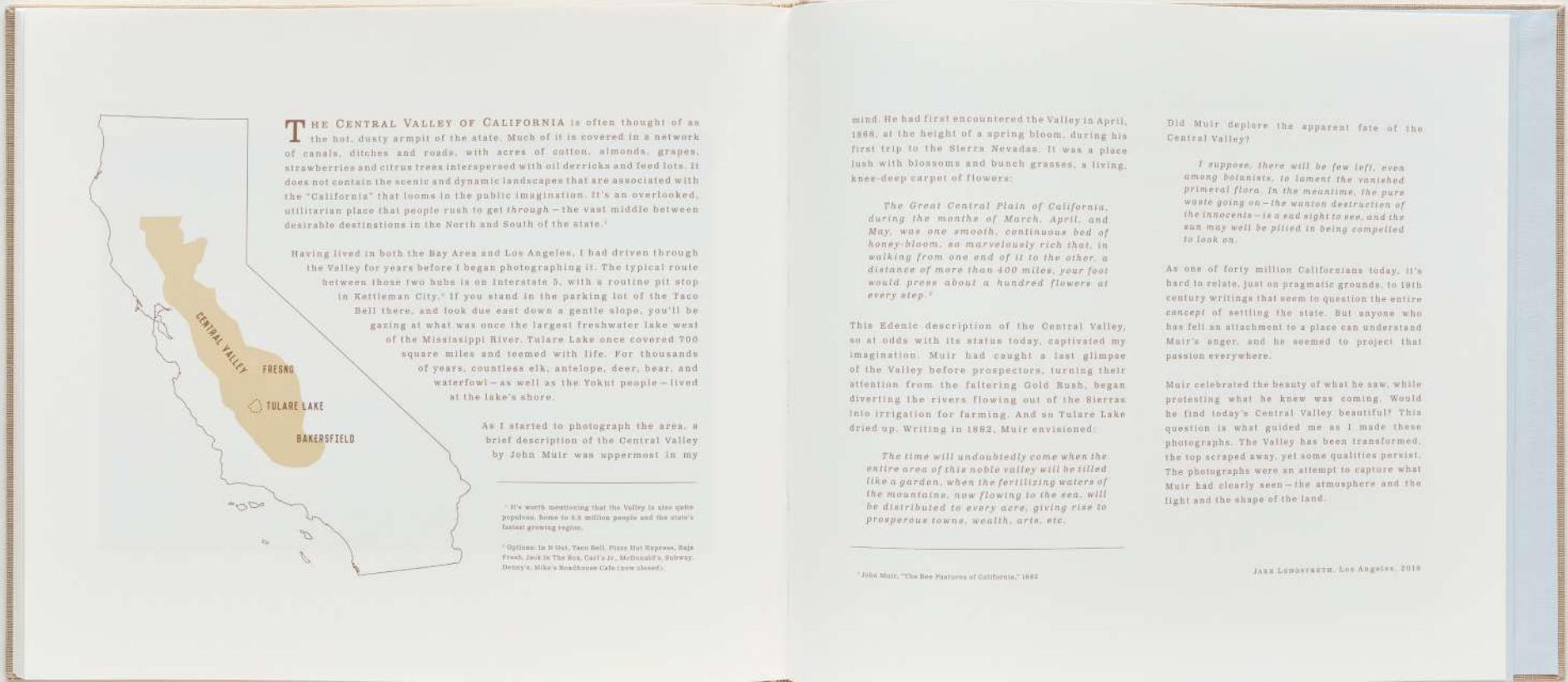
*Photographs by*

**JAKE LONGSTRETH**

THE ICE PLANT

2018

LOS ANGELES



**T**HE CENTRAL VALLEY OF CALIFORNIA is often thought of as the hot, dusty armpit of the state. Much of it is covered in a network of canals, ditches and roads, with acres of cotton, almonds, grapes, strawberries and citrus trees interspersed with oil derricks and feed lots. It does not contain the scenic and dynamic landscapes that are associated with the "California" that looms in the public imagination. It's an overlooked, utilitarian place that people rush to get through—the vast middle between desirable destinations in the North and South of the state.<sup>1</sup>

Having lived in both the Bay Area and Los Angeles, I had driven through the Valley for years before I began photographing it. The typical route between those two hubs is on Interstate 5, with a routine pit stop in Kettleman City.<sup>2</sup> If you stand in the parking lot of the Taco Bell there, and look due east down a gentle slope, you'll be gazing at what was once the largest freshwater lake west of the Mississippi River. Tulare Lake once covered 700 square miles and teemed with life. For thousands of years, countless elk, antelope, deer, bear, and waterfowl—as well as the Yokut people—lived at the lake's shore.

As I started to photograph the area, a brief description of the Central Valley by John Muir was uppermost in my

<sup>1</sup> It's worth mentioning that the Valley is also quite populous, home to 6.5 million people and the state's fastest growing region.

<sup>2</sup> Options: In N Out, Taco Bell, Pizza Hut Express, Baja Fresh, Jack in the Box, Carl's Jr., McDonald's, Subway, Denny's, Mike's Roadhouse Cafe (now closed).

mind. He had first encountered the Valley in April, 1868, at the height of a spring bloom, during his first trip to the Sierra Nevada. It was a place lush with blossoms and bunch grasses: a living, knee-deep carpet of flowers:

*The Great Central Plain of California, during the months of March, April, and May, was one smooth, continuous bed of honey-bloom, so marvelously rich that, in walking from one end of it to the other, a distance of more than 400 miles, your foot would press about a hundred flowers at every step.<sup>3</sup>*

This Edenic description of the Central Valley, so at odds with its status today, captivated my imagination. Muir had caught a last glimpse of the Valley before prospectors, turning their attention from the faltering Gold Rush, began diverting the rivers flowing out of the Sierras into irrigation for farming. And so Tulare Lake dried up. Writing in 1882, Muir envisioned:

*The time will undoubtedly come when the entire area of this noble valley will be tilled like a garden, when the fertilizing waters of the mountains, now flowing to the sea, will be distributed to every acre, giving rise to prosperous towns, wealth, arts, etc.*

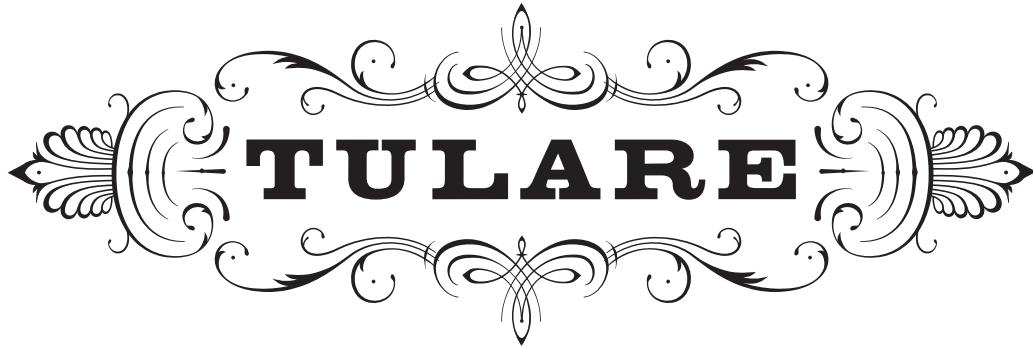
Did Muir deplore the apparent fate of the Central Valley?

*I suppose, there will be few left, even among botanists, to lament the vanished primeval flora. In the meantime, the pure waste going on—the wanton destruction of the innocents—is a sad sight to see, and the sun may well be pitted in being compelled to look on.*

As one of forty million Californians today, it's hard to relate, just on pragmatic grounds, to 19th century writings that seem to question the entire concept of settling the state. But anyone who has felt an attachment to a place can understand Muir's anger, and he seemed to project that passion everywhere.

Muir celebrated the beauty of what he saw, while protesting what he knew was coming. Would he find today's Central Valley beautiful? This question is what guided me as I made these photographs. The Valley has been transformed, the top scraped away, yet some qualities persist. The photographs were an attempt to capture what Muir had clearly seen—the atmosphere and the light and the shape of the land.

<sup>3</sup>John Muir, "The Bee Features of California," 1882



Jake Longstreth

**TULARE**

Twenty Archival Pigment Prints  
on 300gsm Baryta Satin Paper

Photographs from the series  
*TULARE*, 2010–2012, printed 2020  
8 x 11 in (20.32 x 27.94 cm), paper size  
Edition of 10, 2 APS

Special thanks to  
The Ice Plant  
Mike Slack

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