

Tanja Engelberts



*Bozeman's Curse – Untitled VII*



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**Tanja Engelberts** (1987) lives and works in The Hague (The Netherlands). She graduated from a master fine art at Chelsea College of Art & Design after studying sculpture and monumental arts in both the Netherlands and Japan.

At the core of her artistic practice is the perception of landscape through photography and materiality. How do you show the experience of a landscape, and the many layers like history, economics and culture that make up a place? She is always looking for ways to explore these questions.

### **Bozeman's Curse**

For her series *Bozeman's Curse*, exhibited in the namesake exhibition Engelberts spent a month as artist-in-residence at the Ucross Foundation in Wyoming (USA). Through the cycle of photography and material play, she investigated the duality between the perception of a

romantic landscape and the economic reality of today's world. In Wyoming she found a place of transition.

The lands photographed here originally belonged to native, nomadic people. Then arrived colonists looking for gold and prosperity, later companies came drilling for raw and valuable materials. When the mines ceased to bear wealth, they looked still deeper to unearth riches below ground – and turned to fracking.

At first glance perhaps the land photographed here – Bozeman's trail – doesn't seem to be a very distinctive place. Void of houses, people and traffic, a vast emptiness opens up. John M. Bozeman, this work's protagonist and namesake, was the first to cross the land in search of gold. His digging was the start of human imposition on these lands; the title lends the work this story of place.

Like a map, the image unfolds. The technique of etching that Tanja Engelberts is using in her work, somewhat bites an image into the surface of the plate and is itself a form of erosion – akin to the blight on this land. The shimmering, golden surface alludes to the craziness of the gold rush and the copper and brass mines surrounding Bozeman's trail – its reflection transforms the land from positive to negative. At once present and a shadow, the story of Bozeman's trail appears tethered to its surface.