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Seeking to fill in gaps left by projects that highlighted only the wild landscapes of the river, McClaran began to turn his lens on scenes of industrialization. From the outset of the project, he aimed to capture each of the river's 1,243 miles, venturing from the sands of the Pacific to the alpine lakes of British Columbia, Canada, with an eye for capturing both scenery and character. "It's beautiful, it runs through a beautiful landscape, but it's industrialized fully and completely, with the exception of short sections," McClaran said of the river. "The idea was for all of the pictures to reflect the impacts that humans have had on the landscape."

His reflection begins with an acknowledgment. This life giving river was once known by many names, including the Wihmal, Shwan-etk-qwa and Nch'i-Wana, each referring to the "great river" that McClaran's series is named for. His photographs don't shy away from the presence of stretches with more concrete than forest. Some images show abandoned structures, processing plants or, say, a customs checkpoint in the foreground of a mountain vista. One frame shows a scene of apple boxes stacked atop a cement surface near Pateros, Washington. Another refers to a graffiti mark along a stretch of highway as a "modern pictograph."

Toward the Columbia's headwaters, one image shows a man standing on a wide stump, the result of a long trip down a remote logging road. "That's on Kinbasket Lake, which is the uppermost reservoir on the Columbia," McClaran said, "I came into a clearing, I saw



Photos by Robbie McClaran

ABOVE: A gelatin silver print of Wáatpatukaykas, also known as Cayuse Sisters or Twin Sisters at Wallula Gap in Washington state, the ancestral home of Umatilla, Walla Walla and Cayuse. BELOW LEFT: Campers sit by Syringa Provincial Park at Lower Arrow Lake, near Castlegar in British Columbia, ancestral lands of the Sinixt people. BELOW MIDDLE: A man stands on a stump at Kinbasket Lake in British Columbia, the ancestral homeland of the Secwepemc, Ktunaxa, Syilx tmix, and Sinixt people. BELOW RIGHT: A clearcut forest at Upper Arrow Lake in British Columbia.

a couple of young guys sitting around a campfire," the photographer continued, "I started a conversation with them and that's how that picture came about."

The use of large format film for the project was both a visual and historical choice. "I've always loved, in my travels around the Northwest, when you stop in a small town cafe and they have historic photographs of that area on the wall, typically of logging operations," McClaran said, adding that many of those rel-

ics were likely captured with large format cameras.

Along the Columbia, McClaran photographed entirely in monochrome, using two cameras with interchangeable antique lenses. Keen on embracing the imperfections of working with an analog format, the photographer looked to the past for guidance. "Reverting back to those historic photographs that inspired me, those all had those kinds of imperfections in them as well," he said.

Each image, developed and printed by McClaran, holds weight as a tangible historic object. The final product, a combination of silver gelatin contact and enlarged pigment prints, has the presence of a lasting document.

The journey's final image, marking the

point at which McClaran had traversed the river's full span, was taken on a hot and dry June day at Cayuse Sisters, Wallula Gap.

But McClaran admits that it's difficult to define a clear end point. "For a project like this, it's really hard to say, 'I'm done,'" he said. "There's a few locations probably from the lower Columbia gorge to halfway between Portland and Astoria that I'd like to do some additional pictures, and I may in time."

But he's satisfied with the result, much of it now on display at Lightbox Photographic Gallery through May 11. "I think it turned into pretty much what I had hoped for it, which was ... to create a body of work that would serve as an archive or a survey of the landscapes of the Columbia River," he said.

