

ARTSCENE™

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Tad Beck, "Palimpsest Three," 2009, lightjet print, 42 x 42".

The photographs, video and film installations in this alluring appreciation of physical beauty created by bicoastal artist **Tad Beck** go back to "Roll," a 20 minutes, 4 channel, 4 scrim student video. The work features models from Maine, nude, breathing heavily as they labor to maintain his balance on a log afloat in a Maine river. Back in grad school at Art Center, when Jack Goldstein viewed "Roll," the conversation turned towards parallels with Thomas Eakins' work, specifically a swimming hole study in which Eakins puts in an appearance as an observer, treading water. Out of considerations raised, Beck's "Palimpsest" series, (recently displayed in LACMA's "Manly Pursuits" exhibition), evolved. Here Beck responds to Eakins' "Grafly Album," fictionally reconstructing the 19th century artist's photographs. After digitally affixing his own images of contemporary models, Beck enshrines the re-worked results in silver repousse frames. A final re-photographing on stark black backgrounds adroitly calls attention to dualities in Beck's own work and Eakins' earlier idealizations of male nudes, often posed in nature. Dualities surface again in Beck's images of men adorning boat prows and in his single channel film loop, "Stroke." Viewers gaze down upon two nude guys, in wooden boats positioned to form a V, who rhythmically bend their backs over rowing machines, attempting to head off on alternative courses (Samuel Freeman, Santa Monica).

Diane Calder