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MEDIA CONTACT

Michael Kusek at communication angle
413.575.1435/michael@communicationangle.com

EXHIBITION INFORMATION

selections from **American Vale**

George Lawson Gallery

49 Geary, 2nd Floor

San Francisco, CA 94108

Exhibition Dates: March 15 – April 16, 2011

Opening Reception: Thursday, March 17th, 5:30 – 7:30 PM

Gallery Hours: Tuesday through Saturday 11:00 AM – 5:30 PM and by appointment

Gallery phone number and email: 415.772.0977;

www.georgelawsongallery.com; info@georgelawsongallery.com



PHOTOGRAPHER SUSAN MIKULA TO PRESENT

**selections from American Vale
at GEORGE LAWSON GALLERY,
SAN FRANCISCO, CA**

SAN FRANCISCO, CA – Photographer Susan Mikula will be exhibiting selections from **American Vale** in her second show at George Lawson Gallery, 49 Geary, 2nd Floor, San Francisco, CA 94108, from March 15 – April 16, 2011. The gallery will be hosting an opening reception for the artist on Thursday, March 17th, 5:30 – 7:30 PM.

The images that make up **American Vale** were shot in the valley between the Berkshire and Taconic mountain ranges in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, a city that grew on the spine of the massive industrial facilities of the General Electric (G.E.) Corporation. Pittsfield's G.E. facilities are fast-disappearing, with some of the buildings Mikula shot for this show torn down and the rubble hauled away even before the last photos were taken. Others in the show are still active and thriving — though they survive on the fragile entrepreneurial cusp that is American manufacturing today.

With **American Vale**, Susan Mikula continues a story first seen in her show **American Device**, which depicted working plants on the arid coasts of southern California and the Texas Gulf, finding the unromanticized, present, physical beauty of industrial sites and the landscapes they shape. George Lawson Gallery debuted photographs from **American Device** in February of 2010.

Mikula's photographs in **American Vale** strip away detail and soften edges, only to better reveal the underlying and essential strength and form of these massive installations. Shot exclusively with Polaroid cameras and – of necessity – expired Polaroid film, Mikula works only with available light, manually controlling exposures to create painterly, almost impressionistic imagery. The resulting images are neither cropped nor retouched as they travel from camera to final print.

Using cameras and films made by a now defunct former giant of American industrial innovation further connects the subject of **American Vale** and this body of work. Even as remnants of the old Polaroid Corporation are auctioned off piecemeal to satisfy creditors, the products of their industry continue to produce works of power and substance in Mikula's hands.

"Once Pittsfield and G.E. were synonymous, with each other and with a thriving, vital community. Now you can drive through town a million times and not even know that these massive facilities are still there" says Mikula. "Now they're hidden behind layers of security and obscurity, like an old skeleton in the family closet. But places like these had and still have such a powerful impact on our landscapes and our lives, and I'm so drawn to the sense of story that hangs over them, and to their sheer, physical beauty."

Highly abstracted, and in a tight chromatic range, the images in **American Vale** continue to place form significantly more front-and-center than in many earlier bodies of her work. Mikula shot the sixteen images that make up **American Vale** over a period from summer of 2009 to spring 2010, of which five will be on display at the gallery.

The images in the exhibition are printed at large scale (40"x41" and 28"x29") using archival, pigment-based inks on archival paper made by Crane & Co. of Dalton, MA, mounted on anodized aluminum with an integrated brace/cleat system on the back that allows the work to hang flat, yet "float" about an inch off the wall.

Mikula lives in rural Western Massachusetts and New York City with her partner, Rachel Maddow.

For more information about Susan Mikula and images of work, please go to susanmikula.com

George Lawson Gallery, opened in October of 2008, originally as Room for Painting Room for Paper, and later as George Lawson Gallery. George Lawson directs the program. The staff includes Brennan Gray who manages community outreach, Ashley Treni, our internal gallery manager, and Rafael Cuevas who manages the web site. We represent an international group of emerging and mid-career artists, with a primary focus on contemporary painting. The gallery publishes limited run catalogs of selected exhibitions throughout the year available for purchase at the gallery.

NOTE TO EDITORS: Hi-resolution images from American Vale: Recent Photographs, as well as portraits of Ms. Mikula, are available to accompany editorial and may be downloaded at susanmikula.com.