Stefanie Motta
Water Line
April 1 – May 6, 2017

The photographs of Stefanie Motta are simply gorgeous, entirely mysterious and intimately otherworldly. Full bleed inkjet prints hung unframed on the gallery walls, the photographic imagery reveals a chemical reaction that is both ethereal abstraction and environmental documentation. Unturned tarot cards accompany the photographs, awaiting their own reveal.

In the spring of 2012, Stefanie loaned me Jack Kornfield's, "After the Ecstasy, the Laundry," at the conclusion of our first studio visit. Our discussion had meandered between photographic technique and theory, family as subject matter, post-graduate school survival, psychics, tarot cards, yoga and, finally, meditation, to which I professed both my ineptitude and horror. Never fear, she assured, handing me some comfort in the form of Kornfield's book, the gist of which is that whether or not one is able to find enlightenment, there is still the business of the everyday to which to attend, be it doing your job, maintaining your health, taking care of your kids, etc. In our case, no matter how much inner peace we might attain through transcendental meditation, Buddhist philosophy or otherwise, she had an art practice to develop and I had a mess of an art gallery that then existed as only a pile of paperwork. Enlightenment is nothing but a fantasy without learning how to integrate it into our daily lives, the now. As I continued to work towards opening this very gallery in which Stefanie's photographs now hang, this book became an invaluable guide.

Embarrassingly, I have yet to return it.

The photographs of Stefanie Motta are created using…Actually, I am not going to tell you. Not that the disclosure will spoil some sort of surprise, or that the process is a treasured secret. I am just not going to say. They are photographs, so you know they are made with light. They are inkjet printed photographs, same as the glass-covered tarot cards, so you know they are made of ink and paper. They are titled with specific sites, so you generally know where they were made. And they are being exhibited at David Petersen Gallery, so you know they are for sale. None of this really matters.

Stefanie Motta's photographs are significant for so many more characteristics beyond visual production. Deftly and gracefully, they balance aesthetic and formal qualities with the artist's inventive curiosity and inquisitive exploration to abandon the traditional studio and tools of photography. Yet, Motta still activates photography's technological and chemical controls while embracing chance and unpredictability as she relinquishes certainty and agency to the photographs themselves. Further, this work is as much an artistic statement as it is spiritual, environmental or political (although, at this point, what *isn't* political?), without didactic or pedantic appeal, leaving open a spectrum of concerns and ideas from the growing contamination of rivers, lakes and oceans to the possibility that water is as conscious as its consumer, if not more so. And what is most impressive, to this failed meditator anyway, is how the work quietly commands attention, from either a distant or intimate remove, as a photograph of a rigorous, thoughtful intellectual practice and a physical document of the very water in which is was made, or, *by which* it was made. The ecstasy and the laundry seem to have found that they may be, here, together and the same.

Stefanie Motta is a graduate of the University of Minnesota MFA program, a photography teacher, a yoga instructor and a dog owner.