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For immediate release

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**CHARLOTTE STREET FOUNDATION'S URBAN CULTURE PROJECT presents**  
***THE HEAVIEST FLOWER***  
***Recent work by Colby Caldwell & Elijah Gowin***

**Opening Reception: Friday, October 16, 6-9pm**  
**At Urban Culture Project's PARAGRAPH GALLERY / 23 East 12<sup>th</sup> Street, KCMO**



**Artists' remarks:**  
**Friday, Oct. 16, 6pm**  
**Exhibition runs:**  
**Oct. 16-Nov. 12**  
**Hours:**  
**Thursdays + Saturdays,**  
**12-5pm**  
**816.221.5115**  
**[charlottestreet.org](http://charlottestreet.org)**

Urban Culture Project is excited to host *The Heaviest Flower*, a two-person exhibition of recent photographic work by longtime friends and peers Elijah Gowin and Colby Caldwell. Tied together through their innovative inquiry of the materiality of photography—both artists use painstaking and elaborate processes for reaching their final images – the exhibition circles around themes of anxiety, loss, and the tenuous beauty of living. An 80-page, full-color catalogue is being published by Tin Roof Press in conjunction with the exhibition.

The work of Elijah Gowin and Colby Caldwell, independently and even more so together, urges us as viewers to slow down and to attend to the present moment, which a moment from now will join the vast field of that which is past. Both artists have rich histories shooting film and making prints, and possess a love and certain reverence for “the machinations or the materiality of photography itself,” as Caldwell describes it. But these two artists live equally in the digital age, applying its tools—digital cameras, Photoshop, scanners—toward a merger, or accumulation, of the analog and the digital that mines the potential and properties of both. On one level, it is this investigation into the nature of photography and the photograph that is the subject of their work, but it is in the delicacy and subtlety of manner with which this course of investigation is pursued that the poetry and potency of the work of these two artists emerges.

Since relocating to Kansas City in 2002 to teach at the University of Missouri Kansas City, Elijah Gowin has made a shift from creating carefully composed, narrative-driven “straight” photographs inspired by the landscape and mythology of the American Southeast to creating works that derive from appropriated images found on the Internet or which otherwise incorporate digital processes as essential elements. His stunning series of images of baptisms, for example, originated as photos found on the Web, which Gowin manipulated in Photoshop, made into paper negatives (one of the oldest photographic processes), then scanned, yielding streaky inkjet prints which are finally varnished and mounted. These images, depicting groups of two or more figures waist deep in water achieve a mythic, otherworldly sense of ecstatic ritual. Gowin’s most recent

photographs feature figures caught, this time by his own camera, in mid-air. Ambiguous as to whether the subjects are floating skyward or in the process of falling to earth, these also convey a sense of spiritual seizure or ecstasy, and speak to passage from one state to another.

Colby Caldwell's work achieves an equivalent level of gravitas, whether the subject is a figure in the landscape, a film negative, the colorful static produced by a glitch in analog to digital translation, or an expended shot gun cartridge. In the past few years, Caldwell has returned to using a still camera (after working extensively with film footage and digital video), creating photographs that reflect a continued interest in the dynamics and physical properties of the photograph, especially relative to ideas of history, memory, and place. Throughout, his recent images are rife with tension between arrival and departure, potential and loss, life and death, whether portraying individuals blooming with energy and possibility, "empty" landscapes, dilapidated hunting blinds, or scanned objects speaking to events now long past.

#### **About the artists:**

Born in Dayton, Ohio in 1967, **Elijah Gowin** received an MFA in photography from the University of New Mexico in 1996 and currently lives and works in Kansas City, MO. He is represented by the Robert Mann Gallery, New York, and by the Dolphin Gallery, Kansas City. The recipient of a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship (2008) and a Charlotte Street Foundation Award (2006), Gowin has presented solo exhibitions at galleries and museums including Robert Mann Gallery, NYC; Page Bond Gallery, Richmond, VA; Ellen Curlee Gallery, St. Louis, MO; Vermont Center for Photography, Brattleboro, VT; Light Factory, Charlotte, NC; Houston Center for Photography, Houston, TX; and Dolphin Gallery, Kansas City, as well as in group exhibitions at venues including Photo Gallery International, Tokyo, Japan; Noorderlicht Photogallery, Groningen, Holland; Museo Municipal de Arte Contemporaneo, Madrid, Spain; and Pace/MacGill Gallery, NYC. Gowin's work is featured in the collections of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, LA; Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona, Tucson; Princeton University Museum of Art, Princeton, NJ; Houston Museum of Art, Houston, TX; Hallmark Collection, Kansas City; and Sprint Corporation Art Collection; Overland Park, KS, among others.

Born in Raleigh, North Carolina in 1965, **Colby Caldwell** received a BFA in photography from the Corcoran College of Art and Design in 1990 and currently lives and works in St. Inigoes, Maryland. He is represented by Hemphill Gallery in Washington, DC and Nailya Alexander in New York. Caldwell's work is featured in the collections of the National Museum of American Art, Washington, DC; The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington DC; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX; Ulrich Museum of Art, Wichita State University, Wichita, KS; and the Ogden Museum of Southern Art, New Orleans, among others. His work has been featured in dozens of solo and group exhibitions, including "small game" at Hemphill Gallery, "HOME" at Allan Sheppard Gallery, NYC; "Pattern Recognition at Adamson Gallery, Washington, DC; "48<sup>th</sup> Corcoran Biennial" at Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; and "decelerate" at the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City.

**Images on prior page, from left:** Colby Caldwell, *.gestus picture (44)*, 2009, 44x54", inkjet print hand waxed and mounted on wood panel; Elijah Gowin, *Whirlwind 2*, 2008, 47x40", varnished inkjet print.

***Urban Culture Project is an initiative of the Charlotte Street Foundation, an organization dedicated to making Kansas City a place where artists and art thrive. Urban Culture Project creates new opportunities for artists of all disciplines and contributes to urban revitalization by transforming spaces in downtown Kansas City into new venues for multi-disciplinary contemporary arts programming. For more information, visit [www.charlottestreet.org](http://www.charlottestreet.org).***