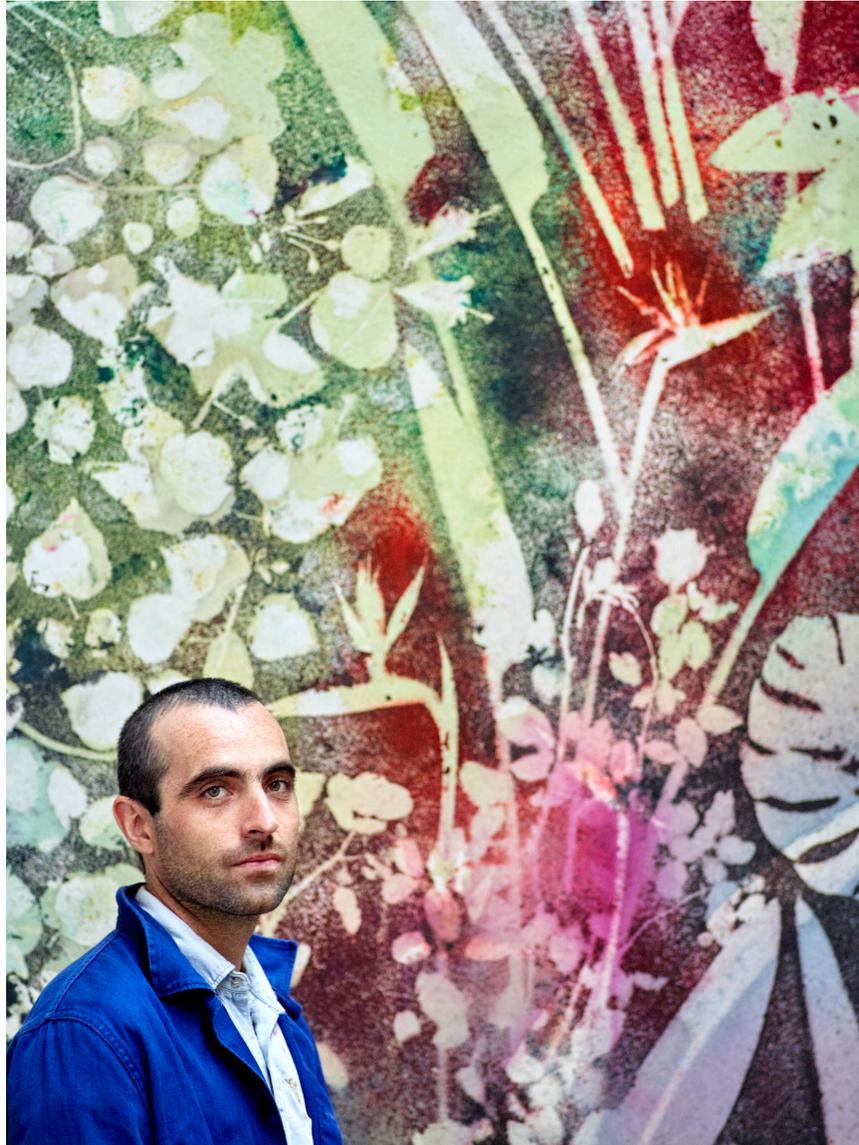


# CULTURED

"Nature as Studio: Sam Falls Reveals in the Medium of Chance"

By William J. Simmons

November 29, 2018



Sam Falls photographed in Los Angeles in front of his photogram, 2018. Photo credit: Aubrey Mayer

Sam Falls' work occupies a rare space between photography, [painting](#), sculpture and documentary. Central to his thinking is his experience of and relationship to the viewer. "I want to un-mediate the relationship between myself and the work so that the work relates to the viewer more intimately," he says. "I try really hard to have the work relate directly to the viewer, and be not so much about the artist or the artifice."

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*Untitled (Topanga State Park), 2018. © Sam Falls, courtesy 303 Gallery, New York.*

Though he has worked in endlessly varied media, Falls is perhaps best known for his painting-photographs (photograms of sorts) using natural phenomena. In a recent installation for the [Hammer Museum](#) in Los Angeles, for example, Falls visited every national forest in California and littered large canvases with flora endemic to the area. After layering randomly chosen dry pigments on top of the composition, Falls then left the hodgepodge overnight, allowing the evening's condensation to wet the colors and bleed onto the canvas, creating silhouettes not unlike those found in early photograms. The viewer is thus left with indices of an environment that feels at once immediate and impossibly removed. Falls says, "The process comes out of a desire to work with a form that is available to every viewer. With photography, especially abstract photography, there is so much manipulation—in the darkroom, and lately with inkjet printers. By using the sun, the rain and plants, there is universal subject matter that everyone can relate to, which allows deeper dialogues about art for people who want it."

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*Untitled (Sea Ranch), 2018. © Sam Falls, courtesy 303 Gallery, New York.*

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