I think as a viewer I’m really always the most excited about sculpture, and sculptural objects, and architecture, and works that kind of envelop your body or have a relationship with the body, but I think that my natural sort of tendency is almost more of a 2D...like it’s a lot harder for me to conceptualize a sculpture, I’m not someone who can visualize a form. For me, a photograph is just another material, but also I felt like maybe photography is a younger medium, just starting to go through these growing pains that painting had already done, so I just saw these rules of photography as just kind of ripe for the picking, and picking apart. Even that gesture of screwing a screwwhole through a photograph just felt liberating because photography gets so hung up in its own preciousness as a material and people wearing white gloves to handle them and making it very clean and pristine, and those are all the things I wanted to break down. It took a while to sort of focus in on this sort of project of photography and sculpture and specifically landscape photography, which in my mind still is quite a wide-open territory, but how can a landscape photograph be contemporary, and how can it be kind of present, and also that this relationship between the sculptural form and these actual sites—I felt like there was a lot of material there.
Letha Wilson

The Fabrication of Hawaii-California Steel (Figure Ground)
The power of nature to destroy anything you try to do is there, in the wind and the rain. A lot of time, artists don’t want their work to change, and for some reason, that’s built into the idea of the piece, so I love that then when pieces are put back outside, they have a relationship with the landscape, and not just visually, but physically. For this piece, that’s why I chose to use Cor-Ten steel, because there’s the image printed on one side, and the back is just steel, so it’s going to rust, it’s going to turn orange, when it rains it’s going to get streaks on it. I’m hoping the sun will have an effect, and the shadows.... Even when I designed the piece from different angles with these sort of cut-outs, I was interseted in the various site lines also that could be altered by the sun and shadows on the piece that it creates for itself. I mean, also, I feel like for my work it’s a kind of natural progression that it starts to come back into nature. I think it will create a strange rupture with the actual landscape from the photos moving back out into the world, having that relationship with the metal and the rust and the steel as they start to work in with the image. And also this sort of scale that it really is like architectural--it’s a ten-foot tall piece, and even like the weight of it...it weighs like a thousand pounds, I think. So my works are often heavy, and this thing of the lightness of the photograph and the heaviness of the material and the weight and the balance of that and, can a photograph be really heavy?

Letha Wilson

The Relationship Between Hawaii and California
The green image is from a trip I took to Hawaii on a Jerome Foundation Travel Grant, and it’s from the island of Kauai. I was born in Honolulu and I hadn’t been back since I was four, and part of it was sort of going back to where I was born, but also I was really thinking of Hawaii as this sort of farthest... in thinking of the American landscape or bucolic landscape image that Hawaii could be included in that but in a totally different kind as a tropical green paradise landscape, but this was the first time that I’d been able to shoot in that kind of a lush green forest. The other image is from Joshua Tree, and Joshua Tree is a place I’d been starting to go to more and more frequently just because I really enjoy it and the desert and that the park there has these range of rock formations, but also the Joshua trees themselves and the desert landscape and the sort of sky that encompasses everything. I think the selection, part of it is often in the work, like I’m looking for a balance, so they’re offering a balance to each other in their opposition or their contrast between the lush forest and the rocky desert. I think a lot of times I make a decision based on color or even just thinking of the green with the rock or this or that. And also, photographs I’d taken that were a little bit, you know, got closer in so it’s not so much a landscape vista, but more of a detailed shot of the subject matter.