University of South Dakota Presents Internationally Recognized Santa Fe Photographer Natalie Christensen

The Deconstructed Self: Natalie Christensen Explores the Psychology of Place



Natalie Christensen in her Santa Fe, New Mexico, studio - Photographer Credit: Christine Alexander

VERMILLION, SD, UNITED STATES, September 7, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Deconstructed Self: Natalie Christensen Explores the Psychology of Place

University of South Dakota Presents Solo Exhibition by Internationally Recognized Santa Fe Photographer Natalie Christensen

The University Art Galleries at the University of South Dakota are pleased to present The Deconstructed Self: Photographic Works by Natalie Christensen on view October 7–30, 2026, in the John A. Day Gallery at the Warren M. Lee Center for the Fine Arts, University of South Dakota. An Opening Reception will be held Friday, October 9, from 5:00–7:00 p.m. The exhibition is free and open to the public.

> “As a psychotherapist, I learned the art of asking the question—in many ways, these photographs are an extension of that work.”
>
> *Natalie Christensen*

In The Deconstructed Self, internationally recognized photographer Natalie Christensen transforms the overlooked spaces of everyday life into quietly compelling meditations on perception, memory, and identity. Rather than documenting dramatic landscapes or decisive moments, Christensen photographs the peripheral spaces of the American Southwest—parking lots, adobe walls, sidewalks, swimming pools, and the shifting interplay of light and shadow—revealing them as places where ordinary experience becomes psychologically resonant. Rooted in what might best be described as a psychology of place, her photographs

explore the ways our inner lives are shaped by the environments we inhabit, inviting viewers to discover profound meaning within the most familiar surroundings.

According to Amy Fill, Director of the University Art Galleries, Christensen's work shows "the unexpected convergence of photography and identity," asking viewers "what it means to find yourself in the places you least expected to look." These spaces reveal themselves as psychologically charged landscapes that quietly reflect the complexities of personal transformation.



Natalie Christensen, "you can't get there from here"



Previous (Traveling) Exhibition: Deconstructed Self, Installation View, Intersect Arts Center, St. Louis, Missouri, 2022

Christensen's photographs are deeply informed by her previous career as a psychotherapist, where exploring the hidden, the unconscious, and the unspoken formed the foundation of her professional life. After relocating from Kentucky to New Mexico in 2014, she found herself captivated not by the grandeur of the Southwestern landscape, but by its quieter, overlooked spaces. Rather than documenting place alone, Christensen asks viewers to participate in the act of seeing itself, encouraging them to project their own experiences, emotions, and memories onto seemingly ordinary scenes. In doing so, she transforms commonplace environments into visual metaphors that reveal the subtle relationship between landscape and the human psyche.

As Christensen explains,
"As a psychotherapist, I learned the art of asking the question—in many ways, these photographs are an extension of that work."

Deconstructed Self has enjoyed a successful national tour, premiering at the Fort Worth Community Arts Center in Fort Worth, Texas, before traveling to Intersect Arts Center in St. Louis, Missouri; Sahara West Museum and Performing Arts Center in Las Vegas, Nevada; and most recently the Gannett Art Gallery at SUNY Polytechnic Institute in Utica, New York. Following its presentation at the University of South Dakota, The Deconstructed Self will travel to the Center for Contemporary Arts, Santa Fe, New Mexico, for a solo exhibition in the spring of 2028.

During the exhibition, Christensen will also present an artist talk and featured lecture as part of the South Dakota Art Education Association (SDAEA) and South Dakota College Art Association (SDCAA) Art Educators Conference, held October 8–10, 2026, at the University of South Dakota. The annual conference brings together K–12 art educators, university faculty, museum professionals, practicing artists, and students from throughout the region for lectures, workshops, exhibitions, and the exchange of innovative ideas in arts education.

The University Art Galleries at the University of South Dakota have established themselves as one of the region's leading academic venues for contemporary art, presenting nationally and internationally recognized artists while serving as a vital cultural and educational resource for the university and the broader community. For students of art, design, psychology, education, and the humanities alike, the exhibition demonstrates the remarkable capacity of contemporary photography to foster critical thinking, close observation, and meaningful dialogue across disciplines. It is precisely the kind of exhibition that enriches both academic study and public conversation.

Natalie Christensen is an internationally recognized photographer whose work has been exhibited extensively throughout the United States and abroad. Her recent honors include the Great Meadows Foundation Grant (2025), the All About Photo Merit Award (2024), selection as a UAE Embassy Culture Tour Delegate, the commissioned cover photograph for the Santa Fe New Mexican special edition celebrating the opening of the Vladem Contemporary (2023), and selection for the New Mexico Purchase Initiative through New Mexico Arts / Department of Cultural Affairs (2023). Her work has received widespread critical acclaim in publications including The Guardian (London), Creative Boom, and The British Journal of Photography. She has also been featured in several distinguished publications, including Minimalism in Photography (teNeues, Düsseldorf, Germany), for which she was the cover and featured artist, and the monograph 007 – Natalie Christensen (Setanta Books, London). Her photographs are held in numerous public collections.

Exhibition Information

The Deconstructed Self: Photographic Works by Natalie Christensen
October 7–30, 2026

Opening Reception

Friday, October 9, 2026
5:00–7:00 p.m.

Artist Talk & SDAEA/SDCAA Art Educators Conference Presentation
October 8–10, 2026

University of South Dakota
John A. Day Gallery
University Art Galleries
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