

Press Release

For Immediate Release

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Robert LeBlanc
"Gloryland"

January 24, 2023 through January 28, 2023
Exhibition Reception: Friday, January 27th 7-9pm
Book Signing: Friday, January 27th 7-9pm

The Fahey/Klein Gallery is pleased to present "*Robert LeBlanc: Gloryland*," an exhibition showcasing LeBlanc's documentary work on a uniquely American subculture. This exhibition provides viewers with an intimate perspective into the last remaining Sign Following Pentecostal serpent-handling church of West Virginia, deeply hidden in the Appalachian Mountains.

"*Gloryland*" is the first-of-its-kind collaborative exhibition with Fahey/Klein Gallery, NFT marketplace SuperRare, and art streaming platform Niiio. "*Gloryland*" photographs are available as editioned fine art prints with Fahey/Klein, NFTs with SuperRare, and an artcast (streaming on smart TVs) with Niiio. This work is the first to offer NFTs as licensing tokens. NFT owners earn a percentage of all streaming royalties, including when the artist licenses the work to additional streaming platforms.

The photographs in "*Gloryland*" center around the Wolford family, their humble church in Squire, West Virginia, and the upheld belief in the King James Bible. "The House of The Lord Jesus" is one of the few churches practicing serpent handling in the 21st century. The congregation recognizes the dedication to the practice as the embodiment of obedience to the Word of the King James Bible. Mark 16:17-18 is widely regarded as a foundational teaching that if the believers truly contained the Holy Spirit within them, they could consume poison, handle fire and venomous snakes without harm. Such practices are seen as evidence of salvation and a demonstration of faith.

"This is a sympathetic insight into a tradition more maligned than understood. This is their story and a view of a faith that many believe is fated to be abandoned. However, any obituary for this tradition is but foolish speculation. The obituary will never be written. Core photographs in *GLORYLAND*, focus upon Chris Wolford and his church. The picture of a rattlesnake on Chris's bible during a homecoming is prophetic. Mark 16:17-18 clearly states that "And these signs shall follow them that believe...(Mark 16:17) A major theme in *GLORYLAND* is that of abandonment. There are wonderful pictures of abandoned buildings, homes, and an abandoned coal loader. In West Virginia, coal is king. Corporate America takes the wealth derived from coal mining, rapes and ravishes the land, and abandons what is no longer needed—including those who risk their lives underground or now operating huge machines that level entire mountains. However, abandonment is a dual theme. The simple fact is that believers in West Virginia have not abandoned God. Mired in poverty or not, believers in West Virginia are rich in their embodied faith." – Ralph W. Hood, Jr., Ph. D.

Welcome to GLORYLAND.

Robert LeBlanc is a fine art and documentary photographer. His work is marked by uncommon intensity and immediacy, the product of a career spent documenting subcultures and raw corners of the world from a position of extreme closeness. His projects are the culmination of years spent building relationships and trust. LeBlanc has developed a practice of locating and gaining intimate access to revelatory slices of life that speak greatly to a world in upheaval. His book *Unlawful Conduct*, has been carried in leading art bookstores worldwide, including MoMA PS1 and the Frye Art Museum. His second monograph, *Moondust*, is a collection of images shot over four years documenting Hotshot firefighting crews in Montana and California. *GLORYLAND* is the third monograph release from LeBlanc.

Robert LeBlanc's publication, *GLORYLAND* (387 pages printed in a Bible replica; \$40), is available for purchase at the gallery while supplies last.

Press Photographs Available on Request