

# The Washington Post

*Democracy Dies in Darkness*

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## In the galleries: A visual guide to a shrinking arts scene

By **Mark Jenkins**

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Eric Johnson's "Salton Sea and Mountains," on view at Multiple Exposures Gallery through May 7. (Eric Johnson)

### **Eric Johnson**

California's Salton Sea has suffered two major losses: first water, then tourists. Eric Johnson documents the effects of both departures in "Mono Lake/Salton Sea," his show of black-and-white photographs at Multiple Exposures Gallery. The D.C. artist portrays landscapes of salt outcroppings, limestone towers and abandoned buildings, set off by water and sky that share rich gray tones. He shoots wide and in close-up, vertical and horizontal, to encompass the many ways a visitor might soak up the scenery.

Neither the mountain-nestled Mono nor the below-sea-level Salton has outflows; water escapes only through evaporation, so the remaining liquid is brackish and mineral rich. Diversion of water for agriculture and Los Angeles's aqueducts increased the salinity, and eventually destroyed the Salton Sea's recreational economy. Johnson devotes one of the gallery's three walls to decaying, mostly abandoned structures; these include a pair of "Sunken Trailers," little more than metallic skeletons awaiting an archaeologist. Conservation efforts have started to heal Mono Lake, but the Salton Sea's human presence continues to wither.

***Mono Lake/Salton Sea: Photography by Eric Johnson On view through May 7 at Multiple Exposures Gallery, Torpedo Factory, 105 N. Union St., Alexandria. 703-683-2205. [multipleexposuresgallery.com](http://multipleexposuresgallery.com).***