

PRESS RELEASE: EXHIBITION

**JOHN CHIARA: *California/Mississippi***  
26 October - 8 December 2018



JOHN CHIARA

*Martin Luther King at Leflore-V3, 2015, from the Mississippi series*

Image on Ifochrome paper

106 x 88.5 cm (41.7 x 34.8 inches), unique photograph

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**Paris, 16 September 2018:** Galerie Miranda is very proud to present the exhibition **California/Mississippi** by San Francisco-based artist John Chiara (b. 1971). The exhibition will present selected works from these two landmark series in the artist's practice.

John Chiara pushes the boundaries of the photographic medium through his choice of process and the mastery of its possibilities. His approach is distinguished by its incredible physicality and recalls the early days of the medium when artists dealt with heavy, awkward equipment and endured long exposure and development times. Chiara's giant cameras, which he designed and built himself, are transported to locations on a flatbed trailer to produce one-of-a-kind large-scale prints. The design of the cameras, which resembles that of daguerreotype box cameras, allows the artist to simultaneously shoot and perform his darkroom work while images are recorded directly onto oversized photosensitive paper (not film). This process, which Chiara first discovered as a student in 1999, invites anomalies in his final prints that create a rawness but also a lyricism in his pictures.

Since 2004, Chiara has used photography to pursue the metaphorical association between memory and place, "Photography has a long a complicated relationship with memory, which seems to always be in flux. Memories are unbound, with divergent edges. You have to move around in them to get to points of clarity. ... The psychological weight of memory burns the visual experience into the mind. As time passes, the tie to what the memory was originally linked to can loosen, but the visual image remains." The artist often chooses deliberately nondescript places to photograph, what he calls "in-between spaces...the type of places you would normally walk past without paying much attention". Given the time consuming and labor-intensive nature of his photography, John Chiara chooses to work in one place for extended periods of time that also allow him to thoroughly get to know its different light and enabling him to previsualize the possibilities of what the final image will be, "I respond to the qualities of the light and the way it envelops the landscape - the way the light is captured and held by the paper. I leave room for the noise from the photographic process itself to complete the work."

**California:** The series was produced in 2012-13 and Galerie Miranda will present selected images taken in Los Angeles, perhaps one of the world's most photographed city after Paris. Chiara's approach results in images that transcend conventional depictions of place and transforms familiar landscapes into hypnotic visual passages through the ordinary world. His depictions of Los Angeles are profoundly new: finding neither an idyllic rural Eden, a sprawling urban hell or a city of spectacle, Chiara instead hones in on delicate transformations in the environment, both natural and man-made. His interest lies with the psychological underpinnings of the city's development and the subtle ways these are revealed in the shifting landscape. His Los Angeles images are both surreal and powerfully direct: the blazing sun reflecting off modernist building facades; the sun, again, blinding us from behind lush vegetation; a hillside exploding with scorched earth; dry, mineral building and landscapes.

The exhibited *California* works feature in the book *California* (John Chiara, Aperture Foundation and Pier 24, 2017) which includes an excellent essay by Virginia Heckert (Curator and Department Head of Photography, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles) that situates John Chiara's practice within the history of American landscape photography in California, citing notably Eadweard Muybridge, Imogen Cunningham, Edward Weston, Robert Adams). Signed copies of the book will be on sale at the gallery during the exhibition.

**Mississippi:** During 2013-2015 John Chiara made numerous trips along the Mississippi Delta, choosing Coahoma County for the project. Coahoma County has a strong oral tradition and locals possess a deep historical and cultural knowledge of the region, the birthplace of the Delta Blues. Chiara put down temporary roots, ultimately spending several months, ten days at a time, immersed in the culture and getting to know the land. He studied the area throughout drastically different seasons, from the sweltering summer and its shocking greenery to the relatively dormant fall and winter months when the landscape is unnervingly exposed, "There are worlds within worlds in Coahoma County... The sun radiates and creates an energy here like no other place. This is due to the water table being approximately ten feet below the large flat plain that is Coahoma County. This is an area that has consistently flooded over and over again for several thousand years, making it one of the most fertile regions of the world."

For the Coahoma County work Chiara utilized two different cameras to produce over 100 photographs at 34 x 28.25 inches and 50 x 53 inches. The photographs made during this time reveal the rich quality of the Mississippi earth with subtle notes of local history—all rendered in exquisite detail. The resulting prints are haunting, lush, and characterized by an exceptional luminosity.

*This series was made possible through a collaboration between ROSEGALLERY, Seven Chimneys Farm, and The Porch Society.*

## Artist biography

John Chiara received his B.F.A. in Photography from the University of Utah in 1995, and his M.F.A. in Photography from the California College of the Arts in 2004. He has been an artist in residence at Crown Point Press, San Francisco, in 2006 and in 2017; at Gallery Four, Baltimore in 2010, at the Marin Headlands Center for the Arts in 2010 and at the Art Factory, Budapest (Hungary) in 2017. In 2011, Chiara's *Bridge Project* was commissioned by the Pilara Foundation, San Francisco, and was included in the Pier 24 Photography group exhibition titled *HERE*. In 2012 Chiara was one of thirteen international artists whose work was included in the exhibition *Crown Point Press at Fifty* at the National Gallery of Art, Washington D. C., and at the de Young Museum, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. He curated and participated in an exhibition *In Conversation - June Schwarcz and John Chiara* at the Richmond Art Center, Richmond, California in 2012. The Pilara Foundation commissioned Chiara a second time in 2013 for the group exhibition *A Sense of Place* at Pier 24 Photography in San Francisco. Concurrently, Chiara's work was included in *Twisted Sisters: Reimagining Urban Portraiture* at the Museum Barengasse, Zurich, Switzerland, and in *Staking Claim*, a California triennial invitational at the San Diego Museum of Photographic Art. In 2015, Chiara was one of seven artists featured in *Light, Paper, Process, Reinventing Photography*, at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles. In 2016, Chiara's work was included in *A matter of memory: photography as object in the digital age* at the George Eastman Museum in Rochester, New York.

John Chiara's photographs are currently on view in the Denver Art Museum's exhibition, *New Territory: Landscape Photography Today*, and will be featured in the *New Southern Photography* exhibition at the Ogden Museum of Southern Art, New Orleans from October 6, 2018 – March 10, 2019.

Works by Chiara are in numerous private and public collections, including the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA; Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, San Francisco, CA; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA; George Eastman Museum, Rochester, NY; Haggerty Museum of Art, Milwaukee, WI; Museum of Photographic Arts, San Diego, CA; and the Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin, TX.

## Galerie Miranda

Inaugurated in March 2018, Galerie Miranda is situated in Paris' vibrant 10th arrondissement at 21 rue du Château d'Eau, close to the Place de la République and 100 metres from the former site, on rue Léon Jouhaux, of Louis Daguerre's wonderful Diorama and laboratory, destroyed by fire in 1839. Art gallery and bookshop specialised in photography, Galerie Miranda is founded by Miranda Salt, Australian who has lived and worked in the 10th arrondissement since her arrival in 1995. The gallery presents international artists who are established in their own country but who have had little exposure in France and Europe, as well as lesser-known bodies of work by well-known artists. The first cycle of exhibitions was inaugurated on International Women's Day and featured prominent women artist: Jo Ann Callis, Nancy Wilson-Pajic, Marina Berio and, currently, Ellen Carey. The gallery also proposes a curated selection of books in French and English: monographs, artist publications, critical texts, biographies and catalogues on photography.

*Exhibition produced in friendly collaboration with ROSEGALLERY, Santa Monica: [www.rosegallery.net](http://www.rosegallery.net)*

Galerie Miranda  
21 rue du Château d'Eau  
75010 Paris FRANCE  
Tuesday-Saturday 12:00-19:00 or by appointment  
Gallery: + 33 1 40 38 36 53  
[www.galeriemiranda.com](http://www.galeriemiranda.com)

## **AUTUMN PROGRAM**

### **7 September - 20 October 2018**

ELLEN CAREY: *Mirrors of Chance, la photographie expérimentale*

### **26 October - 8 December 2018**

JOHN CHIARA: *California/Mississippi*

### **14 December - 2 February 2019**

ANDRE KERTESZ / ARNE SVENSON: *A ma fenêtre*