

Press release

# CHUCK KELTON

*L'alchimie du paysage*  
(The alchemy of landscape)

EXHIBITION EXTENDED UNTIL 1 MAY 2021



CHUCK KELTON

*Resist #10, 2018*

Photogram and chemogram on silver gelatin paper

50 x 40 cm

Unique

@ Chuck Kelton / Galerie Miranda

Galerie Miranda  
21 rue du Château d'Eau

## Paris, January 2021

Galerie Miranda is delighted to present a solo exhibition of works by American artist Chuck Kelton (b. 1952, USA). The exhibition title *l'Alchimie du paysage* (the alchemy of landscape) provides us with a direct entry to Kelton's work: exploring and working with darkroom chemicals used throughout the history of photography, the artist manipulates photosensitive paper to create abstract, emotionally-charged artworks that are reminiscent of canyons, mountains, oceans and forests.

Kelton makes unique, camera-less photographs, working in full daylight outside of the darkroom and spending weeks, sometimes months, sketching and preparing each work. A master printer, Kelton is also a passionate collector of photographs, practical manuals and tools from the history of photography. He explores 19th century techniques and chemistry such as gold chloride and selenium, that he combines with bleach and developer to coax a lush palette of colours from light sensitive, traditional silver gelatin papers. Describing his approach as "calligraphy with chemistry", Chuck Kelton combines chemogram and photogram techniques: the image in a photogram is the result of exposing photographic paper to light — writing with light — whereas the image in a chemogram is the outcome of exposing photographic paper to developer and fixer — writing with chemistry. Kelton often folds the paper in two - a transgressive act in photography - creating a visual break that is understood by the viewer as a horizon line creating depth of field in the artist's misty palette.

Kelton's works are evocative of other media such as watercolor, oil painting or charcoal drawing, and his glowing skies are reminiscent of Turner, Le Gray, Constable. A recent suite of his abstract work is entitled 'A View, Not from a Window' in reference to the 'first photograph in history' taken in 1827 by Nicéphore Niépce, Point de Vue de Gras, taken from the window of his home in Saint Loup de Varennes. In a fitting nod to the historical references of his practice, Chuck Kelton's first Paris exhibition will be held at Galerie Miranda in the 10th arrondissement of Paris, situated only 100 metres from the site of Louis Daguerre's Diorama and photographic laboratory that burnt down in 1839.

Chuck Kelton invites us into a romantic world that seems nonetheless on the edge of calamity. His imagery is delicate and composed but also the product of improvisation and accident, resulting in highly atmospheric and timeless images:

"I'm looking for spectacular images, something I haven't seen before, something that references photography and a hundred other things both historical and visual. A moment where chaos seems to undermine harmony. A moment where you feel threatened and peaceful, a visual dialogue between oppositions; irrational and rational, belief to disbelief, something at once known and unknown." (quoted in interview published in LensCulture, 2016)

Chuck Kelton has been a master printer for over 35 years and has handled the work of artists such as Danny Lyon, Saul Leiter, Helen Levitt, Mary Ellen Mark, Larry Clark, and Lillian Bassman. Kelton's personal work has featured in numerous exhibitions and publications and is in the collections of the Museum of Fine Arts Boston; Bibliothèque Nationale de France; Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach, Florida; International Center of Photography, New York; and New York Public Library. In 2020, the Getty Museum in Los Angeles acquired several of his works. The artist lives and works in Jersey City, NJ. His work is currently on view at the Berman Museum, Pennsylvania, USA.

## Artist biography

### CHUCK KELTON

1952 Born in Bronx, NY

1986—Present: Owner, Kelton Labs, specializing in exhibition and portfolio gelatin silver prints, New York, NY

#### Education

1977 MFA Photography, Ohio University, Athens, OH

1975 BFA Photography, Kansas City Art Institute, Kansas City, MO

#### Selected Solo Exhibitions

2020 Galerie Miranda, Paris

2020 Berman Museum, Collegeville, PA2016 Von Lintel Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

2013 Bosi Contemporary, New York, NY

2012 Mana Contemporary, Jersey City, NJ

2012 Causey Gallery of Contemporary Art, Brooklyn, NY

2010 Causey Gallery of Contemporary Art, Brooklyn, NY

1987 Hedgepeth Gallery, New York, NY

1986 Hedgepeth Gallery, New York, NY

1982 Bruxelles, Bibliothèque Nationale Museum Collection, Paris, France

#### Selected Group Exhibitions

2018 Yossi Milo Gallery, NYC

2018 9 New Jersey Photographers, Stockton University Art Gallery, NJ

2012 Robert Anderson Gallery, New York, NY

2011 Works On Paper, Robert Anderson Gallery, New York, NY

2010 Art on Paper, Monmouth Museum, Lincroft, NJ

2009 International Center of Photography Education Gallery, New York, NY

Ingenious Methodology, Causey Gallery of Contemporary Art, Brooklyn, NY

2007 Hoxie Gallery, Westerly, RI

Crossroads Gallery, Kansas City, MO

Ch'i Contemporary Art, Brooklyn, NY

Queens Library Gallery, Queens, NY

#### Selected Bibliography

2016 Casper, Jim. "Creating with Light, Chemistry and Imagination; Photographs without a camera by Chuck Kelton.",  
Lensculture, June 3, 2016.

Ollman, Leah. "Chuck Kelton's lush landscapes, crafted in the darkroom." Los Angeles Times, May 31, 2016.

S. Bonnie, "Interview with Master Printer Chuck Kelton." Onward, Spring 2016.

2015 Silverman, Rena. "Hearing and Feeling What Photographers Are Saying." The New York Times, March 25, 2015.

2013 "Chuck Kelton/Eric William Carroll." The New Yorker, March 2013.

2011 "Chuck Kelton and Go Sugimoto." The New Yorker, April 2011.

2007 Meyers, William. "Out of One Darkroom, Many." The New York Sun, February 22, 2007.

1982 Focale Publication

#### Selected Public Collections

Nelson Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO

Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Santa Barbara, CA

Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, France

Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA

International Center of Photography, New York, NY

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA

Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach, FL

New York Public Library, New York, NY

**Interview with Chuck Kelton in *LensCulture* magazine, 2016**

“These specific images have been evolving for about six years; the emotional evolution that got me to this moment has been going on for decades.”

— Chuck Kelton

*LC: Your works are made without cameras, yet they evoke luscious three-dimensional landscapes and beautiful abstractions. Can you talk a little bit about how you experimented to develop the processes that you are using now? When was the first time you made an image like this that you liked?*

CK: Photographic imagery is defined by its materials and the processes used to control those materials. In my work as an artist and master printer I have continued to explore, to define to redefine, to abuse and use those materials. I have investigated processes and formulas that date back 150 years. This created a platform for my visual vocabulary. The real issue then became the ability to construct this information into a narrative and language that worked for me as an object—a dialogue between materials, process, visual intention and emotion. These specific images have been evolving for about six years; the emotional evolution that got me to this moment has been going on for decades.

*LC: Many of your images are made by folding the photo paper before exposing it to light and chemicals. What does the folding do in the creation of the image?*

CK: In its basic sense, the fold suggests a horizon line that divides the image. At the same time I am interested in allowing the fractured structure of the paper to provide its own story, and not least of all I’m interested in violating the perfection of the paper. These worked magnificently together and created a drama which helped shift the “story” under the surface of the paper.

*LC: After years of working in the darkroom, are you able to predict fairly well how an image will come out? Or is there still a lot of chance involved in the process? How do you improve the chances of getting a stunning image?*

CK: My process is very selective yet there is always a randomness or allowance for chance. I’m working with the tension between these two forces, allowing the materials as well as the performance to create the image. I work with these images with many layers of chemicals: developers, fixers, bleaches, re-developers and finally toners. I suppose by the end, the image, paper, chemicals and myself are exhausted. This is how I improve my chances of achieving beautiful these images.

*LC: What are the qualities of images that you decide are successful? How do you select images for an exhibition?*

CK: I’m looking for spectacular images, something I haven’t seen before, something that references photography and a hundred other things both historical and visual. A moment where chaos seems to undermine harmony. A moment where you feel threatened and peaceful, a visual dialogue between oppositions; irrational and rational, belief to disbelief, something at once known and unknown. Simple things.

*LC: Can you talk a bit about the scale and size of the images? Does size change the way the chemicals and light interact with the paper? Do you prefer to work large or small? Why?*

CK: I work in many sizes, just now I’m seduced by the intimacy of the smaller scale.....You are correct the larger scale requires many changes in this process, the paper absorbs differently. You can see the “trails” of chemical applications and the sense of a hand is more present; things I’m trying to avoid.

*LC: You have worked in the darkroom with some of the world's best photographers. Can you talk a bit about the difference between printing from negatives and making art directly on photo paper?*

CK: When I create a print from a negative or just using light and chemistry I'm creating a visual story. I interpret what I've been given through the use of the materials and my emotional response to that. This never changes. I think and respond to them in very similar ways.

*LC: I imagine you feel a lot more free to experiment with your own work. Can you talk about the difference of printing for someone else, and printing for yourself?*

CK: I really do employ the same system. My responsibility is to make the strongest possible statement using the materials and process available to me. When I'm given a negative to print, decades of information intuitively pours out into that print. This is part of me, then it becomes part of the image. I would say that I most likely would not pour gold chloride into the developer I was using for a Danny Lyon print. But for myself, of course. With my own works there is nothing I will not try.

*LC: Do you still use a camera sometimes in your work? And if so, what kind of images do you like to make with a camera?*

CK: Yes. I actually never stopped using a camera; I love photography! At the moment I'm pushing the physical properties of both film and film developers, attempting to achieve an image extremely unique both physically and emotionally. I'm shooting images primarily of mountains and skies. Not a big surprise!

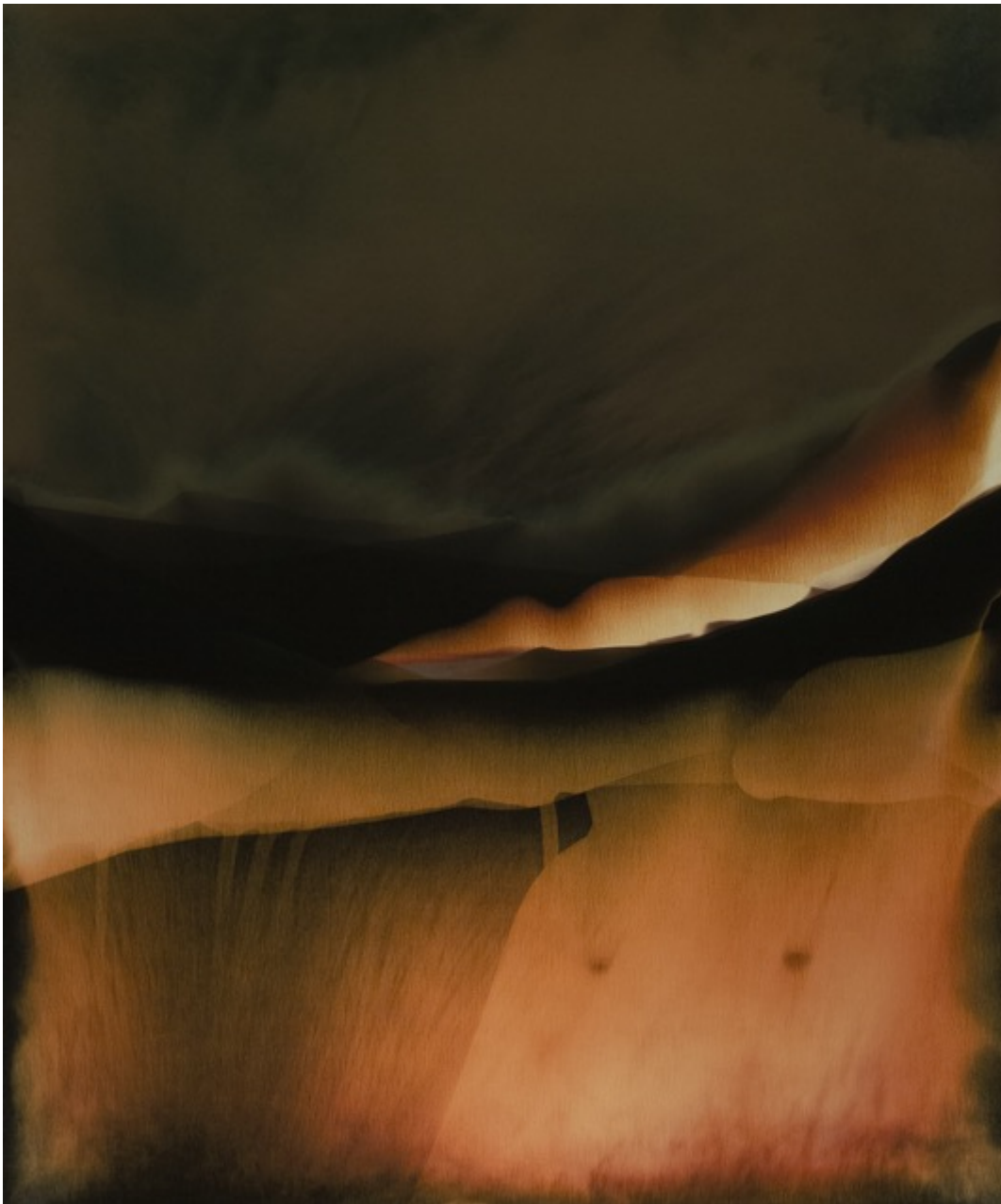
—[By Jim Casper / LensCulture](#)

Works available in high resolution for press publication



CHUCK KELTON  
*Resist #10, 2018*  
Photogram and chemogram on silver gelatin paper  
50 x 40 cm  
Unique

@ Chuck Kelton / Galerie Miranda



CHUCK KELTON  
*Thoughts on Mountains and Valleys #123, 2017*  
Photogram and chemogram on silver gelatin paper  
60 x 50 cm  
Unique

@ Chuck Kelton / Galerie Miranda



CHUCK KELTON  
*A View, Not from a Window #593, 2019*  
Photogram and chemogram on silver gelatin paper  
47 x 35 cm  
Unique

@ Chuck Kelton / Galerie Miranda





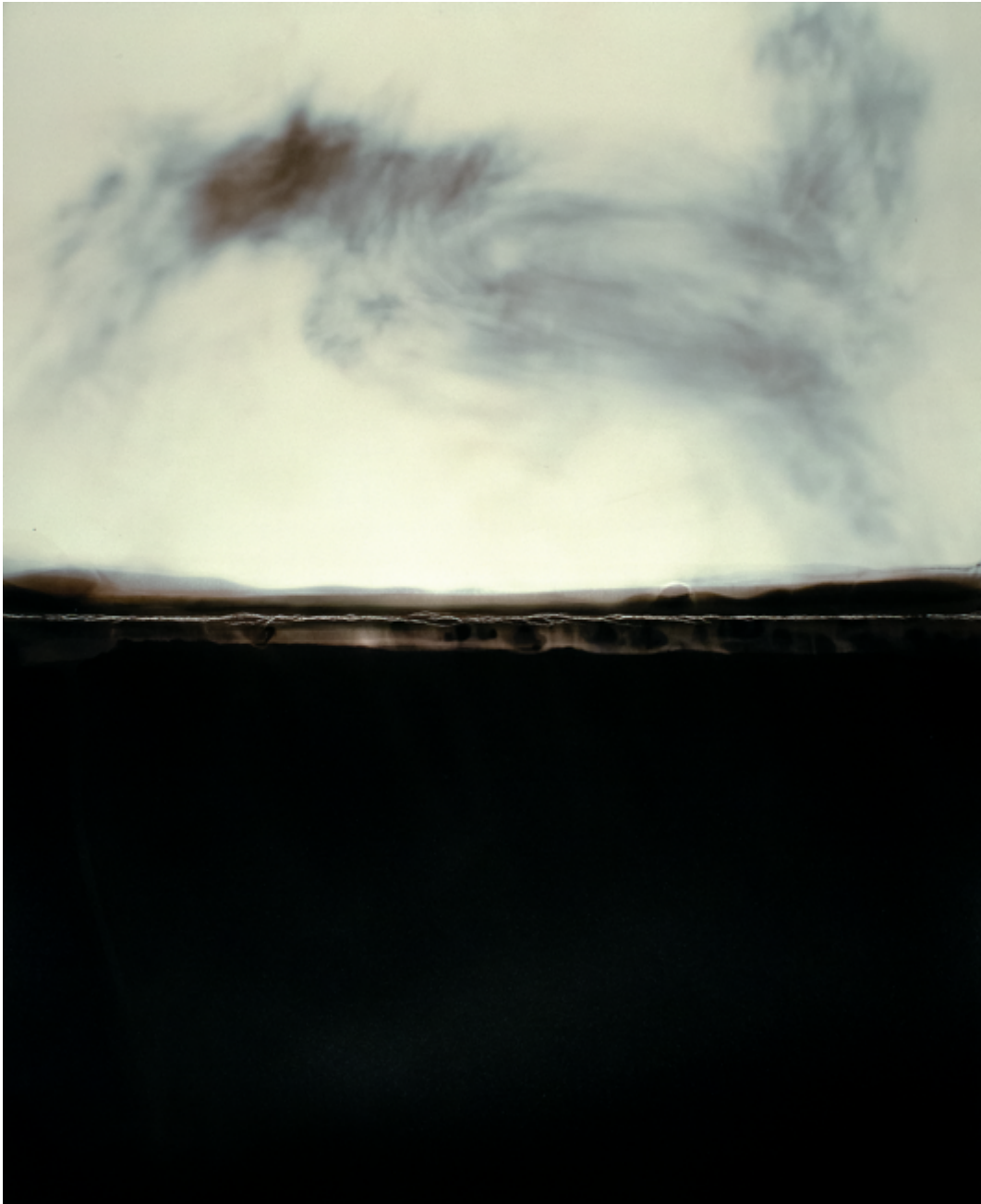
CHUCK KELTON  
*A Picture of a World #5, 2016*  
Photogram and chemogram on silver gelatin paper  
50 x 40 cm  
Unique

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CHUCK KELTON  
*A View, Not from a Window #502, 2019*  
Photogram and chemogram on silver gelatin paper  
35 x 27 cm  
Unique

@ Chuck Kelton / Galerie Miranda



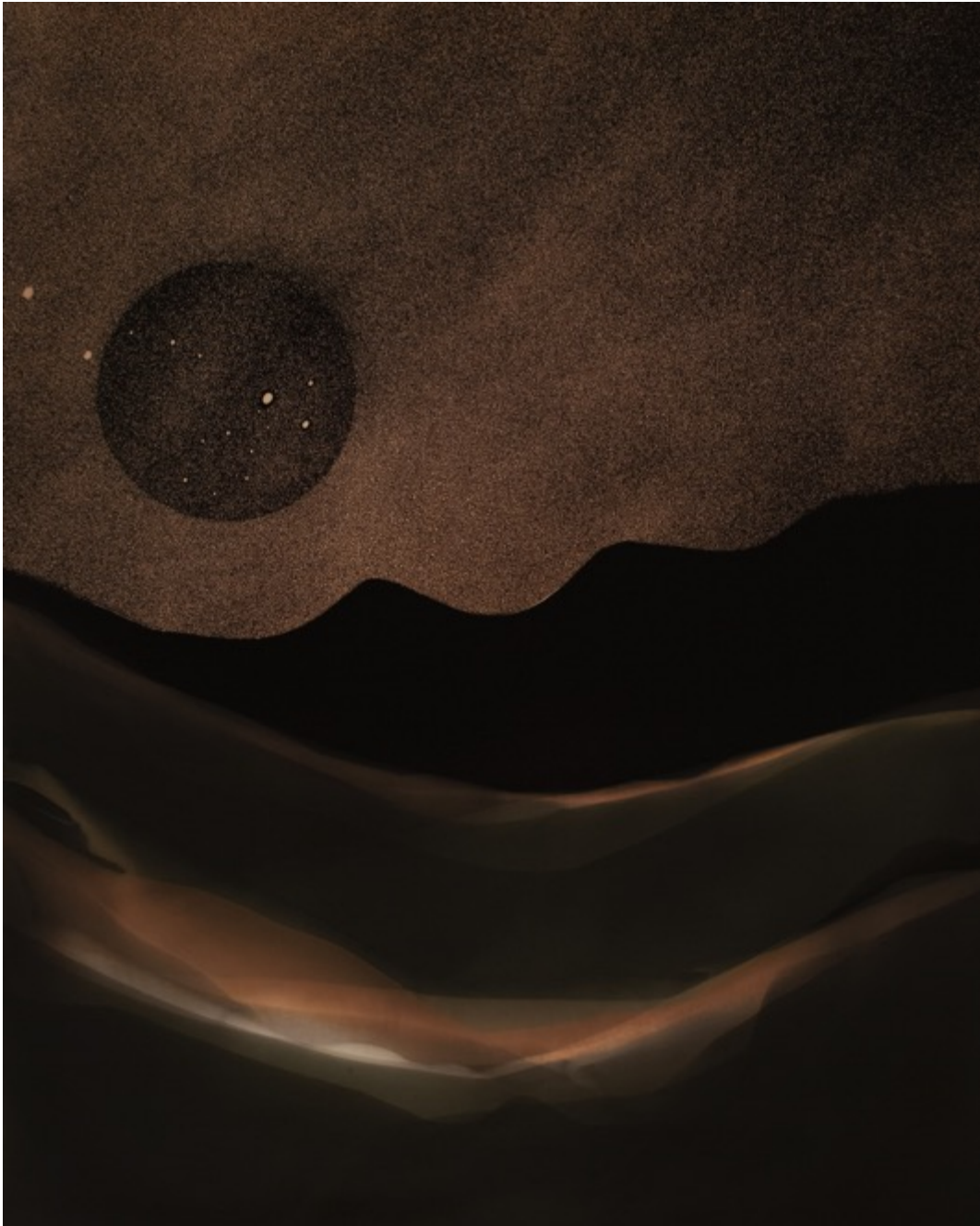
CHUCK KELTON  
*A View, Not from a Window #613, 2020*  
Photogram and chemogram on silver gelatin paper  
50 x 40 cm  
Unique

@ Chuck Kelton / Galerie Miranda



CHUCK KELTON  
*A View, Not from a Window #691, 2020*  
Photogram and chemogram on silver gelatin paper  
50 x 40 cm  
Unique

@ Chuck Kelton / Galerie Miranda



CHUCK KELTON  
*Moonrise #50, 2020*  
Photogram and chemogram on silver gelatin paper  
50 x 40 cm  
Unique

@ Chuck Kelton / Galerie Miranda



CHUCK KELTON  
*Thoughts on Mountains and Valleys #73, 2017*  
Photogram and chemogram on silver gelatin paper  
60 x 50 cm  
Unique

@ Chuck Kelton / Galerie Miranda

## Galerie Miranda: à propos

Galerie Miranda was founded in 2018 by Miranda Salt, French-Australian who has lived and worked in the 10th arrondissement of Paris since her arrival in France in 1995. Specialized in fine art photography, the gallery presents international artists and works celebrated in their own country but little-known in France and Europe. Inaugurated on International Women's Day 2018, the gallery's first cycle of exhibitions featured solo presentations by prominent women artists Jo Ann Callis, Nancy Wilson-Pajic, Marina Berio and Ellen Carey. Amongst the other artists represented, or with works available at the gallery, are Merry Alpern, Jo Bradford, Sally Gall, Gérard Dalla Santa, Chloe Sells, Noé Sendas, Terri Weifenbach. The gallery participates in selected fairs and private salons, and is also a bookshop with a curated selection of publications in French and English on photography: monographs, artist publications, critical texts, biographies and catalogues. Galerie Miranda is situated in Paris' vibrant 10<sup>th</sup> arrondissement, close to the Place de la République and 100 meters from the former site, on rue Léon Jouhaux, of Louis Daguerre's wonderful Diorama and laboratory, destroyed by fire in 1839.

Galerie Miranda  
21 rue du Château d'Eau  
75010 Paris FRANCE  
Tuesday-Friday 14:00 – 19:00 / Saturday 12:00-19:00 or by appointment

[www.galeriemiranda.com](http://www.galeriemiranda.com)

