

LANDSCAPE AND ALCHEMY

Katja Liebmann and Nadezda Nikolova

17th July – 27th September



Katja Liebmann

Winter Journey I (after Franz Schubert's Winterreise), 2010



Nadezda Nikolova

Elemental Forms, Landscape no. 143, 2021

Landscape and Alchemy brings together the evocative works of Katja Liebmann and Nadezda Nikolova in a contemplative dialogue between place, memory, and photographic transformation. Rooted in early photographic processes, Liebmann's cyanotypes and Nikolova's wet plate collodion images transcend straightforward landscape depiction to become meditations on time, perception, and the elemental.

Both artists act as modern-day alchemists, manipulating light, chemistry and material to transmute landscape into more than image, into sensation, atmosphere, and emotion. Here, the landscape becomes a site of transformation - both physical and poetic. Through processes that are as tactile as they are visual, *Landscape and Alchemy* reveals the photographic medium as a vessel for both material experimentation and spiritual inquiry. This is a journey through spaces not merely seen, but felt, remembered, and remade.

Liebmann draws on memory and archival photographic material to explore the mutable nature of time and recollection. Her "etchings of time" reflect her belief that memory is fluid and ever-changing. Her works often present fleeting glimpses of cityscapes and landscapes, imbued with a strong sense of presence - of the observer both witnessing and remembering.

"During our journeys through life, to our alleged goal, it is easy to become detached from our immediate environment. It becomes hard to see anything beyond what we have already learned to see and most of what we see, when we see, is quick and remote; we are lost in thought. I try to capture these traces of moments, of life happening around us, frozen in one image." Katja Liebmann

For Nikolova, nature is both subject and collaborator. Her work explores the tension between control and surrender, simplicity and complexity, light and shadow. Using elemental shapes in her photogram silhouettes, she embraces variables - temperature, humidity, exposure time - conditions that materially shape the final image. The resulting abstract landscapes are fragile, meditative, and timeless, capturing, in her words, "the still point of the turning world" (T.S. Eliot).

"I believe that we need to create new templates for how we relate to ourselves, to one another, to the living planet... My work becomes a portal to place outside of space and time... the work aims to evoke mystery and awe, inviting contemplation and stillness, so that on some level, it speaks to beauty and hope." Nadezda Nikolova

Though distinct in method and mood, both artists are quiet observers of the world, engaged in existential explorations of identity and presence, guided by intuition. Nikolova's interest in Hannah Arendt's concept of natality - the capacity for new beginnings - echoes through her work, while Liebmann explores life as a cyclical journey with neither beginning nor end.

Their works resist literal transcription. Instead, they invite the viewer to feel, to experience. Nikolova's abstract landscapes offer a spiritual refuge, while Liebmann's remind us of the impermanence of our journey and the quiet beauty of the unseen.



Katja Liebmann, *Dialogue Through Glass*, 2024

About Katja Liebmann

Katja Liebmann (German b.1965) grew up in Berlin and is based in Oldenburg/Germany. She is a graduate of the Royal College of Art, London, the Kunsthochschule Berlin-Weißensee and the Academy of Fine Arts, Nuremberg. In 2001 she received a Scholarship from the Hasselblad Foundation in Gothenberg, Sweden. She was shortlisted for the 1998 Citibank Photography Prize (now the Deutsche Börse Photography Prize) and was awarded the prestigious DAAD scholarship in 1995. Recent exhibitions include: *Blues* at the Oldenburg State Museum, Germany, 2024. Her work was selected for the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition 2025.

Katja Liebmann's work is in the permanent collections of the Royal College of Art, London; the Victoria and Albert Museum, London; the Charles Saatchi Collection, London; the LzO Art Collection, (Landessparkasse zu Oldenburg), Oldenburg; the Bishkek Art Centre, Kyrgyzstan; and the Omsk Museum of Visual Arts, among others. Her work has been featured in *Black + White Photography*, *Photomonitor* and *Artdoc* magazine. She is a lecturer in printmaking and early photographic processes at Carl von Ossietzky University, Oldenburg and was Visiting Lecturer at the Royal College of Art, London College of Printing and Camberwell College of Art, London, Kent Institute of Art & Design, Kent, UK and Hacettepe University, Ankara.



Nadezda Nikolova, *Elemental Forms, Landscape no. 96*, 2019

About Nadezda Nikolova

Nadezda Nikolova (b. 1978, former Yugoslavia) is an artist presently working with wet plate collodion photograms - a historical technique dating back to the 1850s. Collodion - which uses a thick solution of nitrocellulose in ether or alcohol - is mixed with salts, and spread over a glass or metal plate, which the photographer sensitizes in a bath of silver nitrate before making exposures.

Nadezda Nikolova studied historic processes at the George Eastman Museum and at the University of Kentucky. Her art has been featured in solo exhibitions in the United States, United Kingdom, and France, and her pieces are held in the collections of the J. Paul Getty Museum (Los Angeles, USA), Victoria & Albert Museum (London, UK), Saudi Arabia Museum of Contemporary Art (Riyadh, SA), Monterey Museum of Art (Monterey, California), and Eskenazi Museum of Art at Indiana University (Bloomington, Indiana). Publications including *The Washington Post*, *Arab News*, *Analog Forever*, *It's Nice That* and *Architectural Review* have highlighted her work.

In 2023, Nazraeli Press published her monograph entitled *Elemental Forms*, in collaboration with HackelBury Fine Art. She has lectured about her work at various universities and photographic institutions, including SUNY Plattsburgh (New York), Penumbra Foundation (New York), Center for Photographic Art (California), and Santa Fe Workshops (Arizona). She was a finalist for the 2018 LensCulture Exposure Awards.

About HackelBury

HackelBury was founded twenty-six years ago by Marcus Bury and Sascha Hackel. The gallery is committed to championing artists working with the visual arts who push the boundaries of their medium to create meaningful and contemplative work.

The London based gallery initially showcased classic photography from the 20th century including Henri Cartier-Bresson, Berenice Abbott, Malick Sidibe, and Sebastião Salgado. The transition from traditional photography to more conceptual work was as intuitive as it was organic, beginning with artists such as William Klein, Pascal Kern, Doug and Mike Starn, Garry Fabian Miller, Katja Liebmann, Ian McKeever, Stephen Inggis and Bill Armstrong.

In recent years the gallery has taken on emerging artists such as Oli Kellett, Nadezda Nikolova, Alys Tomlinson, Coral Woodbury and Sharon Walters.

Each artist, whether emerging or established, creates work defined by a depth of thought and breadth and consistency of approach. The small group of artists with whom HackelBury work, represent a diversity of practice yet share an artistic integrity which the gallery is fully committed to supporting in the long-term.

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