

PRESS RELEASE

JOHN CHIARA: *La poussière des anges*

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*John Chiara and his smallest camera working in New York City (2018)*

## JOHN CHIARA: *La poussière des anges*

**Paris, October 2020:** Galerie Miranda is very proud to present the exhibition *La Poussière des anges* by San Francisco-based artist John Chiara (b. 1971), the artist's second solo exhibition at the gallery and the first European exhibition of this new body of work.

In 2019, John Chiara was artist in residence at the Budapest Art Factory residence in Hungary, where he spent time photographing **Angyalföld**, the city neighborhood whose name translates into English as '**Angel Dust**', into French as '**la Poussière des anges**'. The negative photographic images he created there capture the city's particular urban mix of history and modernity, with residential and industrial architecture of different periods punctuated by advertising billboards, electrical cables but also many trees. In a poetic echo of the district name 'angel dust', the city's bright blue skies become in their negative incarnation a fiery orange-black, creating a nocturnal, dreamlike landscape inhabited by ghostly forms.

John Chiara is a landscape photographer whose art is grounded in the physical process of the medium. "The subject of my work is photography itself," says Chiara. "... (and) its manifestation through its means." Chiara's giant cameras, which he designs and builds himself, are transported to locations on a flatbed trailer to produce one-of-a-kind large-scale prints. The design of the cameras allows the artist to simultaneously shoot and perform his darkroom work while images are recorded directly onto oversized photosensitive paper. The camera's very large size and 18th century technology force part of his process beyond his control and, through the barrel lens, images are projected directly onto the scroll of photographic paper fixed inside the camera 'chamber'. During exposure, Chiara manually burns, dodges and filters the light entering through the lens, working to change the temperature of light and spectrum of color as if in the darkroom.

Chiara uses careful observation, intuition, and chance to capture landscapes that evoke a personal narrative or visual memory of place:

"Photography has a long and 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, in urban, rural or semi-rural places, seeking 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 in order to thoroughly get to know its different light and 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."

Chiara works mainly in San Francisco but has also had residencies or exhibition projects in Baltimore, Los Angeles, Clarksdale (MS), New York, Budapest (Hungary) and in 2020, at the Fundaziun Nairs (Switzerland). His California work, started in 2004 and published in 2017 by Aperture, included a first series of experiments with negative images and color, taken around Los Angeles and San Francisco. In 2018, John Chiara undertook a complete project of negative images, capturing the dramatic and varied architecture of the city of New York.

As the image is received onto negative paper, light and shadow are reversed, as are the colors, creating a surreal vision of architectural juxtapositions in an unexpected palette. In the *Angyalföld* work, it seems that "All that is solid melts into air"<sup>1</sup>: Chiara's lacey, translucent trees and glassy buildings against a permanent night sky are a fitting tribute to the shifting history of this country still emerging from communist rule, and currently a populist battleground between tradition and modernity.

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<sup>1</sup> BERMAN, Marshall, *All that is solid melts into air: the experience of modernity* (1982, Penguin Books: New York)

## 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 Budapest Art Factory (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 invitation 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; in 2018, in the *Triennale de l'art imprimé contemporain* at the Musée des Beaux-arts, Locle (Switzerland); *New Southern Photography*, Ogden Museum of Southern Art, New Orleans LA; *Brilliant Spectrum: Recent Gifts of Color Photography*, Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Santa Barbara, CA. In 2019, John's work featured in the exhibition *New territory: landscape photography today*, Denver Art Museum, Denver, CO.

Works by John 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: 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 inaugural 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, Gerard Dalla Santa, Noé Sendas, Terri Weifenbach. The gallery participates in selected fairs and private salons, including Paris Photo, Photo London, Private Choice, approches and the Villa Benkemoun.

Galerie Miranda 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.

*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-Friday 14:00 – 19:00 / Saturday 12:00-19:00  
or by appointment

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



JOHN CHIARA  
*Tompau. at Pintér József u., Budapest Hungary, 2019*  
Negative image on Fujiflex Crystal Archive  
50x30 inches / 127 x 76 cm  
Signed and dated on verso  
Unique

© John Chiara / Galerie Miranda





JOHN CHIARA  
*Madarász Viktor u. at Fővény u (left), Pintér József u. at Tompa u. (right), Budapest Hungary, 2019 (Dptych)*  
Negative images on Fujiflex Crystal Archive paper  
2 Photographs each 50x30 inches / 127 x 76 cm  
Signed and dated on verso  
Unique

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JOHN CHIARA  
*Variation, Népsziget u. on Népsziget island, Budapest Hungary, 2019 (Dptych)*  
Negative image on Fujiflex Crystal Archive paper  
50x30 inches / 127 x 76 cm  
Signed and dated on verso  
Unique

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