

GALERIE NATHALIE OBADIA

PARIS - BRUXELLES

LAURA HENNO

Radical Devotion

November 8 - December 31, 2021

3, rue du Cloître Saint-Merri, 75004 - Paris



Laura Henno
Jack, 2017
Silver print, 55 x 130 cm
© Laura Henno
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/Brussels

Galerie Nathalie Obadia is pleased to present for the first time the work of French artist Laura Henno, ahead of her exhibition at the Palais de Tokyo next April. Photographer and filmmaker Laura Henno's work sheds light on parallel realities, often marked by phenomena of displacement or migration.

Following her research in the Comoros, which explores the complex geopolitics of the archipelago through life portraits of clandestine teenagers, Laura Henno turns her gaze to Slab City, a campsite lost in time in the Californian desert. Shown for the first time in Paris, the *Outremonde* series, initiated in 2017, received critical acclaim at the Rencontres d'Arles in 2018, as well as at the Institut de la Photographie in 2019 and at Bleu du Ciel in 2020, under the curation of Michel Poivert. The exhibition presented at the Galerie Nathalie Obadia allows the discover of previously unpublished prints, augmenting this project which will be the subject of a feature film developed as part of the artist's residency at the Villa Albertine in 2022.


In the middle of the Sonoran Desert, Slab City is one which does not show on any map, located at the gates of a military training complex dedicated to interventions in the Middle East. Populated by abandoned caravans, this wild camp of about 150 outcasts reveals the off-screen of an America confronted with the violence of its social and political history. In this otherworldly place where those who wish to can disappear, time is suspended as life finds new forms on the edge. The desert exerts all of its power, both magnetic and merciless, while the military tests tear the silence under the burning sun. Indifferent to social rules, the Slabers live their destiny in a legal loophole.

Immersed for several weeks a year, living in her caravan, Laura Henno creates a fresco of this no man's land where the rejects of a declining Americana find refuge. Quoting Don DeLillo's eponymous novel, *Outremonde* refers to the politics of erasure evoked in this chronicle of the second half of 20th century America. Laura Henno in turn writes the story of a world hidden from view, restoring its gravitas through the portraits of its rebellious souls. Dave, an uncanny pastor who tirelessly rebuilds his church torn by the wind. Then Nicholas, a young evangelist with a pioneer appearance, strives to recreate the celestial garden to feed the most destitute of inhabitants. Both characters are featured in the film *Haven*, presented in the exhibition, which showcases both the resilience and the community bonds emanating from this makeshift purgatory.

New prints, presented for the first time, further uncover these destinies lived in suspense, and characterized by a vindicated nomadism. We discover Lewis, a Vietnam war veteran, magnified by the chrome of his Harley, standing in front of the truck he drove for 40 years. Another portrait reveals the scarred but gentle face of a man

driving his pick-up truck, crowned with a luminous backlit halo.

Dialoguing with the great tradition of American documentary photography, that of Dorothea Lange during the Great Depression, Laura Henno tells the story of a different world that she brings out of oblivion. In contact with this autarkic community, the photographer introduces her audience to the Slabers whose freedom, built through adversity, is shaped by choices of their own making.

With the support of  Centre national des arts plastiques, the Rencontres de la Photographie d'Arles, the Institut pour la Photographie and Bleu du Ciel

Born in 1976 à Croix (France). Lives and works in Paris (France)

After studying photography at the ENSAV of La Cambre, Laura Henno starts a formation in cinema at the Fresnoy. Winner of the Prix Découverte des Rencontres Internationales de la Photographie d'Arles in 2007, the artist has since had a plethora of exhibitions in France and abroad, such as her show *Radical Devotion* at the Institute for Photography in Lille 2019, at the Ryerson Image Center in Toronto, *Redemption* at the Rencontres de la photographie d'Arles in 2018, *M'Tsamboro* at the BBB Centre d'Art in Toulouse in 2017, *Summer Crossing* at the Centre Photographique Ile de France, or her show at the Finnish Museum of Photography in Helsinki in 2011.

Laura Henno also participates in numerous group exhibitions such as *Diaspora at Home* at the Centre for Contemporary Art, Nigeria, *Eldorama* at the Tri Postal in Lille, *Persona Grata*, at the Mac Val and Musée National de l'Histoire de l'Immigration, Paris, at the Sharjah Biennial, and at the Fogelman Galleries of Contemporary Art in Memphis, USA.



Laura Henno
Maryann and Jack-Jack, 2017
Silver print, 100 x 130 cm
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Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/Brussels

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Laura Henno

Radical Devotion
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Brussels

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